

7/1/99 -
cumulative files

WMS - parent involvement
extension of Sasha Bruce program

If asked about cooperation from DCPS...

- DCPS is actually required to do only a few things for charters, but it's crucial that they be done well.
- We've had very good service from the Office of Categorical Programs (Mitzi Beach's office), which administers our federal funds. They've been clear, prompt, and reliable.
- But other areas have been problematic, the most prominent being facilities. As my testimony indicates, schools have gotten all sorts of conflicting signals about both policy and procedure. And for a long time, there was simply nobody home; schools couldn't close deals because there was no one to negotiate with. This wasted time, of course – but it also distracted schools from all the other issues they were facing in trying to get open on time.
- Sometimes, it's the "nuts and bolts" problems that are most frustrating. I'll mention just two:
- First, getting student ID numbers assigned. Very simple, but very important -- in fact, critical if student performance on the Stanford 9 is to be properly evaluated. It took months to work this out.
- Second, transferring students' cumulative files from the school they attended previously. In this case, there were memos sent from Mrs. Ackerman's office, but the schools themselves seemed unaware that they had a responsibility to send those files -- just as if the child had enrolled in any other public school. Several of our schools went through most of the year without having access to hundreds of student records; this has caused enormous difficulty in creating appropriate academic, discipline, and special education services.

If asked about Franklin...

Franklin is just the most obvious example of one problem addressed in my testimony -- the lack of adherence to publicly-announced policies and procedures. The same problem affects schools that are in charter hubs and suddenly have to look for new space because their leases are being challenged.

The point is, we need stability in these processes. We need to agree on what the legal preference for charters means, and how it relates to the school system's need for capital funds. Then we should agree on procedures to implement that policy – and stick to them.