
#DCSchoolsRecovery: Our Vision for a Family-Centered DC Education System in Response to COVID-19

OUR WHY

Coronavirus and the resulting impact on our communities have created an unprecedented crisis within the District of Columbia. This will require an unprecedented response and an unprecedented commitment to long-term recovery - all of which should be centered in equitably addressing the needs of kids and families. **We need to be partners with our city leaders as they plan our path forward and use our experience as parents to ground these critical decisions in the voices of those that are most impacted: the District's kids and families.**

OUR PROCESS

Throughout the spring and the fall, we surveyed a diversity of parents from all across the District and met virtually to develop OUR vision for how the District should approach a response and recovery in the wake of this crisis.¹ Based on those discussions, we are now calling on our District leaders to do the following:

Part One: Meeting Families' Basic Needs

Access to Food and Groceries

- **Continue to ensure that the food and grocery needs of families are met**, including access to healthy food and support with delivery for low-income families, families without access to a car, and/or families with underlying health risks.
 - Supplemental supports like Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) should be available for eligible families that have children who aren't able to receive food at school in-person. Funding should be consistent and timely throughout the pandemic, as many families rely on this program.
- **Expand work to distribute informational materials on available resources**, health and safety measures, cooking/nutrition guidance, and updates on available items as appropriate.

¹ PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

- **Ensure that stores are enforcing health and safety guidelines** and that all frontline workers have access to PPE at all essential sites, especially those at grocery stores and other meal pick-up locations.

Access to Resources (Income, Housing, Utilities)

- **Allocate additional emergency funding to ensure all residents are able to access unemployment benefits and support during this time** - including undocumented immigrants and excluded workers.
- **Ensure all families have access to information and guidance on what support/relief options are available and guidance on how to access them.**
- **Explore mortgage and rent deferral, assistance, and forgiveness programs** that allow residents to delay payments and repay them overtime, rather than large sums at once.

Access to Health Care and Child Care

- **Allocate sufficient funding for a child care stabilization package**, so existing centers can provide emergency care and reopen after the crisis.
- **Work with all schools to effectively communicate health care and insurance information** to families and guidance around Coronavirus and testing as well as traditional medical requirements for schools.
- **Work with schools and community partners to provide supplemental cleaning supplies for families** during work packet or food pick-up, in order to ensure safe and healthy environments for our kids.

Part Two: A Family-Centered Education System

Strengthen Distance Learning

- **Fund critical supports for children during distance learning.**
 - The Mayor and Council should allocate funding for mental health and other student support services, and provide devices for all families that need them.
 - The Mayor and our federal representatives should push the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to increase the minimum download speeds for basic internet to levels that would adequately support reliable connections across multiple devices.
- **Develop and share best practices to partner with families and communities.**

- The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) should work with mental health providers and community partners to create and maintain a robust resource hub for schools and families.
- **Improve cross-sector coordination and communication with families.**
 - OSSE, DME, PCSB, and DCPS should work together to provide all school leaders with professional development, best practices, exemplar resources, and additional support to improve communication and engagement with families and support families with learning at home.

A Safe and Equitable Plan for Reopening Schools In-Person

- **Engage Key Stakeholders in Planning:** System leaders should leverage existing structures (e.g. advisory councils, public charter school boards, or other bodies at LEAs that include parents, teachers, and school staff). These structures should be sure to:
 - Consistently work to engage parents and community members - especially those who are often left out of the conversation and share how their feedback is being incorporated.
 - Reevaluate the effectiveness of the plan throughout the school year and make improvements as necessary.
 - Coordinate with nurses, custodians, special education coordinators and staff, mental health professionals, as well as community partners including, but not limited to, Out of School Time providers, WMATA, community organizations, healthcare providers, and child care providers.
- **Develop Comprehensive Guidance for Health and Safety:** System leaders should build off of the guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) as well as other successful models to establish developmentally appropriate health and safety guidance to support schools with reopening.
 - Comprehensive guidance and resources for COVID-19 testing procedures for students and staff.
 - Entry and exit procedures that include daily screenings, stagger entry and exit times, and limit in-person access to school buildings to essential staff and students.
 - Clear cleaning and social distancing procedures.
 - Develop and share scenario maps for each possible occurrence (e.g. if someone tests positive for COVID or if someone is exposed to COVID, etc.).

- **Build Community Trust in the Plan:** System leaders should clearly communicate the health and safety guidance and support schools to share evidence that it is being implemented with fidelity in order to build trust with educators, families, and communities.
 - Increase transparency on budget process and allocation, while also centering equity to ensure older schools and schools East of the River are fully updated and able to comply with the health and safety guidance.
 - Create systems for ongoing evaluation and accountability through the use of an independent quality assurance team.
- **Communication:** System leaders need to collaborate and support LEAs to consistently and effectively communicate with families about reopening.
 - System leaders should provide a uniform template for week school-or site-level briefings to ensure every family is receiving the same amount of information.
 - Information should be shared in a timely and accessible way with the use of simple and clear language and translating into multiple languages.
 - Health guidance should be shared and taught in the school community through engaging means.

Invest in and Strengthen Systems that Support Kids and Families

- **Provide support and resources for schools** around planning for family engagement, redesigning school culture, adjusting academic plans, health and safety measures, and implementing mental health supports and special education services.
- **Ensure schools and related agencies have what they need to support families** as the year continues and have support in adjusting and adapting plans in this uncertain climate.

Make BOLD Investments in Our Kids and Our Schools

- **Invest in Mental Health Supports in School**
 - Urgently ensure schools have access to mental health professionals - especially those that support our students with the greatest needs.
 - Estimated cost to fund the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) school-based mental health expansion: \$6.4 million to expand to 80 more schools.

- Reverse the \$4 million cuts to community-based providers from FY21, especially the \$2 million that is matched with a federal multiplier of three which would add an additional \$6 million.
 - Ensure all schools have the resources they need to provide high-quality, culturally-affirming and responsive, and evidence-based social emotional learning programs as well as trauma-informed training and restorative practices for all staff at each school.
 - Estimated total cost for K-12: \$10.8 million (\$45,000 per school x 236 schools)
- **Fully Fund Schools through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula to the Recommended Adequacy Level**
 - This should be based on the 202013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available). The UPSFF should be \$11,840 (when adjusted for inflation). The UPSFF is currently set at \$10,980 which is a gap of \$80 million.
 - We recommend this gap be closed over two years: minimally 4% in FY21, and 3% in FY22.
- **Fully Fund the At-risk Weight in the UPSFF to the Recommended Adequacy Level**
 - This should be based on the 2013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available).
 - The at-risk weight should be 0.37, or \$4,062 per student. The at-risk weight is currently set at 0.225, or \$2,437 per student, which is a gap of \$68.8 million.
- **Protect funding for Out of School Time Programs** so students can continue to access these essential enrichment activities.
- **Stabilize and expand funding for subsidies for child care providers, early childhood health programs, and pay for child care workers.**

We know these investments are significant but that is exactly what this moment requires in order to ensure that the gap between the haves and have-nots in our city does not become further exacerbated by this crisis. As parent leaders, we commit to working with our public officials to turn these proposals from a vision to reality, and we hope our city leaders will make the same commitment to partnering with us in the weeks and months ahead.