
Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education

Quarter 1 Report

DC Office of the
Ombudsman
for Public Education



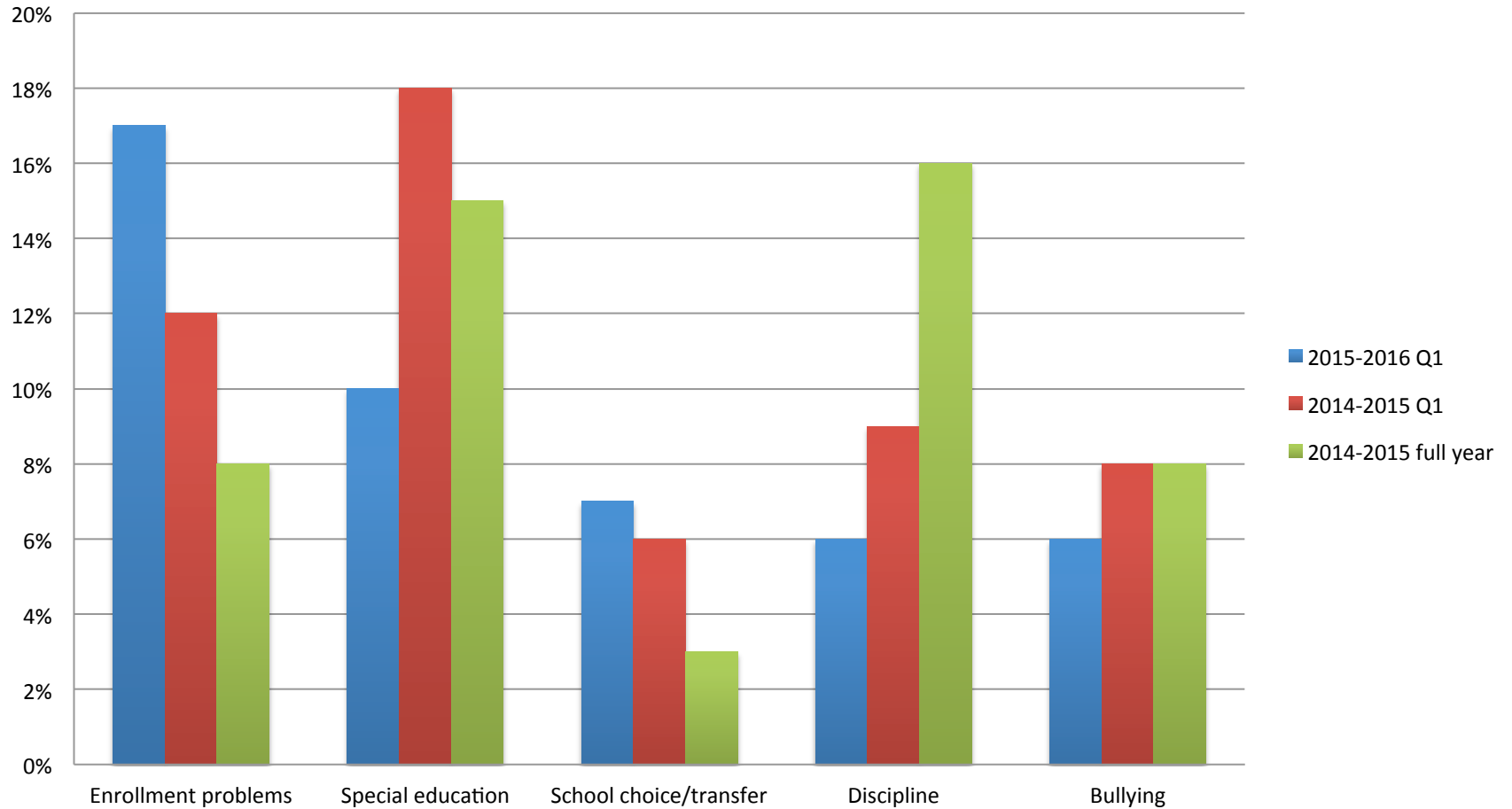
Current Caseload

Total number of complaints represents a 27% increase compared to the same period of time in previous years:

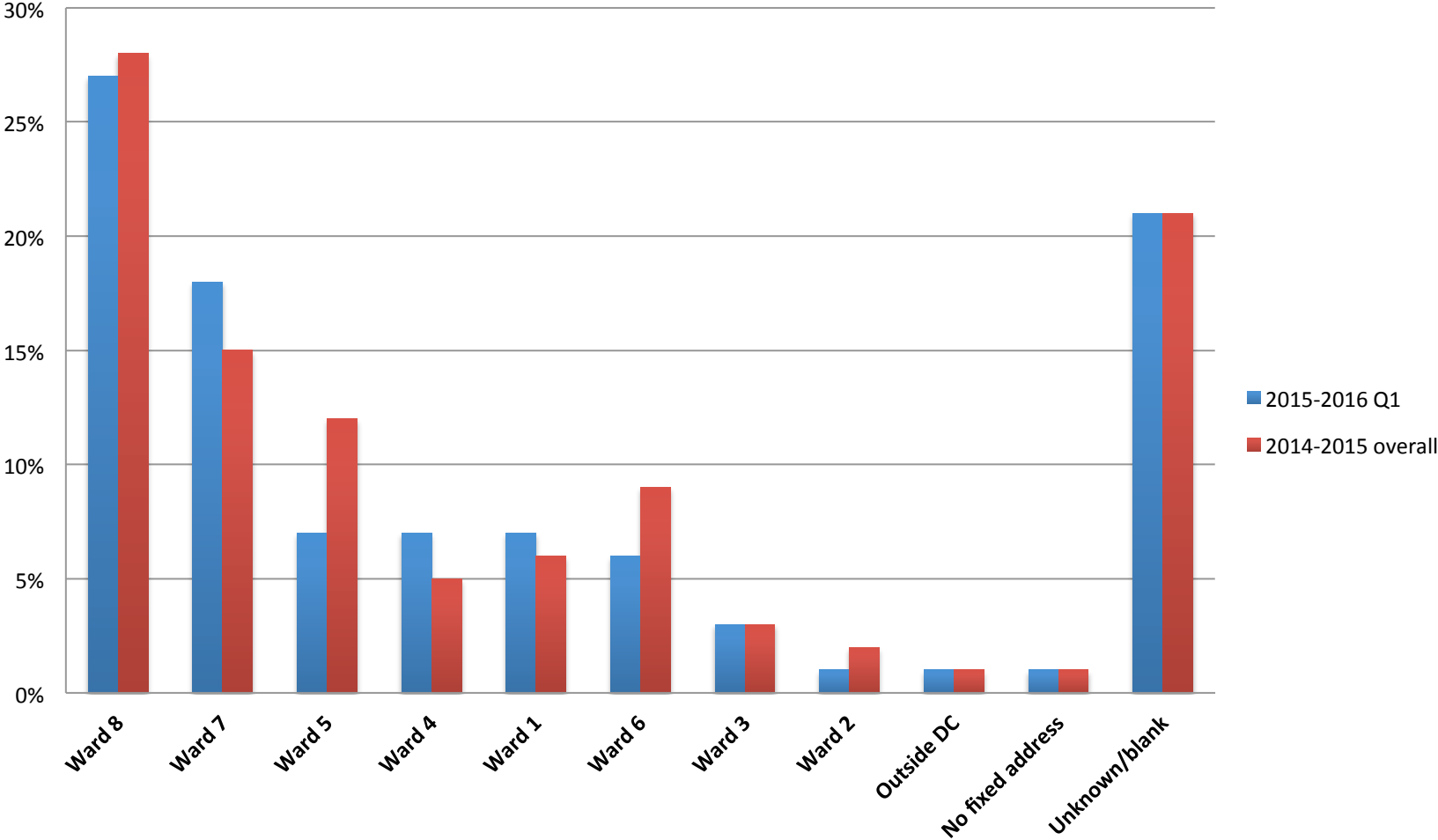
- SY 2015-16: 144 cases in Quarter 1*
- SY 2014-15: 113 cases in Quarter 1
(Quarter 1 is defined as August 1-October 31st)

*Please note that after December, we will lose two of our fellows in part of Quarter 2, and in Quarters 3 and 4. Thus, our staffing levels will drop while we are currently experiencing a 27% increase in our overall caseload.

Top Complaints

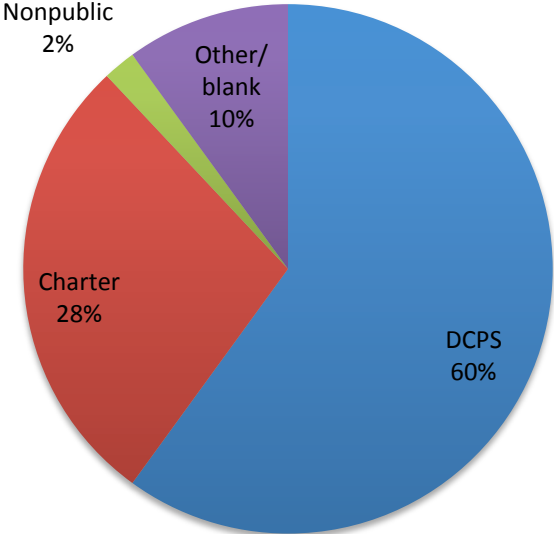


Ward Breakdown of Quarter 1 Complaints

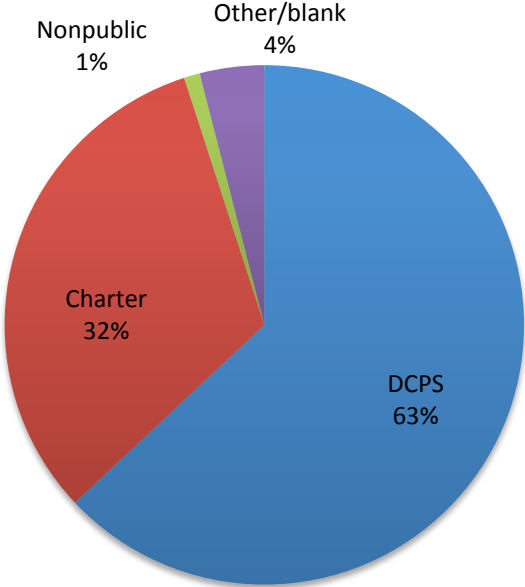


School Type

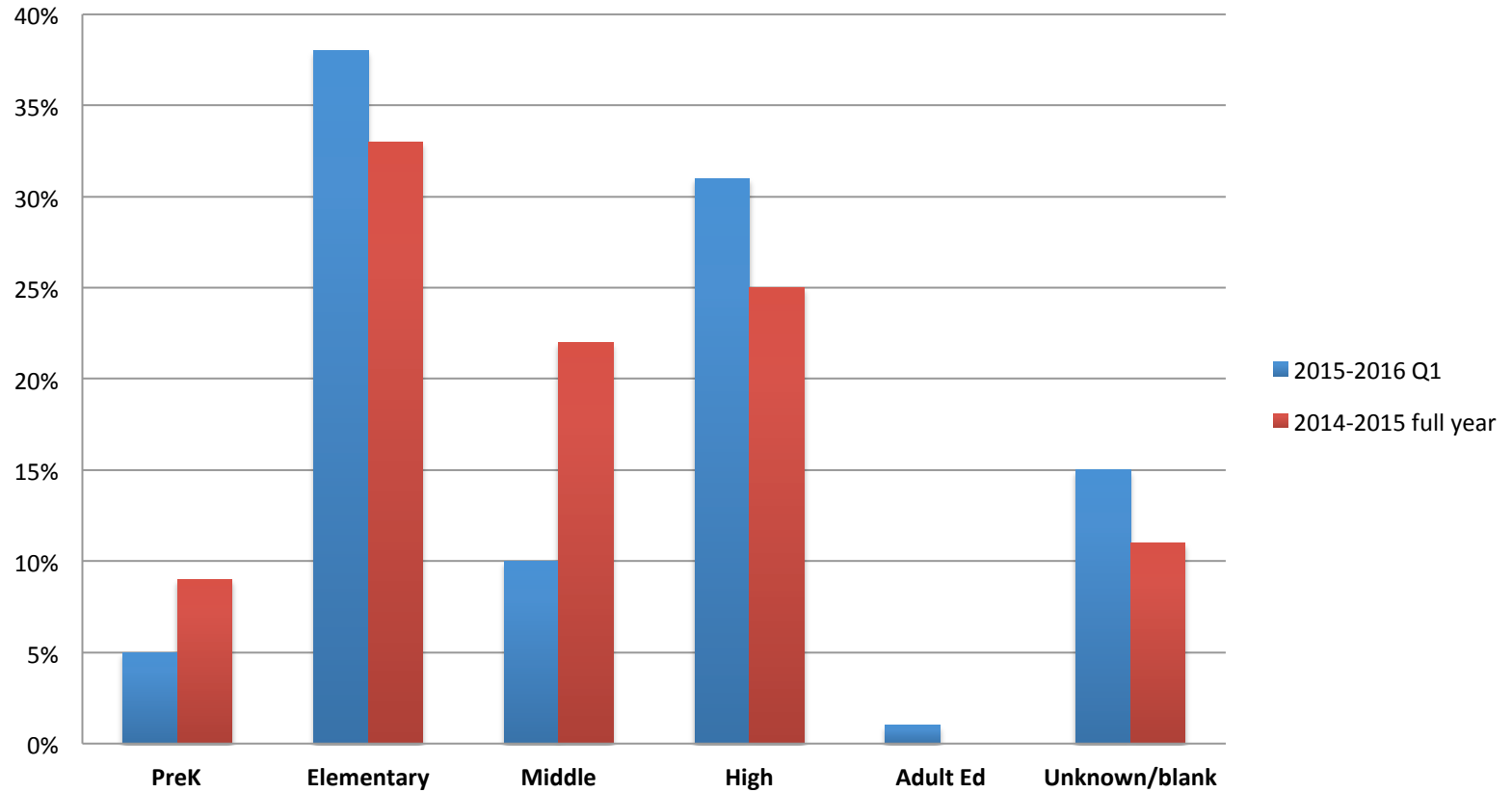
2015-2016 Q1



2014-2015 full year

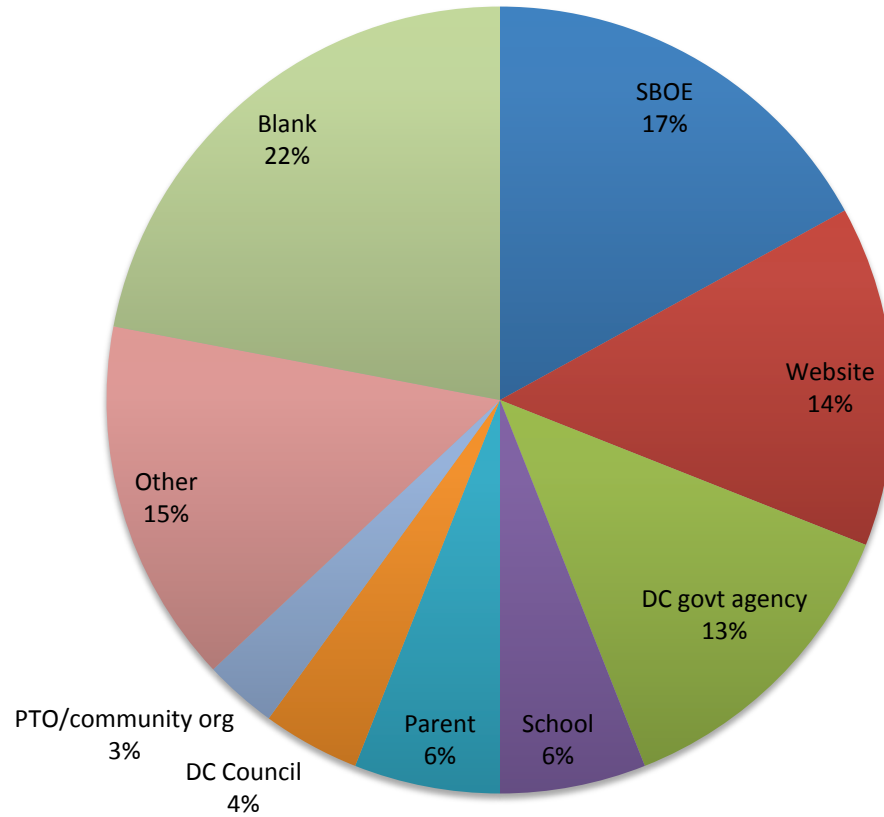


Grade Level



Referral Sources

2015-2016 Q1



Trends and Systemic Issues

Notable trends:

- We are still observing enrollment problems for students with disabilities.
- We are also continuing to observe students with disabilities being subjected to harsh punishments that do not take their disabilities into account, especially push-out practices by charters.

Systemic issues we are currently working on:

- Discussing concerns with a charter school that appears not to understand responsibilities for special education evaluations.
- Discussing concerns with an adult education program that appears not to provide meaningful due process before withdrawing students.
- Providing feedback to DCPS on Chapter 25 revision.

Community Engagement Efforts in SY15-16

- Panelist on a panel entitled “Parents vs. Bullies: Understanding the 2012 Youth Bullying Prevention Act.” Fox5 News featured our bullying panel during an evening news segment on October 29.
- Panelist on a panel entitled “Moving to the Left on the CADRE Continuum: New Early Dispute Resolution Processes in DC.” This panel was part of the CADRE Conference held in Eugene, Oregon on October 22. I joined this panel to discuss special education dispute resolution across DC.
- Invited to moderate panel entitled “Engaging Families as Partners in Education” with the Carnegie Institution for Science; DC STEM Network on November 5.
- Invited to be a Co-Chair of the Education Committee of the United States Ombudsman Association.

Annual Recommendations: What's Next?

We welcome SBOE assistance with raising awareness and convening roundtables around some of the annual recommendations mentioned in our 2015-16 annual report. Some of our suggestions include:

- Encourage use of alternatives to suspension:
 - Possibly recommend state-level discipline regulations for OSSE to adopt (OSSE has had draft state level discipline regulations for a number of years now, but has failed to adopt the regulations).

Annual Recommendations: What's Next?

- Educate parents about their new special education rights, in partnership with Ombudsman and Chief Student Advocate.
 - State Board member Tierra Jolly has taken the lead in this initiative by co-hosting a special education panel for parents with the Office of the Student Advocate. This event will be held on November 9.
- Hold a roundtable regarding the needs of homeless families-inviting families and service providers to discuss issues around access to education.
- Encourage OSSE and DME to develop a centralized website with information about schools' policies, academic programs, and special education offerings.

Questions?

