



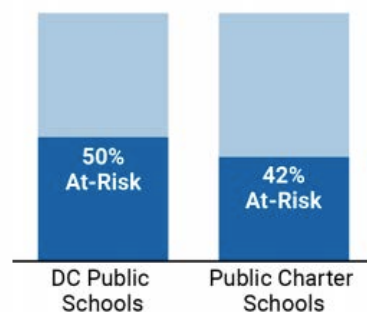
What You Need to Know:

- DC provides additional funding for each at-risk student to help reduce the effects of poverty and improve academic performance.
- Students are considered as at-risk if they are homeless, in foster care, eligible for food stamps or welfare, or in high school and one year older than their expected age for their grade level.
- It is projected that 44,496 students will qualify as at-risk this year. DC schools will spend \$103.9 million in at-risk dollars.

Why At-Risk Funding?

Currently, 44 percent of the nearly 100,000 students in DC public schools are considered at-risk. To make public school funding more equitable across the city and help close the opportunity gap, the DC Council passed the **Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act** in 2013. This act added, for the first time, an at-risk weight to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)—meaning that all DC public schools, both DCPS and public charter schools, now receive additional funding based on the number of enrolled students at their school who meet the at-risk criteria.

About Half of DC Students Qualify For At-Risk Funding in 2018



Source: Fiscal Year 2018 Budget & Financial Plan.

DC FISCAL POLICY INSTITUTE | DCFPI.ORG

Because almost half of the students in DC schools qualify as at-risk, this effects every parent and family across the District. In the 2016-2017 school year budget, schools were given an additional \$2,079 per at-risk student. This funding is intended to go directly to programs, services or new resources that help boost academic performance or help lessen the effects of poverty for our most vulnerable students. Examples of uses include **additional academic interventions, social workers, behavior specialists, before and after school enrichment programming, and summer school.**

How Are At-Risk Funds Currently Being Spent?

DCPS schools are required to report how they spent their at-risk funding each year. **Recent analysis shows that many schools are using at-risk dollars to pay for core operations and not specific programs targeted to support at-risk students.** In fact, 60 percent of the \$50 million allocated to DCPS for at-risk supports was not spent on targeted programs.

Unlike DCPS, charter schools are operated by local education agencies (LEAs) and are not required by law to report their spending of at-risk funds, but the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) does conduct an annual survey each year. This report shows that individual charter schools spend their money on similar staffing models and programs as DCPS, **highlighting a need for greater budget transparency across all schools in the District.**





How Do We Ensure Appropriate At-Risk Spending?

Without necessary basic funding for our schools, district and school leaders have felt the need to tap into at-risk funds to cover general operations and staff positions. While there will be a significant increase of 3.9 percent in the UPSFF for 2019, at DCPS, this largely goes toward covering an increase in teacher salaries under the new contract and at charters, it largely goes towards increasing teacher salaries to be competitive with the new DCPS salaries.

We must make sure school leaders have access to the funds they need and are empowered to use at-risk funding for targeted programs, positions, and resources for at-risk students, not pressured to *supplant* the funds for positions that should be standard in all of our schools - like art teachers or teacher aides.

We also need to make sure the formula for at-risk funding meets the needs of our students. In 2014, the Deputy Mayor for Education released the DC Education Adequacy Study, which called for the at-risk weight to equal \$3,906 per student, a difference of almost \$2,000 more than what is currently being given to schools.

With full funding, at-risk dollars can be spent on targeted programs and supports that help our students who need it most to succeed in school and beyond. Parents and community members need more transparency in current spending, as both DCPS and public charter schools' reports are relatively vague, making the money difficult to track. **With added oversight and a clear picture of where the money is going, parents, the community, and elected officials can help ensure proper at-risk funding.**

How Can Parents Drive Solutions?

To make sure parent voice is included in the oversight and decision-making process, parents can:

- Work with PAVE to testify before the Deputy Mayor of Education, OSSE, and other agencies on at-risk funding.
- **DCPS Parents:** voice your opinion at your child's school's Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) Meeting.
- **Charter Parents:** call your charter school's administration to make sure they respond to DC PCSB's survey on use of at-risk funding, and speak with your charter school board about how your school is using at-risk funds.



PAVE parent Rose Shelton testifies at the DME budget oversight hearing, calling for additional mental health supports for our at-risk students.

Learn More:

- ❖ Read more about at-risk spending in "What's in the Final Fiscal Year 2018 Budget for PreK-12 Education?" from the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute: <http://bit.ly/2BCHHrT>
- ❖ See findings from the DC Education Adequacy Study to learn more about recommendations for school budget formulas: <https://bit.ly/2HLuqk7>