

October 2008

Notes from the Ombudsman

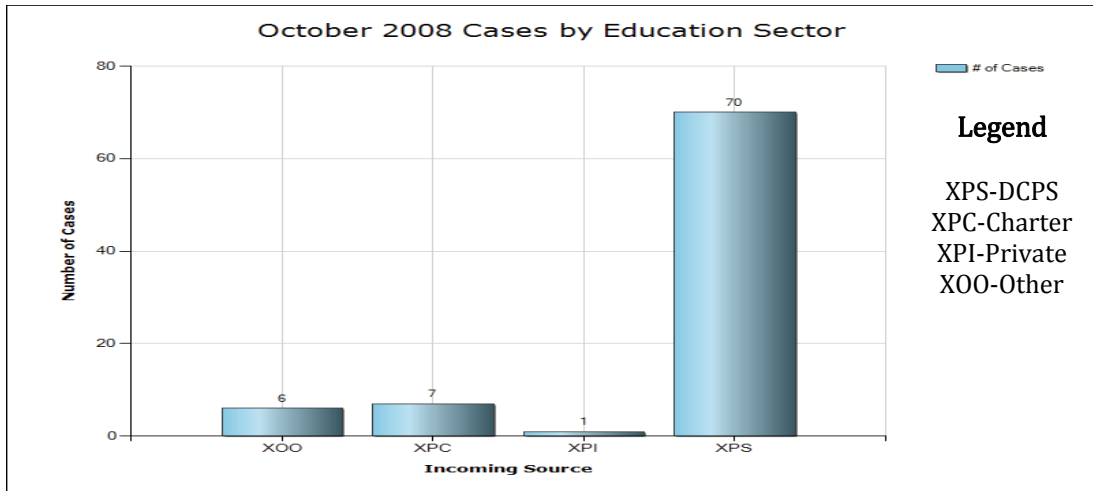
The Office of the Ombudsman is an important resource for public school families and students. In October 2008, the Ombudsman responded to 84 individuals with concerns about District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and Public Charter Schools (PCS). In addition to resolving individual concerns about public schools, staff in the Office of the Ombudsman offer professional mediation and alternative dispute resolution supports to schools. The Ombudsman collaborated with the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement on a series of student dialogues at consolidated or restructured schools, including students at Charles Hart Middle School, Browne Educational Center and HD Woodson Senior High School. The activity was a proactive step by DPCS to engage students in community building and to identify issues that might impact integration of schools. It provided a safe place for students to discuss concerns about their school environment. More than 1000 students participated and discussed their expectations for the school year. DCPS administrators are developing plans to follow-up on the findings.

Monthly Data

Incoming Issue Class

Student 68

Staff 16



Issue Highlight: *Pay Parity*

Staff issues made up 16 of the 84 issues that the Ombudsman helped to resolve in October. Ten of the cases involved central administration personnel expressing concern about a disparity in the pay and benefits plan between District of Columbia government employees and DCPS employees. Historically, staff in DCPS have been paid using a different schedule than other District government employees. DCPS staff, including central administrators and teachers, also have a different benefit plan than other employees in DC government. DCPS employees are on a lower salary scale than similarly classified employees in other areas of District government and they do not receive employer-provided vision and dental benefits. This issue merits further exploration.

Number of Cases
84

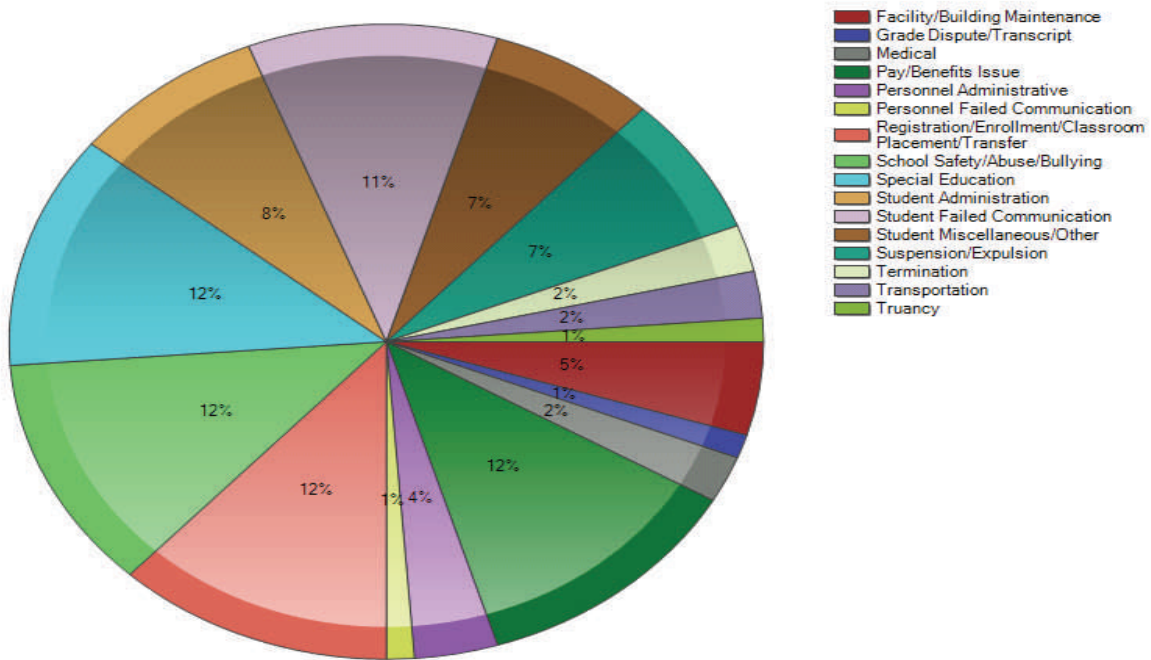
Number of Issues
84

Most Frequent Student Issues:
Safety (10)
Special Ed (10)
Enrollment (10)

Most Frequent Personnel Issue:

Pay and Benefits(10)

October 2008 Issues Report



Since the beginning of this school year, a majority of the requests for help from the Ombudsman involved enrollment or school placement issues. October case data showed a different trend with three of the student-related issue categories showing a frequency of 15 percent each: **registration and enrollment, special education and student safety**. The enrollment cases included reports of classroom overcrowding and course scheduling concerns. Contacts in October regarding special education and safety represent an increase in the frequency of these issues. The special education cases involved a range of issues, including a complaint about the appropriateness of both public and private placements; and requests for help getting a new IEP. Parents with children in DCPS and PCS contacted the Ombudsman with concerns about school safety. All of the safety cases involved student-on-student violence. The Ombudsman works with families and schools to develop a safety plans for students hurt in incidents and intervention plans for the other students.

October 2008 Student Issues Report

