



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
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## The District Should Do More to Evaluate Success of Critical Education Programs

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Yesterday, DCFPI [testified](#) before the Council Committee on Education on two important divisions within the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) that would benefit from better data and evaluation: homeless student services and the city's Community Schools program. Our key recommendations included guidelines for conducting a comprehensive needs assessment for homeless students and ensuring the Community Schools program evaluation will be made accessible to the public.

**Assessing and Identifying Needs of Homeless Students:** Homeless liaisons in DC Public Schools and public charter schools need a comprehensive set of tools to help address the unique needs of each homeless child and their family. This is especially important in the District, given the very large number of homeless students and the barriers to learning that homelessness can create if not addressed. Conducting a system-wide needs assessment – to identify what services are being provided, how well they work, and what gaps in services remain would help the city better understand what is needed to adequately serve homeless students and how best to allocate staff and resources.

While some work is underway at OSSE, DCFPI recommends the needs assessment process be even more comprehensive by working with a broad range of stakeholders, including the OSSE coordinator for the McKinney-Vento program, school level homeless liaisons, teachers, shelter providers, school nurses, homeless families and others who are homeless or community partners who provide services for homeless students.

**Evaluation of the Community Schools Program:** The Community Schools model use public schools as central hubs for students and the larger community to access integrated services and supports. They do this by developing partnerships between the school and community-based resources. The partners often connect students and their families with outside supports, including medical, dental and mental health services, before- and after-school programs, or classes focused on financial literacy, GED prep, or computer skills.

With last year's expansion, there are currently 13 schools operating Community School partnerships in the District. Funding was also added this year to conduct a city-wide program evaluation of the model. OSSE is using a "service-based" approach, which would look at the impact of services on certain student and community outcomes that go beyond test scores, such as improved behavior of students, parent involvement, and larger community benefits.

DCFPI supports this larger perspective on measuring the impact of Community Schools and encourages OSSE to share data from the evaluation with the public as well as Community School grantees at the end of the 2015-16 school year.

You can find our full performance oversight testimony for OSSE [here](#).