



## What You Need to Know:

- Specialized school programs are woven into the entire curriculum, and go beyond individual course offerings.
- Specialized school programming is linked to higher student achievement and engagement.
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit the most from specialized school programming.




## What Are Specialized School Programs?

Specialized school programs provide students unique learning opportunities that focus on a variety of interests or topics. Depending on the school community’s needs and the nature of the programs, specialized school programming can be the focus of the entire school or be offered as “tracks” students can take to explore their interests and be more prepared for life after high school. Examples of specialized school programming include:

- **Dual Language Programs** are a type of education where students are taught literacy and content in two languages.
- **STEM** education builds a curriculum centered around science, technology, engineering, and math.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** prepares students with academic and technical skills for the workforce by aligning curriculum with career pathways to opportunities in engineering, business, health, hospitality, and other industries.

## Why are Specialized School Programs Important?

Specialized school programs are linked to many benefits for students, including **more engagement, better academic outcomes for students with disabilities, and higher graduation rates**. The table below outlines specific benefits of popular programs:

Program	Benefits
<b>Dual Language</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher scores on standardized tests</li> <li>• Better problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Greater appreciation and empathy for other cultures</li> <li>• Fewer behavioral problems</li> <li>• Better preparation for today’s global workforce</li> <li>• Improved outcomes for English Language Learners</li> </ul>
<b>STEM Programs</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better critical-thinking skills</li> <li>• Higher rates of student attendance and engagement</li> <li>• Higher scores on standardized tests</li> <li>• Better preparation for today’s workforce that’s experiencing a shortage of over 3 million workers in STEM fields</li> </ul>
<b>Career and Technical Education</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in graduation rates by 10%</li> <li>• Higher rates of student attendance and engagement</li> <li>• Higher likelihood of earning a more upon completing high school</li> <li>• Improved outcomes for students who choose not to pursue higher education</li> </ul>



## What Does Specialized School Programming Look Like in DC?

Currently, 56 out of the 228 public schools in the District offer dual language, STEM, or CTE programs. Yet, even though 45% of students in DC attend schools East of the River, only 13 schools in Wards 7 and 8 offer those programs. Specialized programming is proven to be beneficial for all students and can greatly impact academic and life outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is crucial that we focus on expanding programs in schools that serve our students with the highest needs.

School Program	West of the River	East of the River	Total
Dual Language	21	2	23
STEM	12	7	19
CTE	10	4	14

Each specialized school program requires specific training and qualifications for teachers, along with additional costs which can vary from program to program. Parents across the District are looking for additional learning experiences for their children that spark their passions and prepare them for college and careers, and we must work together to identify resources and create a diversity of options for families.

*“We need to have more STEM programs [and] need to teach our kids engineering skills. It helps kids with analytical thinking and critical thinking...Even if a kid [doesn’t win a competition] or isn’t the best, this type of exposure is so important.”*

*-Yvette Selby, PAVE Parent Leader*



## How Can Parents Get Involved?

To advocate for more specialized school programming, parents can:

- Testify at the **DC Council Budget Hearings** that take place from February to April
- Reach out to your child’s school’s **PTO, LSAT (DCPS), or school board (PCSB)** to advocate for more programming
- Contact PAVE’s **community organizing team** [organizers@dcpave.org](mailto:organizers@dcpave.org) for more information

## Learn More:

- ❖ See DC Language Immersion Project’s resources to learn more about the benefits of dual language programs and what that looks like in DC: <https://dcimmersion.org>
- ❖ For more information on how STEM education prepares students for the future, check out this resource: <https://bit.ly/2JoOZaK>