GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION (OSSE)

Public Hearing on the District of Columbia Auditor's Report: "Measuring What Matters: More and Better Data Needed to Improve DC Public Schools"

Shana Young
Interim State Superintendent of Education
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

Testimony

Submission to:
Committee of the Whole
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

March 19, 2021

Council of the District of Columbia
Virtual Meeting Platform
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 402
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. I am Shana Young, the Interim State Superintendent of Education. I am pleased to testify before you today for this public hearing on the District of Columbia Auditor's Report: "Measuring What Matters: More and Better Data Needed to Improve DC Public Schools."

Thank you for this opportunity to share more about the history of our education data systems and our current capacity for collecting and sharing critical information about our students. This story is one of growth and progress, accomplished together over many years, with collaboration across government, schools, and our families. Not only have we invested in systems, but we have used information over time to become the fastest improving state in the nation in student outcomes.

OSSE has a deep belief and commitment to this work as data have been a key pillar of our strategic plan first published six years ago. We have shared our vision, including both our needs and our progress, with this Council and the public transparently over time. We believe that this work is critical to fulfilling our mission to sustain, accelerate, and deepen educational progress in the District - especially for those who are farthest behind. This work is even more urgent as we muster all available resources to support schools in recovery of unfinished learning caused by the pandemic.

My testimony aims to provide important context to this report. First, I will describe the efforts that OSSE has taken to build our statewide data systems because it is critical to appreciate where we started and the progress we have made during that time. Second, I will describe the status of our data collection systems and processes. Finally, I will outline where we are headed in the future, so we can deliver on the objectives promised in our strategic plan. By the culmination of our time together this afternoon, I believe you will understand the complexity of this work and continued confidence in our ability to do it.

Part I: Historic Efforts

The story of our data systems is one of progress. As we advance statehood for the District, we must remember that we didn't have a state education agency prior to 2007. Our journey has required significant collaboration – across multiple Mayors, with investments approved by the Council over multiple budget cycles, with collaboration from LEAs and agencies across the District to contribute to education data from birth to adulthood. This journey has been documented publicly in our annual performance oversight materials, budget hearings, and prior public testimonies before Council. It has taken many years to build our data systems which collect and share important information on student outcomes. It is important to understand that story to engage in a meaningful and constructive conversation on our progress and the path forward.

Prior to OSSE, the state education office (SEO) was located within DCPS. Early into OSSE's existence in 2007, the agency received a set of federal grants for a statewide longitudinal data system and a grant from Race to the Top. These investments laid the foundation for the primary data system that we have today - the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLED), which is the statewide data repository that collects information from LEA student information systems (SIS).

When the Bowser Administration began in 2015, we had a clear vision about the role data should play in our work. Actionable data has been a key pillar in our strategy since the very beginning, and we knew that while the foundation was laid, there were significant needs that had to be met in order to get where we need to go as a District. We carefully prioritized our time and resources to ensure that we were making meaningful improvements.

We made small but essential investments in things such as server capacity, so we could store and process the data we were collecting. To support efficient linkages between LEA SIS and statewide data systems, we procured a Districtwide student information system, or State SIS. We made the SIS available to all LEAs to use, free of charge. Today, 18 LEAs use this system as their primary local SIS, while all LEAs use it to submit certain administrative data such as contact information for school officials.

We built key data applications - or software programs - that help support the efficient collection of data. For example, work of this nature helped us modernize our outdated practice of conducting a physical head count for our annual enrollment audit to an online process.

OSSE took another significant step forward by requiring all LEAs to use automated data transfer for certain data reporting. Automated data transfer replaced manual reporting processes. It allows for the automatic, routine movement of data from the LEA data system to OSSE's system. Implementing this transition helped build more quality controls around our data reporting.

We also invested early in data quality and access, deploying the first data access and visualization applications to help LEAs better manage their data, more effectively share it back to them, and allow them to see in real time how the data they sent were being reported. These look like dashboards, allowing LEAs to examine trends based on their students' data, providing comparisons over time, and allowing LEA staff to drill down into the data to the student level. This includes things like looking at attendance trends, demographic trends, or even outcomes – for example we have a ninth-grade outcomes app that shows middle school staff key data about how their students are doing in their respective high schools.

OSSE has also expanded the District's data collection capacity significantly over time – adding data on student attendance, school faculty and staff, and student discipline. We have also coordinated with other District agencies, such as the Department of Human Services (DHS), DC Health, and others to collect and share other information about our students in order to direct and provide critical services. For example, we work with DHS and its contractor to track data on students experiencing homelessness, so schools can provide critical services to children and their families.

Each new collection requires careful technical planning and close coordination with LEAs – to share expectations, provide assistance to build infrastructure and compliance, and to receive feedback on what reporting is most helpful to our educators and drive changes in practice. We do not collect data for the sake of having more data, and we know that each piece of information we have is actually submitted by the staff at our schools who often have multiple roles and heavy workloads. We have recognized our responsibility to not re-direct resources from student support

to administrative functions. It is a difficult balance to strike, and one we must do in partnership with our educators.

This intense partnership and collaboration has resulted in some of the most robust reporting across the nation on schools and students. An example of this is our DC School Report Card, published for the first time in 2018, which – informed by stakeholders – presented statewide, common, transparent, comparable information across DCPS and charter schools. DC was proud to be one of the few states in the country to drive equity by weighting and reporting data on specific groups of students – such as by race, at-risk, and disability status – to clearly see where we need to focus our resources to help students learn.

The work in collecting and sharing data is not a one-time effort, and the work is never done. We must continuously upgrade our infrastructure to match our ambitions, and we have made significant strides to revamp and revitalize our agency structure to support this work. None of us are using the same cell phone or laptop we had in 2007. So too, have we updated our data systems over time, and we must continue to do so. We have created a detailed four-year plan to standardize, streamline, and automate our end-to-end data functions from collection through reporting. These efforts will improve the experiences of LEA staff and OSSE staff who work in these areas, and we are beginning to implement it. We were pleased that in the fiscal year 2021 (FY21) budget, the Council moved up the remaining capital project funding for data infrastructure from FY23 to FY21, so we could begin to execute this plan immediately.

Part II: Present Efforts

As you know, the data we collect reflect what is happening in the life of a student each day. Most data are collected and entered into a SIS by an educator or member of school staff. Now, I would like to transition to give you an idea of the landscape of District education data today and how we use data.

The District's Education Data Are Longitudinal And Portable.
When students enter the education system, we assign them their first "Unique Student Identifier," and that information travels in their record throughout their education in the District.

Using that unique student identifier, we attach many different data points to a student throughout their journey in our schools. For example: enrollment, attendance, and assessment scores. A teacher or school leader has access to information about their students through their own school-level SIS. And through data shared back from OSSE in SLED and its tools, an LEA leader can see both LEA trends and student-level data related to all key data submitted to OSSE (see *Exhibit A – Who Sees Which Data* showing the student-level data available to certain school users).

Allow me to be a little bit more descriptive of this capacity. Last week, during our performance oversight hearing, I was asked about the longitudinal data for students who attended Washington Metropolitan High School. When students enrolled in Washington Met, their electronic records carried with them information on historic enrollment, attendance patterns, and assessment results. These records also move with the students if, and when, they enrolled in another school. When school leaders plan, they can look at this data to guide them in what kind of instructional

supports or other interventions to plan. For example, OSSE makes available reports that show LEAs a preview of their incoming enrollees who are students with disabilities or English learners, through a suite of reporting called "Early Access Applications." This helps schools prepare to support students on the first day of school by making sure that educators have information on the accommodations needed for the student to access course material effectively.

Another piece of evidence of this longitudinal data, are the many research analyses that OSSE has published detailing student outcomes over time. For example, we have published a first of its kind Students with Disabilities landscape analysis, reports on graduation rates over time, reports on Postsecondary Pathways, and many of our STAR and Report Card metrics, such as re-enrollment which also provides longitudinal views of specific student groups reported over multiple years.

The District's Education Data Are Transparent.
OSSE publicly reports an extremely large volume of the data that it collects. Either through federal or local compliance efforts or through public reports, OSSE reports more data on the performance of the District's schools than ever before, leading to an unprecedented level of transparency. You may find a listing of the data reports that we release on our website (see also *Exhibit B – OSSE FY19-20 Data Related Reports*). OSSE provides downloadable spreadsheets on our statewide assessment. We publish the DC School Report Card and provide downloadable files containing all metrics that appear on the site. OSSE also publishes an extensive volume of reports to comply with our statutory requirements from this Council.

In addition to being transparent by publicly reporting, OSSE is clear regarding the sources and methods behind its disclosures. In our public data files, we include data notes that describe the source and methodology for reporting, as well as any caveats or demonstrated anomalies. When we published the STAR Ratings, we concurrently published an extensive technical guide that provides a deep look into our statewide school accountability system and our methods, providing a level of transparency unmatched by most states. When we note that DC has been the fastest-improving city in the country on academic measures, we cite results on the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Finally, beyond publishing data transparently, OSSE highlights accomplishments in our reports but also continues to address and deeply examine some of the most challenging issues facing public education in the District. We have conducted extensive analysis on attendance, for example, work that looks at the relationship with attendance and distance to school, attendance and acts of violence, attendance and having a sibling, attendance and being suspended, and much more. And we published our Educator Workforce Report, responding to public desire to have more of this data, which provided the first statewide look at the status of our teachers across the District.

The District's Education Data Are Compliant With Applicable Laws.
OSSE is following local laws as they relate to the functionality of our systems. Specifically, DC Code 38-2609 authorizes OSSE to develop and implement a longitudinal educational data warehouse system. This system exists. We work in it and with it every day. It is a dynamic system that is constantly evolving and improving. OSSE's current data system meets the

functionality that is required in the statute (see *Exhibit C – Data Warehouse Statutory Requirements Checklist* for a crosswalk of the statute to our capabilities).

The District is following federal laws and is – and has been – in compliance with applicable federal grant requirements. The U.S. Department of Education recently issued a letter re-stating this and re-confirming our successful completion of our grants to their satisfaction (see *Exhibit D – ED Letter Affirming Completion of SLDS Grants*). Any allegation that OSSE is out of federal compliance is inappropriate, irresponsible, and risky. It could potentially jeopardize the federal funds that support our schools and at-risk children or open the District to meritless litigation.

The District's Education Data Are High Quality.
Beyond compliance with local and federal laws and grants, we have developed a robust data governance system, which is a set of policies that document how data are collected and shared. These systems and processes ensure quality at all phases of the data lifecycle - from collection to reporting. Over the past six years, we have centralized and collected more of this data, and strengthened our policies and oversight of LEAs. We set reporting standards that are applicable to all schools and set up systems of oversight and compliance. For example, we reject records and require corrections when they do not conform to our standards for pieces of data, such as when a student's record is submitted without corresponding demographic information. We also have a system of reflecting a whole range of other possible errors back to the LEA for corrections. We have staff devoted to helping LEAs fix problems when they can't. We also have multiple points in the year where LEAs review and certify their data or calculations that are created from their data. To reduce or eliminate human error and technical glitches, we have implemented a system of checks to ensure data accuracy and compliance.

The District's Education Data Are Informed by Stakeholder Feedback Pertaining to What Data to Collect and How to Collect Them.
Through robust and extensive public engagement with stakeholders, we ask what data would be most meaningful and how it should be displayed to make the most sense. For example, when we created the My Child Care DC website, which shares profiles on our child care providers, we met with providers and families to ask what information would be valuable to them. We engaged with schools and business partners in the development of our Career and Technical Education state plan.

For our STAR Framework and the DC School Report Card, we engaged with teachers, principals, Ward Education Councils, the State Board of Education, families, and students. OSSE heard from more than 4,000 parents and community members whose voices helped guide the development of the DC School Report Card. I have spoken in front of groups of stakeholders, explained our plans, answered tough questions, taken tough and creative feedback to heart, and carried that feedback to our teams for implementation. Frequently, this resulted in changes to our original plans, such as when we added years of teacher experience to the DC School Report Card or changed proposed metric weights in the STAR Framework. We have been cited nationally for the time and investment we make in this important work of authentic engagement.
A 2019 report by the Data Quality Campaign titled Empowering Families with Data: How Washington, DC Engaged Stakeholders to Build its School Report Card noted DC's "strong commitment across city leaders and CBOs to connect with families and hear their ideas for the

DC school report card," adding: "OSSE leaders took what could have been a basic compliance exercise and turned it into a meaningful opportunity to cultivate relationships throughout the city, which is ultimately the goal of any type of stakeholder engagement." This valuable feedback informs our work and makes it better.

The District's education data are accessible.

OSSE not only makes a large amount of data public and transparent, but we also make it accessible – that is, we work to make it available to the people who need it in ways that they can actually use and understand. For research, OSSE partners with governmental and non-governmental entities to conduct independent research and analysis, and we are well on our way to establishing the District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership. Over the past year, we published the notice of invitation and managed the application and selection processes as required by law. We are currently in the process of drafting the Master Services Agreement with the selected partner for the Collaborative, the Urban Institute, and members of the Advisory Committee are being selected both inside and outside of government. We are looking forward to fully actualizing the vision that many of you had for a truly independent education research practice partnership free from government influence and politics, and reflective of the diversity of viewpoints of the District. This is truly an exciting time for our work with significant potential for the future.

For schools and LEAs, we not only collect and make available statewide data and data on a school's students, we also have built multiple dashboards and visualizations. We create pre-populated reports and analyses, and we host trainings and communities of practice with educators. We are responsive to feedback we hear from educators and incorporate it when we create new reporting and data sharing mechanisms. For example, we have specific data sharing and programming for a group of schools who are supporting students from eighth to ninth grade transition.

Finally, for the public, in addition to producing the extensive research and reporting described earlier, we work extremely hard to ensure that our tools are accessible to everyone in the District. We do extensive user-testing with families on our websites to ensure that they are intuitive and user-friendly, and we make them mobile-accessible. Our vital materials are translated into all the languages required by the Language Access Act. We ensure that the language we use is clear and understandable. We create videos, guides, user tools, and printable reports.

All these actions help us fulfill our goal to share and use actionable data, not only to inform policy decisions, but also to empower our partners to improve and build community understanding.

Part III: Future Efforts

Our work is far from done. We want to know more. We want to be able to share information with those who are best positioned to act. We want modern, efficient systems that allow us to spend less time on querying data and more time on turning research and analysis into action.

OSSE has a plan in place to continue our progress by updating our data infrastructure, improving our data collection, and increasing reporting and sharing. While purchase of off-the-shelf systems can be a tempting recommendation to solve a big technology concern, we are confident that our multi-year plan for infrastructure upgrade is more effective, more efficient with Districtwide investments, and less disruptive to our schools which are focusing on learning recovery. To further modernize our data systems, we have capital and operating plans to continue our existing efforts. We will improve our data collection environment by implementing new standards, investing in cloud technologies and modern data management, dissemination, and analytical tools. We will reengineer OSSE's data architecture by leveraging the best mix of OCTO's on-premises, cloud, and shared services.

In terms of data sharing and research, we have built our capacity to collect and report more data, including such data as teacher workforce and retention, and have been in the planning stages for comprehensive course code collection. We are in the exciting process of working with the research practice partnership to significantly expand and advance research that can inform what happens in our schools.

We must also continue to focus our efforts on using the information we have to drive improvement. As we know, the District faces significant challenges as we respond and recover from this pandemic. We must do everything we can to make sure that the hard-fought progress we've made in student achievement is not reversed. Data are a necessary part of that effort, but data alone would be insufficient, and it will not, on its own, increase student outcomes. Over the course of the next year, OSSE will be analyzing outcomes from the new instructional models that our students have experienced. We will look at attendance and discipline outcomes. We will support our schools in evaluating and re-evaluating the needs of students with disabilities. We will require, evaluate, and approve LEAs Continuous Education Plans for reopening and learning recovery in the next year, including requiring schools to identify how they will assess student learning. We will support schools in implementing evidence-based academic interventions. All of that pales in comparison to the work our educators will do every day in the classroom to ensure that each of our students is served both academically and with social supports. We must continue to focus our time, energy, and resources in helping our teachers and leaders serve our children.

Conclusion

It is clear our story is one of great collaboration across all levels of government, schools, and community. We have made enormous progress together over time. OSSE itself has come a long way, and I am proud of the talented team we have assembled at the agency. The reality is that much of the reporting and analysis that we currently do would not have been possible a few short years ago, and we make more information available than ever to improve student outcomes. DC is a unique city with unique needs, and we've built our systems to accommodate those needs. Our data processes and systems have leapt forward significantly, but these systems will never be perfect or finished, they will continuously be improved to meet our needs.

We share the urgency that the DC Council and other city leaders feel to not only help our schools recover quickly and address learning loss, but also to advance student learning to be even better

than it was before. We must get there not by throwing away years of progress, but by building on that progress and focusing on a future that we all want to see – a future where our schools serve all our students, and all students are prepared to achieve in school and in life. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to any questions you may have.

Authorized LEA Staff can see a wide variety of OSSE data, including…

Current Data

Student data
- ✓ Enrollment
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Discipline
- ✓ Breakfast counts
- ✓ AP/IB participation
- ✓ Assessments
- ✓ Health & Physical Ed Assessment
- ✓ IEP detail data
- ✓ EL status
- ✓ Related Services data
- ✓ Alternative Assessment Eligibility
- ✓ STAR Framework & Report Card data

Student history from other LEAs
- ✓ Enrollment
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ AP/IB participation
- ✓ Assessment results
- ✓ IEP data

Other data
- ✓ Faculty and Staff
- ✓ Enrollment audit process
- ✓ Duplicative enrollment process
- ✓ Data validation process
- ✓ Metric calculation confirmation
- ✓ Per pupil expenditures
- ✓ LEA/school entity management
- ✓ Calendar management
- ✓ School official contact management
- ✓ Potential data errors

Incoming/Outgoing Student Data

Incoming SWD
- ✓ Enrollment
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ IEP detail data

Incoming EL
- ✓ Enrollment
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ EL history
- ✓ EL screener data
- ✓ ACCESS data
- ✓ PARCC data

Bridge to High School Participating LEAs can also access

Incoming HS students
- ✓ Prior enrollment
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Assessment results
- ✓ EL status
- ✓ SWD status

Outgoing middle school students
- ✓ 9th grade enrollment
- ✓ 9th grade courses and grades
- ✓ 9th grade attendance

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OSSE Data Related Reports (FY19-20)

Please read a comprehensive list of OSSE's reports on the OSSE Data Report site.

The following reports were published in FY19.

- OSSE District of Columbia Healthy Schools Act 2018 Report (October 31, 2018)
- District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Graduation Documentation Review (Nov. 2018)
- Interim Update on Duke Ellington Investigation (November 9, 2018)
- 2018 STAR Framework Brief (December 7, 2018)
- 2017-18 School Year Attendance Report (December 14, 2018)
- 2018 STAR Analysis: Exploring Distributions and Correlations (December 18, 2018)
- Youth Suicide Prevention and School Climate Amendment Act of 2016, 2018 Report (January 3, 2019)
- Non-Traditional Childcare (Jan. 22, 2019)
- OSSE Report on the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, January 2019 (February 1, 2019)
- Fiscal Year 2018 Pre-K Report (March 15, 2019)
- Youth Suicide Prevention and School Climate Amendment Act of 2016, 2019 Report (October 15, 2019)
- State of Discipline: 2017-18 School Year (March 8, 2019)
- OSSE Promoting the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) at Child Development Facilities (FY18), (June 20, 2019)
- Non-Resident Student Review & Findings, School Year 2018-19 (September 17, 2019)
- District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education 2019 Child and Adult Care Food Program Report (September 26. 2019)

The following reports have been published in FY20.

- Students with Disabilities in the District of Columbia Landscape Analysis (October 9, 2019)
- Youth Suicide Prevention and School Climate Amendment Act of 2016, 2019 Report (October 15, 2019)
- DC Teacher Workforce Report (October 9, 2019)
- National Assessment of Educational Progress: 2019 Results (October - 30, 2019)

- [OSSE Report on the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools Act Under Council Review](#), (December 20, 2019)
- [2018-19 School Year Attendance Report](#) (December 2, 2019)
- [2019 STAR Framework Brief](#) (December 18, 2019)
- [2019-20 Enrollment Audit Report and Data](#) (January 31, 2020)
- [Plan to Expand the Use of School Climate Surveys in District of Columbia Public and Public Charter Middle and High Schools](#) (February 7, 2020)
- [State of Discipline: 2018-19 School Year](#) (March 2020)
- [Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2019 Report](#) (July 8, 2020)
- [Fiscal Year 2019 Pre-K Report](#) (September 3, 2020)
- [Annual Non-Resident Student Review and Findings Report for the 2019-20 School Year](#) (September 14, 2020)

The following reports have been published in FY21 (to date) or are in progress:
- [2019-20 School Year Attendance Report](#) (November 30, 2020)
- [DC Environmental Literacy Plan](#) (January 5, 2021)
- [DC Free Summer Meals Program Report](#) (February 9, 2021)
- [Dual Language Landscape](#) (February 19, 2021)
- [2020-21 Enrollment Audit Report and Data](#)
- Youth Suicide Prevention and School Climate Amendment Act of 2016, 2020 Report (Forthcoming)
- State of Discipline: 2019-20 School Year (Forthcoming)
- Fiscal Year 2020 Pre-K Report (Forthcoming)

DC Code § 38–2609. Development of the educational data warehouse system

Requirements	OSSE Status
a) Who should use the system:	
1. OSSE, UDC, Public Schools, and Public Charter schools	✓
2. Publicly funded educational programs and policymakers	✓
3. Institutions of higher education and researchers	✓
b) Purpose of the data and resulting research and analyses:	
1. Federal reporting	✓
2. Policymaking and programming	✓
3. Improving information sharing while protecting confidentiality	✓
c) Compatible with other systems data systems	
a) Data shall be submitted to OSSE by: OSSE, UDC, Public Schools, Public Charter schools, Publicly funded educational programs	✓
2. In a timeframe and format determined by OSSE	✓
d) Who participates in the Warehouse system:	
1. OSSE, UDC, Public Schools, Public Charter schools, Publicly funded educational programs	✓
2. OSSE shall ensure that technical assistance and training is provided	✓
e) Groups to whom unique identifiers must be assigned:	
1. Students at all of the groups above	✓
2. Teachers at all of the groups above*	✓

With the rollout of the Faculty and Staff data collection tool in SY20-21, OSSE has fully met this requirement. OSSE assigns a unique faculty and staff identifier that is maintained year over year to ensure quality of data and for reporting purposes – effective SY20-21.

Exhibit C - Data Warehouse
Statutory Requirements Checklist

IES ☼ **Institute of Education Sciences**

December 22, 2020

William Henderson
Office of the State Superintendent of Education
1050 1st Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Henderson:

This letter is to confirm that OSSE successfully completed its 2012 Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Grant, US Department of Education (US ED) grant number R372A120032. OSSE also successfully completed its 2007 SLDS Grant, US ED grant number R372A070021. Both projects were monitored throughout the duration of the work, and the final performance reports were reviewed and accepted by US ED as evidence of successful completion of the projects.

Please let me know if we can provide any additional information about the status of these grants.

Best,

Nancy Sharkey

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