



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog
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Community Advocates Release Set of Guiding Principles for Public Education

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This week, education advocates from across the District released a [set of principles](#) for a more equitable and effective public education system in the city. So far, over 60 organizations and community members, including the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, have signed on. The principles, intended to inform the new mayor and DC Council, focus on improving access to quality neighborhood schools, targeting resources on low-income students, and improving coordination between DC Public Schools and the charter school sector.

Here are some highlights:

- 1. Ensure all families have access to high-quality DCPS schools in their neighborhoods – a predictable, matter-of-right path from preschool through high school.** The message from the public in the [Deputy Mayor for Education's \(DME's\) Student Assignment process](#) was clear: While residents want the ability to select alternatives, they do not want to be at the mercy of a lottery for access to a school that can fully meet the needs of their children and community.
- 2. Focus resources on students and communities with the greatest need.** Schools serving children with the greatest need often lack the resources they require and face the highest staff turnover. To address these inequities, the District should fully implement the recently enacted “at-risk” weight in the school funding formula, which provides added resources to DCPS and charter schools based on the number of low-income students. The city also should improve access citywide to magnet and specialty programs and strengthen early childhood education.
- 3. Coordinate planning between the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) to build a core system of stable DCPS neighborhood schools with a complementary set of alternative options.** Coordinated planning for all Pre-K-to-12 education, overseen by an accountable city agency, with active community input, will enable the District to more efficiently manage school modernizations, expansions, closings, and openings. It also would help disseminate successful policies, programs and practices identified in both the DCPS and charter sectors.

4. Responsibly manage our financial resources.

- Improve transparency of the DCPS budget, and commence budget planning in the fall to give sufficient time for community input.
- Require full transparency of charter school budgets, including payments to private entities and full audit.
- Provide DCPS and each charter LEA the funding required to meet the needs of their students. The compass point is adequate funding, not mathematical parity between schools and LEAs with dramatically different needs.

5. Broaden assessment measures to focus on student growth and use multiple measures to assess a quality education. The District should follow the lead of other districts that are diversifying measures of student achievement and teacher and school effectiveness in order to provide parents with accurate information and enable the city to provide targeted support where needed. This means having a well-rounded curriculum in all matter-of-right schools, reducing the emphasis on snapshot measures of proficiency toward measures that focus on student growth, and making public data disaggregated by income, race and geography.

6. Ensure families and community members have reliable ways to exercise the right to participate in public education decision making. The research is clear that community engagement and ownership are key to improvement.

- Strengthen and support mechanisms such as Local School Advisory Teams (LSAT) and School Improvement Teams (SIT) to engage communities in school planning.
- Support or create parent/teacher or home school organizations at all by-right schools.
- Build on mechanisms such as the Budget Taskforce, the [DCPS Parent Cabinet](#), the [elected school board](#), the [PCSB Community Advisory Group](#) and [DME](#) taskforces to secure ongoing oversight and community input in decision making for our schools.

To learn more and show your support, visit [here](#).