

**ALICE DEAL MIDDLE SCHOOL  
LOCAL SCHOOL ADVISORY TEAM**

*Submitted by Electronic Mail*

January 28, 2019

The Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On behalf of the Alice Deal Middle School Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), I would like to offer our full support for the recommendations in the attached letter regarding the insufficiency of technology, technology-related services, and technology funding in D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) across the city.

As outlined in the letter, the status quo is failing our students. Given the outdated nature of existing equipment and the lack of available training and provision of services required for that equipment, it is clear to us that small incremental changes, funding increases, and service improvements will not be enough to bridge the gap between the poor state of technology within DCPS and what our students need to be successful and competitive. The available resources and infrastructure are simply antiquated and inadequate.

These technology deficiencies play out every day at Deal, a school of over 1,500 students. Like many, if not most, of the schools across the District, Deal hasn't had a technology upgrade in at least seven years. This means that classrooms are filled with desktop computers that were deemed obsolete by DCPS years ago, displaying their end of life stickers -- which no one has returned to dispose of, or better yet, replace. Classrooms that are lucky enough to have received electronic interactive whiteboards during the District's school modernization effort struggle to have consistent internet connections for instruction and lack the necessary technology-related training. Students, teachers, and staff cannot reliably access online tools that are now part of twenty-first century education, including working on projects via Google, conducting research, or engaging in distance learning. In an attempt to work around these issues, teachers at Deal, and likely across the city, have resorted to using their own cell phones and data plans to download lessons, review homework, and conduct research projects, in addition to spending their own money to buy much needed projectors and other technology-related equipment.

As a premier city, and as the nation's capital, our school system must be able to rely on the effective and consistent availability of modern technology and technological services to support everyday instruction, as well as the intervention and enrichment strategies of DCPS. That is not the case today, and we are failing our students in that regard.

Even beyond the persistent shortcomings in access to modern technology, there is a lot of work to do to ensure that available technology comes with monitoring and management capabilities to provide appropriate online and personal safety, networks, firewalls, training, storage, and other necessary backstops. Last, but not least, the need does not stop at infrastructure. Our teachers and administrators must have adequate training and support from DCPS by not only technicians who can fix equipment, but by specialists who are knowledgeable about technology-based instruction.

As part of the Ward 3 Education Network (Ward3EdNet) and as the Deal LSAT, we urge you to accept and implement the three challenges presented to you by parents, teachers, and education advocates from across the city. In short, those three challenges are:

- Allocating sufficient dedicated funding in the 2020 budget to meet the technology needs of our schools;
- Directing DCPS to develop and make public a comprehensive, multi-year technology and technology support plan; and
- Ensuring the capacity to maintain functional, up-to-date technology.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important issue. We remain available should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Karissa Kovner  
LSAT Chair, Alice Deal Middle School

cc: Councilmember Mary Cheh, Ward 3 Representative  
Councilmember David Grosso, Chairperson of the D.C. Council Committee on Education  
Ms. Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Member of the D.C. State Board of Education  
Mr. Brian Doyle and Ms. Melody Molinoff, Co-Chairs of the Ward3EdNet  
Ms. Grace Hu, Advocacy Chair for Amidon-Bowen PTA  
Ms. Julie Chen, Deal LSAT Technology Subcommittee  
Mr. Michael Donaldson, Deal LSAT Technology Subcommittee and WTU representative  
Ms. Melanie Parish, Deal LSAT Technology Subcommittee

January 10, 2019

Mayor Muriel Bowser  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

We write to you as a diverse coalition of parents, teachers, and advocates from all eight wards in DC. We believe the current state of technology in DC Public Schools inadequately prepares our children for the jobs of the future. For years, the vast majority of DCPS students have used unreliable, aging technology, and there has been a shortage of working devices at many schools, even as DCPS has transitioned to heavy reliance on computer-based assessments (including the high-stakes PARCC test) and online learning programs.

Failure to address DCPS technology challenges will result in continued irreversible impacts on students, including lost instruction time due to unreliable computer devices, substandard performance on online tests due either to students' lack of familiarity with computers or poorly functioning devices, and fewer career options for students who are not computer literate. Simply put, the status quo is failing our students.

As noted by the *City Paper* in July 2018, access to technology in DC Public Schools is deeply unequal. Parent Teacher Organizations at some schools have taken on the burden of raising money for technology, but even that type of supplementation is inadequate. Further, many schools do not have this option, which only increases the existing inequities in our school system.

We commend you on your efforts to attract technology jobs to DC and improve technology training through initiatives like the Tech Career Pathways Pledge and Lighthouse City partnership that provide internship and education opportunities for young adults. You have previously stated:

- “We will continue preparing residents with the skills and knowledge they need for the jobs of the future, including at Amazon” (2018).
- “As we work to create more pathways to the middle class for Washingtonians, we are focused on bringing in companies that are looking for the type of talent and entrepreneurial spirit that exists in Washington, DC” (2018).
- “We will expand the capacity of DC residents to engage in the tech economy by creating 5,000 new tech jobs for underrepresented workers” (2016).

However, we have not yet seen a comparable effort to improve technology infrastructure and education in DC Public Schools, despite the critical role of K-12 education in preparing students to be college and career ready. For DC to be viewed credibly as a source of highly-qualified talent by future employers across any industry, including the tech industry, our students need to be not just computer literate, but also skilled in using a broad range of technology applications.

Many of our highest-need students also lack access to technology at home. In Wards 5, 7, and 8, the average home broadband adoption rate is less than 65 percent, compared to 85 percent for other Wards. Students with limited technology and broadband access at school and at home are at a distinct disadvantage as more school and learning activities move online. The digital divide becomes greater with each year that a comprehensive and viable technology plan for schools is not implemented.

Since the announcement of Amazon's selection of Arlington as a new headquarters, we have learned that neighboring localities plan to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in regional institutions of higher education for technology research and education. Likewise, we must make investments today to ensure that DCPS graduates are prepared to take advantage of these local opportunities in the future.

Let us be clear on this point. We cannot emphasize enough the vast gap between what our students require for a productive future, and the reality of insufficient and outdated technology infrastructure and support that our schools and students grapple with every day. Incremental changes will not close this increasing digital divide.

Therefore, our students urgently need the following, with your vital leadership:

1. **The 2020 DCPS budget should allocate sufficient dedicated funding to meet school technology needs** equitably across all our city's schools. Previous budgets have not allocated such funding. We also understand that DCPS has submitted for your approval a budget proposal that would phase in a 1:1 student-device ratio over time. Accepting this proposal would be a good start, but it does not fully address the need for a comprehensive technology plan that ensures working technology, reliable IT support, teacher training, reliable broadband access, and sustainable funding for the long term.
2. **DCPS should develop and make public a comprehensive, multi-year technology plan** to define and provide adequate technology to every school, as recommended by the DC Auditor in 2017. The plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources. Many other U.S. urban school districts have comprehensive technology plans and are already a few years into implementing them.
3. **DCPS should build the capacity to maintain functional, up-to-date technology** equitably across all our city's schools. There is not yet a sustainable model in place for maintaining and replacing technology at DCPS schools.

By implementing these actions, we have an opportunity not just to address a significant deficit, but to position DC education as a national model for preparing a creative, engaged and tech-ready workforce. We would be happy to serve as a partner with your staff in implementing these actions.

Sincerely,

Ward 1 Education Council Interim Executive Board  
Ward 3 - Wilson Feeder Education Network  
Ward 4 Education Alliance  
Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization (CHPSPO)  
Ward 7 Education Council  
Ward 8 Education Council  
S.H.A.P.P.E. (Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators)  
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs

Washington Teachers' Union  
EmpowerEd Teacher Council  
Teaching for Change  
Coolidge Alumni Association  
Education Town Hall - We Act Radio  
Educationdc.net

CC:

Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn  
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development Brian Kenner