

Needs assessment of out-of-school time programs in the District of Columbia



This report describes the current landscape of out-of-school time (OST) programs in the District of Columbia.

The report's purpose is to take stock of the existing OST programs in the city and assess whether those programs meet the needs of public school students (including both D.C. public schools and public charter schools).

This report focuses on subsidized OST programs, which include programs funded by federal or local government funds such as programs in Title I schools, programs in non-Title I or charter schools funded by school budgets, and programs provided by community-based organizations (CBOs), which receive grant funding from the District.

The analysis begins with information on where students in D.C. public schools and public charter schools live and go to school. This distinction is important because families may prefer before- and afterschool programs located at or near their students' schools, while they may prefer locations closer to their homes for weekend and summer programs.

Next, the report details the location and capacity of OST programs, specifically focusing on afterschool and summer programs. The existing OST program capacity is then compared to four potential metrics of need to identify what capacity would need to exist to meet the needs under these potential policy goals.

The report then provides coverage information by ward, and a proximity analysis to identify parts of the

city where OST programs are most accessible. The report also presents information on the characteristics of OST providers, challenges faced by providers, and information on the experience of parents and guardians. It concludes with a set of recommendations for the consideration of the Commission on Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes.

Findings

The main findings of the report are the following:

Findings on where public school students live and where they attend school

For school year 2021-22, audited student level data captures 89,905 students who were enrolled in public schools (DCPS and public charters) across PK3 through grade 12. Of these, 68,888 students were enrolled in the elementary or middle schools, and 19,017 were enrolled in high schools.

By where they live, public school students are distributed unevenly across the city. In school year 2021-22, the largest share of students lived in Wards 7 and 8, with 44 percent of elementary and middle school students and 43 percent of high school students residing in these wards. Wards 4 and 5 followed, with 31 percent of elementary and middle school students, and 33 percent of high schoolers. In contrast, the largest share of elementary and middle school students attended public schools located in Ward 5 (19 percent), followed by Wards 4 and 8.

Ward level information on schools and students

	Number of public and public charter schools		Share of students who are not attending their by-right school		Share of students who attend a school in the ward where they live	
	PK3-Grade 8	Grades 9-12	PK3-Grade 8	Grades 9-12	PK3-Grade 8	Grades 9-12
Ward 1	14	2	63%	86%	56%	38%
Ward 2	12	5	75%	n/a	31%	7%
Ward 3	9	1	22%	36%	69%	41%
Ward 4	29	7	67%	83%	61%	45%
Ward 5	41	6	89%	92%	47%	28%
Ward 6	23	3	64%	n/a	35%	13%
Ward 7	35	8	76%	83%	70%	51%
Ward 8	41	5	77%	64%	83%	80%

Source: Student level data obtained from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education.

Note: Share of students who are not attending their by-right school is calculated at the ward level based on the school students are attending and not by student residence. There are no by-right high schools in Wards 2 and 6.

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Many students attend a school other than their by-right school. 71 percent of students attending PK3 through grade 8, and 80 percent of students attending high school, attend a school other than their by-right school. However, these shares vary greatly across wards. Schools in Ward 3 have the smallest share of students who are out-of-boundary (22 percent for PK3 through grade 8, and 36 percent for high school), and schools in Ward 5 have the highest share (89 percent and 92 percent respectively). Ward 2 schools (by-right or out-of-boundary) serve the smallest share of students who live in that ward (31 percent for the earlier grade band, and 7 percent for high school). Ward 8 schools serve the largest share of students who live there (83 percent and 80 percent respectively).

Students are deeply segregated by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status based on where they live. 60 percent of public school students who are Black live in Wards 7 and 8. In contrast, Wards 2, 3, and 6 collectively account for only 13 percent of Black public school students. Hispanic or Latino students are most concentrated in Wards 1, 3 and 5. White students make up about 13 percent of the public student body, and are concentrated in Wards 3, 4, and 6.

At-risk students are likewise more likely to live in Wards 7 and 8 (61 percent of elementary and middle school

students and 52 percent of high school students). Ward 8, for example, is home to 24 percent of the students enrolled at an elementary or secondary school, but 36 percent of the at-risk students enrolled at the same level. In contrast, Ward 3 holds 7 percent of students enrolled at an elementary or middle school, but only one percent of at-risk students at this level.

A breakdown of students by the ward where their school is located shows that wards could be more diverse in terms of the race and ethnicity of students who attend school within their boundaries, relative to the race and ethnicity of students who live there. But that is largely because many Black students who live in Wards 7 and 8 attend school somewhere outside their home wards. For example, 34 percent of Black elementary and middle school students live in Ward 8, but 26 percent attend school there.

In contrast, more Hispanic or Latino students attend school in Ward 4 compared to those who live there. And more white students attend school in Ward 3 compared to the white students who live in this ward. For example, 28 percent of white students who attend high school live in Ward 3, but nearly half the white students in the city attend high school in this ward.



Findings on the type, location, and capacity of OST providers

OST programs include programs that are located in and operated by D.C. Public Schools and D.C. public charter schools; programs that are operated by other government agencies, specifically those provided by the Department of Parks and Recreation; and programs that are operated by community-based organizations, many of which receive public funding. The Mayor Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program

(MBSYEP) offers summer work opportunities for youth between the ages of 16 and 24.

During school year 2021-22, there were 150 different providers offering 474 different OST programs serving the District’s public school students through afterschool and summer programming. These providers are summarized below.

Providers collectively offered 30,360 afterschool seats in OST programs at the PK3 through grade 8 level, and

OST providers and programs

	Providers	Programs
Community based organizations	88	92
Public charter schools and non-Title I DCPS schools	58	58
DCPS Title I schools	1	55
Department of Parks and Recreation	1	254
DCPS summer programs	1	14
Department of Employment Services (MBSYEP)	1	1
Grand total	150	474

Source: Provider surveys conducted by the D.C. Policy Center, administrative data from DCPS for Title I schools, administrative data summaries from Department of Parks and Recreation, and administrative data summaries from the Department of Employment Services for the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program.

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OST seats by program time, school year 2021-22

Grade band	After school	Summer	Before school	Seasonal sports	Weekends	Seasonal breaks	Single day school closures	Other
PK3 through grade 8	30,360	16,434	9,655	7,698	5,547	4,134	2,695	2,754
Grades 9-12	6,090	15,044	477	528	3,574	2,321	606	880

Source: Provider surveys conducted by the D.C. Policy Center, administrative data from DCPS for Title I schools, administrative data summaries from Department of Parks and Recreation, and administrative data summaries from the Department of Employment Services for the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program.

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6,090 seats at the high school level. In addition, there were 16,434 seats in summer programs for elementary and middle school students (24 percent of enrollment), and 15,044 seats for high school students (80 percent of enrollment), of which, approximately 8,350 (45 percent of enrollment) were seats in the MBSYEP.

OST program providers also provided before school seats, mainly serving students attending elementary and middle schools. Students could also attend seasonal sports organized by DPR (such as football in the fall, basketball in the winter, etc.) but these were organized around practices and games and not offered consistently through the week. There were also programs offered during seasonal breaks, single day closures and other times, and these were mostly organized by CBOs or public charter schools or DCPS schools that are not a part of the Title I program.

Determining the need and demand for OST programs is difficult since these metrics are driven by complex

factors such as policy objectives, family interest and various barriers that can prevent participation.

This report defines four potential metrics of need for OST programs, based on different policy goals.

These metrics are universal coverage, broad income targeting (300 percent of the federal poverty line), students with at-risk status, and narrow income targeting (100 percent of the federal poverty line). The table below shows the gaps in number of seats based on these need metrics.

In afterschool programming, the city faces seat shortfalls in all four metrics except narrow income targeting at the PK3 through grade 8 level as well as at high school level. For summer programming, existing capacity is not sufficient to provide full coverage under any of the need metrics at the PK3 through grade 8 level. In contrast, the only metric under which summer programs are not sufficient under the high school level is universal coverage.

Gaps in OST coverage based on four need metrics

Goal	Afterschool		Summer	
	PK3-Grade 8	Grades 9-12	PK3-Grade 8	Grades 9-12
Universal coverage	(39,528)	(12,927)	(53,454)	(3,974)
Broad income targeting	(24,777)	(8,923)	(38,708)	116
At-risk	(3,332)	(3,029)	(17,258)	5,924
Narrow income targeting	2,334	1,235	(1,592)	10,188

Source: Analyses developed by the D.C. Policy Center.

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Existing seat capacity at the high school level would cover 80 percent of all students, but more than half of these slots are those offered under MBSYEP.

OST capacity has grown since 2017. Comparing these findings to findings from the 2017 study reveals that the number of OST seats has grown faster than the number of public school students, reducing gaps under the universal coverage metric, especially for the PK3 through grade 8 grade band for afterschool programs, and all grade bands for summer programs. Consequently, gaps have narrowed for at-risk students and from households under narrow income targeting.

The data presented here are not the total universe of OST programming, nor are they a complete estimation of the demand and needs of students in the District. Importantly, the analysis considers only whether a seat would be available to a student, not whether programs match the needs of students and families.

Barriers to participation may prevent students from accessing OST programs, including language barriers, transportation, hours of OST programs, and care needed for students with disabilities.

The existing seat capacity in afterschool programs can serve 43 percent of students enrolled at

OST coverage rates by ward for afterschool programs, by grade band, student residence, and where students go to school



Source: Public school student counts by their ward of residence obtained from the DME, and capacity data compiled by the D.C. Policy Center.

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elementary and secondary schools. For these grade bands existing summer programs can serve 23 percent of students. For afterschool programs serving students in PK3 through grade 8, Wards 2 and 5 have the greatest coverage rate (82 percent and 60 percent respectively), when comparing seats in each ward to students who live in that ward.

But that picture changes considerably when comparing seats in each ward to students who attend school in that ward. Under this metric, Wards 2, 5 and 6 lose considerable ground because many students who attend school in these wards travel from some other ward. Wards 7 and 8 have more favorable outcomes when comparing the number of seats to students who attend school there (as opposed comparing seats to students who live there) because many children and youth who live in these wards attend school in another ward.

For high school students, the citywide coverage rate is 33 percent for afterschool programs and 35 percent for summer programs (excluding the seats MBSYEP—when those seats are included, the coverage rates goes up to nearly 100 percent). Coverage rates vary greatly across the city and are even more sensitive to whether they are being measured against ward of residence or ward of school attended: in Ward 2, there is an OST program for only one in four high school students attending school there, but when measured against the number of high school students living there, that number exceeds one. This is partly because there are no by-right high schools in Ward 2. Similar patterns are observed Ward 6, which also does not have a high school.

Across the entire city, on average, each student attending PK3 through grade 8 has 948 seats within one mile of their home. This number is highest in Ward 1 (1,502 seats within a mile of the average student), and much lower in Wards 7 and 8 (even though there are many more seats, there are also many more students, resulting in 729 and 870 seats within a mile respectively).

Findings on challenges reported by providers

The D.C. Policy Center administered surveys to collect information on capacity and program characteristics to community based organizations (CBOs) and to non-Title I schools and public charter schools. The Policy Center received responses from 180 providers including 102 CBOs and 78 schools. Most OST providers operate within a single Ward, offer programs

five or more times a week, and offer programs that last between 2 and 4 hours a day.

During school year 2021-22, providers experienced variable student enrollment, observed an increased level of absenteeism, and often struggled to retain staff and keep up with rising costs.

Providers mentioned several obstacles to operating OST programs at current levels and expanding services including hiring and retaining qualified staff, rising costs, obtaining funding and the timing of grant distributions, highly variable enrollment and attendance, difficulties finding space for programs, and increased needs of participants including direct service provision and mental health supports.

Findings on challenges reported by parents and guardians

Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) administered two surveys to parents—one in English and one in Spanish—inquiring about participation in OST programs, expectations from such programs, and challenges experienced by families in accessing programs.

Transportation, distance, and finding program information where among the biggest challenges families faced in accessing OST programming. Many parents and guardians expressed that information on OST programs was difficult to find, including information on when program sign-ups occurred, how to sign up, what services programs offered, and how much programs cost. This was especially prevalent for people who do not have internet or devices, have language barriers, are essential workers and cannot be online at certain times during the day, or are caring for children with special care needs.

Adding to this issue, previous ties between programs and families have been broken by the pandemic, leading to programs having difficulties recruiting families and families having trouble finding information. Parents most frequently cited children's schools as a source of information, while on the other hand, providers often mentioned difficulties working with schools to get space or disseminate information.

When asked about why students may not participate in OST programming, the most frequently mentioned concern was affordability, followed by transportation and difficulties getting into programs. These concerns are not evenly distributed across the city: more Ward 8 parents cite conflicts with work schedules, lack

of transportation, and programs being too far away. Ward 4 had the highest share of parents who said that participation was hindered because programs could not meet students' specific needs.

Recommendations

Many of the following recommendations relate to challenges collecting more data and information on OST programs, including the need to measure the demand for programs, specific needs of students, and provide comprehensive information about existing programs to students and families.

Recommendations on improving data collection and coordination

- Collect standardized data about OST programs provided by the District government and organizations that receive government funding.
- Collect information on OST programs operated by fully private providers that do not receive public funding.
- Increase coordination between OSSE and the OST office to develop a better understanding of the role of licensed child development centers in the OST landscape.

Recommendations for further research and action

- Study OST provider costs, financing, and pricing models.
- Study the participation constraints families and youth face that prevents them from participating in OST programs by participant and program characteristics such as location, type of programming, and services provided.
- Conduct further research on challenges facing groups who need additional care or special accommodations.
- Develop quality and effectiveness benchmarks.
- Monitor bottlenecks from the staff background clearance process.

Recommendations on community engagement and information dissemination

- Improve communication about OST programming and services through public events.
- Engage schools as sources of OST information.

- Redesign Learn 24 website and update how the information is populated on this website to make it more informative and useful for families and students.

About the data

This report relies on several data sources.

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)

The assessment of needs uses audited student level data obtained from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), which has been matched with neighborhood clusters as defined by the Office of Planning, and city wards adopted in 2022 based on the 2020 Decennial Census. Data received from DME are audited enrollment data for school year 2021-2022, as of October 5, 2021. Students are grouped into grade bands by using grade level information provided in these data, corresponding to grade levels identified for each student for Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) purposes. The data exclude students identified as adult, alternative, or special education (for grade level purposes). They also exclude one charter school that is not coded as adult or alternative but serves older students who are typically in the labor force.

Capacity data

OST capacity data have been compiled through:

1. A survey of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), charter schools and non-Title I schools about the programs they offer;
2. Supporting data from the DME on CBOs that receive OST grants;
3. Administrative data from DCPS for programs offered at Title I schools;
4. Summary data obtained from Department of Parks and Recreation on summer programs, afterschool programs, and seasonal sports programs;
5. Summary data from the Department of Employment Services on the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program; and
6. Other data directly collected from CBOs and providers through interviews.

In addition, the D.C. Policy Center benefited from two surveys to parents and guardians conducted by DC PAVE (one in English, one in Spanish). Additional information about the methods used to develop these estimates can be found in the Appendix.