

March
2007

EDUCATION MATTERS

Volume 3, Issue 2

MISSION

The District of Columbia State Education Office promotes learning for District residents of all ages by providing access to resources, services and information for a higher quality of life.

VISION

The State Education Office is the agency that is leading the District of Columbia's transformation into a national model of educational excellence

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DC STATE EDUCATION OFFICE HOLDS POLICY FORUM ON EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

(Washington, D.C.) On Thursday, March 1, 2007 the DC State Education Office (SEO) hosted a Policy Breakfast Forum titled "*Early Childhood: What's on the Horizon? Advancing Program Access, Quality, and Funding*". The forum examined the characteristics of a high-quality system of early childhood programs for school readiness and explored the District's current system of early care and education. In the first 100 days of his administration, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty pledged to make early childhood programs a priority as the District moves toward a system of universal and voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year olds by 2010.

Speakers at the policy forum included: **Deborah A. Gist**, DC State Education Officer; **Barbara Kamara**, Administrator, Department of Human Services (DHS), Early Care and Education Administration; **Cheryl Roberts**, Executive Director, DCPS School Readiness & Early Childhood Programs; **Sara Watson**, Senior Officer, State Policy Initiatives, Pew Charitable Trusts; **Tammy Mann**, Deputy Executive Director, Zero To Three; and **Jesse Bailey**, Co-Chair, Fenty Education e-Transition Early Care and Education Work Group; Program Director, Pre-K For All Campaign. Tom Bullock of the DC Education Compact, moderated the audience discussion.

Mr. Bailey's presentation included data from Mayor Fenty's E-Transition Work Group on early childhood education whose recommendations included input from over one hundred families and organizations. Best practices from Maryland, Illinois, Oklahoma, San Francisco, Los Angeles and others were studied. Included in the group's discussion was that the Fenty Administration should launch a



Attendees at the Early Childhood Policy Breakfast Forum

Comprehensive School Readiness Initiative to prepare young children for success in school and life and support the family, a child's first teacher. The work group also concluded that Comprehensive School Readiness requires: strong systemic accountability for quality; pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds and a seamless web of support throughout the early years; and building capacity to support a quality system.



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OFFICE**

**STATE
EDUCATION OFFICER**

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Dr. Cynthia Bell

Nutrition Services

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A Message from the State Education Officer



public education in the District of Columbia.

The Policy, Research and Analysis (PR&A) department of the State Education Office (SEO) seeks to improve the knowledge base of citizens and policymakers about

expert speakers and an audience of 106 early childhood education stakeholders.

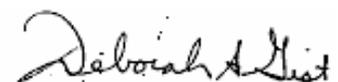
PR&A also provides policy guidance on special education and related services for children with disabilities through the State Advisory Panel on Special Education (SAP). SAP is an important advisory group focused on improving the educational outcomes for children and youth with disabilities.

Our goal is for PR&A to become the premier research and policy center on public education in the District, respected and known for objective and reliable basic information on our schools as well as emerging trends and best practices. PR&A produces reports and informational papers in response to legislative requirements and on topics of relevance to policymakers and the public; creates opportunities through meetings and public forums for education stakeholders to explore topics and resolve cross-cutting policy issues; provides outreach on education information and policy issues to policymakers, practitioners and the public; provides support to the State Advisory Panel on Special Education; coordinates the activities of the citywide literacy initiative; and collects common data elements across education systems for a central education data warehouse.

The need to answer critical questions about the progress of our students and the success of our schools and education institutions with the depth of analysis afforded by comprehensive real-time data requires a statewide data system capable of tracking students and their academic, demographic and programmatic information over time, as they move within our systems of education. PR&A is working with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to create a pre-K -16 longitudinal education data warehouse to meet this need.

We envision the education data warehouse for Washington, D.C. to be a web-based system that captures real-time longitudinal data on students. I am excited about the work PR&A is doing to shape the horizon of education in Washington, D.C., and look forward to sharing their latest accomplishments with you in the future.

Also in this edition, Higher Education Financial Services continues to host Saturday DC OneApp Sessions, Nutrition Services celebrated National School Breakfast Week, and DC GEAR UP is getting ready to kick off the second annual DC GEAR UP Spring Break College Tour.





The State Education Office would like to highlight two outstanding employees who received the **Golden Apple Award** for this past quarter. The Golden Apple Certificate is awarded to employees who demonstrate diligence and superior performance in their respective departments within the State Education Office.

Golden Apple recipient for December, 2006 is Kristin Yochum:

Kristin has demonstrated great initiative, a strong work ethic and is an invaluable support to her peers. She has led the effort to successfully revise the DC GEAR UP database, with the support of the SEO staff, to create a more efficient, user-friendly system. Kristin goes beyond the call of service and actively serves on three super teams.

Q&A

Describe where your passion comes from in advocating for DC GEAR UP?

I have always been known as someone who is very passionate about the work I do. That is probably because I have chosen to become a public manager in a city which I love. All other jobs aside, I am known throughout the SEO for my unwavering and *very* vocal support for DC Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (DC GEAR UP). This passion for the program is derived from the work the program does, the students we support, and the colleagues with whom I work. In the past I have felt disconnected from the work the program does on a daily basis, because I am not out in the schools working with the students. I have come to realize, however, that the work I do is necessary for my colleagues to be able to do their work in the field. I represent the entire program which includes the DC GEAR UP staff and all of our students. So, sometimes, if it seems like I am a little too passionate for one person, just keep in mind that I am sharing the passion nearly 1,000 people have for DC GEAR UP!

Golden Apple recipient for January, 2006 is Robert Boik:

In Robert's capacity as Special Assistant to the State Education Officer, he efficiently handles the organization of an executive's busy agenda while creatively working on special assignments and policy projects of a time sensitive nature and updating the Director daily on vital staff items. Whatever task Robert finds himself assigned with, the SEO staff can rest assured he will handle thoroughly and carefully.

Q&A

What motivates you to be involved in education?

The quest for efficiency in my work stems from my passion for education policy. I firmly believe that education is the great equalizer in our country and the mechanism by which citizens are able to achieve the "American dream". It makes social mobility, one of the great tenets of our democracy, possible. I also believe that the economic prosperity of our nation's future is solely dependent upon our ability to provide quality educational opportunities to our children. We face a time when the skills required of our workforce are becoming highly technical and based on a foundation of creativity. As such, we must ensure that students who graduate from our schools have the tools to think critically and creatively. I see this challenge as one that the State Education Office firmly embraces in its day to day mission and it makes me proud to come to work every day.



Robert Boik, Kristin Yochum

Did You Know ?

Educational Licensure Commission (ELC)

is the District's regulatory authority on educational licenses that is executed by five resident Commissioners appointed by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. SEO staff members support and implement the policies of the Commission.

The primary functions of the Commission are to license and regulate post-secondary educational institutions, enforce post-secondary education laws and regulations, investigate complaints against institutions, and maintain closed institutions' student records.

The Commission meets once a month in a public meeting at 441 4th Street to review and vote on license applications.

DC Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness (DC GEAR UP)

hosted a University Partners Meeting on Friday, March 23, 2007 from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. This meeting gave DC GEAR UP an opportunity to gather partners to discuss Saturday and Summer Institutes, planning for the next school year, and an opportunity to share upcoming activities and events.

2nd Annual Spring Break Tour

DC GEAR UP is preparing for the second annual Spring Break College Tour. This year students will visit schools in Knoxville, TN; New Orleans, LA; and Birmingham, AL. They will also participate in a community service project over 2 days in New Orleans.

University Partners Host Summer Institutes

DC GEAR UP is preparing students to take part in summer institutes hosted by our university partners. Students who participate will be able to enroll in the DC Department of Employment Services' (DOES) Summer Youth Employment Program, which will allow the students to receive payment for the hours they spend in the summer institute. Summer Institutes provide the DC GEAR UP students with an opportunity to take classes and participate in other activities on a college campus.

Educational Facilities and Partnerships (formerly known as Office of Public Charter School Finance & Support)

advances better use of educational facilities through models such as community schools, co-location, joint-use, and public-private partnerships. EF&P is comprised of two divisions: Public Charter School Financing and Support and Educational Partnerships.

On March 16, 2007, E.L. Haynes PCS broke ground in Ward 1 at 3600 Georgia Avenue. The new school is scheduled to open in January, 2008. The SEO, through EF&P, provided E.L. Haynes funding for the school through the Credit Enhancement and Direct Loan Program, the Incubator Credit Enhancement, and the competitive City Build Grant.

E.L. Haynes received financing support through the Credit Enhancement and Direct Loan Program to help facilitate the purchase and construction of their new school. The school also qualified for the Incubator Credit Enhancement because they agreed to share their building during the first one - two years while the school is not yet at full enrollment as an incubator for new public charter schools.

E.L. Haynes' City Build application was stellar. With demonstrated academic progress, desire to help revitalize the neighborhood, commitment to improving literacy, and understanding how important healthcare is to its students, families and community members, E.L. Haynes truly exemplifies the importance of having strong neighborhood schools. The strong leadership and incredible team at E.L. Haynes greatly assisted the SEO in helping the school fulfill its vision.

Higher Education Financial Services (HEFS)

will be conducting *Special Saturday DC OneApp Sessions* on March 24; April 28; May 19; and June 23. The Saturday Sessions assists DC residents with completing their DC OneApp. The DC OneApp is the online application for the District's three higher education financial aid grant programs: DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DCTAG), DC Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (DCLEAP), and the DC Adoption Scholarship (DCAS). DCTAG and DCAS offer up to \$10,000 with DCLEAP offering up to \$1,500 per academic school year for DC residents to attend eligible colleges and universities.

During the hours of 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM at 441 4th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001, HEFS counselors will be available to assist DC OneApp applicants with the online completion of their DC OneApp. Applicants will also have the opportunity to submit the documents required to complete the application process. In addition, on June 27 – June 30, 2007 from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM the HEFS staff will dedicate its efforts to document intake utilizing the Old Council Chambers at 441; this will allow for servicing the large number of applicants that are in the final phase of document completion.

To support HEFS' commitment in making the online DC OneApp process a smooth and easy one, HEFS has outreach events geared specifically towards completing the DC OneApp. Students, parents, educators, and advisors are encouraged to read the DC OneApp Online Instructions and view the Event Calendar at the below link for a full listing of HEFS outreach events:

<http://www.seo.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view,A,1225,Q,559772.asp>

The DC OneApp deadline is June 30, 2007.

HEFS will be offering students on spring break an opportunity to have HEFS counselors help them get the dollars they need to go to college by completing their DC OneApp during:

DC OneApp Spring Break Sessions

DC OneApp Spring Break Sessions are a result of HEFS' partnership with Reach4Success. The sessions will be held at Reach4Success' College Information Center located at MLK Jr. Memorial Library at 901 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20001 on April 2 – 4, 2007 from 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM with evening hours April 3, 2007 from 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM.

For further information, student, parents, counselors, and other interested parties can contact the State Education Office at (202) 727-2824.

Did You Know ?

Nutrition Services, (NS) celebrated this year's theme "A World of School Breakfast" on Wednesday, March 7, 2007 in honor of the *National School Breakfast Program*. The event was held at Emery Recreation Center from 10:00 AM -11:00 AM.



Dr. Cynthia Bell, Director of NS, introduced the guests speakers including: Barbara Martin, Chief, School, Summer and Nutrition Education Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Reuben Gist, Director of Advocacy & Community Outreach, Capital Area Food Bank; Shanique Street a Bill

Emerson Hunger Fellow; John Stokes, Director of Marketing and Communications, SEO and the SEO NS Staff. Dr. Bell thanked the Department of Parks and Recreation for making the event possible.

The event highlighted performances by DC public and private school students. Howard University Middle School choir sang, Young Elementary School students recited a poem, Paul Public Charter School students performed a cheerleading routine, IDEA Public Charter School students performed a drum line, KIPP Academy's Orchestra, celebrated with a few musical selections, and Howard Road Academy wowed the crowd with their cheerleading /step team.

The event recognizes people, places and partners that raise awareness and highlight the importance of a nutritious school breakfast for the District public and private school students.

The goal of the SEO and NS is to further promote the National School Breakfast Week Program with alliances to various government agencies, and food advocacy organizations in an effort to prevent hunger in the District of Columbia.

Policy, Research & Analysis, (PR&A)

facilitates a process annually to collect feedback, conduct research and develop recommendations for the Mayor and the Council of the District called the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF). The UPSFF is the mechanism by which the District funds all public (DCPS and charter) schools in the District. Although DCPS and charter schools are funded at the same per pupil level, the UPSFF does not dictate how the money should be spent at the school level. The UPSFF allocation goes to DCPS as a system, and the DCPS central office, based on its own internal formula, determines how much money each school needs for a student. Charter schools, on the other hand, receive the entire amount of UPSFF allocation individually. Interested parents and citizens can contact the SEO, attention Hom Raj Acharya, at 202-727-8864 to get more details on the UPSFF and education finance in the District.

Only DC residents are entitled to a free education in the District. Non-residents who attend the District's public schools must pay tuition. The SEO is the agency charged with developing tuition rates for students who do not live in the District. One of the reasons parents have to submit residency documents annually is to ensure that only legitimate residents are receiving the free education to which they are entitled. Interested parents and citizens can contact the State Education Office, attention Hom Raj Acharya, at 202-727-8864 target more details on these rates.

SEO Ed Digest is a free online tool distributed monthly by the State Education Office. Our mission is to share national research on urban P-16 education with city leaders, administrators, researchers, the education policy, community and other interested stakeholders. Visit the SEO Ed Digest at www.seo.dc.gov. You can subscribe to the SEO Ed Digest by registering with DCDOCS.

PR&A – Student Enrollment Audit

Since the 2001-2002 school year, the State Education Office has held the legislatively mandated responsibility for verifying fall enrollment counts for traditional public and public charter schools. At the end of January 2007, PR&A, in coordination with the independent auditing firm of Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio & Associates (TCBA), finished the 2006 Enrollment Audit with the release of the final report that includes the official enrollment figures for the 2006-2007 school year.

For SY 2006-2007, the audit process fielded about 50 auditors to over 250 count locations and counted 75,000 students between October 13th and November 14th.

This year, the SEO introduced two major changes to improve overall efficiency of the audit process:

First, in a departure from the appeals process used the previous three years, the SEO introduced a new Resolution Process in which it introduced a final quality review process for schools. In this new process, school principals communicated to their school authorities (DCPS, PCSB, BOE) their interest in appealing a particular audit finding, and the school authorities submitted documentation to the SEO. By doing so, the SEO produced one single, authoritative report that communicated the results of the audit for all public schools - DCPS and PCS.

Secondly, the SEO requested the auditor report race/ethnicity and gender data by school and grade level. This is of particular benefit to researchers as it provides them with additional data about the students in the District of Columbia.

What's New

The State Advisory Panel on Special Education has been actively engaged in evaluating educational issues relating to students with disabilities in the District of Columbia during the 2005-2006 school year. The Panel's activities are listed below.

➤ In the fall, the Panel held its 2nd Annual Retreat. Activities from the 2005-2006 school year were reviewed and new priorities for the current year were established..

➤ The Panel also co-sponsored the Board of Education President and Districts 3 and 4 Candidates Forum at St. Coletta of Greater Washington Public Charter School which provided an opportunity for community to discuss and voice concerns on special education issues with candidates.

➤ On February 20, 2007, the Panel testified before the Committee of the Whole on Bill 17-0001, the "DC Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007." Mayor Fenty also requested that the Panel review and comment on the special education amendments to this important legislation.

➤ Please keep an eye out for the Panel's 2nd Annual Report which will be released in July 2007.

The Panel's remaining meetings are scheduled for April 19, 2007 and June 14, 2007. Meetings are open to the public and we encourage your participation to help the Panel closely examine education related issues pertaining to students with disabilities.

For additional information please contact Melisa Rawles at 202-442-4008 or at Melisa.Rawles@dc.gov.

New Team Members & Anniversaries

New Team Members

2/20/2007
Thaddeus Price
Program Analyst
Education Programs, DC GEAR UP

3/05/2007
Fonda Sutton
Director
Policy, Research & Analysis

3/19/2006
Stefan Huh
Director
Office of Public Charter School
Finance & Support

Anniversaries

1/1/1970
Kenneth Howard
Operations Manager
Higher Education Financial Services

3/20/1976
Rita V. Akers
Senior Program Specialist
Nutrition Services

3/21/1978
Laurencia O'Connor Henderson
Program Assistant
Higher Education Financial Services

3/1/1984
Cynthia M. Bell
Director of Special Nutrition
Nutrition Services

3/1/1984
Christine Madison
Staff Assistant
Agency Management Program

1/27/2003
Anthonisha (Toni) Hickman
Staff Assistant
Agency Management Program

3/24/2003
Bachir R. Kabbara
Database Manager
Agency Management Program

1/11/2004
Kendrinna Rodriguez
Program Analyst
Agency Management Program

1/12/2004
Renee Evans
School Program Manager
Nutrition Services

1/12/2004
Pamela Taylor
Program Manager
Education Program, DC GEAR UP

2/23/2004
Isaac Shaw, Jr.
Program Specialist
Nutrition Services

3/22/2004
Pamela Pinkett
Program Specialist
Higher Education Financial Services

1/9/2006
Kim Celay
Program Specialist
Higher Education Financial Services

3/6/2006
Alexandra King
Manger
Literacy Initiative
Policy, Research & Analysis

Bonjour ... Hola

(DCPS Pre School & Pre-Kindergarten Goes Multilingual)

Every Monday morning, two-pre-kindergarten classes of four year-old children start their day saying, “Bonjour Madame Blay,” or “Hola, Senora Palacios.”

The children attend Shepherd Elementary in Ward 4, one of four schools in the District of Columbia Public School system (DCPS) that offer pre-kindergarten classes in a language other than English.

DCPS’ Office of School Readiness now supports 128 pre-kindergarten classrooms in 88 schools across the District. Lawmakers in many states across the country and in DC are scrambling to adopt universal pre-kindergarten programs, citing widely accepted research-validated benefits. These benefits include higher graduation rates and a reduction in the achievement gap.

Shepherd Elementary principal, Dan Robinson says his office sent out a questionnaire to parents asking which two foreign languages they wanted included in the curriculum. The parents made it clear they wanted their children to learn French and Spanish. The children learn to converse only in French with their teacher, Madame Blay, or their Spanish teacher, Senora Palacios on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, the children learn in English.

“We held several open houses where 25-30 parents would show up. They’re given a tour, and invited to visit the classes and they’d literally be reduced to tears hearing the kids singing songs like ‘Sur le Pont, d’Avignon,’ ” or when they recite children’s stories in French or Spanish,” says Robinson.

“Now, I have a waiting list long enough to fill two additional pre-k classes, but I don’t have the space.”

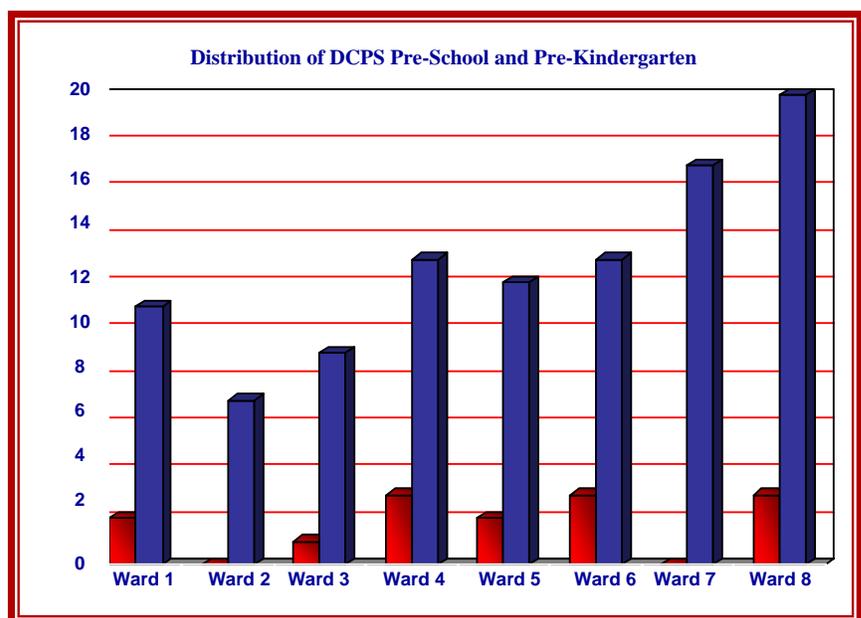
Shepherd is the only school in DCPS that offers dual language immersion for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. As the children progress through school, French and Spanish immersion classes will be offered all the way to the sixth grade.

Initially, Mr. Robinson’s ideas to offer dual language immersion to pre-kindergartners, and a plan to offer an International Baccalaureate (IB) program had its skeptics. But now, Robinson says, the school routinely gets requests from DC officials, and even representatives of foreign embassies to visit his pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes.

“They’re four years old now---can you imagine how incredible they’ll be four, five, six years from now?”

Pre-School (3 yrs old)

Pre-Kindergarten (4 yrs old)



Source: District of Columbia Public Schools

What's Happening

March 2007

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Calendar of Events

Date/Time	Event
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DC Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness (DC GEAR UP)

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|-------------------------------|--|
| 3/23/07
10:00 am – 1:00 pm | DC GEAR UP University Partners Meeting
Citywide Conference Center
441 4th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001 |
| 3/31/07 – 4/5/07 | DC GEAR UP Spring Break
Knoxville, TN; New Orleans, LA; Birmingham, AL |

Higher Education Financial Services (HEFS)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 3/13/07
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm | DC OneApp Session
Fort Davis Community Center
1400 41 st Street SE, Washington, DC 20019 |
| 3/16/07
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | DC OneApp/IMS Counselor Training
City Wide Conference Center
441 4 th Street NW, Washington DC 20001 |
| 3/24/07
9:00 am - 4:00 pm | Special Saturday Hours
State Education Office
441 4 th Street NW, Washington DC 20001 |
| 3/27/07
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm | DC OneApp Session
Sherwood Recreation Center
640 10 th Street NE, Washington, DC 20002 |
| 4/2/07 - 4/6/07
11:00 am - 2:00 pm | Spring Break/DC OneApp Sessions
Reach4Success at MLK Jr. Memorial Library
901 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20001 |
| 4/3/07
5:30 pm - 8:00 pm | Spring Break/DC OneApp Sessions
Reach4Success at MLK Jr. Memorial Library
901 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20001 |
| 4/12/07
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm | DC OneApp Session
North Michigan Park Recreation Center
1333 Emerson Street NE, Washington, DC 20017 |
| 4/19/07
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | DC OneApp/IMS Counselor Training
City Wide Conference Center
441 4 th Street NW, Washington DC 20001 |

What's Happening



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Calendar of Events

Date/Time	Event
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Higher Education Financial Services (HEFS)

4/23/07 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	DC OneApp Session Emery Recreation Center 5701 Georgia Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20011
4/28/07 9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Special Saturday Hours State Education Office 441 4 th Street NW, Washington DC 20001
5/7/07 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	DC OneApp Session Parkview Community Center 693 Otis Place, NW, Washington, DC 20010
5/9/07 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	DC OneApp Session Harry Thomas, Sr. Community Center 1743 Lincoln Road NE, Washington, DC 20002
5/16/07 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	DC OneApp Session Chevy Chase Community Center 5601 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20015
5/18/07 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	DC OneApp/IMS Counselor Training City Wide Conference Center 441 4 th Street NW, Washington DC 20001
5/19/07 9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Special Saturday Hours State Education Office 441 4 th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001
5/31/07 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	DC OneApp Session Lamond Recreation Center 20 Tuckerman Street NE, Washington, DC 20001

Nutrition Services (NS)

3/5/07 - 3/9/07
National School Breakfast Week

3/7/07 10:00 am - 11:00 am	A World of School Breakfast Emery Recreation Center 5701 Georgia Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20011
3/28/07 10:00 am - 1:00 pm	New Summer Sponsors Training State Education Office 441 4 th Street NW, Washington, DC 20001

What's Happening

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July 2007

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August 2007

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Calendar of Events

Date/Time	Event
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Nutrition Services (NS)

3/29/07 11:30 am – 2:00 pm	Early Childhood Obesity Collaborative Meeting The ARC 1901 Mississippi Avenue SE, Washington, DC
4/11/07 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Returning Summer Sponsor Training Beacon House 601 Edgewood Street NE, Washington, DC
4/25/07 10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Returning Summer Sponsor Training Union Temple 1225 West Street SE, Washington, DC
4/27/07 10:15 am - :45 pm	Food Bank Conference First Baptist Church 3600 Brightseat Road, Landover, MD

Policy, Research, & Analysis (PR&A)

3/1/07 8:30 am – 10:30 am	Policy Breakfast Forum Early Childhood: What's on the Horizon?
3/2/07 9:30 am – 10:30 am	DC School Search Sub Committee Meeting
3/16/07 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm	Mayor's Adult Literacy Council Meeting
3/27/07 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Ed SMP Steering Committee Meeting
3/29/07 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	Communications Sub Committee Meeting
4/19/07 5:30pm - 7:30 pm	State Advisory Panel on Special Education Meeting TBD
5/15/07 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Mayor's Adult Literacy Council Meeting

Mayor's Adult Literacy Initiative

25-year-old Leslie Hines says he never really went to high school, but thanks to the Mayor's Adult Literacy Initiative Leslie is a success story.

"Really, when I look over my life, after I got kicked out of Roper Junior High School in Southwest, DC, I basically stopped going to school all together. When I was about 12 or 13, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. My family was going through a lot. We were in Section 8 housing. My mother worked for minimum wage, there wasn't a whole lot of money coming into my house. There was a lot of drug dealing going on, so I got hooked up into that," says Hines.

Today, Leslie Hines is a college student at Southeastern University and a budding entrepreneur, thanks to some help he's received along the way through a few programs supported by the SEO's Mayor's Literacy Initiative. The dream of owning a successful business started several years ago, ironically, when Hines was sent away from his family home in DC to a juvenile home in Florida.

"I used to read to pass the time by reading about black leaders and inventors: people like Frederick Douglass and blacks who were the first to accomplish "this and that."

One of Hines' greatest inspirations is a man named William Alexander Leidesdorff, whose biographer, Gary Palgon, claims is this country's first Black millionaire.

"I can remember sitting on the floor of the school reading how Leidesdorff became wealthy when gold was found on his San Francisco property just prior to his death in 1848. I was really shocked to learn that a black man, someone who looks like me was the first in America to invent and launch a steam-powered schooner. He also organized and held the first horse race in the state. Reading about him and others like him who were talented and black really inspired me. If I hadn't read about these people, I never would have educated myself because the schools never taught us about these people. Plus reading about black inventors is really what gave me the confidence to believe that I could start my own business."

Hines earned his GED after about 18 months of classes. He took classes at several SEO-supported literacy provider organizations, including Catholic Community Services and Beyond Talent. In addition to providing access to a wide range of services including GED preparation, ESL classes, workforce literacy, and basic literacy classes, the Mayor's Adult Literacy Initiative provides guidance and makes recommendations to the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia for adequate adult education funding and supports to the system.

"I also did the Bard College Clemente Course—a study of liberal arts and humanities. We learned a lot about writing and philosophy. I really liked philosophy—Plato, Aristotle and Socrates—I really like Socrates' debating style. He comes off as a person that's supposed to be ignorant, and he waits until the person he's debating to put their defenses down, then Socrates proves that his knowledge is superior," says Hines.

For Hines, earning a GED and pursuing a college education, did not change his ambition to become an entrepreneur. Hines admits to trying to make a go of starting his own Internet company after seeing an Infomercial on late-night TV.

"I must have spent a couple hundred dollars on the kit they advertised, but after two years, I only made \$63," he says.

But Hines wasn't discouraged. He now works as an independent contractor at Virtual Enterprises on Florida Ave, NW, teaching software applications. Hines estimates he'll earn an associates degree in finance within a year or two. After this, he'll likely pursue a bachelor's degree, and Hines has no doubt he'll succeed.

"Today, I'm more goal-oriented, and now I believe I can do anything I apply myself to."