

Investing in Education

Introduction

The Council continues its commitment to District students that they receive a meaningful education with \$17.5 million of investments in the FY 2021 operating budget and the FY 2020 supplemental operating budget. These enhancements include childcare subsidies, library opening hours and circulation, literacy grants, school financial transparency, and out-of-school time grants – see [table](#) below.

Education Budget Highlights

	Mayor's FY21 Proposed Budget	Council's FY21 Enhancements	Approved FY21 Budget
Childcare subsidies*	\$107,467,000	\$11,402,000	\$113,869,000
Library opening hours & circulation	\$26,320,000	\$4,200,000	\$30,520,000
Literacy grants	\$1,700,000	\$900,000	\$2,600,000
School financial transparency	\$0	\$435,000	\$435,000
Out-of-School Time Grants	\$13,190,000	\$284,000	\$13,474,000

*Note: The Council added \$5m of this enhancement in FY20

Education is a major determinant in almost every aspect of our lives, including employment, general and mental health, income, longevity, and rate of divorce, among others.¹ Education also occupies a unique space as both one of the best tools to end racial disparities and the foundation on which many of these disparities are built. Racial inequities within the American school system that have persisted for generations result in achievement gaps that have lifelong impacts for Black Americans. Black students, as compared to their white peers, often read at a lesser proficiency, have lower graduation rates, are several grade levels behind, and are punished more frequently and severely.² Yet, while these racial disparities currently exist in the American school system, efforts taken to close education-based gaps will also narrow many of the health and socio-economic gaps that follow Black individuals throughout life.

Recognizing the importance of education and access to libraries both generally and as a means to promote equity across D.C., the Council made the following enhancements to public education, early childhood development, and the public library system.

Public Education

Education can play an important role in ending racial disparities when every child has access to high quality pre-K through 12th grade school and all residents have meaningful opportunities to pursue post-secondary education and adult learning. The Council recognized the importance of investing in education 15 years ago when it passed legislation and provided funding to make the District one of the first jurisdictions in the U.S. to provide universal pre-kindergarten, and every year the Council increases funding for D.C.'s public and public charter schools. Further, through the capital budget the Council works to fully modernize school facilities to ensure that student learning happens in safe and welcoming environments.

The challenge of ensuring educational equity is formidable. Across the U.S., traditionally underserved students, including minorities and low-income students, complete high school and attend college at lower rates than their peers. During the 2015-2016 school year, Black students in D.C. were on average 4.9 grade levels behind white students, and Latinx students were typically 4.1 grade levels behind.³ The Council is encouraged that the racial achievement gap in the District has narrowed every year since then, with Black students' English Language Arts state assessment results going up by 10.8 percentage points between 2015 and 2019 and Latinx students' results rising by 15.5 percentage points.⁴ Still, there is much work left to be done. The Council continues to fight to end racial disparities in educational outcomes and advance equity in the classroom. In FY 2021, the Council increases the additional "at-risk" student weight to provide extra services and supports to students that have greater barriers to success, including those students who are homeless, in foster care, eligible for social safety net programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or one year or older than the expected age for their enrolled grade level. In FY 2021, the at-risk weight will provide over \$100 million for targeted supports to vulnerable students including an approximately \$300,000 increase approved by the Council across both sectors. The Council supports continuing investments in District students, teachers, and schools through the Mayor's 3 percent increase to the Uniform Per-Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), which results in an increase of \$79.5 million for DCPS and \$30.1 million for charter schools.

The Council is committed to providing educational equity across the public education system. However, this effort is undermined by disjointed DCPS budget submissions and the lack of transparency provided about school budgets in the charter sector. Therefore, the Council adopts the "School Financial Transparency Amendment Act of 2020" requiring, among other things, common financial reporting standards for both DCPS and public charter schools, the publishing of previous school year's actual expenditures in both sectors, and places open meetings requirements on public charter schools. The Council provides \$435,000 including two new FTEs and directs a small part of the increase provided by the UPSFF for the charter sector to cover the costs associated with this legislation.⁵ The Council also invests \$248,000 at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education to continue supporting

In FY 2021, the Council adopts the "School Financial Transparency Amendment Act of 2020"

organizations that provide equitable out-of-school time programming for youth.

Early Childhood Development

The Council directs \$11.4 million to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education for childcare, including \$6.4 million for direct support to child care facilities, of which \$5 million was made available in FY20, and \$5 million to restore child care subsidies for families with young children.⁶ Through this enhancement, the Council provides needed relief to childcare providers during a critical time. Childcare is a critical part of the District's economic growth and recovery strategy, and COVID-19 has had a significant impact on childcare providers' operations. Many childcare centers in the District and have closed during the public health emergency and those that have remained open operate at a reduced capacity. If the District fails to support the jurisdiction's childcare infrastructure throughout the public health emergency and its aftermath, many parents and guardians will be unable to return to work.

The Council's investment works to ensure that all families in the District have equitable access to high-quality childcare. Seventy-six percent of D.C. children who are younger than age 5 receive at least 10 hours of child care outside the home, the highest rate of any state.⁷ However, childcare in the District is expensive, with the estimated average cost of care per child in FY 2019 ranged from \$17,011 to \$24,416.⁸ Childcare subsidies help families afford childcare and increase access equity. While Black women have historically had the highest rate of employment as compared to other women, they typically earn 20 percent less than white women.⁹ The Council's enhancement will also support childcare workers, who are disproportionately women and people of color. Over 93 percent of childcare workers in the U.S. are women, and 47 percent are Black or Latinx.¹⁰

Academic success begins with investment in early childhood education. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, white fourth graders read at or above proficiency at more than twice the rate of their Black peers, at 45 percent to 18 percent, respectively. Only 30 percent of D.C. fourth graders read at or above proficient level.¹¹ Early literacy results in long-term positive impacts for children, such as improved academic achievement, future employment opportunities, and increased income.¹² In FY 2021, the Council invests \$900,000 to increase support through early literacy grants that improve the reading outcomes of young children through OSSE.

The Council invests \$11.4 million in childcare

Public Libraries

The Council also recognizes in the FY 2021 budget the important role libraries play in District communities. In FY 2019, the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) system checked out over 4.86 million books, movies, and digital items to 446,000 District residents who had active accounts.¹³ In addition, its 28 branches serve as centers of neighborhood engagement and provides learning opportunities to all District residents, including literacy and career readiness training. *DCPL supports learning from the very youngest to the very oldest District resident, and the Council supports their work with \$4.2 million in enhancements in FY 2021.* The Council's enhancement includes *\$2.7 million to restore library operating hours.* It also includes *\$1.5 million to allow DCPL to purchase new books, both hardcopy and digital.*

With a substantial digital divide in the District and the fact that school will be held virtually for the foreseeable future, libraries are a vital resource to access technology and educational material.¹⁴ According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2015, over 50 percent of American parents with children under age 18 had visited a library or bookmobile site in past 12 months.¹⁵ Fifty percent of all survey participants between the ages of 16 and 49 also visited a library or bookmobile site in past 12 months. Among these groups, 56 percent visited once a month or more, with Latinx being the most frequent visitors (21 percent reported visiting at least once a week). District libraries saw over 3.8 million visitors in FY 2019, the highest since FY 2016.¹⁶

DCPL includes a central library, 25 neighborhood branches, and library services within the D.C. Jail. Most libraries offer a variety of programs that support community learning and in FY 2019 and the first quarter of FY 2020, DCPL offered more than 17,550 programs that were attended by more than 518,000 people. There are also 446,000 active D.C. Public Library accounts, with 72,000 registered to students. Wards 6 and 8 have the most accounts at around 45,000 and 42,000, respectively. Overall, library visitors primarily borrow print books, read, study, or listen or view media. This is particularly true for Hispanics, those age 16 to 29, and lower-income visitors. While 27 percent of visitors reported using a library's computer, internet connection, or Wi-Fi, 38 percent of Black, 32 percent of Latinx, and 31 percent of lower income visitors reported that they used these services. In the District, library computer and Wi-Fi usage has been increasing over the last few years, with more than 944,000 desktop computer sessions and 523,000 Wi-Fi connections in FY 2019. Americans see libraries as beneficial for their economic and educational resources, but also for the ways in which they promote a sense of community.

The Council supports the D.C. Public Library with \$4.2 million in enhancements in FY 2021.

Endnotes

- 1 (D. C. Department of Health, 2018; Franđ, 2017; Shen, 2018; Skrbinjek, 2020)
- 2 (Abamu, 2018; Chirimwami, 2019; French-Marcelin, 2017)
- 3 (Abamu, 2018)
- 4 (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2019)
- 5 "School Financial Transparency Amendment Act of 2020," as approved by the Committee of the Whole on July 28, 2020 (Enrolled Version of Bill 23-760).
- 6 (Tooley, 2020)
- 7 (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California - Berkeley, 2018; Committee for Economic Development, 2019)
- 8 (D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2018)
- 9 (Banks, 2019; Hegewisch & Hartmann, 2019; Malik & Hagler, 2016)
- 10 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020)
- 11 (The Nation's Report Card, 2019)
- 12 (Borre, 2012)
- 13 (D.C. Public Library, 2019)
- 14 Approximately 25 percent of D.C. residents lack access to broadband internet service. The average home broadband adoption rate of Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 is 85 percent, while its 65 percent in Wards 5, 7, and 8. There are also lower rates of broadband adoption among Black and Hispanic residents than among white residents. (Connect.DC - Digital Inclusion Initiative; Connect.DC, 2015)
- 15 (Horrigan, 2015)
- 16 (D.C. Public Libraries, 2020)

References

- Abamu, J. (2018, October 18). What Data On The Racial Divide In Schools Says About The Washington Region. WAMU. Retrieved from <https://wamu.org/story/18/10/18/data-racial-divide-schools-says-washington-region/>
- Banks, N. (2019). Black women's labor market history reveals deep-seated race and gender discrimination. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/>
- Borre, A. (2012). Long-Term Effects Through Grade Three of the Early Authors Program for Low-Income, Ethnically Diverse Preschoolers. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6b68/e67c9f071f5bf1cd4716b7921c954a470f66.pdf?_ga=2.9185590.2069110115.1593282310-1578276130.1593282310
- Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California - Berkeley. (2018). Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018. Retrieved from <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/2-About-the-Workforce.pdf>
- Chirimwami, V. K. (2019). Influence of Educational Equity Policies on High School Graduation Rates for Black Students Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8890&context=dissertations>
- Committee for Economic Development. (2019). Child Care in State Economies: 2019 Update. Retrieved from <https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/181104%20CCSE%20Report%20Jan30.pdf>
- Connect.DC - Digital Inclusion Initiative. Fact Sheet, What is the "digital divide"? Retrieved from <https://connect.dc.gov/page/fact-sheet>
- Connect.DC. (2015). Building the Bridge, A Report on the State of the Digital Divide in the District of Columbia. Retrieved from https://connect.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/connect/page_content/attachments/State%20of%20the%20Digital%20Divide%20Report.pdf
- D. C. Department of Health. (2018). Health Equity Report: Social Determinants of Health in Washington DC. Retrieved from District of Columbia: <https://app.box.com/s/yspij8v81cxqyeb17gj3uifjumb7ufsw>
- D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education. (2018). Modeling the Cost of Child Care in the District of Columbia. Retrieved from Washington, D.C.: <https://osse.dc.gov/publication/modeling-cost-child-care-district-columbia-2018>
- D.C. Public Libraries. (2020). LIBRARY SERVICES QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT. Retrieved from <https://www.dclibrary.org/sites/default/files/Library%20Performance%20Report%20-%20FY2020%20Q1.pdf>
- D.C. Public Library. (2019). Library Services Quarterly Report, Q4 FY 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.dclibrary.org/sites/default/files/Library%20Performance%20Report%20%20FY2019%20Q4.pdf>
- Frant, A. E. (2017). Conceptual delimitations regarding the role of education in preventing crime. *Acta Universitatis George Bacovia. Juridica*, 6(1/2017). Retrieved from http://www.ugb.ro/Juridica/Issue11ROEN/5._Rolul_educatiei_in_prevenirea_savarsirii_infraclivnilor.Anca_Frant.IS.AC.TA.1.2017.EN.pdf
- French-Marcelin, M. (2017). Bullies in Blue. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/bullies-blue>
- Hegewisch, A., & Hartmann, H. (2019). The Gender Wage Gap: 2018 Earnings Differences by Race and Ethnicity. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-2018/>
- Horrigan, J. (2015). Chapter 1: Who Uses Libraries and What They do at Their Libraries. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/09/15/who-uses-libraries-and-what-they-do-at-their-libraries/>
- Malik, R., & Hagler, J. (2016). Black Families Work More, Earn Less, and Face Difficult Child Care Choices. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2016/08/05/142296/black-families-work-more-earn-less-and-face-difficult-child-care-choices/>
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education. (2019). 2019 DC Statewide Assessment Results. Retrieved from Washington, D.C.: https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/2019%20Statewide%20ELA%20and%20Math%20Public%20Results.pdf

- Shen, D. (2018). Better Educated, Fewer Divorces: The Impact of College Education Quality on Marriage Outcomes. Retrieved from Munich Personal RePEc Archive: <https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/94198/>
- Skrbinjek, V. (2020). Benefits of Higher Education: A Literature Review. Retrieved from <http://www.toknowpress.net/ISBN/978-961-6914-26-0/125.pdf>
- The Nation's Report Card. (2019). District of Columbia Overview. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/DC?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=DC&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&sfj=NP
- Tooley, J. (2020). [E-mail on March 31, 2020].
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity. Retrieved from Washington, D.C.: <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>