

Changes in Chartering!!

For the school year ending in spring 2007, the DCPS was governed by the D.C. Board of Education, with eleven members, including two students who had the right to debate but not to vote. Five members were elected and four were appointed by the Mayor. The Board established DCPS policies and employed a superintendent to serve as chief executive officer of the school district, responsible for day-to-day operations. Four Board members represented specific geographical boundaries and the Board President was elected at large. One condition of the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 was the creation of DCPS as a separate cabinet level agency from the D.C. Board of Education. This moved DCPS within the executive branch of the District of Columbia government—specifically, under Mayoral control. Currently, this means that DCPS is subordinate to District of Columbia Mayor Vincent Gray. D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty proposed putting the public schools under the direct control of the Mayor's Office upon taking office in January 2007. However, this reform to District of Columbia Public Schools was encouraged by his predecessor and constituents at large. It also placed all of the District of Columbia public charter schools under the care of a new board—District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB). Although these schools were previously a part of DCPS, they are now considered to be a separate district controlled by the D.C. Public Charter School Board (PCSB).

The D.C. Council passed the Mayor's proposal into law but since the change amended the Home Rule Act, the change needed to gain Federal approval before taking effect. D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton introduced H.R. 2080, a bill to amend the D.C. Home Rule Charter Act to provide for the Mayor's proposal. H.R. 2080 was passed by the United States House of Representatives under an expedited procedure on May 8, 2007 by a voice vote. After three U.S. Senators (Ben Cardin of Maryland, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, and Carl Levin of Michigan) initially placed "holds" on the bill to prevent its consideration in the United States Senate, the Senate agreed to pass H.R. 2080 without amendment on May 22, 2007 by unanimous consent. On May 31, 2007, the bill was presented to the President and President Bush signed H.R. 2080 into law on June 1, 2007. After the standard Congressional review period expired on June 12, 2007, the Mayor's office had direct control of the Superintendent and the school budget. On June 12, Mayor Fenty appointed Michelle Rhee the new Chancellor, replacing Superintendent Clifford B. Janey.