

“The WTU Can Be Better!”

Where has the WTU missed the boat?

Eight ways we can do better...

1. **School closings** – Why has the union been silent? Empower DC has filed a lawsuit on behalf of parents. The WTU seems to have no analysis that they are wrong.
2. **The cheating scandal** – The union should have called for a real investigation and pointed to the pressures on teachers and principals to game the system. It is a scandal.
3. **IMPACT** – WTU needs to offer a serious critique of IMPACT. Fixation on rubrics hurts good teachers. Cheating makes teachers baseline scores inaccurate.
4. **Teacher churn** – DCPS has one of the highest rates of teacher and principal turnover in the nation. It’s bad for the teaching and learning culture. Its’ bad for kids.
5. **Professional Development** – Professional development days are still largely a waste of time. Don’t just negotiate days. Ensure the time is well used or available to teachers.
6. **School Budgets** – Rollercoaster of annual budgets leads to excessing. Shifting central office costs to the schools has meant cuts to which the WTU should have objected.
7. **Not a voice in the community** – The WTU needs to build a movement of parents and community groups who want better schools. Instead the WTU fashions itself like a lawyers’ office making it much weaker than it needs to be.
8. **Not seen as champions of quality** – Nathan and his predecessor George Parker both play to the stereotype of a union blocking improvements. Liz Davis coauthored a 2008 Post Op-ed on what reforms would look like if the union and DCPS really wanted to improve teaching and learning.

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What would a better WTU look like?

Six promises –Our vision for the future...

1. **Restore internal democracy in the WTU** – Our union must not be so tightly controlled by one individual. We need a more robust democratic process, dialogue at monthly union meetings, open board meetings, frequent hearings, task forces and other ways to involve members in helping to shape WTU positions and administration decision-making in DCPS.
2. **Build powerful alliances with parents and community organizations** – The WTU needs to help build a community coalition for the schools to defend public education. Parents and the community are just as disempowered under Mayoral Control.
3. **Engage on the content of reform** – The WTU should be putting out white papers and engaging our own members in asserting what research says the content of reform should be.
4. **Engage on Issues of Teaching and Learning** – The WTU needs to organize the teachers’ voice on issues of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
5. **Positive school Climate** – The most important role for WTU is to make schools respectful places to work and respectful places for parents to send their children. A learning culture has to replace the current climate of fear that has become the norm.
6. **Organize for Power** – It is our professional expertise and public respect that is our greatest source of power, not just our ability to hire lawyers. While we will always hire lawyers, the WTU must re-structure for strength.