



The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

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Unlocking Opportunities: Parent Engagement Services That Help Poor Children Succeed in the Classroom

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A child's family plays a significant role in their ability to succeed in school. A parent who is engaged in their child's education can reinforce what is learned in the classroom and track their child's progress. Students considered to be at greatest risk, including those from low-income families, have the most to gain from quality family engagement in their education.

However, a parent's ability to get involved in school activities can be affected by poverty. Nationally, one-fourth of children living in poverty have a parent who volunteers at their school, compared with nearly 45 half of children above the poverty line. Low-income parents often work multiple jobs or have non-traditional work hours and have less free time and resources available to regularly participate in school activities.

The second [installment](#) in *Unlocking Opportunities*, DCFPI's new series on [services that can help poor children succeed in the classroom](#), focuses on strategies in DC schools to help parents become more engaged, and what can be done to expand effective programs.

High-quality parent engagement strategies go beyond "back-to-school" events and parent handbooks. They instead establish true partnerships between families and schools. Robust parent engagement services require adequate staff capacity and leadership to make it a success. The District is making notable progress in this area, for example:

- Next year, 30 DC schools will be part of the **Family Engagement Partnership** with the private Flamboyan Foundation. Teachers build trusting relationships with families and share information parents need to support their children's learning at home. The partnership uses two strategies: Parent-Teacher Home Visits that send pairs of teachers to visit families in their homes, and Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, where parents are given information on the academic skills their children need to know to complete the grade and are shown specific learning activities they can do at home.
- DC Public Schools has started the **Family Engagement Collaborative**, a year-long professional learning community. This year, 52 participating teachers met regularly to study high-quality parent engagement strategies and conduct home visits with families.

The District should continue to evaluate this work and share best practices with policymakers to inform future funding decisions. The city also should help more high-poverty schools develop the capacity and resources needed to participate in effective parent engagement models.

To read our issue brief on parent engagement strategies in the District, click [here](#).