












Fact Sheet: Increased Access to Specialized School Programs

What are Specialized School Programs?

There are **11** types of specialized school programs in DC, including:

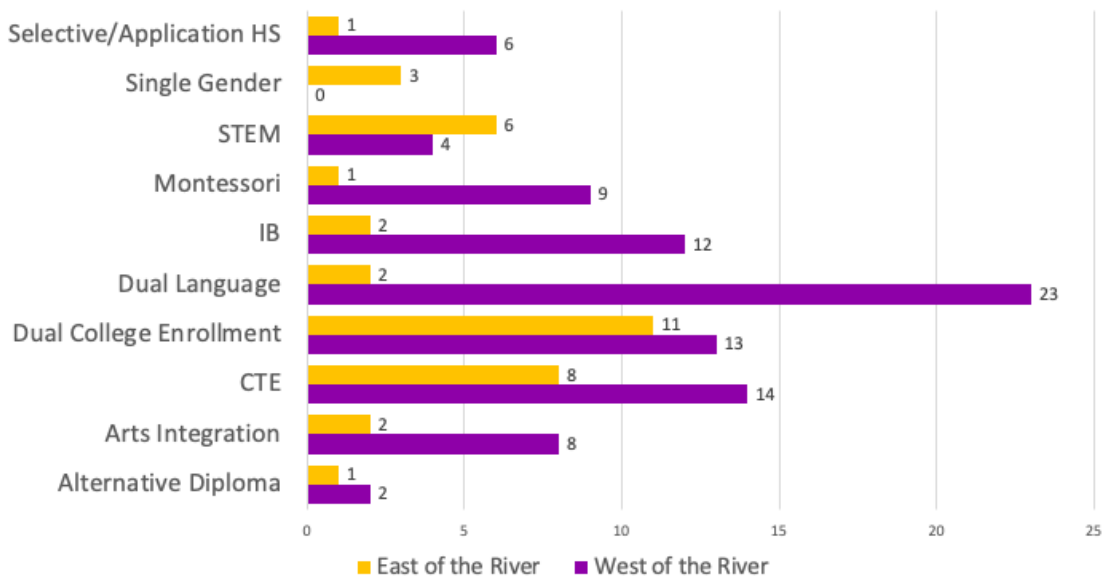
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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
|  | • Alternative Diploma |  | • International Baccalaureate (IB) |
|  | • Application (Selective) High Schools |  | • Montessori |
|  | • Arts Integration |  | • Single Gender Campus |
|  | • Career Technical Education |  | • Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) |
|  | • Dual Enrollment |  | • Special Education Schools |
|  | • Dual Language | | |

Current Access to Specialized School Programs

Not all families have access to these programs in their community.

- Data from the [2018 Master Facilities Plan](#) acknowledges that limited transportation options in some areas of the city affect student access to these programs.
- There is also a disparity in the number of programs across the city in terms of location. Even though **45%** of public school children in DC live East of the River -- the majority of which are low-income students of color -- the vast majority of specialized school programs are located west of the River, and many have waitlists (see the table below).

Location of Specialized School Programs



Program*	# with Waitlists West of the River	# with Waitlists East of the River	Total with Waitlists
Alternative Diploma	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arts Integration	14	2	16
CTE	6	0	6
Dual Enrollment	6	1	7
Dual Language	10	1	11
IB	9	2	11
Montessori	4	1	5
Single Gender	0	2	2
STEM	6	2	8
Application (Selective) HS	1	0	1
Special Education School	n/a	n/a	n/a

*Includes data from DC School Report Card, Edscape, and MySchool DC.

Priorities Needs Parents Identified Around Increasing Access to SSP

- **Equitable Access to Programs**
 - Expansion of access to those farthest from opportunity
 - Increased access based on parent demand
 - Parent-driven legislation/planning and community working group collaboration that is cross-sector (to make access more equitable as we expand)
- **Improve Access to Information about Programs**
- **Feeder Patterns that Offer Programs at ALL Grade Levels**
- **Ensure Quality**
 - Standards and Accountability
 - Teachers should be trained and have the resources they need

Key Questions around Increased Access to SSP

- How can we improve/increase communication about the availability of the programs?
- How are these programs chosen at schools and how can we have more programs?
- How can specialized school programs better serve students with disabilities/special needs?
- What are the success factors of these programs?

Information about Specialized School Programs

Specialized School Programs have important benefits for students in terms of both academic and social emotional outcomes. These programs are linked to higher student achievement, engagement, and graduation rates.

Alternative Diploma: High schools for disengaged youth or youth who are not currently enrolled in an education or training program. They may have previously dropped out, be in juvenile court, or have had difficulties in traditional school settings.

- Beneficial for students who have had difficulties in traditional academic settings by teaching them in smaller classes, providing wrap around supports, and a more personalized learning environment.
- School staff is likely to have a better understanding of and ability to meet each student's unique needs.
- Schools may provide wrap-around services like food, child-care, job placement or live-in options.
- Offer a combination of in-class activities, online learning, and project-based learning.
- Students can choose from a number of career preparation programs.

Application High School: *Also known as "Selective high schools", offer challenging and robust curriculum options and require students to apply. Some schools specialize in particular types of programs like STEM, art, or world languages and culture.*

- The average graduation rate for application high schools is 96%, compared to DC's average of 68%.
- A selective application process promotes a rigorous school environment where all students are held to a very high standard of achievement.
- Offer many dual-enrollment and Advanced Placement (AP) courses where students may earn college credit.

Arts Integration: *teaches academic content through art, such as drama, visual arts, music, and dance. This happens throughout the school day, beyond dedicated arts periods.*

- Increases student achievement and information retention, especially for English language learners.
- Improves student engagement, communication skills and student discipline - especially for students who have experienced trauma or are new to the country.
- A study of Missouri public schools found that arts integration led to fewer discipline problems and higher attendance, graduation rates, and test scores.

Career and Technical Education: *teach students specific career skills centered around skilled trades, science, or technology. These programs prepare students for a variety of pathways after high school – including college and careers – including postsecondary (or after high school) degrees or certifications in a technical field as well as high-skilled careers.*

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) promotes academic and technical skills that prepare students for the workforce in a hands-on setting. The curriculum standards can be seen [here](#), and include programs of study such as agriculture, construction, health sciences, IT, transportation, and more.
- [This study](#) and a study done in Massachusetts suggest that participating in a high-quality CTE program boosts the probability of on-time graduation from high school.

Dual College Enrollment: High school students can **take college courses to earn college credit**. Participating students, or “dual enrollees”, can enroll in colleges or universities that partner with the District **tuition-free**.

- **Dual-enrollment classes often save students money on tuition.**
 - Dual college enrollment programs provide a tuition-free way for students to earn college credit.
 - [Average student loan debt is about \\$37,000](#) and is continuing to rise. Earning credit for some college classes for free in high school can result in a major cost savings for students.
- **Provides a Head-start on the College Student Experience**
 - Students may have access to college facilities like libraries.
 - Students can explore different interests that help them choose a major sooner.
- **Students are More Prepared for College**
 - Students who participate in dual enrollment courses have more confidence in their own preparedness (both academically and their ability to manage the workload) and are less likely to participate in remedial courses.
- **[Increases Likelihood of Graduation](#) – High School and Beyond**
 - Studies show that dual enrollees are more likely to graduate high school and earn higher grades in college.
 - Dual enrollees are more likely to earn degrees – both associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees.

<u>Dual Enrollment</u>	<u>Early College</u>
<i>Open to all eligible public school students in DC</i>	<i>Offered in 3 high schools in DC</i>
<i>On average, students earn 3-9 college credits</i>	<i>On average, students earn 60 credits – enough for an associate degree</i>
<i>Students generally begin taking college classes during 12th grade</i>	<i>Students take college classes in 11th & 12th grade</i>
<i>Student support varies by school and program</i>	<i>Integrated academic, social, emotional and college/career support are required for all students</i>

Dual Language: Students are taught academic content (reading, writing, math, science, etc.) in both English and a partner language. This language and culture are central to the school’s mission and vision.

- **Improves Student Outcomes**
 - [Long-term studies](#) of test results show that students in dual language programs have either equal, or higher educational outcomes versus their English-only peers. Studies also indicate equal or enhanced [social emotional skills](#) compared to monolingual peers in part due to greater understanding, appreciation and respect for other cultures and languages.
 - [Research suggests](#) better attendance and fewer behavior problems as well as improved problem-solving skills, executive function, and social-emotional skills than students taught in one language

- **Workforce Demand, a Global Economy, and Higher Pay**
 - The city is becoming more diverse and the world more globally connected, requiring more bilingual workers.
 - [Demand for employees to be able to speak more than one language doubled over the last 5 years and is growing faster than demand for jobs overall.](#)
 - [Bilingual employees are paid 5-20% more than those who speak one language](#)
- **Fosters Cultural Diversity and Understanding**
 - Non-English-dominant families often feel their culture and language is valued in dual language programs that teach their native language, which helps foster students' connection to their culture.
 - This emphasis can improve students' sense of belonging and increase parent involvement in their children's education.
 - Learning about other cultures helps develop acceptance, empathy, and cultural awareness and understanding for all students.
- **Supports English Language Learners (ELLs)**
 - [In the long-term](#), ELL students in a dual language program not only catch up, but surpass their peers in an English only environment.
 - [EL students in a dual language program have higher rates of reclassification status, English proficiency, and academic achievement.](#)
 - In a [Portland study](#), EL students had up to 14 points lower rates of ELL reclassification by 6th grade.
- *Note: There is especially a lack of dual language programs in Wards 6, 7, and 8 compared to [other parts of the city](#). [DCPS](#) only offers Spanish/English language programs, while [DC public charter schools](#) offer [Chinese](#), [Hebrew](#), [French](#), and [Spanish](#).*

International Baccalaureate: *An international program that seeks to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.”*

➤ *Emphasizes research, student-led learning and critical thinking*

➤ *Prepares students for college-level work*

➤ *High school diploma program requires community service, second-language development, and extensive writing projects*

- **Increased College Attendance**
 - In the US, [IB graduates are 21% more likely to be admitted into 10 of the country's most prestigious universities, including Harvard, Princeton, Yale and Stanford.](#)
 - A [study](#) from Chicago showed graduates of IB programs were 40% more likely to attend a four-year college and 50 percent more likely to attend selective colleges than graduates without IB diplomas.
- **Students Feel More Prepared for College**
 - IB places a strong emphasis on inquiry-based learning, or learning through research, and expression through writing. Students report feeling more prepared for college because of this extensive research and writing experience.
 - The IB track is a lot of work for students. Because of this, students learn to develop good study habits and time management skills.

Montessori: A student-led and project-based learning model.

- Students are encouraged to choose their own projects based on their interests as the teacher guides their learning.
- Students of mixed ages learn together in one classroom, as the goal is for students to learn at their own developmentally appropriate pace.
- **Unique and Well-Rounded Skill Building**
 - Student choice can deepen student engagement and enjoyment at school, build independence and good decision-making skills, and inspire entrepreneurial spirit.
 - Because there is a mix of age groups in the classroom, younger learners can learn from older students and older students can strengthen and deepen their learning by teaching others.
 - Some research has shown that students who attend Montessori schools foster higher levels of executive functioning skills like self-discipline, autonomy over learning, deep focus, critical reasoning and problem solving.
- **Improved Outcomes**
 - [Students who participated in a Montessori program](#) over multiple years showed higher achievement on standardized tests and higher graduation rates.

Single-gender: Schools teach male and female students separately. The goal is to allow educators to adapt their school environments, teaching, and curriculum to each gender's specific learning style and developmental needs.

- **Can Breakdown Gender Stereotypes**
 - In single-gender schools, both male and female students are more likely to take risks or explore things outside of gender stereotypes.
 - Examples:
 - More girls take on leadership roles, develop self-esteem, and show interest in things seen as “masculine”, including math and science.
 - More boys explore things seen as “feminine”, such as art, music, or poetry, and focus on character development.
- **Adapts School to Students' Specific Needs**
 - Teachers in single-gender schools are able to adapt their curriculum and teaching to better meet each gender's developmental needs and learning style.

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math: Integrates science, technology, engineering, and math together equally alongside reading and writing. STEM programs help develop 21st century skills and use real-world applications to deepen students' learning.

- **Improves Student Outcomes**
 - A [study](#) showed that participation in STEM of kids with disabilities lowered chances of dropout, increased math test scores, and increased enrollment in postsecondary education.
- **Build 21st Century Skills**
 - Because a STEM focus integrates many lessons at once, it improves social skills, communication, flexibility and initiative, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, decision-making, leadership, entrepreneurship, acceptance of failure and more!

- STEM programs increase media and technology literacy, which is especially critical in today's digital environment.
- Requires hands-on learning experience and real-world application, which improves retention and helps foster innovation.
- **Increased STEM Workforce Demand**
 - STEM jobs are multiplying every year. Companies have more and more STEM positions open but can't fill them due to a shortage of workers with the necessary skills.
 - Girls and people of color are especially in demand in STEM jobs, as [diversity](#) is greatly needed in the field.
 - [Half of all current STEM jobs are available to workers without a four-year college degree.](#) These jobs pay 10% higher than jobs with comparable education requirements, and include in fields like computer programming, environmental engineering and nursing.

Special Education Schools: Schools specifically designed for students with significant special education needs.

- **DCPS city-wide school, River Terrace Educational Campus**
 - [River Terrace](#) is a citywide DCPS school that serves the 1% of the DCPS population with the greatest needs.
 - River Terrace provides students, from 3rd grade to adult, with wrap-around services and numerous kinds of therapy, including Speech and Language, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Vision, Orientation and Mobility, and Audiology.
 - The school also has a pool for aquatic therapy, and provides medical and dental screening services.
- **DC PCS, St. Coletta**
 - [St. Coletta](#) is a public charter school serving students in the greater Washington, D.C. area, ages 3-23, who have 24.5 hours (full time) of special education services on their IEP.
 - St. Coletta offers both an academic program and a variety of programs including vocational training, arts education, computer skills, daily life skills, functional academics and adaptive physical education.
 - St. Coletta has many different therapy options, including Speech and Language, Physical Therapy, Music and Art Therapy, Autism Resource Services, Counseling, and Social Work Services.