

January 31, 2022

Dr. Christina Grant
State Superintendent of Education
Office of the State Superintendent of Education
1050 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Dr. Grant,

We write in reference to the extraordinarily troubling stories of sexual misconduct at Duke Ellington School of the Arts as recently reported by [NBC 4](#). Ensuring our children are kept safe must be our utmost priority.

According to the reporting, over nearly two decades, a teacher – who was entrusted with guiding our children in their education – preyed on multiple students evading reprimand and investigation by the school, District of Columbia Public Schools, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). While the teacher was put on leave after the first reports of the misconduct in the fall of 2004, he was permitted to return in the spring of 2005. Further reports of misconduct were made in 2018 regarding predatory behavior in 2013. There was a failure of the school to keep proper record keeping before 2017 not allowing a link between the cases to be made. In 2019 the teacher resigned and has still not faced formal consequences from the school, OSSE, or the justice system. In addition to the troubling reports in 2004 and 2018, three Duke Ellington teachers have been arrested for sexual misconduct since March of 2020. This is a matter of urgency to take steps to protect Duke Ellington students. **We have the responsibility to keep all of our students safe while they are in the care of their school community and to hold people who imperil that safety accountable.**

We are also extremely concerned about the lack of investigation on behalf of MPD. MPD failed to conduct a thorough investigation and speak with all who may have known about the misconduct as is the proper MPD procedure. The apparent lack of action on behalf of MPD in this case is unacceptable. When responding to reports of sexual abuse of minors, there must always be a robust response from law enforcement. It is our understanding that Commander Pamela Wheeler-Taylor has reassigned the case to a new team for a full investigation.

There appears to be gaps in the relationship between Duke Ellington and DCPS which is charged with investigating Title IX claims and violations. There was also failure on the part of MPD in not following proper procedures to investigate these claims. The systems we have put in place to protect our children have failed in this instance.

We understand and support the school's unique nature of Duke Ellington as a place where talented students can thrive in the arts and to be taught by faculty with diverse talents and expertise. While maintaining these strengths, attention must be paid to the systemic lapses and changes must be made.

We request that OSSE provide the following:

- 1. A response on the steps OSSE will be taking to prevent future predatory behavior at Duke Ellington and other DCPS schools including updates on proper record keeping of these allegations and reports.**
- 2. A formal review of the Duke Ellington School Board structure and full consideration to placement on the board of an objective party who is trained as a Title IX expert.**
- 3. A requirement that personnel files on all Duke Ellington teachers be centrally maintained by DCPS regardless of whether the teachers are DCPS employees to improve the ability to keep our children safe from harm.**

Thank you for your continued commitment to providing a safe learning environment for all children enrolled in our schools.

Sincerely,



Brooke Pinto
Councilmember, Ward 2



Allister Chang
State Board of Education Member, Ward 2

CC: Mayor Muriel Bowser
CC: Metropolitan Police Department, Chief Robert J. Contee III
CC: Deputy Mayor for Education, Paul Kihn
CC: District of Columbia Public Schools, Chancellor Lewis Ferebee
CC: City Administrator, Kevin Donahue
CC: Metropolitan Police Department, Commander Pamela Wheeler- Taylor