



VINCENT C. GRAY  
MAYOR

August 21, 2014

Dear Members of the DC Advisory Committee on Student Assignment:

Thank you for sharing with me the Committee's Final Recommendations on Student Assignment Policies and DCPS Boundaries.

First, I commend you for your hard and thoughtful work over the last ten months. The process you undertook to conduct the first comprehensive student assignment and boundary review in the District in more than forty years was impressive including unprecedented community engagement and the rigorous use of data. The reason District leaders have put off this project for a generation is the work is complex, inevitably controversial, and there is no way to avoid difficult choices. However, it is clear that you took the time to consider the full range of perspectives and all relevant information before developing your final recommendations. I appreciate that they incorporate extensive feedback received from so many parents and community members throughout the District and, as a result, reflect significant revisions from earlier drafts.

Although there will never be a good time to make changes to our assignment policies and DCPS boundaries, the benefits of moving forward with your recommendations far outweigh the ongoing price of inaction. The path of education reform we embarked on as a city in 2007 can go only so far without taking this critical next step.

After thoroughly reviewing your report, I have determined that it is in the best interest of the District – and especially our children – to accept your final recommendations including the recommended DCPS school boundaries. Implementation of the school boundary changes will start in school year 2015-16. The phase-in policies of the new attendance zones and feeder patterns outlined in your recommendations strike the important balance between maintaining consistency for children and families and moving ahead with implementation so that we can begin to see the benefits to the reformed system as soon as possible. To effectuate these changes we will immediately begin the process of notifying families who may be affected by the changes in 2015, and we will engage in a broad ongoing information effort over the next year.

Recognizing that some of the recommendations related to student assignment policies included in your final report will take time to implement, I have asked Deputy Mayor Smith and Chancellor Henderson to work with the relevant District agencies and stakeholders to develop an implementation plan and timeline. In some cases, implementation of these policies will require further stakeholder engagement. In addition, I recognize that many of these policies will themselves have to be phased in over several years. I have requested that the implementation plan be completed by the end of October.

In closing, I wish to again express my gratitude that you -- as parents, District residents, and community leaders -- came together to develop a set of thoughtful policies that complement and reinforce the ongoing work we do every day to improve the quality of public education for the children of the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vincent C. Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "V".

Vincent C. Gray