



# Family and Community Guide to the DC Public Schools Budget



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WE ARE  
WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



Dear DCPS Community,

When I visit classrooms across our district, I meet with educators who are creating joyful learning experiences, students who are making plans for college and career, and school leaders who are building communities where our 51,000+ students feel loved, challenged, and prepared. I know that in order for our schools to continue their progress, we must provide them with the resources that they need to set students up for success.

When I have engaged with our community over the past year, I have heard your feedback about the importance of the DCPS budget being both **transparent and equitable**. I know that we cannot build trust without transparency, and that **equity and putting students first must be at the heart of our budget decisions**. With School Year 2019-2020 underway across the district, we are already beginning to plan our budget for next school year and beyond.

Toward this goal, the district is taking two major steps in the budget process:

- **For next school year, which is funded in Fiscal Year 2021, DCPS is committed to making our budget process more transparent**, so that our families and our communities understand how our dollars are allocated across our schools. In this guide, we are sharing steps we are taking to make the budget process more transparent, including a narrative to explain fluctuations in school-specific budgets and more context on the central office budget. For the FY21 budget, DCPS will continue to engage with our community through a student budget hearing, a public budget hearing, and Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) Roundtables to ensure that the needs of our community are reflected in how we allocate our funds.
- **For Fiscal Year 2022, which will take effect in School Year 2021-2022, DCPS is holistically evaluating our budget model** and process to determine how we can best engage in transparent, equitable, and financially sustainable budgeting that empowers principals to use resources in a more flexible manner to improve student outcomes. Engagement with our stakeholders as well as with school budget experts will be critical in this process, so that we ensure that our budgets meet the needs of the students and families our schools serve. This engagement will take place through the spring of 2020.

By working in collaboration with our schools, our families, and our community, we will build a DCPS Budget for All. I look forward to working with you toward this goal, so that we can provide every school with the resources needed to set its students and community up for success.

In partnership,

Lewis D. Ferebee, Ed.D.  
Chancellor  
DC Public Schools



# The Budget Timeline

**August** School year begins.

**October** Fiscal year begins.

Opportunities for public input, including community forums and the public budget hearing, begin and continue through the next few months.

**January to March** Projected student enrollment count for next school year used to determine district funding amount.  
DCPS provides initial school budgets to schools for next fiscal year.

LSATs discuss their school's proposed budget.

Schools submit the next fiscal year budgets to DCPS.

DCPS submits the next fiscal year budget.

**Spring** DC Council approves the next fiscal year budget.

**June/July** School year ends.

**Summer** District leaders present the next fiscal year budget to Congress for approval.

**August** School year begins.

**October** Fiscal year begins.



## Transparency Commitments

DCPS is committed to increasing transparency in the budget process and to helping our community understand how our funds are allocated. For FY21, DCPS is:

- **Highlighting new budget data.** New resources on the [DCPS Data Center](#) site will help community members understand how schools customized their budgets to reflect the needs of their individual school communities.
- **Allocating school budgets by fund.** Allocating by fund source (e.g. local funds, grant funds) will support schools in better understanding their grant funding.
- **Summarizing year-over-year budget changes by school.** A narrative section on each school's initial budget allocation will describe any key enrollment, student demographic, or programmatic shifts that affect a specific school's initial allocation.
- **Revising the School Budget Guide.** Changes will be informed by the community regarding how to make the guide clearer and more transparent. For example, DCPS may add an executive summary section to make the document more accessible.
- **Sharing more content on the central office budget.** This year, this guide offers more details on the role of the central office, its overall budget, and how funds are spent.



# How DCPS is Funded

## Sources of Funding

DCPS receives funding primarily from local tax dollars. DCPS also receives funding from federal grants, including Title I and Head Start; other sources such as philanthropy; and special purpose revenue, including custodial fees generated from building rentals.

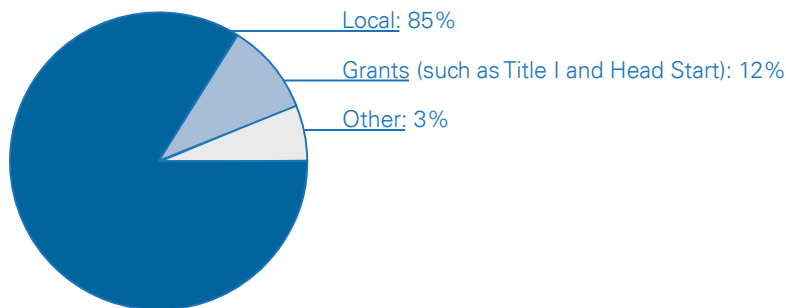
## Opportunities for Budget Stakeholder Input

Each year, DCPS invites student representatives from each high school to participate in a Student Budget Hearing. Students share their feedback on DCPS investments and make recommendations about what they would like to see at their schools in areas such as attendance, technology, literacy, social emotional learning, and more.



In the fall, DCPS' Chancellor and senior leadership convene an annual Public Budget Hearing to hear from key DCPS stakeholders about what they would like to see in the upcoming fiscal year budget. DCPS also hosts an opportunity for the community to learn more about the budget process and DCPS' priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, and provide feedback through interactive discussions with district leaders and fellow stakeholders. This happens during community forums in the fall and winter.

## District Total Funding (Fiscal Year 2020)



## Local Funding

DCPS' local funding is determined by the city's Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF). This formula provides a base or "foundation level" for each DCPS student and supplements on top of the base for certain student factors.

Additional funding is provided for students in certain grade levels, students with disabilities, students who are English Learners, and students in Opportunity Academies. Additional funding is also provided for students who meet the "at-risk" definition, including students who are homeless, students in foster care, students who qualify for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and high school students who are overage for the grade in which they are enrolled.

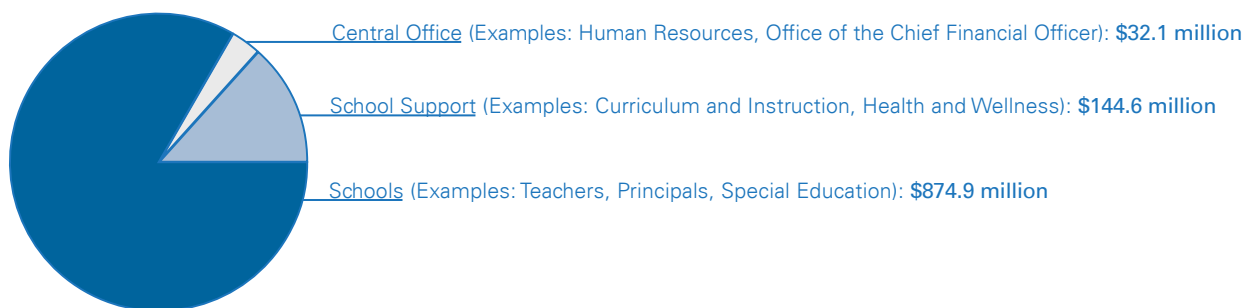
The total per-pupil funding amount is then multiplied by the expected DCPS student enrollment count to determine the total local funding DCPS receives. For more information on the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, visit [code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/38/chapters/29](https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/38/chapters/29).

## Federal Funding

DCPS receives several different types of federal funding, including formula (or enrollment-based) funding and competitive grant funding. This includes funding for students from low-income families (Title I), students with disabilities (IDEA), and students who are English Learners (Title III).

## District Funding Breakdown

DCPS invests the majority of funds in schools and in support of schools. In Fiscal Year 2020, for every dollar in the budget, nearly 97 cents went to schools or to directly support schools.







# How School Budgets are Created

Schools develop their budget for the following school year through a three-step process.

## **Step 1: Enrollment**

School budgets are based on the expected student enrollment count for the upcoming school year, which is determined using historical enrollment data, trends, and other relevant factors. To begin the school budget creation process, DCPS central office provides each school with an expected student enrollment count for the following year. This includes an estimated number of students by grade, students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who may be eligible for free- or reduced- price lunch.

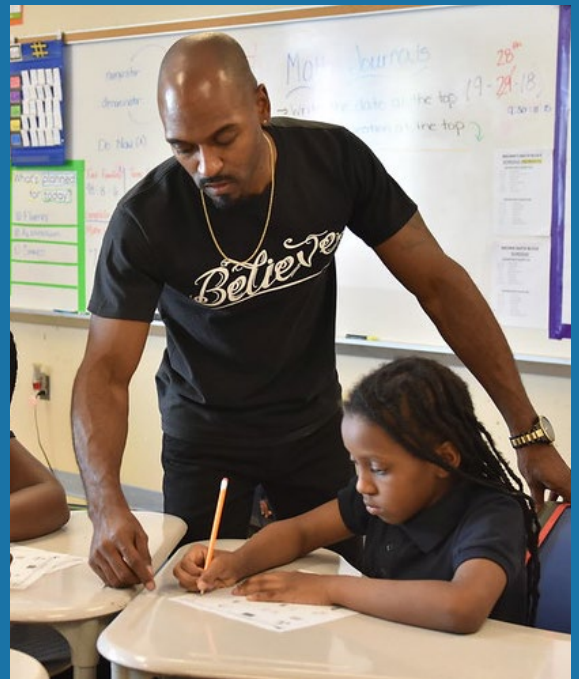
## Step 2: Initial Funding Amount

Each school then receives an initial funding amount, or allocation, based on its unique population. This initial funding amount is determined by:

- **The Comprehensive Staffing Model:** The Comprehensive Staffing Model (CSM) is designed to ensure that all schools have enough positions and supplemental funding to ensure that students across all wards have access to a high quality educational experience. For more information, visit [dcpsdatacenter.com](http://dcpsdatacenter.com).
- **Non-Personnel:** Each school receives funding for non-personnel investments, such as funding for technology and supplies. The amount of non-personnel funding is based on a per student formula.
- **Additional Funds:** Some schools benefit from additional funding opportunities through applying for grants or being part of specialized District initiatives and programming. For example, the UPSFF includes additional funding for students who meet the definition of “at-risk.” Schools receive additional staff positions and resources to support these students.

The **Comprehensive Staffing Model** (CSM) allocates funding for school staff positions including school leadership (such as a principal), instructional staff (such as a 1st grade teacher), and other school staff (such as a psychologist, custodian, or guidance counselor). The model also provides dedicated funding for staff who support students with disabilities and English Learners.

Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and education campuses each have a different staffing model. For example, every school gets a principal, but a high school may receive funding for an athletics and activities coordinator, while an elementary school may receive funding for a prekindergarten instructional aide. In addition, each school type model takes into account each grade level’s specific teacher-to-student ratio requirements.



While the CSM allocates funding for staff positions, schools are not required to spend the funding on every position included in the CSM. Some positions, like a principal, are required. Other positions are flexible or the school may ask permission to spend the associated funding differently.

More information about the Comprehensive Staffing Model is available at [dcpsdatacenter.com](http://dcpsdatacenter.com).



### Step 3: School Budget Development

Between January and February, principals use their initial funding amount to develop their budgets for the following school year. This process involves the steps below.

- **Engagement:** Principals work with their school's LSAT in developing their budgets. Principals and LSATs gather additional input from teachers, staff, families, and communities; they consider this feedback as they decide how to use funds that can be spent flexibly.
- **Budgeting for Required Positions:** Schools are required to include certain positions in their budgets. Examples include principals and teachers.
- **Budgeting for Flexible Decisions:** Schools make decisions about staffing and budgeting to design programs that support their students' educational success. For staff positions under the CSM that are flexible, schools may seek permission from DCPS central office to spend the allocated funding on a different investment aligned with their school goals. This could look like investing in an afterschool provider or additional professional development for teachers and staff.

### Step 4: Budget Review and Approval by DC Council

After principals submit their proposed budgets, DCPS compiles and submits the proposed budget for the district, including schools and central office, to the Mayor. The Mayor adds DCPS's proposed budget to the proposed DC government budget and submits it to DC Council for approval.

The DC Council holds a hearing on DCPS' budget, can make changes or additions to the proposed budget, and ultimately approves the budget for the district.

More information about individual school budgets is available at [dcpsdatacenter.com](https://dcpsdatacenter.com).

The **Local School Advisory Team (LSAT)** is a group of elected and appointed members that exists for every DCPS school. The team consists of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff, a community member, and in some cases, students. This team advises the principal on matters that promote high expectations and achievement for all students, including the development of the school's budget.



#### Average Salaries at DCPS

DCPS budgets for all school-based staff based on the average cost of the staff member. As a result, each school receives funding for the average cost of each staff position, including salary and benefits, and includes the average cost in the school's budget development. The actual staff member who is hired may receive a salary that is more or less than the average. Using average salaries protects schools against fluctuations due to staff changes and maintains schools' ability to hire teachers based on quality.



# How Central Office is Funded

DCPS is committed to investing resources in schools to support student success. Based on that goal, we invest most funds in schools, through the Comprehensive Staffing Model, and in support of schools through central services.

The role of the central office at DC Public Schools is to promote equity, set a clear standard for excellence, and support schools in meeting those expectations. DCPS' central office budget supports schools through three types of investments:

- **School-based positions:** These centrally-budgeted allocations support functions such as cafeteria service, athletics, and related service delivery for students with disabilities, including social workers and psychologists.
- **School support:** These allocations support functions such as curriculum and instruction, and management and technical assistance (e.g. staff who directly support each school cluster).
- **Central administration:** These allocations support district functions such as procurement, human resources, and financial administration.

By centrally budgeting for some personnel and good and services, DCPS can realize economies of scale, create efficiencies in procurement, meet fluctuating needs as student demographics shift across and within schools, and support compliance.

## FY20 Schools and Central Allocations

The FY20 budget was the tenth consecutive year the school district's budget increased funding for schools. In the budget process, DCPS always prioritizes programs closest to schools. Since FY15, DCPS' spending on central office administration has remained approximately flat in terms of overall dollars. For FY20, DCPS invested:

- \$874.9 million, or 84% of its operating budget in school budgets and school-based supports.<sup>1</sup>
- \$144.6 million, or 13% of its operating budget in school supports.
- \$32.1 million, or 3% of its operating budget, on central administration.

As with DCPS' overall budget, the central office budget is comprised of local and non-local funds, such as federal and other grants. DCPS reviews its budget codes annually with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO).

## Significant Central Allocations

This section outlines several centrally-managed, significant planned expenditures that DCPS provides schools for FY20.

- **Food Services: \$54 million** to operate the school nutrition program to ensure students receive healthy meals.
- **Building Maintenance: \$28 million** for school campus maintenance costs, including electricity, gas, and water.
- **Information Technology: \$25 million** for technology, data systems, and technology support for DCPS students and staff.
- **Related service providers: \$19 million** for staff who provide services for students with disabilities. The budget for audiologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, and speech therapists, among others, is managed centrally because these employees serve caseloads of students across multiple schools.
- **Athletics: \$7 million** to provide athletics offerings from elementary to high school grades.

<sup>1</sup> The centrally-budgeted school-based allocations are included in this number. An example of a centrally-budgeted school-based allocation is a related service provider, such as an Occupational Therapist, who serves in multiple schools and is budgeted and managed centrally so that she can be redeployed based on student caseload shifts.



## How Central Budget is Developed

Each year, DCPS develops our schools budgets and then develops the central office budget. In determining its central office allocation, DCPS carefully examines the supports central office provides to schools. Specifically:

- DCPS conducts extensive public engagement throughout the fall to seek stakeholder input on budget priorities. For example, DCPS hosts an annual Public Budget Hearing, an annual Student Budget Hearing, and additional Community Budget Forums.
- Leaders review DCPS' Capital Commitment goals and seek alignment with their workstreams.
- Leaders review legal and compliance mandates (e.g. providing human resources supports such as benefits onboarding) related to their offices.
- DCPS determines its planned investments in schools and in central functions, which determine central office allocations.

## How DCPS' Budget Differs from Other School Districts

There are several ways DCPS' budget is unique compared to other school districts' budgets.

- DCPS' proposed budget is included in the City's proposed budget. The City's budget is presented to Congress. Other districts' budgets are adopted by their School Boards.
- DCPS follows the federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30). Many other school districts set their own fiscal year (often July 1 to June 30 to align with the school year).
- DCPS cannot carry local funds year over year. Many other school districts maintain fund reserves, which allow the districts to make strategic adjustments on an ongoing basis.
- Unlike some school districts, DCPS does not levy taxes to fund its schools.
- DCPS does not create its own chart of accounts (e.g. the business functions in the budget); instead, DCPS follows the City's chart of accounts.
- The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) oversees and supervises financial functions for DC government, including DCPS. For instance, OCFO staff manage DCPS' accounting. OCFO also oversees a city-wide financial system that DCPS and other City agencies use. Other school districts own staff overseeing this work and maintain their own financial systems.

## **DCPS' Capital Budget**

Each year, DCPS allocates Capital funds to ensure we are providing 21st Century learning environments across all eight wards. Our Capital budget is funded through the District's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and includes investments to design and construct our modernized buildings, as well as to stabilize our facilities through small capital construction projects. Through the CIP, Mayor Bowser has designated more than \$360 million in Capital funding for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), and more than \$1.3 billion for FY20 through FY26. DCPS' Capital budget is aligned to requirements set forth by the [PACE Act](#). The Capital budget for Fiscal Year 2020 funds the completion of modernization projects at C.W. Harris Elementary School, Houston Elementary School, Jefferson Middle School, Eliot-Hine Middle School, and the opening of a new Early Learning Center at the historic Thaddeus Stevens building.

## **Questions?**

For more information, visit [dcps.dc.gov/budget](https://dcps.dc.gov/budget).



DC Public Schools serves more than **51,000 students** and operates **118 schools** across the District of Columbia.

