



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog

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Council Invests in Summer Programs for DC Public School and Charter School Students

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This week, the DC Council took action to extend the reach of summer school programming this year, adding \$4 million to increase slots at both DC Public Schools and DC Public Charter Schools. This reversed an approach that would have funded a much smaller group of students to participate this summer.

The Council found the money to strengthen summer school by taking funds from one of the city's best housing programs, with a plan that is expected -- but not guaranteed -- to restore the housing funds later in the year. It is unfortunate that efforts to fund a critical education program could put funding for another important program at risk.

There's a reason summer school should be a funding priority. Though many students look forward to having the summer off, research shows this time can be valuable to youngsters who are academically behind. With the right blend of programs, DC students can benefit from summer school offerings by catching up in key academic subjects and preventing "summer learning loss" from one grade to the next.

DC Public Schools offers a range of summer school programming, including services for students in kindergarten through 12th grade and a "summer bridge" program for rising 9th graders. Over 6,000 children and youth were served last summer. This year, however, DCPS changed its K-8 summer school policy to serve students on an invitation-only basis. This meant that only about 2,700 students who were identified as high priority, or considered most likely to benefit from five weeks of summer school programming, were to be offered a DCPS K-8 slot this summer.

While DCFPI supports the investment in summer school, the funding method is not ideal. The move to fund summer school took \$4 million out of the city's Housing Production Trust Fund, which supports the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing. There is a plan to restore funds to the Trust Fund at the end of the fiscal year, using revenues for the Washington Metro Transit Authority that are projected to be higher than what is needed. But, it is uncertain at this point that resources will be sufficient to do this.

In the short-term, we hope the DC Council will ensure that the \$4 million in funds are paid back into the Housing Production Trust Fund at the end of this fiscal year. This situation also raises questions of whether DCPS funding is adequate to offer both a robust school-year program and a summer program to all students who need additional support. This is something the DC public education adequacy study, currently underway, will hopefully address.