

Budget for Public Education in DC

How are Public Charter Schools Funded?

DC Public Charter Schools receive funding through several different sources, including local, federal, and private dollars. Those funds are used in a combination of ways to support and deliver educational services to DC's public charter school students. Like DCPS schools, public charter schools are primarily funded through the **Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF)**. The UPSFF determines funding based on student enrollment levels and specific student weights based on the school's population of students who are in special education, English Language Learners, and/or students identified as "at-risk."¹

Additionally, DC public schools receive federal funding from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), which distributes federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education to DCPS and public charter schools through specific programs or grants. Of the total amount of funds spent in public charter schools, approximately 10% are from the federal government. In addition, both DCPS and public charter schools may receive funding from private organizations. Like DCPS parents, parents of public charter school students across the city have raised funds for extracurricular activities, grants to teachers, equipment, school supplies, and social events.



How Do DC Public Charter Schools Utilize Funds?

Each public charter school LEA (Local Education Agency) has broad flexibility over the use of its funds; however, it is important that public dollars are used in appropriate and efficient ways. The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) is appointed by the Mayor and is charged with approving and overseeing the city's public charter schools. DC PCSB conducts an annual performance review for each school on academic achievement, compliance with laws and their charters, and fiscal management. Schools that fail to reach the standards set internally by DC PCSB are deemed "financially unstable," and DC PCSB works with them individually to provide support and prevent school closure. Also, to ensure transparency, DC PCSB issues a "report card" with scores based on each school's financial performance.

How are Public Charter School Facilities Funded?

Unlike DCPS, public charter schools are not provided school buildings by the city, so they must lease or purchase, and then maintain their own facilities. To support public charter schools, DC now gives LEAs \$3,025 per student through the **Charter Facilities Allotment** annually to cover the rental, purchase, or renovation of a building to create an appropriate educational environment. Importantly, the Charter Facilities Allotment is in addition the amount LEAs receive through the Uniform Per-Student Funding Formula (UPSFF).

Did you know?

In 2012, public charter schools had about \$402 million in long-term debt, most of which was due to facilities costs.

¹ The Fair Funding Act defines a student to be "at-risk" if they identify as:

1. Homeless;
2. In foster care;
3. Eligible for food stamps or welfare; or
4. One year older, or more, than the expected age for their enrolled grade level.

Is DC Adequately Funding Our Schools?

- In the Mayor's proposed 2018 budget, the UPSFF would receive an increase of only 2%. This minimum increase of 2% is insufficient, falling below the 3.5% increase that a working group convened by the Mayor recommended.
- With already tight budgets, and adding inflation and rising school costs and teacher salaries, this increase is not enough to support our schools as they invest in and do the hard work of educating our kids.
- Already, members of the DC Council are advocating for a greater increase in the UPSFF. By the end of May, the DC Council will have completed their Committee mark-ups and vote on the Budget Support Act, which will have to be approved by the Mayor.

Are Charter Schools Facilities Adequately Funded by the City?

- This year, the Mayor proposed a 2.2% increase to the Charter Facilities Allotment, giving LEAs \$3,250 per student for facilities costs. This increase would help public charter schools ensure they can provide an appropriate educational environment; however, this amount is still lower than the recommended \$3,439.
- Parents and advocates also call on city officials to "de-politicize" the funding of public charter school facilities by accounting for rising inflation and the cost of construction – expenses DCPS schools do not need to absorb in their school budgets. This proposal would make the funding of DCPS and public charter schools more equitable.

Get Involved

Stay Informed

- Read the "Investing in Our Kids: District of Columbia School Finance Primer" by the DC Fiscal Policy Institute to get more detailed information about school budgets.
- Read PAVE's budget updates by visiting our News and Updates page on dcpave.org.

Participate

- Email PAVE at info@dcpave.org to receive updates from PAVE regarding the status of the Mayor's proposed 2018 budget.
- Email your Ward Councilmember (where you live/vote) to ask them to urge the Mayor to fund the 3.5% increase to the per pupil funding.

Become Empowered

- Visit PAVE's Community Events Calendar to see when the next DC Council public hearing will take place.
- Email PAVE's Director of Community Engagement and Organizing Raven Willoughby, raven.willoughby@dcpave.org, to find out how you can get involved with PAVE.