

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)



Public Roundtable on
DCPS Initial School Level Budgets

Testimony of
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Chancellor

Before the
Committee of the Whole
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairperson

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Live via Zoom Video Conference Broadcast



Introduction

Good afternoon Chairperson Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and staff. I am Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee, Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on DCPS' initial plans for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) school budgets.

This year, we have seen the ways that school communities have led with resilience while overcoming the challenges of the global health emergency. DCPS remains steadfast in our goal to provide a safe and supportive learning environment where all students are able to thrive. As we look to the coming school year, DCPS' FY22 budget is anchored in two priorities: learning acceleration and building resiliency for students.

Key Investments

First, I would like to express my gratitude to Mayor Bowser for committing an additional \$15 million in the initial school budgets, compared to last year, to secure a strong foundation for schools' road to recovery, even as our student enrollment – a primary driver of funding – decreased this school year. We recognize the differing circumstances that families, particularly those with Pre-K children and adult learners, managed during this pandemic. This investment to stabilize school budgets reflects our commitment to current and future DCPS students.

We also recognize the urgency to support our students furthest from opportunity by placing learning recovery at the forefront. This is why we are aggressively targeting federal stimulus dollars directly to schools and in supplemental supports to address the academic and social-emotional learning impacts of COVID-19. To date, we have committed:

- \$33 million in student learning acceleration and social-emotional supports – nearly all these funds have been allocated directly to schools.
- \$27 million in technology, including student and educator devices and supports directly to schools.
- \$10 million in sustained supports and services for schools, students, and families.
- \$9 million to initiate in-person learning innovations, including outdoor learning.

Building School Budgets

For FY22, DCPS is continuing to fund schools using the Comprehensive Staffing Model (CSM). Maintaining our current model has allowed communities to engage with their schools with a strong foundation of understanding. Through this model, schools receive positions and funding for required positions, such as principals and teachers – and flexible positions, such as business managers. Schools also receive funding for programs such as career and technical education, and non-personnel items, such as art and custodial supplies.

Initial school budget allocations are primarily driven by two factors: enrollment and unique student need. For example, a change in overall enrollment or in the number of students expected to receive special education or English Learner services may result in a shift in staff allocated. Based on these factors, we do expect to see changes in school budgets year over year. As part of the budget development process, Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) – comprised of both school staff and family members – work together to guide key budget decisions based on school-level priorities.



It is important to note the budget development process is ongoing. After initial allocations are provided to schools, DCPS supports schools with specialized needs in three ways:

1. First, schools are provided with the **flexibility to petition** to use positions differently from how they are allocated, in order to best meet the needs of their students and school program.
2. Second, schools can submit a request for **budget assistance** or additional funding support. Individual school requests are considered based on student need, the school's overall improvement plan, and each school's unique context.
3. Third, we also continue to **monitor enrollment** through the spring and summer and provide additional teachers and associated funding, as needed. As required by law, DCPS reserves funding, referred to as an "enrollment reserve," to address within-year enrollment increases that require additional staffing.

As noted earlier, we are also leveraging stimulus funds to ensure that schools have sufficient student devices and enhanced technology support as we continue to implement our Empowered Learners Initiative, as well as a refresh of our teacher devices across our system. Additionally, schools have received a projected allocation of stimulus funding to support targeted student learning acceleration and social-emotional development. These funds are being provided in addition to initial school budget allocations and are based on each school's enrollment and population of students identified as at-risk.

I am proud to share that our schools have already begun developing tailored learning recovery plans for this summer and beyond through a grassroots engagement approach with their teachers, staff, families, and community. Schools will begin outreach to nearly 12,000 families next week inviting students to participate in Acceleration Academies this summer. These school-based programs are designed to serve a targeted group of students to support their social-emotional development and academic acceleration ahead of next school year. Districtwide, DCPS will also offer up to 7,000 in-person and virtual seats in extended summer learning opportunities such as literacy enrichment for elementary students and credit recovery for secondary students.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today about DCPS' initial FY22 school budget allocations. I appreciate Council's partnership as DCPS remains committed to ensuring schools have the resources they need to facilitate student engagement and learning acceleration. As we remain focused on shaping the road to recovery, we will continue to evaluate additional investments aligned with these priorities as even more federal stimulus dollars become available. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

