



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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Helping Low-Income Families Access High-Quality Schools

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It appears that the recently adopted changes to the District's [school boundaries, feeder patterns and admissions policies](#) may or may not move forward under the Bowser administration, with the possibility of revisions to the plan once she takes office in January. Despite this uncertainty, several of the recommended changes include key steps – outside of school boundary changes – to help low-income families access high-quality schools, and should not be derailed.

DCFPI thinks the following recommendations should be maintained:

Prioritize Placement for At-Risk Students: Starting in the 2016-17 school year, DCPS and public charter schools would set aside 25 percent of their out-of-boundary seats in the lottery process for low-income students. Currently, 20 DCPS and 12 public charter [schools](#) would be affected because of their current number of low-income students. This would promote socio-economic diversity, which is linked to improving outcomes for low-income students without adversely affecting middle class students, as long as a core of middle class children attend the school. The Advisory Committee on Student Assignment recommended that this preference apply to charter schools, in addition to DCPS, which would require a change in DC law.



Source: flickr.com, brianjmatis

Neighborhood Access to Early Childhood Education Programs: Currently, children apply for Pre-Kindergarten through the lottery process, without a guaranteed seat at a child's in-boundary school. The Committee recommended giving children who live near high-poverty DCPS schools (those that receive [Title I](#) funds) access *by right* to Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4 slots in their zoned DCPS school. This makes sense for families who would prefer to send their young children to schools close to their home, and may help alleviate the struggle of lengthy wait lists for early childhood education slots at many DC schools.

Subsidize Public Transit: Low-income families will need access to affordable transportation to truly be able to take advantage of new opportunities to attend out-of-boundary schools. While students can now ride MetroBus for free, their parents cannot, which is a problem for parents with very young children. That's why the Committee's recommendation to offer free bus passes to parents of students in Pre-K3 through 5th grade makes sense.

As Mayor-elect Bowser reviews the boundary and admission changes, we hope that these positive steps will be allowed to move forward.