



## What Are Specialized School Programs?

Specialized school programs provide students **unique learning opportunities** that center their curriculums on a variety of topics and/or approaches to learning. 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 specific pathways.

Parents want more specialized school program options so they can find the best fit for their child as each is unique and has individual interests, needs, and learning styles. These programs are more likely to prepare students for college and careers, as they often offer real-world experiences and application of their learning and unique ways of engaging and supporting students in finding their passion. For all these reasons, specialized school programs can lead to **better engagement, excitement and passion for learning, better career options, and, eventually, higher pay.**

## Types of Specialized School Programs



**Alternative Diploma Granting:** High schools for disengaged youth or youth who are not currently enrolled in an education or training program. They may have previously dropped out, be in juvenile court, or have had difficulties in traditional school settings.



**Arts Integration:** Teaches academic content through art, such as drama, visual arts, music, and dance.



**Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Teach specific career skills centered around skilled trades, science, or technology. These programs prepare students for a variety of pathways - both college and careers - including postsecondary degrees or certifications in a tech field as well as high-skilled careers.



**Dual College Enrollment:** High school students can take college courses to earn college credit. Participating students ("dual enrollees") can enroll in colleges or universities that partner with DC tuition-free while they work towards a high school diploma.



**International Baccalaureate (IB):** A rigorous international diploma program that seeks to "develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect."



**Montessori:** Student-centered model where students work at their own pace through project-based and personalized learning and group collaboration.



**Single-gender Campus:** Schools teach male and female students separately. The goal is to allow educators to adapt their school environments, teaching, and curriculum to each gender's specific developmental needs.



**STEM:** integrates science, technology, engineering, and math together equally alongside reading and writing to help 21st century skills and use real-world applications to deepen students' learning.



**Special Education:** Schools specifically designed for students with significant special education needs.



**Dual Language/Language Immersion:** Students are taught academic content (reading, writing, math, science, etc.) in both English and a partner language. The language and culture are central to the school's mission and vision.



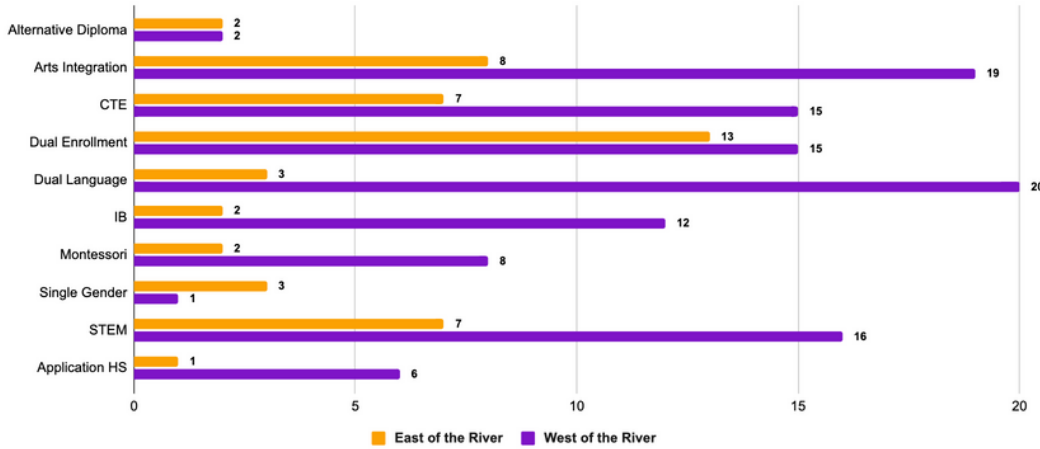
## Access to High-Quality Specialized School Programming in DC

Access to specialized school programs varies by Ward and program type. Oftentimes, families must travel far distances to access the program they are looking for, especially families living East of the River.

There's not a universal standard for specialized school programs and info sources like MySchoolDC, the DC School Report Card, and EdScape aren't consistent. Schools that offer specialized programs may not implement program models with fidelity, so not all kids have access to high-quality programming.

More accurate and standardized information sharing about where specialized school programs are offered is needed to support families in their decision-making and planning for expansion.

Location of Specialized School Programs



## What is Needed to Increase Access to High-Quality Programs?

Not all families have equitable access to high-quality school options with specialized school programs. To get to a system of great schools that meet all communities' needs, parents are calling on DC to:

- Fully fund schools through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) to ensure all schools have adequate funding to provide specialized school programs
- Create a common standard for each specialized school program type to build trust and ensure quality
- Increase community partnerships in schools
- Pilot a cross-sector working group for family-centered school and specialized program planning
- Create more ways to share information about programs, their benefits, and which schools offer the programs.

## How Can Parents Get Involved?

To advocate for increased access to specialized school programming, parents can:

- Testify at a State Board of Education (SBOE) meeting or a DC Council Performance Oversight Hearing on DME, DCPS, and PCSB about what programs your community needs.
- Reach out to your child's school (DCPS or public charter) to advocate for programming.
- Look out for PAVE's updates on DC education initiatives where you can share your voice about specialized programs like the MFP, PCSB strategic plan, and DCPS boundary process.
- Contact PAVE's team at [info@dcpave.org](mailto:info@dcpave.org) for more information.
- Resources: [EdScape](#) and [DC School Report Card](#)