

2021-22

# State of D.C. Schools

## Report Highlights & Summary



D.C. POLICY CENTER  
Education Policy Initiative

*State of D.C. Schools* is an annual systemwide overview of public education in the District of Columbia. In school year 2021-22, all students returned to in-person classes for the first time in almost two years—since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Accordingly, this report examines the transition back to in-person learning, measuring outcomes for the first time since the start of the pandemic, and beginning work on recovery.

Read the full report at [dcpolicycenter.org/publications/schools-21-22](https://dcpolicycenter.org/publications/schools-21-22).

## Enrollment

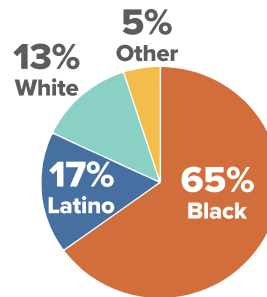
In school year 2021-22, DCPS and public charter schools had:

- 86,991** PK-12 students
- + 6,018** Adult and alternative program learners
- + 352** High-need special education students

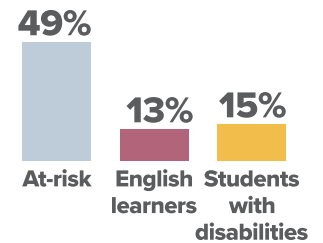
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- = 93,361** Total students

### RACE & ETHNICITY



### SPECIAL POPULATIONS



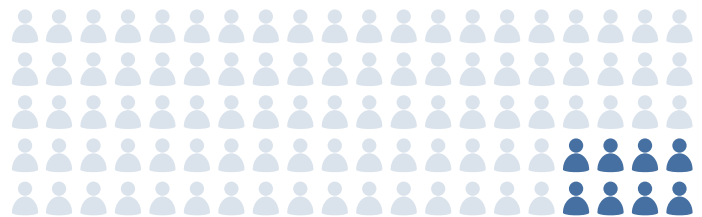
## Academic outcomes show recovery is not yet complete

The shares of students who met or exceeded expectations on the state assessment declined compared to pre-pandemic:

	ALL STUDENTS	AT-RISK STUDENTS*
English language arts (ELA)	37% → 31%	21% → 15%
Math	31% → 19%	16% → 6%

\* "At-risk students" refers to students who are designated as at-risk, a category used for funding purposes that includes students who receive certain public benefits, experience homelessness, are in the foster care system, or are overage in high school.

Of every 100 ninth graders, only 8 will complete postsecondary education within 6 years of finishing high school.



While high school graduation rates have increased to 75%, postsecondary enrollment and completion rates are down.

# School year 2021-22 represented a huge shift toward recovery, even with COVID-19 still impacting schools' day-to-day operations

Yet school communities were resilient, making huge efforts to ensure that in-person learning was as safe and joyful as possible. Parents and students began to reengage with and trust schools in a new way.

## \$540M IN ESSER FUNDS

Schools in D.C. have received \$540 million in federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, intended to help school districts manage and recover from pandemic-related challenges.

73% of funds spent so far have been dedicated to learning acceleration programs like high-impact tutoring (HIT), which has reached 7% of students.

## 317 DAILY COVID CASES IN D.C.

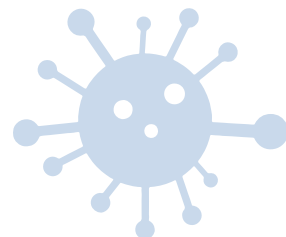
With an average of 317 COVID-19 cases per day in D.C.—and a spike up to 2,000 cases in the winter—COVID-19 continued to impact school year 2021-22.

Families struggled with evolving COVID-19 protocols, and school leaders spent a large portion of their time implementing and enforcing policies.

## 74% TEACHER RETENTION RATE

The teacher retention rate rose to 74%, compared to 70% pre-pandemic, yet it was more difficult to hire new teachers. In the fall, the vacancy rate was 6%—3x higher than the fall of 2018.

Difficulties in hiring and a lack of substitutes led to a shortage of teaching staff, when many teachers had to cover for others. This increased concerns about teacher burnout.



# Students were still recovering socio-emotionally and figuring out how to reengage with school

## 100% IN-PERSON CLASSES

All students—aside from those with medical exemptions—attended class in person. Only 21% of students were regularly attending in-person class for even one day a week at the end of the previous school year.

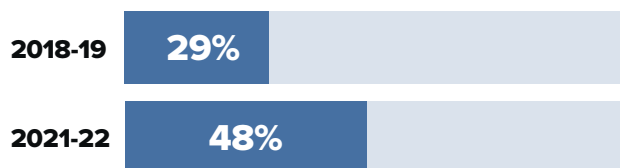
## 36% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTED FEELING SAD OR HOPELESS

This is an uptick from 33% two years ago.

The increase is likely due in part to additional stress from the continued pandemic.

## 48% OF STUDENTS WERE CHRONICALLY ABSENT

The share of students missing at least 10% of the school year increased significantly:



Quarantines, mental health issues, community violence, and other factors all impacted attendance.

**With so much potential for recovery, D.C. needs to continuously evaluate efforts in the coming years, set bold goals especially around achievement and postsecondary outcomes, and make changes when things are not working.**