



Washington Teachers' Union

Amplifying the Voice of DC Teachers

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DC Public Schools

Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Budget Engagement

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Testimony of

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Good evening. I am Elizabeth Davis, President of the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU). The WTU represents 5,000 active and retired teachers. We are dedicated to social and educational justice for the students of the District of Columbia and to improving the quality of support, resources, compensation and working conditions for the public servants and proud teachers who educate our students.

I am a teacher. I believe our students are only limited by the opportunities that we provide them. As we begin conversations about the upcoming budget, I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to highlight the opportunity gaps that continue to plague our schools and many students. While the health pandemic has brought renewed attention to these gaps, we have long known that they have existed. It is time that we acknowledge the impact that these opportunity gaps – especially the digital divide – has on the achievement of our students. And, as we emerge from this crisis, it is critical that the FY2022 DCPS budget adequately reflects our reality and adequately invests in all our students (see Appendix 1).

The budgeting process is full of choices. We recognize that budgets will be tight this coming year. However, we expect DCPS to advocate for the resources that our students need, taking a strong budget request to the Mayor, asking her to increase the city's per-student allocation and expand at-risk funding. We also expect DCPS to prioritize transparency and the engagement of Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) as it considers changes to its local school funding model and makes decisions about programmatic funding for SY2021-2022.

We believe our city's FY2022 education budget should (1) ensure our teachers and students are safe when we reopen schools for in-person learning; (2) ensure equity, and high-quality, well-rounded education for all students; (3) provides supports for and the retention of our teaching workforce.

At the systems level, we encourage DCPS to invest in programs to better support teachers and reduce teacher turnover. We all share the goal of having a highly effective teachers in every classroom. However, we differ greatly in how we believe we should evaluate teachers. We encourage DCPS to remove high-stakes testing from teacher evaluations and instead invest in programs to support teacher growth and development. This includes robust, research –led professional development, programs to support student loan forgiveness and tax credits to public servants who live in the communities where they work.

As the WTU looks at the FY2022 budget at the individual school level, we are looking for investments that are equitable, help our city and students recover from the health pandemic, and prioritize closing the achievement gaps that plague our city. As you begin the development of DCPS' FY2022 budget and consider changes to the local school budgeting model, I urge you to keep these priorities in mind:

- 1. DCPS should establish transparent base funding for each school tied to enrollment and grade level.** Under the city's Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), each LEA receives a level of funding to support the unique needs of each public school student enrolled. The city formula accounts – through a weighted system – for the additional costs of educating students in each grade band, as well as additional funding needed for special education, English Language Learners, and other unique categories of students. DCPS's FY2022 budget process should use a specific and transparent methodology ensuring school communities are informed on both the method of funding individual schools and the results.

2. **Ensure At-Risk Funding supplements rather than supplants local funding and is flexible at the local school level.** The city's current school funding formula provides an additional \$2,470 for every "at-risk" student. However, DCPS continues to shortchange schools and students by failing to ensure this funding supplements local school budgets.¹ DCPS should publish each school's supplemental at-risk allocations and give school leaders, including LSATs, authority to spend those dollars at the local level.
3. **Ensure every student receives a well-rounded education.** Far too many of our schools fail to provide equitable opportunities to all students. DCPS needs to ensure that every student has access to similar opportunities regardless of their zip code or success in the lottery. Specifically, DCPS needs to ensure that every student has equitable access to the Arts, Science, Social Studies, and World Languages. Every DCPS school should have a full-time librarian and middle school students should have opportunities to take Algebra and Geometry courses that help to prepare them for our city's selective high schools.
4. **Invest in Community Schools and enhanced social-emotional programming.** Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. DCPS must invest in the mental and social health of our students and begin the process of altering these systemic inequities. Building upon efforts to Defund the Police, DCPS must ensure the FY2022 budget fully supports social and mental health, career support, and other social-emotional positions within the DCPS budget and expands the Community Schools model to serve more students.
5. **Ensure 1:1 technology.** The health pandemic has highlighted the vast digital divide and its impacts on our students. In the coming budget, DC Public Schools needs to change our city's approach to this gap and make a sustained pledge to ensure every DCPS student receives a computer and has access to the internet. Access to the internet and on-line learning must be seen as a basic right of all DCPS students.
6. **Empower LSATs with real decision-making and budget authority.** DCPS's Capital Commitment places family engagement as one of its 5 key strategic priorities, promising to ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community. DCPS needs to ensure this promise is met by empowering LSATs with timely information and real engagement throughout the budget process. This must include previews of budget models for input and respecting the time, commitment and input of these bodies as final budget decisions are made.

Our public schools should be the great equalizer. Our schools must be a place where students can come and learn, a place where they can rise up and achieve. Unfortunately, here in the District of Columbia, we have a two-tiered system of education with vast inequities and the gaps are continuing to grow. Today's conversation should be a first step forward in correcting this injustice.

As DCPS considers the financial investments I outlined above, I also hope it will work with the Washington Teachers' Union, parents, and community advocates to reform our school accountability measures to deemphasize the role that standardized testing plays in how we rank our schools and evaluate our teachers. We also hope that DCPS will work with us to require the

¹ <https://dcauditor.org/report/d-c-schools-shortchange-at-risk-students/>

city to develop a comprehensive plan for education and establish a Master Facility Plan to guide the growth of our city's school systems. DCPS' needs to reject the concept of school choice and stand with parents and students in ensuring that every student, regardless of their zip code or success in the lottery receives a great education.

Thank you for your attention. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Appendix 1.

District of Columbia PARCC Results	State ELA % 4+				4-year Growth
	2016	2017	2018	2019	
All Students	26.7%	30.5%	33.3%	37.1%	10.4%
White	74.3%	82.0%	82.1%	85.0%	10.7%
Black	19.3%	22.0%	24.7%	27.8%	8.5%
Hispanic	24.7%	28.9%	32.0%	37.3%	12.6%
Asian	55.7%	66.2%	71.6%	74.0%	18.3%
At-Risk	13.2%	15.8%	18.4%	21.1%	7.9%
English Learners	13.8%	1.5%	18.8%	19.7%	5.9%
Students with Disabilities	5.4%	4.8%	5.7%	7.9%	2.5%

PARCC Scores	State Math % 4+				4-year Growth
	2016	2017	2018	2019	
All Students	24.8%	26.9%	29.4%	30.5%	5.7%
White	71.0%	75.5%	78.8%	78.8%	7.8%
Black	17.4%	18.6%	20.7%	21.1%	3.7%
Hispanic	22.0%	28.2%	28.2%	30.5%	8.5%
Asian	59.7%	64.5%	69.8%	69.4%	9.7%
At-Risk	12.9%	14.2%	15.7%	16.3%	3.4%
English Learners	18.5%	21.2%	20.9%	22.7%	4.2%
Students with Disabilities	6.4%	5.3%	6.4%	7.2%	0.8%

Source: <https://osse.dc.gov/parcc>