



INVEST IN STRUGGLING SCHOOLS



OVERVIEW

As part of our 2017 Capital Commitment strategic goals, DCPS is investing heavily in our 40 lowest-performing schools. These schools serve large populations of students who need extra support, including low-income students, young people of color, and special needs students. We believe that every student, in every school, should have access to committed and highly-qualified staff, rigorous learning opportunities, and specialized support.

We have made great strides toward our goal of investing in our struggling schools. DCPS created incentives to keep high-performing teachers where they are needed most. We funded creative school innovation through Proving What's Possible grants that created new ways for students to learn. We also introduced specialized staff, such as reading specialists and literacy leaders, to serve students who need us most.

Despite this progress, our work is not finished until every student in every school has a clear path to success in college and career. We are determined to find deeper and more creative support for establishing learning environments that are challenging, responsive, and engaging. This includes partnering with each school to better understand their 40 unique stories and to jointly determine the best plan of attack, with input from the community.



CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS

Investing in struggling schools will require us to address the following challenges:

- **Existing School Structure**

Principals in DCPS are committed to closing historic opportunity gaps and accelerating school improvement. We will not find success via traditional concepts of the role of the principal, the role of the teacher, and the school schedule. We know that bringing creative options like more learning time, innovative staffing, and robust community partnerships is critical to our success.

Strategies to consider: Extended day and/or year programs; support teams for principals and specialized qualifications for teachers.

- **Supports for Students**

Even with staff and structures in place, some students need more support. The needs range from academic to social and emotional. We have to identify partners and specialized programs that are skilled at bringing resources directly to students.

Strategies to consider: Targeted intervention classes during the day; individual academic coaching for students.

- **School Culture**

Students and parents want to feel a sense of safety when they walk into school. In fact, research tells us students need to feel valued, encouraged, and loved to reach their potential. The DCPS School Climate Initiative helps schools identify basic steps for safety and structure, and then guides communities toward restorative and inspiring culture for every student.

Strategies to consider: Youth development training for teachers; positive school climate and social-emotional programs like Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Improved school culture
- Improved teacher support
- Increased teacher retention

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What's the challenge area you would prioritize to support struggling schools and what additional strategies would you recommend?
- What data or observations have you had that support that focus?