



# ETEP

OFFICE OF EDUCATION THROUGH  
EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS



# 2024

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS REPORT

# Table of Contents

O1. Acknowledgments ..... Pg. 2	O4. Findings ..... Pg.5
O2. Introduction ..... Pg. 3	O5. Next Steps ..... Pg. 8
O3. Community Outreach Process Pg. 3	O6. Conclusion ..... Pg. 9

# Acknowledgments

We appreciate the support of our community partners who welcomed us in their trusted meeting spaces to hear directly from community members. We also want to thank Education Through Employment (ETE) Policy Board and Public Stakeholder Advisory Board members who continue to serve as strategic thought partners and share their expertise. Through ongoing collaboration with our Public Stakeholder Advisory Board, we will ensure that community needs remain at the heart of this work.



# Introduction

The Office of Education Through Employment Pathways (ETEP) is committed to ensuring DC youth and adults are on pathways to family-sustaining careers through access to high-quality education and workforce programming. The Office is focused on centering community voice throughout the development of this work. In order to accomplish this, the Office launched a Public Stakeholder Advisory Board in spring 2024. This group consists of families, school staff, and community partners who will provide regular feedback on Office priorities as well as strategies for engaging the public.

In addition to input from the Public Stakeholder Advisory Board, the Policy Board voted to release the Office's mission, vision, and research agenda for public comment on May 6, 2024. The draft research agenda included 13 research questions, with a particular focus on residents served by DC's education, workforce, social services and juvenile justice programs. The draft research agenda also included "focus populations" to prioritize for analysis. The public engagement period took place from May through August 2024 with the following goals:

**01** Foster awareness and build community understanding of the Education Through Employment Data System.

**02** Solicit authentic community feedback to inform the Office's priorities and areas of focus.

## Community Outreach Process



With the support of our community partners, we connected with more than 200 students, families, educators, policymakers, and program leaders.



Our office held 14 engagement opportunities across in-person and virtual settings.

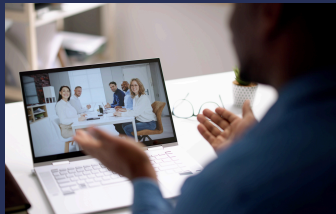


We collaborated with 12 partners and community organizations to prioritize accessibility and ensure community members could share input through existing meeting spaces.

In the public engagement period, the Office connected with more than 200 stakeholders including District families, youth, school staff, employers, education and workforce program providers, community partners, and researchers. This included engagement with the following groups and organizations:

- DC Postsecondary Success Collaborative
- Research Practice Partnership (RPP)
- DC Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) Collective
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education Adult Education Working Group
- DC Builds DC Skills Alignment Working Group
- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE)
- Education Reform Now (ERN)
- Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators (SHAPPE)
- District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) College and Career Institute school staff participants
- Youth Guidance participants
- Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) interns

The Office leveraged the following outreach strategies to maximize our engagement period:



### Online Presentations & Webinars

- Two webinar events
- Eight co-hosted virtual presentations with community partners

### In-Person Presentations

Four in-person engagement presentations in collaboration with the Education Reform Now, DCPS College and Career Institute participants, Youth Guidance student participants and SYEP interns.



### Community Survey

The ETEP team also launched a survey to solicit written feedback.

# Findings

The Office connected with members of the public from all eight wards across multiple stakeholder groups and perspectives. Community members shared feedback on the draft research agenda and focus populations. Respondents expressed that the Office should prioritize analysis on the following topics:

## Youth



*Factors contributing to high income*

*Supportive school environments*



*Reliable adult guidance*

## Families



*Holistic measures of student success*

*Access to navigational support at early age*



*Opportunities to build transferrable skills*

## School Staff



*Factors contributing to high income*

*Interactive data tools*



*Whole family support*

## Employers



*Interactive data tools*

*Program enrollment vs. career choices*



*Program alignment to labor market demand*

## Community Partners & Policymakers



*Holistic measures of student success*

*Existing access gaps within the education system*



*Enhancing alignment across education and workforce programs*



## Youth

- Students were most interested in research questions focused on factors that contribute to a high income after high school. This included connections between future earnings and college major, workforce training programs, industry credentials, or specialized programs.
- When considering high school options, students shared that they focus on graduation rates, college enrollment patterns, and suspension trends to understand how well-supported students are by the adults in school settings. Students emphasized that having reliable, accessible adults along their journey through high school is what matters to them most.



## Families

- Family discussions centered on research questions about whether programs prepare students for life after high school and to compete in emerging industries.
- This audience focused on understanding access to programs that help students explore their interests, and how this information could inform tools to navigate

## Families

- ...decision-making, explore different career paths, and feel encouraged to seek help from knowledgeable adults earlier in their education experience.
- This group advocated for research questions to be expanded to examine measures beyond employment and earnings to include broader quality of life metrics as well. Families agreed that understanding which opportunities are equipping students with the skills they need to feel ready and excited before embarking on their college and career journey is critical for helping students leverage community assets to persist through college and career experiences.

## School Staff

- This audience gravitated toward income-focused research questions and emphasized the need for interactive tools that help students understand which choices set them up to earn a living wage.
- Staff members raised that it will be necessary to share information with both students and families, and to frame research questions and related public deliverables in a way that will be accessible to both students and families who are supporting them.

## Employers

- Employers were most interested in research questions about program employment outcomes and whether graduates pursue the careers they study.

(Findings continued on next page...)



- This group shared that this is the most valuable information that could shape their decisions about program partnerships as they seek to develop a local talent pipeline.

## Community Partners & Policymakers

- Community partners expressed an interest in expanding the priority populations noted to include parenting students as well as immigrant students and DC-born students.
- Community partners were widely supportive of all questions on the research agenda and expressed an interest in adding research questions that explore additional metrics beyond income levels such as job satisfaction, advancement rates, stability, and readiness.
- Partners also shared the importance of asset-based questions about how systems can best support more students instead of a focus solely on barriers students face.
- Partners also raised feedback around opportunities to strengthen the education and workforce systems more broadly. Themes include instilling transferrable skills in students earlier in their education experience, amplifying awareness of specialized programs, validating student

- ...interests, and enhancing alignment across education and workforce programming.

## Survey Responses

Twenty-seven members of the public shared feedback through the Education Through Employment Community Survey. Most respondents self-identified as between the ages of 35 - 44, and non-Hispanic or Latino individuals who identify as Black or African American. This group largely included parents or guardians, and community partners who work within DC's education system.

Respondents were supportive of the questions reflected in the draft research agenda and rated the research agenda an average score of 4.25 on a scale from 1 - 5 based on usefulness. Similar to the engagement sessions, survey respondents were interested in adding immigrants and student parents to the list of high-priority populations.

Community partners also expressed particular interest in systems-involved youth, posing questions such as "What type of education, training or employment support do our disadvantaged students need to support themselves?" Respondents also named an interest in understanding the current landscape of transition supports for high school graduates, which skills are obtained from career-oriented programs, and outcomes related to housing outcomes, and entrepreneurship.

(Survey Responses continued on next page...)

The draft mission and vision received an average rating of 4.1 by respondents. Community members recommended clarifying how the tool will help leaders address system gaps, which populations ETEP will be seeking to prioritize through this work, and how this initiative can demonstrate the impact of policy decisions that have shaped the current economic landscape.

## Next Steps

To be responsive to District residents and community partners, the Office has incorporated changes to the draft mission, vision, and research agenda that will strengthen the foundation of this work. The following revisions have been incorporated in the final iteration of the ETE mission, vision, and research agenda which was approved by the Policy Board in fall 2024:

01

### Underscoring who we serve

Immigrant students, parenting students, and DC natives have been added to the list of priority populations. The mission and vision also clarifies that the Office will focus analysis on the high-priority populations and leverage insights to strengthen services and supports.

02

### Clarifying how we approach the work

ETEP is in the process of creating a graphic to more clearly communicate how each research question could be viewed through the lens of multiple focus populations.

03

### Expanding the scope of what we measure

In fall 2024, the Office launched a survey on early career outcomes for high school alumni who graduated at 5-7 years ago. The survey will shed light on education, workforce, and quality of life outcomes for DC students, along with information on the programs that had the biggest impact along their journey.



# Conclusion

The Office of Education Through Employment Pathways is committed to ensuring our work reflects community values. Through this report, the Office has captured key themes from community feedback to pave the path forward.

Looking ahead, we are excited to grow our community presence and strengthen relationships to inform future stages of this work. Through collaboration with key partners and ongoing outreach, the Office will develop public tools and resources that enhance our collective understanding of how District programs are supporting residents on the path to economic mobility and prosperity.



**Additional questions?**

**Contact us at [ETEP@dc.gov](mailto:ETEP@dc.gov)**

