

# School data analysis shows reform failing in many mostly black schools in the U.S. capital

By Tom Grubisich / FOUNDER, LocalAmerica.com

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Education reform so far has made little headway in performance at many schools in mostly black and heavily poor Wards 7 and 8 of the District, a Local America analysis of data shows. [See hot map.](#)



In Ward 8, which is 92% black and has a household poverty rate of 33%, 16 schools – both those run by the District’s Public School System and the public charter system – show a decline in math scores during the first four years of reform. Sixteen other schools in both systems reported increases. Ward 8 school performance in reading was worse, with 21 schools having lower scores and 7 higher ones.

In Ward 7, which is 97% black and has a poverty rate of 22%, 14 schools in both systems had lower scores in math over the four years of reform and 17 had higher ones. In reading, performance here was way down too, with 21 schools having lower scores and only 2 having positive ones.

Performance in Ward 3, which is 84% white and has a median household income of \$71,875 – the highest in the District – was higher. Sixteen schools -- all but one of them in DCPS – reported increases in scores in math and reading and six – all in DCPS – reported declines, five of them less than 5% each.

Overall, charter schools did better than those in the District Public School System:

- In math, 15 PSCs were down (21%) and 55 were up (79%). In DCPS, 54 schools were down (48%) and 59 were up (52%).
- In reading, 24 charters were down (41%) and 35 were up (59%). In DCPS, 70 were down (64%) and 40 were up (36%).

Several DCPS schools in Wards 7 and 8, which are across the Anacostia River, did turn in top performances in the District's tougher scoring process. Ward 7's Plummer Elementary was No. 1 in yearly increase in overall proficiency in 2011 (18.6%) and the ward's Thomas Elementary was No. 2 (17.1%). Both schools are in DCPS. No. 3 in overall proficiency was Ward 8's charter Septima Clark (17%).

School reform began in District-run schools under the aggressive leadership of former Chancellor Michelle Rhee in the 2007-2008 school year. As Rhee, using her new powers as the system's first chancellor, issued a succession of reform edicts that included the closing of many schools and firing of a number of teachers, parents in Wards 7 and 8 protested that they were generally ignored. New resource centers that were promised at local schools failed to materialize.

In the face of a storm of criticism – and the electoral defeat of her chief patron, then-Mayor Adrian Fenty, in 2010 – Rhee resigned. While defending the thrust of her reforms, Rhee acknowledged she and her team didn't give enough attention to parental involvement. She was succeeded by longtime DCPS executive Kaya Henderson, who as part of her strategy to calm the confrontational educational atmosphere, stepped up neighborhood outreach and created more resource centers at schools across the Anacostia.

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