



D.C. POLICY
CENTER

**FY23 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING:
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
(EDUCATION AGENCIES)**

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Virtual platform

**Testimony of Chelsea Coffin
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Good morning, Chairman Mendelson and members of the Committee of the Whole. My name is Chelsea Coffin and I am the Director of the Education Policy Initiative at the D.C. Policy Center, an independent think tank focused on advancing policies for a growing and vibrant economy in D.C. I will focus my testimony today on the critical need to streamline and track goals for recovery in education at the system level in FY23 and beyond based on our findings in the recent State of D.C. Schools report.¹

The FY23 budget includes substantial investments in academics, with a historic increase of 5.87 percent to the UPSFF foundation level and \$14 million for high impact tutoring, among others. These resources intended to boost learning outcomes are essential for success in school year 2022-23, but there is a need to focus more on the expected results. OSSE's Annual Performance Plan has FY22 targets of 43.2 percent of students being college and career ready in English Language Arts (ELA) and 40.1 percent in Math, which indicate an increase of 6.2 percentage points in ELA and 9.1 percentage points in Math from 2018-19. These increases assume that learning has continued apace during the pandemic even though findings suggest that these years have been incredibly challenging for students and that achievement levels are lower than they were pre-pandemic. Instead D.C. needs a framework for improving learning outcomes that considers the baseline and targets improvements by student group, especially for students designated as at-risk.

The FY23 budget continues the same levels of funding for students with disabilities and English learners, including a supplemental weight for English learners in high school added last year. During the pandemic, these groups were harder to identify – evidenced by a drop of 2 percentage points for students with disabilities and English learners in pre-kindergarten last year. Students with disabilities and English learners also often experienced more challenges with virtual education and show signs of more unfinished learning. OSSE has a goal of IEP reviews that comply with secondary transition requirements and IDEA due process hearings, and no goals for English learners.

¹ D.C. Policy Center. 2022. *State of D.C. Schools, 2020-21*. D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2020-21-State-of-DC-Schools-pages-format.pdf>

To think more deeply about recovery, there should be goals that consider outcomes in addition to process for both groups, such as goal attainment for students with IEPs and exit for English learners.

The FY23 budget also includes significant funding for high schoolers and connections to college and career, with \$6.5 million for the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP), \$7.9 million for reimagining work-based learning, \$1.5 million for the College Rising project, \$12.3 million for DC Futures Tuition Assistance, and more. This funding highlights another area where targets and metrics should be more meaningful beyond high school graduation rates. OSSE's Annual Performance Plan for FY22 aims for 36 percent of students who enroll in postsecondary completing within 6 years, but in FY21, only 22 percent of students completed, making it another target based on pre-pandemic trends. There are no metrics available on employment or earnings outcomes for D.C.'s high school alumni, or other credentials they accrue aside from college degrees. Investing in data systems to connect the dots between high school and the workforce for alumni is crucial to find out what is working in these programs,² and deserves to be a focus point in education recovery discussions especially as high school students have the fewest years before they transition to college and career.

Amidst large investments in education and the acute need to regain what school communities have lost during the pandemic, D.C. needs to track recovery that is intended in this budget with thoughtful targets. The D.C. Policy Center outlines metrics in the areas of student academic success, supportive school environment, and community factors to consider tracking by student group (see Appendix). Some are published already in separate spots, others need to be made publicly available, and others require new data collection efforts (for example, a citywide survey of student wellbeing or perceptions of safety). These metrics could be displayed alongside other COVID-19 data, in a central place with other government data on education, or requested in future oversight

² Coffin, C. and Rubin, J. 2021. *Measuring early career outcomes in D.C.* D.C. Policy Center. Retrieved from <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/measuring-outcomes/>

hearings in an effort to find out what is working and where additional resources may be needed.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Appendix: Metrics for recovery in State of D.C. Schools, 2020-21

Area	Metrics	Baseline
Student academic success	Student engagement measured by chronic absenteeism	31% of all students were chronically absent in school year 2020-21
	Learning outcomes with achievement levels and growth on the statewide assessment	PARCC results not available until 2021-22 (51% of early elementary students currently reading on grade level)
	Transition to college and career with postsecondary enrollment, as well as industry recognized credentials,* and earnings*	51% of graduating seniors in school year 2019-20 enrolled in postsecondary within 6 months
Supportive school environment	Mental health supports with the number of mental health professionals and wellbeing measures as available	Not publicly available for school year 2020-21
	Support for students with disabilities with IEP goal attainment	Not publicly available for school year 2020-21
	English learner supports with exit from English learner status	Not publicly available for school year 2020-21
	Teacher morale with retention rates and teacher satisfaction surveys*	81% of teachers stayed at their school in 2020-21
Community factors	COVID-19's impact on school through the number of in-person school days or live instructional time*	Number of in-person days not available until the close of school year 2021-22 (in the fall of 2021, 1 percent of DCPS students were in quarantine at a given time)
	Community safety with student perceptions of safety*	Black and Latino parents and caregivers were 4 times more likely to report that they or their child felt physically unsafe out of their home than white parents and caregivers
	Family and parent or caregiver trust in schools with enrollment levels, especially in early grades, and parent and caregiver satisfaction rates*	Pre-kindergarten enrollment declined by 7 percent in 2020-21; total pre-kindergarten to grade 12 enrollment was 89,292 students

*Indicates metrics that are not currently regularly collected and reported publicly for all students. These will require gathering new data or administering a new survey.