



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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Our Thoughts for Tomorrow's DC Public Schools Budget Hearing

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Tomorrow, DCFPI will join over 60 witnesses to testify at the DC Council's budget hearing for DC Public Schools (DCPS). There are several promising proposed changes to the school funding formula this year, including a two percent increase to the base level, a new supplement weight for at-risk students, and increased local resources for adult, alternative, English language learner, and special education students. DCFPI is highly supportive of these enhanced local resources, but we want to ensure that the allocation is transparent and that the DCPS schools with the biggest concentrations of need see

their share of the city's educational investments.

Our review of the budget suggests that the changes are not transparent enough to allow parents and other stakeholders to assess whether their school is getting its fair share of education resources.

You can find the full testimony [here](#). See below for a few highlights:

Lack of Transparency for At-Risk Funds: DCFPI is excited about the \$44 million in funding for 21,000 at-risk DCPS students through the school funding formula, but concerned that the proposed budget does not show how or where at-risk funds would be spent. The new funds appear to be wrapped up in a number of initiatives – see the next point – but there is no strict accounting of how the new funds will be targeted to help at-risk students. Moreover, there are clear instances where schools with large concentrations of at-risk students – such as Anacostia High School – would not see much of an increase next year.

Several New Initiatives for DCPS Schools: The proposed DCPS budget would offer extended school day options for all middle schools and the lowest 40 performing elementary schools. Some \$5.7 million is proposed to lengthen the school day to 4:15pm for four days a week at 52 schools,

provided teachers support it. “Proving What’s Possible” student satisfaction awards, totaling \$4.8 million across schools, would go towards field trips, enrichment activities, and anti-bullying programs. There also are proposed new funds for middle-school curriculum and staffing. However, it is not clear from the budget book whether or not these efforts were supported by the new at-risk funds, or if school leaders had flexibility to determine the best approach for their students.

New Budget Format for DCPS: This year, the DCPS budget is also being presented in a new format, which includes allocations at the school level and attempts to make the official budget from the CFO better match the way DCPS spends its funds. Readers can now see how DCPS budgeted directly to individual schools, school-wide programs, school support, and central office funding. DCFPI is pleased that the Committee on Education has taken on the issue of school budget transparency head-on, and we look forward to working with them on further transparency improvements, some of which are highlighted in our testimony.

You can find DCPS’ responses to pre-hearing questions on the Council website: <http://dccouncil.us/budget/2015/education>.