

STATE OF D.C. SCHOOLS

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS & SUMMARY

ABOUT THE REPORT

State of D.C. Schools is an annual systemwide overview of public education in the District of Columbia. In school year 2020-21, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to fundamentally shape students' experiences and outcomes.

This year's report examines how students, families, and teachers continued to adapt to virtual learning and associated challenges.

School leaders and educators expended tremendous effort to reach families and meet students' needs during an unprecedented school year.



Mental health

Schools hired additional staff, initiated partnerships, and integrated social-emotional learning and wellness checks into lessons.



Technology access

LEAs worked to ensure students had learning devices and internet at home and provided technological support.



Virtual learning

Schools used virtual platforms for real-time data about student performance to identify students who may need additional help.



Communication

Families appreciated being able to communicate with school administrators and teachers in a variety of modes, and the availability of virtual conferences.

Virtual learning was *prevalent* but often *inadequate* for students, teachers, and families.



79% of students were still learning *completely* from home at the end of the school year, after almost all students began the year virtually.



54% of parents said they were aware of mental health supports at their child's school amidst increased stress due to COVID-19 and virtual learning.



46% of students said that their internet was always good enough to participate in all school activities. Many students struggled with slow internet speeds and low bandwidth.



7% fewer students enrolled in pre-kindergarten compared to the previous school year. Virtual learning was more challenging across the board for younger students.

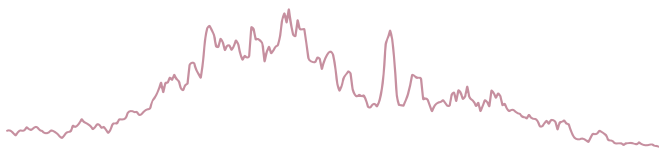


17% of teachers said that they had all the supports that they needed for virtual instruction, which was a challenge, given the quick pivot to virtual learning right before the school year started.



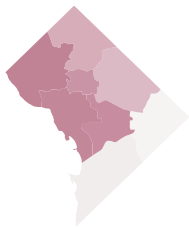
2/3 of teachers said that students with disabilities and English learner students were receiving supports they need.

Education in context: D.C. during the 2020-21 school year



COVID-19 cases around the city

COVID-19 cases rose and fell throughout the school year, and spiked in January 2021 to 41 cases per 100,000 residents.



Broadband access

As of 2019, 82% of households in D.C. had access to a computer with broadband internet (lowest in Wards 7 and 8 at 66%).

Perceptions of community safety

Violence in communities can lead to increased stress and anxiety which can have large impacts on student well-being. In school year 2020-21, the number of **homicides increased by 21% citywide**.

Black and Latino parents were four times more likely to report that they or their **child felt physically unsafe out of their homes** than white respondents.

Unemployment rates

The unemployment rate was 7.2% in June 2021—up 2.3 percentage points compared to February 2020.

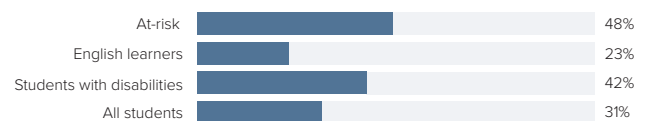
Students designated as at-risk,* English learners, and students with disabilities experienced disproportionate impacts:

Out of D.C.'s public school students:

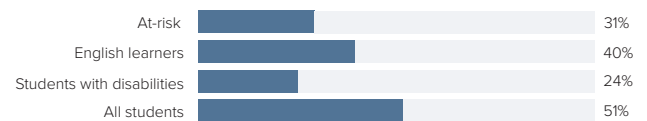
- 45%** of students are designated as at-risk
- 12%** of students are English learners
- 16%** of students are students with disabilities

Outcomes for school year 2020-21:

Chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more of the school year)



Reading on grade level for kindergarten through grade 2 students



Four-year graduation rate



*At-risk is a category used for funding purposes which includes: students who receive certain public benefits, experience homelessness, are in the foster care system, or who are over-age in high school.

Recovery

As schools continue to navigate the pandemic during the 2021-22 school year and beyond, it is important to ask the right questions about how students, families, teachers, and schools are recovering from its impacts. The D.C. Policy Center proposes tracking recovery progress for different student groups in three areas:

Student success

- Chronic absenteeism
- Achievement levels and growth
- Transition to college, industry-recognized credentials, and earnings when available

Student supports

- Number of mental health professionals, and wellbeing measures, when available
- Goal attainment for students with disabilities
- Exit from English learner status
- Teacher retention and satisfaction rates

Community factors

- Perceptions of community safety
- Number of in-person school days, or live instructional time, when available
- Parent or caregiver satisfaction rates and enrollment levels, especially in early grades