

Great Schools in Every Ward and Community

What is the Problem?

Every child deserves access to a great school and we have not yet realized that goal in our city. In a 2011 study commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, researchers found that in the 2010-2011 school year, the DC public school system, including both charter and traditional schools, offered only 20,490 high-quality seats to a student population of over 60,000 DC public school students. That year, our public education system would have needed an additional 39,758 high-quality seats to serve all of our students. Additionally, the study concluded that there was immense inequity in the distribution of the high-quality seats, finding that the majority of students in need of those seats came from only ten neighborhood clusters – six of which are found East of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8.

What Progress Needs to be Made?

While progress has been made, during the 2015-2016 school year, only 39 out of 90 Pre-K-12 public charter schools who were given a Tier rating from DC PCSB’s Performance Management Framework (PMF) received the highest rating, Tier 1. DC boasts one of the nation’s leading models of school choice, but **East of the Anacostia River, parents and students still do not have access to the diversity of school options offered in other parts of our city, such as a selective high school or schools with a bilingual, STEM, Arts & Humanities, or Montessori model.** Many of our Ward 7 and 8 students are traveling over two miles each way to access great and diverse schools for their children. As a city, we need to ensure that we have enough great schools to meet our growing student population, and we must also ensure that we have a *diversity* of schools in each of our communities in order to meet each individual student’s unique talents, interests, and needs.

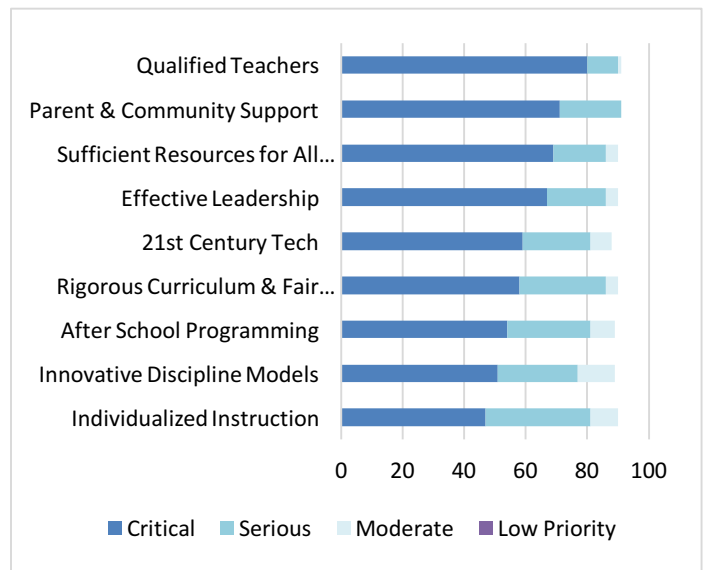
How Do We Create Great Schools in Every Ward and Community?

Parents want **real choice** in every ward and community, which includes a diversity of options that will allow families to find the best school for each of their children. Parents select the school their children attend and should be at the table to create those options, identifying and leading the way for a diversity of great schools across the city.



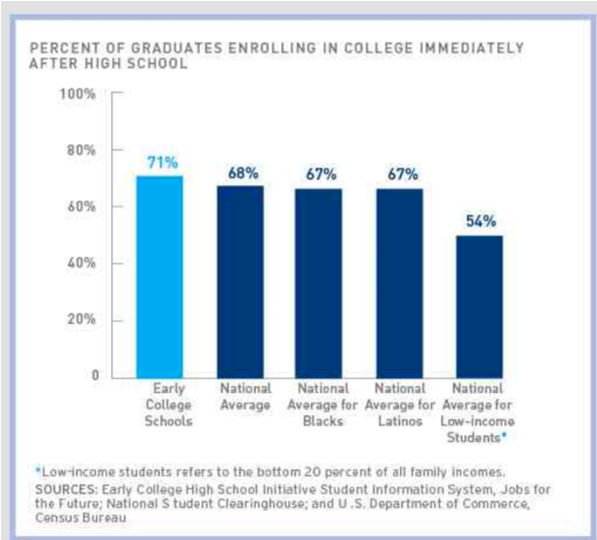
To realize this goal, FOCUS and PAVE, funded by Ed Forward DC, convened the Ward 8 Parent Operator Selection Team (POST), a collective of eight DC parents

and community members —representing both military and non-military East of the River families — working together to bring greater access to great schools East of the River. The Ward 8 POST represents a powerful example of how parents and community leaders can be leaders in shaping their community’s educational landscape by creating a first-of-its-kind Request for Proposals (RFP) for school operators. Utilizing their RFP – created, designed, and written by parents – the Ward 8 POST is evaluating charter school operators, and ultimately will make a community-based recommendation to the federal government of the school they believe should operate on the seven acres of land next to Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. To realize the promise of creating a school that reflects the community’s values first, the Ward 8 POST conducted a survey of over 90 DC and military parents to find out what families value in a great school. Among the answers given, **1) qualified teachers, 2) parent and community support, and 3) sufficient resources for all students** were ranked as most critical for families.



(Above) The breakdown of the 90 responses to the Ward 8 POST survey

In addition to the Ward 8 POST, PAVE’s parent leaders have begun the conversation with our education leaders, policymakers, and elected officials about the other types of school models that are needed in our city. Unlike many other cities and states, DC does not offer a single dual enrollment program to high school students enrolled in a traditional DCPS or public charter high school. George Washington University's program, School Without Walls, offers select high school students the chance to earn both a formal high school diploma and gain college credits in their junior and senior years, but this program is not widely accessible. Without access to advanced or college-level courses, DC’s students are at a disadvantage when applying to and enrolling in universities or other post-secondary education options. If students can gain college credits while still in high school, they will be better prepared to complete a 4-year degree in an accelerated timeline, therefore reducing the overall financial burden of pursuing a post-secondary education.



Why is it important for families to be leaders in creating a diversity of great schools in our communities?

- Our education leaders, policymakers, and elected officials have the best of intentions when creating policies and opening schools but when this work is done without parents at the table, the best of intentions do not always lead to the best results for our kids.
- If we want to have an education system that will continue to grow and progress, we have to include the voices of families at the table, so that they can identify the gaps and help to lead the way in ensuring great schools for every child in every ward and community.
- The engagement of families in our vision for education will lead to greater community engagement because instead of families and communities feeling like education is being done for them, they will be leaders in a system strengthened by and with them.

Get Involved

Stay Informed

- Read the Ward 8 POST edition of the PAVE Post to learn more about how the Ward 8 POST is bringing greater access to high-quality schools East of the River.

Participate

- Send us your interest in joining a PAVE Parent Leader in Education Board in your Ward.
- Email PAVE at info@dcpave.org to be added to our PAVE Post Newsletter.

Become Empowered

- Visit PAVE’s Community Events Calendar to see related events.
- Email PAVE’s Director of Community Engagement and Organizing Raven Willoughby, raven.willoughby@dcpave.org, to find out how you can get involved.