

## Education: Make Essential Investments in All of DC's Children, In and Out of The Classroom

The fiscal year (FY) 2020 DC budget should make essential investments in early childhood learning, equitably funded PreK-12 classrooms, and evidence-based student discipline to support the education and healthy development of DC's children.

### Start Implementing “Birth to Three” Reforms Adopted in 2018

Just as every woman deserves a healthy pregnancy, every child deserves a strong start and high-quality educational experiences beginning at birth. The period from birth to age three is critical for social, emotional and cognitive development, and investments in young children have profound long-term benefits.

The District has taken important recent steps to support infants through age three, including investments to improve quality child care, and adoption of the comprehensive “Birth to Three for All DC” Act. The District now needs to devote funds to make the groundbreaking reforms in this legislation a reality.

The “Birth to Three for All DC” Act recognizes that payments to child care providers serving children from low-income families are well below the level needed for high-quality care and leave many providers in low-income communities struggling to make ends meet. This has damaging lifetime effects on children and adds to DC's deep racial and economic inequities. Children in families with low incomes and children of color face barriers to academic achievement beginning at birth. Low payments to child care providers also contribute to meager earnings for early childhood educators—primarily women of color—who make just \$29,000 on average. Increasing support for child care providers should be connected to raising wages for educators.

The “Birth to Three for All DC” Act also includes important provisions to support families with young children through home visiting services and physical and mental health supports.

**An investment of \$30 million in FY 2020 will allow DC to implement key reforms in the “Birth to Three for All DC” Act:**

- **Child Care:** \$22 million will increase access to high-quality care for low-income children and bring pay for early childhood educators closer to that of elementary school teachers.
- **Home Visiting:** \$6 million will strengthen programs that support families of young children as they transition from pregnancy to parenting, including expansions for immigrant families and families experiencing homelessness.
- **Health Care:** \$2 million will bring more mental health professionals to early childhood centers through the Healthy Futures program and enable pediatricians to provide comprehensive supports to new parents through the Healthy Steps program.



## Adequately Fund DC Schools, with a Focus on Equity

It's time for DC's leaders to focus on creating a school budget that adequately funds all schools and targets resources to address educational inequities. Key parts of the school funding formula remain under-funded—particularly supports for students at risk of falling behind and English-language learners. DCPS continues to divert a large share of at-risk funds intended for high-poverty schools to other educational purposes.

### Increase Funding for All Schools to Match Growing Costs

Currently, DC has no standard to ensure that school funding rises each year to address growing costs such as teacher pay and maintenance. Funding increases in DC's school funding formula—the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)—have been arbitrary in recent years, and for much of the past decade total school funding per-pupil failed to keep up with inflation. Increasing school funding through the funding formula will make our schools better equipped to provide a quality education to every student.

**For FY 2020 and beyond, the District's per-student funding formula should be adjusted using a predictable measure of inflation that is targeted to education costs in DC. This is likely to require \$35 million or more.**

### Increase and Protect At-Risk Funds

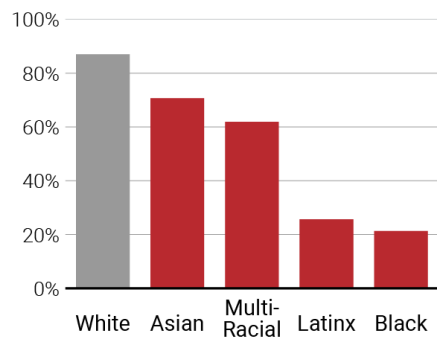
DC's funding formula provides additional money to schools to support low-income students and those falling behind in the classroom. "At-risk" funds are a powerful tool to increase the equity of school funding and address [distressing differences](#) between the educational outcomes for white students and students of color. In high school English, 87 percent of white students are college and career ready compared to only 21 percent of Black students. These inequities reflect historic and ongoing barriers to quality education and good jobs, housing discrimination and segregation, and other factors that have resulted in low incomes for many Black households and most Black students attending high-poverty schools.

Despite these persisting inequities, the at-risk supplement is less than two-thirds the amount recommended a 2013 Adequacy Study. Equally important, DCPS has misspent over 40 percent of "at-risk" funds in recent years, using the funds for regular staff positions across all schools rather than directing funds to schools that low-income students attend.

**For FY 2020, the DC budget should increase the at-risk weight and put it on a path to reaching the full adequacy level over four years. This will require an investment of \$17 million or more. DCPS should be held accountable to devoting 100 percent of at-risk funds to the intended students and schools.**

### Differences in Tested Preparation for College and Career Reflects Racial Inequities in and out of DC Schools

Share of high school students scoring at Level 4 or higher on English Language Arts in 2017, which is considered "college and career" ready

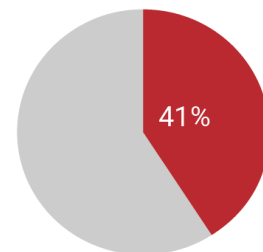


Note: Score refers to 2016-17 PARCC Scores. The performance of students who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian is not depicted here, as calculations for subgroups smaller than 25 are suppressed. Source: Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

DC FISCAL POLICY INSTITUTE | DCFPI.ORG

### Only 59 Percent of DCPS 'At-Risk' Funds Allocated to Supplemental Programming in FY 2019

- Unaccounted For, Likely 'Supplanting' Core School Function
- Budgeted to Support Supplemental Staff and Targeted Programs



Note: By law, 90 percent of 'at-risk' funds must follow students to their DCPS schools. Of that \$50.3 million in at-risk funds, only \$29.8 million was allocated to support positions in addition to those guaranteed in the Comprehensive School Staffing Model. All school level 'at-risk' funds should be budgeted and spent in ways that are identifiably supplemental. It is likely that a large share of these unaccounted for 'at-risk' funds are once again paying for core staff, instead of supplemental services. Source: Analysis of DCPS' initial budget allocations for FY 2019 by Mary Levy, April 2018.

DC FISCAL POLICY INSTITUTE | DCFPI.ORG

## Increase Funds for English Language Learners

DC's school funding formula includes a supplement to meet the needs of English language learners. The current supplement is 20 percent lower than the amount recommended in DC's 2013 Education Adequacy study, which means we are not providing adequate resources to help immigrant students succeed. Without adequate resources, just one in five English-language learners in DC schools are college and career ready.

**The FY 2020 DC budget should increase the English Language Learner weight and put it on a path to reaching the full adequacy level over four years. This will require \$2 million or more.**

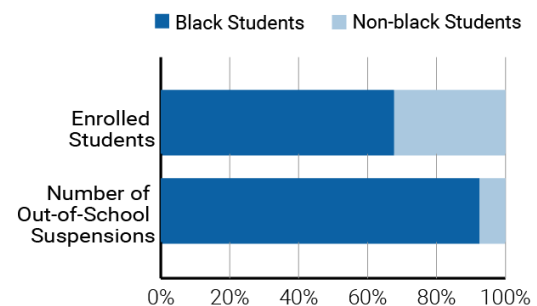
## Stop School Push-out: Provide More Resources for Restorative Justice in Schools

In 2018, the District adopted legislation to shift away from school discipline policies that utilize suspensions and expulsions, and instead focus on restorative justice and creating positive school climates. The District now needs to devote funds to implement the new law, the Student Fair Access to School Act (SFASA).

SFASA dramatically shifts our approach to school discipline. It limits the use and duration of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary transfers to other schools. It also calls for DC to support schools in implementing alternate practices to address behavioral issues and to develop education settings that are trauma-informed.

This shift is important. When schools rely on suspension or expulsion for discipline, students miss lessons, fall behind when they return, and are more likely to drop out. In DC, students of color have received much harsher disciplinary responses than white students for the same behaviors. There is no evidence that students of color misbehave to a greater degree than white students, yet Black students are [seven times](#) more likely to be suspended and sent out of the classroom than white students.

### Black Students in DC Disproportionately Suspended, Despite No Evidence That Students of Color Misbehave Any More Than White Students



Source: Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "State of Discipline 2016-17 School Year."

DC FISCAL POLICY INSTITUTE | DCFPI.ORG

**To improve school culture, student outcomes, and effectively begin implementing the Student Fair Access to School Act, the District should provide at least \$23.50 million in FY 2020 for the following:**

- **Additional School Staffing:** \$15 million will allow DC to hire 144 school-based counselors to serve DC's highest-need schools.
- **Positive School Climate Fund:** \$8.5 million will empower schools to pursue promising practices that reduce school push-out. For example, school leaders might offer new teacher trainings or trauma-responsive services.