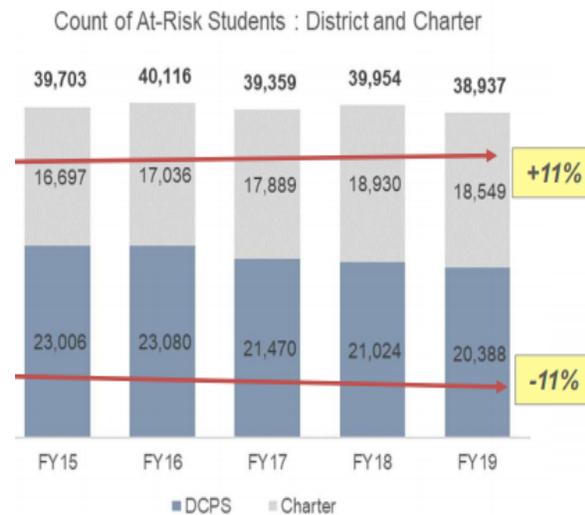


## What You Need to Know:

- 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.
- DC provides additional funding for each at-risk student to help reduce the effects of poverty and improve academic performance.
- It is projected that 41,760 students will qualify as at-risk this year. Schools will receive \$2,551 per at-risk student in FY2021, which is \$1,511 below the level recommended in the DC Adequacy Student when adjusted for inflation.

## Why At-Risk Funding?

To make school funding more equitable across the city and help close the opportunity gap, DC Council passed the **Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act** in 2013. This act added an **at-risk weight** to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)—meaning that all DC public schools, both DCPS and public charter, would receive **additional funding for the students at their school who meet the at-risk criteria**.



Ahead of FY2021, DCPS was projected to serve 24,245 at-risk students, and public charter schools are projected to serve 17,515 for a total of **41,760**. However, given the ongoing persistence of the pandemic, **schools will likely serve more at-risk students than originally projected and the number of students who are considered at-risk will continue to increase**. It is also likely that there will be **some movement of students between schools and sectors** as families face financial and housing instability, food insecurity, and more.

Examples of funding uses to improve academic performance and well being include **additional academic interventions, social workers, behavior specialists, before and after school enrichment programming, and summer school**. However, the widening opportunity gaps, as a result of the pandemic, may require schools to use these funds in more innovative and creative approaches to foster academic growth.

## 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.**

Previously, the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) conducted an optional annual LEA survey to share how they spent their at-risk funding, which showed similar spending on staffing models and programs as DCPS. Now all public schools will be required to report their spending of at-risk funds after the passing of new regulations in the FY2021 budget. **We look forward to greater budget transparency – especially clarity around at-risk funds, and to ensuring families are at the table to determine how that money should be allocated.**



## How do we ensure at-risk funding is adequate & effective?

### Adequate Funding

**Without necessary base 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.**

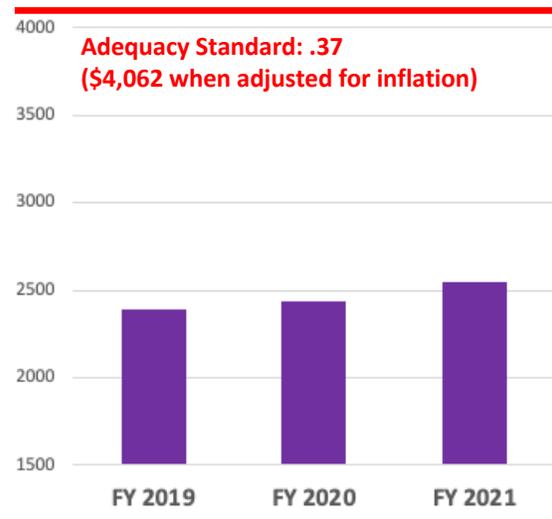
While there was a slight increase of 3 percent to the UPSFF in the FY21 budget, when accounting for inflation it was closer to a 2 percent increase. To be sure, we still haven't met the level needed, and costs will continue to rise due to the pandemic and its impacts.

We also need to make sure the formula for at-risk funding meets the needs of our students. The 2013 adequacy study found that the at-risk weight should be 0.37, or \$4,062 per student. **The at-risk weight is currently set at 0.2256, or \$2,551 per student, which is a gap of \$1,511 per student.** At this time, regardless of which criteria a student meets, or if more than one factor applies, each student considered at-risk receives the same amount of funding, thus the at-risk funding is not dynamic to fit to each student's needs. The DME commissioned a study to determine potential ways to target both at-risk funding and funding for English Language Learners, but no decisions have been made about adjustments yet.

### Transparency and Engagement

We must make sure school leaders have access to the funds they need, **use at-risk funding for targeted programs, positions, and resources for at-risk students**, and are not pressured to *supplant* the funds for positions that should be standard in all of our schools - like art teachers or teacher aides. Parents and community members need **more transparency in current spending** and should have a **seat at the table in identifying the greatest needs at their child's school and what supports will be most effective.**

Funding for "At-Risk" Students Remain Below Adequacy Levels



## 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 DaSean Jones testifies at the Committee on Education, calling for additional supports for our at-risk students for distance learning.

### Learn More:

- ❖ Read more about at-risk spending in ["What's in the Final Fiscal Year 2021 Budget for PreK-12 Education?"](#) from the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute.
- ❖ See findings from the DC Education Adequacy Study to learn more about recommendations for school budget formulas: <https://bit.ly/2HLuqk7>