

**DC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
RACE TO THE TOP AWARD HEARING
JUNE 22, 2011
Acqunetta Anderson**

Good evening, Chair and Members of the D.C. Board of Education. Be advised that my comments are based on a long career as an educator in Washington, D.C. for the D.C. Public Schools and for the Benjamin Harrison Society, and as an anxious aunt of children just beginning their school experiences.

Presently, I work as the GIS and STEM Vice-President for the Benjamin Harrison Society. I am also a school board candidate for the Ward 4 School Board Member in the upcoming 2012 elections. I have served on the D.C. Public Schools Local School Restructuring Team, as Chair of the Washington, D.C. War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, and National Society & Friends Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historical Trail. I headed up a local schools magnet school program as the chair of the Local School Restructuring Team. I have taught students at the elementary, middle and high school levels—including AP college courses.

For me, this school board is charged with helping to shape the most critical ingredient in our city's elusive pursuit of a vibrant and sustainable prosperity. When historians capture the essence of these times, they will assuredly address District's response to the challenge of providing its

children and youth with access to a high quality educational system; where teaching and learning reflect excellence, not just here and there, but across our many communities and where our schools compare with any around the globe.

The Race to the Top grant will give the District of Columbia Schools the tools to challenge students, get parents involved, support teachers, improve low-performing schools and help individual students achieve. A quality educational system benefit us all - with more prosperous communities, less crime and a better quality of life.

The Board of Education must mandate that District of Columbia Public Schools some Race to the Top funds to prepare more people to teach math, science, engineering and/or technology.

District of Columbia Schools must offer students an innovative curriculum, which combines academic instruction, career training, and structured work experiences designed to bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace skills.

District of Columbia's community service graduation requirements should be amended to include graduation requirements which fall in line with the race to the top award: Among my key recommendations are:

- a. Establishment of important indicators of education attainment so we can attend to and be accountable for our collective performance, ensuring that our students are among the best educated anywhere.

- b. Inclusion of a common readiness screening process for children entering kindergarten.
- c. Setting of targets that move the District Of Columbia Schools toward providing universal publicly supported early childhood programs in all of our schools.
- d. Provisions which require that all students in the middle and high school years will have personal learning plans to guide their preparation and foster their interest, and
- e. The all-important focus on enhancing the high school experience, culminating in the receipt of a diploma based on students demonstrating their proficiency against challenging standards through a flexible timetable, and a process that employs a variety of measures to capture sufficient evidence that ensures students who graduate for District of Columbia secondary schools have the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in post secondary and workplace pursuits.

High standards, high expectations drive improved performance among our children. Having said this, the standards movement cannot succeed without the significant redesign of the District's high schools. Shaped for a different time, our secondary schools served well generations of students, but today they need to adapt swiftly to students born to a generation known as the Millennial. Digital thinkers, they come to technology and applications readily, teamwork suits them well, and real-world, applied learning is their forte. We need to redesign our secondary school

experience in ways that raise expectations for performance and attainment—to motivate and interest students.

We should utilize race for the top funding to establish center for student learning., Our high schools need to be true centers for student learning, delivering, and facilitation a rich array of learning experiences from authentic projects, to internships, to early college/dual enrollment opportunities, And we need to ensure that our students demonstrate proficiency against clearly stated standards—in a variety of ways including standardized tests, portfolios, and capstone projects, What matters is that our students are ready to move on to success—in college, careers, and as citizens, We need to transition to a redesigned system where adults guide the implementation of a new enhanced process for awarding high school diplomas, one which documents broad evidence of proficiency and literacy, where student interest are cultivated, and where our young people step up and demonstration what they can do.

The board should change the graduation standards regarding community service and require that community service hour's focus in areas of interest to better prepare for their post secondary, and careers.

The examples of acceptable community service:

- Tutoring students
- Participating in home building
- Making care packages for military personnel
- Instructing senior citizens on computer use
- Preparing or serving food Cleaning up rivers or parks

The board should add the following examples:

- Volunteer nursing/medical assistant
- Preparing websites, geospatial information system (GIS) design computer analysis, spreadsheets, creating documents, and emergency situation mapping.
- Political science studies, and drafting legislation
- Scientific research, watershed research, preservation and conservation
- Non-profit management including financial, and project management

I appreciate the chair and the long serving members of this body for recognizing that education is the lifeblood of economic prosperity and responsible citizenship. And we should say to America and the world that Washingtonians intend to be among the best-educated people in the world.

Thank you for listening. I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Acquonetta Anderson
Ward 4 School Board Candidate 2012