

What You Need to Know:

- The process to set school budgets is different for DCPS and charter schools. The Chancellor sets the budget priorities for DCPS schools through the Comprehensive Staffing Model, while each charter school network leader determines how they want to spend their school funding.
- School budgets cover everything that a school would need throughout the year, including staff salaries and any programs or equipment used at the school.
- DCPS budgets are available on their website, and public charter budgets are available on each Local Education Agency's (LEA) as well as the PCSB website.

School budgets are critically important because they determine the funding for everything that happens within an individual school. Different from school funding, which is the amount of money given to the entire education system, each school has a unique budget based on the needs of the students enrolled. School budgets could include:

- **Salaries:** teachers, administrators, and support staff
- **Resources:** literacy materials, technology, or any school supplies and equipment
- **Programming:** tutoring, after school programs, or social-emotional learning curriculum

How Do School Budgets Get Set?

Funding for LEAs is primarily determined by the **Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)**. The formula includes extra weights for certain grade levels, English Language Learners, students with special needs, and students that are considered at-risk. To help schools provide supports to meet those students' needs, the base UPSFF is multiplied by the additional weighted amount, increasing the total dollar amount provided to LEAs. This source, combined with a smaller portion of the funding from federal and private sources, is what funds LEAs as a whole. How this money gets distributed to **individual schools** depends on if the school is a DCPS school or public charter school and the priorities of the Local Education Agency (LEA) leaders.

Public Charter Schools: Each public charter school LEA has broad flexibility over the use of its funds. Leaders can direct funds to the priorities of their school model, with oversight from the DC Public Charter School Board (DCPCSB). For this reason, there is no uniform budget process for charter schools.

DCPS: Currently, The UPSFF calculation is *not* the exact amount that goes into an each DCPS school. The Chancellor is responsible for directing the total of DCPS funds to three categories:

- **Central Operations:** This covers management roles, including the Office of the Chancellor, the community engagement team, and operational support.
- **School Support:** Support functions are provided at the school level but are managed by central office, including food service, data systems, curriculum development, attendance, and special education services.
- **Direct School Operations:** These funds go directly to schools and are managed by the principal, used for staff, programs, and resources in schools.

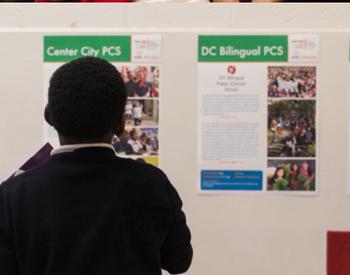
Mayor Proposes Budget

Council Adjusts the Budget

Mayor Ratifies Budget

Chancellor or Charter ED/CEO Allocate Money to Their Schools

School Leaders (Principals) Inform School Budgets



What is the Individual School Budget Process?

For DCPS Schools:

Each year, the Chancellor of DCPS sets guidelines for spending in schools in the **Budget Development Guide Report**. Alongside this report, the first school budget allocations are sent to school principals, usually in March. **DCPS currently uses a funding model called the Comprehensive Staffing Model (CSM), which sets staff-student ratios for key positions (teachers, administrators, librarians, etc.) and calculates the number of staff and the funding each school needs to pay for those positions.** The CSM funding is based on average salary, and when schools decide on staffing, the cost out of their budget is based on average salary even if they have staff with below or above average salaries. This means that the actual expenditures of a school in any given year will not match the amount allocated to the school in the budget process.

Once principals receive the initial budget, they identify any staff and resource needs based on the Budget Development Guide and the goals of their school. DCPS principals should work with their Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), made up of members of the school and one community member, to ensure the budget meets the needs of their school. That budget proposal is sent to central office for final approval, and once approved the principal can then share the budget with the community. **Importantly, oftentimes the window to make these budget decisions is very short.**

A new student-based budget process for DCPS was expected to replace the CSM in the 2021-2022 school year, which aimed to have funding more closely follow the students. This launch has been delayed by the pandemic but is still expected to move forward in the future.

For Public Charter Schools:

The CEO or Executive Director of the LEA develops a budget, which then needs to be approved by the school's Board of Directors. DC residents must make up at least fifty percent of the board, including two parent members. The engagement process for this looks different at every school. Final budgets and financial reports are available on each LEA's and the DC Public Charter School Board's website.

How Can We Ensure Budgets are Parent-Driven?

To advocate for more transparency and engagement with families and to highlight particular issue areas that need support, parents can testify at the **DC Council Budget Hearings** that take place from February to April.

- **DCPS Parents:** Get involved with your **LSAT** to influence the how the principal at your child's school uses the funding.
- **Charter Parents:** Contact your **school's leadership, the Board of Directors, and Parent Representatives** to gain deeper insight on current use of funding and provide feedback.



Learn More:

- ❖ [Learn more about how DCPS funds their schools.](#)
- ❖ Read [PCSB's Financial Report Page](#) for more information on Public Charter School funding.