



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
[www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org)

August 12, 2015

## Students and Families Likely to Benefit from the District's Expansion of Community Schools

By Soumya Bhat

The concept of schools serving as community hubs that connect children and their families to other services is getting a boost in the District. The budget that took effect July 1 will enable the city's pilot Community Schools program to expand to two more sites and provides for evaluation measures that will help to assess whether the program is reaching its goals.

The idea behind the Community Schools model is that if public schools provide services beyond those that are purely educational, ultimately, students and their families will see benefits.

The model uses schools as central hubs for students and the community to make use of services such as physical and mental health care, afterschool activities, adult education, and early childhood services provided by community-based partners. This combination of opportunities can help families become more engaged, help kids do better in school, and build stronger communities.

The strategic expansion of Community Schools is a good idea, and should become part of the city's broader strategy to close the student achievement gap. Currently, [six DC grantees](#) receive local funding to develop Community Schools. The District's budget for this year includes \$400,000 for two more, including one serving a large homeless student population.

### Key Features of Community Schools

- Community engagement and buy-in from school leadership
- Initial assets and needs assessment to identify gaps in services
- Partnerships between school and community-based organizations
- Integration of comprehensive, non-instructional services with academic goals

As the pilot project expands, it is important to set clear goals and document how the program affects students and families. The budget includes an additional \$66,000 to support this evaluation. Tracking school readiness, student attendance, adult education, and other indicators can help measure the model's effects on student learning, health, and family engagement over time.

DCFPI will be following the progress and evaluation of Community Schools. Stay tuned to the District's Dime for updates.