



# A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools: From Impressions to Evidence

Committee on the Independent Evaluation of DC Public Schools, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council

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The District of Columbia (DC) has struggled for decades to improve its public education system. In 2007 the DC government made a bold change in the way it governs public education with the goal of shaking up the system and bringing new energy to efforts to improve outcomes for students. The Public Education Reform Amendment Act (PERAA) shifted control of the city's public schools from an elected school board to the mayor, developed a new state department of education, created the position of chancellor, and made other significant management changes.

A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools offers a framework for evaluating the effects of PERAA on DC's public schools. The book recommends an evaluation program that includes a systematic yearly public reporting of key data as well as in-depth studies of high-priority issues including: quality of teachers, principals, and other personnel; quality of classroom teaching and learning; capacity to serve vulnerable children and youth; promotion of family and community engagement; and quality and equity of operations, management, and facilities. As part of the evaluation program, the Mayor's Office should produce an annual report to the city on the status of the public schools, including an analysis of trends and all the underlying data.

A Plan for Evaluating the District of Columbia's Public Schools suggests that D.C. engage local universities, philanthropic organizations, and other institutions to develop and sustain an infrastructure for ongoing research and evaluation of its public schools. Any effective evaluation program must be independent of school and city leaders and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. Additionally, its research should meet the highest standards for technical quality.



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