



Greater Washington
Urban League

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Greater Washington Urban League Poll Finds Strong Support for Mayor's Education Reform Agenda
DC Residents Consider Schools the Top Priority

A poll released by the Greater Washington Urban League today shows that D.C. residents believe education should be the top focus of Mayor Fenty and there is strong support for school reform in the District of Columbia.

When asked what issue should be the most important priority for the Mayor of Washington DC, 50% of those polled cited schools with no other issue coming remotely close. Asked before Fenty began implementing major reforms, a wide majority (50%) said education in DC has been on the wrong track.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of those questioned approve of Mayor Fenty taking direct control of city schools. The support was broad as well as deep, with all sections of the city favoring Fenty's move. Residents are also very hopeful that Mayor Fenty's reforms can make a difference, with 84% saying the Mayor's takeover of city schools will lead to improvements in D.C.'s public schools – 44% saying it will lead to “major” improvements.

“This poll confirms what we all know: the status quo in our schools is unacceptable,” said Maudine R. Cooper, President and CEO of the Greater Washington Urban League. “As an organization that cares deeply about education, we are in support of Mayor Fenty's efforts to reform all D.C. schools for all D.C. children and commend his courageous leadership in tackling the many changes that are needed.”

Presented with results of the poll, Mayor Adrian Fenty said, “This poll reflects what I have heard from people across the District of Columbia -- education is the number one priority for our residents. My administration will continue to work for real systemic reforms that result in a world-class educational system that prepares our children for success.”

When asked about specific reforms, D.C. respondents approved of having a School Chancellor rather than a School Board (56% to 29%), of having zero tolerance for bullying and aggressive behavior (83% to 16%) and of merit pay for teachers (85% to 12%). Additionally, 69% approve of the federal government's \$39 million annual investment to help fund DC Public Schools, charter schools, and create the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship program as an approach toward improving all D.C. schools.

“No issue is more important than education,” Cooper said. “We look forward to working with Mayor Fenty, Chancellor Rhee, families, educators and anyone in the District who is ready to undertake the hard work of reforming our schools.”

The poll was conducted between August 6-9, 2007 and included 400 DC residents with children under the age of 18. The poll was conducted by Jill Normington of the polling firm Bennett, Petts & Normington.