



Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

825 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 5002 | Washington, D.C., 20002-1994

Telephone: (202) 741-8777 | Fax: (202) 727-1149

September 30, 2009

Dear District Education Community,

As you know, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education was established in 2007 as an independent, impartial office for District residents to bring education-related complaints and concerns. The mandate of the Ombudsman is to:

- 1) Provide outreach to residents and parents communicating the role of the Ombudsman in D.C. public education, and encourage communication regarding all levels of public education;
- 2) Receive complaints and concerns of parents, students, school employees, and other District residents concerning public education, determining the validity of the complaint and working to facilitate resolution by conference, referral, informal mediation, or other appropriate method;
- 3) Track the nature and resolution of complaints brought to the Ombudsman, identifying systemic trends, problem areas and recommendations for school system improvement in monthly and yearly reports submitted to the Deputy Mayor for Public Education and Chairman of the D.C. Council.

Unfortunately, the current economic situation has forced many difficult choices upon our city's elected leaders. As a result, funding for the Office of the Ombudsman has been eliminated for Fiscal Year 2010. **Therefore today, September 30, 2009, is the last day of operation for the Office of the Ombudsman.**

Since opening in December 2007, the Ombudsman's office has responded to over 1,100 complaints, concerns, and information inquiries from residents involving the District of Columbia Public Schools, District public charter schools, and the University of the District of Columbia. The issues received have run the gamut of education-related concerns, from parent complaints regarding enrollment procedures, discipline situations, or student safety to complaints to employees who have been terminated, are owed compensation or benefits, or have concerns with their supervisor.

In each concern, an Ombudsman representative endeavored to hear from all sides and parties, gain an accurate and impartial understanding of issues, and provide parties with the tools and suggestions needed to find resolution. By working with complainants and the school system, the Ombudsman's office has facilitated resolution of 92% of the issues received. Monthly and end-of-year reports have highlighted policy, communication, or responsibility gaps, and have made recommendations for systemic improvement. Additionally, the Ombudsman's office has presented or participated in over 150 PTA, ANC, civic association, and other public meetings and panels to engage community members in thoughtful discussions about public education in the District.

While the loss of the Office of the Ombudsman as a resource to parents, teachers, and students is disappointing, District residents still have a variety of avenues available to them to resolve concerns and/or register complaints. Parents should communicate concerns to their child's teacher or principal first, as these individuals know your child best and are in the most direct position to assist with academic, safety, special education, or administrative concerns. Parents and students can also bring concerns to the following agencies:



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DCPS:

Office of Instructional Superintendent (see <http://dcps.dc.gov> for appropriate cluster)

Office of the Chancellor: (202) 442-5885

Charter School:

Local school Board of Trustees (ask your school for contact information)

Public Charter School Board: (202) 328-2660

University of the District of Columbia:

Main Office: (202) 274-5000

Personally, it has been a privilege to work with the hundreds of students, parents, employees, school and government officials, and community members from all corners of the District during my tenure as Interim Ombudsman. As a resident and community member, I look forward to continuing to observe, scrutinize, and participate in the important work of providing all District students with a high-quality education.

My best wishes to all for a successful, learning-filled school year.

Sincerely,

Jeff Ross
Interim Ombudsman