

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



Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Oversight Hearing

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

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Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Council, and staff. I am Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee, Chancellor of DC Public Schools (DCPS), and I am honored to testify before you today on our budget plans for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). I want to begin with appreciation for Mayor Bowser's leadership and thank councilmembers for supporting DC students as our educators worked tirelessly to make this year's return to full-time, in-person learning a success.

Leveraging Historic Local and Federal Recovery Funds

The FY23 Budget and Financial Plan for DCPS reflects our collective commitment to a strong recovery and will ensure our students are supported academically, socially, and emotionally. The FY23 budget will increase DCPS school budgets by seven percent on average next school year. Additionally, the Mayor provided recovery funds to ensure that no DCPS school receives less in FY23 than their FY22 budget submitted to Council last year. The recovery fund goes further than simply holding school budgets harmless to the dollar – it addresses rising costs so DCPS schools can maximize their locally-funded purchasing power.

In addition to local investments, DCPS continues to leverage federal pandemic relief dollars. For the upcoming school year, DCPS schools will receive an additional \$6 million in flexible ESSER funding that leaders can spend on school-specific, evidence-based acceleration strategies such as staff-led academies, tutoring partnerships, and intervention materials.

Together, these investments allow principals to innovate according to their school needs. For example, Leckie Education Campus is ensuring each grade level has an Instructional Aide to support with small group instruction. Tyler Elementary School funded a new afterschool partnership and created a new Data Coach position to assist teachers with interventions. Hyde-Addison Elementary School is partnering with Keegan Theatre to creatively target reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading motivation for students who need additional support.

Updated Budget Model

This year, we are proud that funding was provided to schools based on our updated budget model, which supports DCPS' overall mission to provide equitable resources so every student can excel. I want to thank everyone in our community who provided feedback as we refined the updated model over the past three years. With school and community input and working with independent experts, DCPS made adjustments to our funding model to reflect our three key principles of equity, transparency, and stability.

- Equity: First, the updated budget model is an equity investment. At-risk funding clearly follows each student and is supplemental to school budgets. Further, we are providing additional at-risk funding via two new weights aimed at driving more dollars to schools where poverty and other barriers to learning are more concentrated among their student populations.
- Transparency: Second, the updated budget model advances our transparency goals. While school leaders have more flexibility because they know their communities best, the model is based on transparent weights, published on the dcpsbudget.com website. Additionally, each school's submitted budget includes a public narrative description of the school's enrollment, student needs, programmatic shifts, ESSER, and recovery funds.



- Stability: Finally, the updated model promotes stability in and through recovery. In addition to student-based dollars, the updated revised model includes funding allocations based on staff and faculty counts. These staffing ratios ensure that essential services, such as special education and English language instruction, are resourced to schools based on need.

Our school leaders, school budget team, colleagues across the city, and many others have worked tirelessly to update our school funding model together, and I thank them for their collaborative efforts.

Technology Initiatives

DCPS will continue to maintain a one-to-one student to device ratio in third through twelfth grades and a three-to-one ratio in prekindergarten through second grade for SY22-23. We also plan to invest in more powerful student devices for specific Career Technical Education (CTE) and Digital Arts courses across high schools. Additionally, DCPS will invest an additional \$7 million in FY23 to purchase approximately 1,500 Smart Boards with the goal of achieving a districtwide refresh of all classroom interactive boards by FY24. We are also allocating \$1.5 million to upgrade the network infrastructure to ensure that we continue to offer robust internet connectivity in our schools.

Expanded Investments in Capital Improvement

DCPS is proud to continue our investments in building world-class facilities across all eight wards through our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Our FY23-28 plan includes more than \$2.5 billion toward modernization projects, additions to help solve overcrowding, and small capital construction projects. In alignment with the PACE Act, we have added four new modernization projects to the budget – Bunker Hill, Langley, Simon, and Hendley. I am proud to report our commitment to consistency in our budgeting process as we once again have not pushed back the timeline for any construction projects or removed any from the budget. We are also pleased to highlight new initiatives, including additional classroom space at Ludlow-Taylor to address overcrowding, replacement of Leckie’s modular classrooms with an addition, the renovation of the former Banneker High school building to serve as stand-alone middle school, and construction of a new building on the grounds of the former Winston Education Campus to serve as a community-based, state-of-the-art laboratory for hands-on learning programming. Additionally, DCPS will open a new high school on MacArthur Blvd and has provided funding to lease space for early childhood education classrooms to alleviate overcrowding within Lafayette Elementary School. Lastly, we commend Mayor Bowser for making a strong \$43.6 million commitment to replace aging HVACs and boilers, as well as \$15 million for preventative maintenance of HVACs and boilers to ensure systems function well year-round. These investments will have a transformative effect on our ability to provide a high-quality education to all of our students.

Prioritizing School Staff for Student Success

Finally, we know that the most important investments we can make is in our people. DCPS is proud to support our incredible educators with one of the highest teacher compensation structures in the country. Additionally, we pursue and receive highly competitive grants to accelerate our work and be an innovator in public education on the national stage. As part of our



Rigorous Instruction Supports Equity (RISE) initiative, teachers and leaders rated as Effective and above who serve in schools with students furthest from opportunity are eligible for expanded performance-based bonuses. Additionally, DCPS was one of eight school districts nationwide awarded a 5-year, multi-million-dollar grant to build a sustainable leadership pipeline program. The grant will afford select aspiring and current school leaders the opportunity to enroll in graduate programs at Howard University and George Washington University at a reduced tuition rate. Finally, we are excited to build upon the successful Anacostia and Ballou High School redesign to embark on a districtwide, multi-year, community-driven partnership with XQ to rethink what high schools can be for all DCPS students and staff.

We are at a moment of incredible opportunity for our schools to thrive as places of academic growth and social-emotional wellbeing. Thanks to our heroic educators and staff, Mayor’s Bowser’s commitment to public schools, and the Council’s unwavering support, DCPS is well positioned to recover from the pandemic and honor our commitment to be a district of both excellence and equity – a place where every family feels welcome and every child is given the opportunities and support they need to thrive.

Thank you, and I’m happy to answer your questions at this time.

