

State of D.C. Schools



Strong system health and modest progress

In D.C., school year 2023-24 showed some signs of strong system health, with rising public school enrollment and improving educator retention. However, recovery for student outcomes has been slow, with modest improvements to learning outcomes and chronic absenteeism, which both have yet to rebound to pre-pandemic levels. Following national trends, these metrics indicate that the pandemic’s effects on education are enduring and will require years to reverse—in D.C. and nationally. *State of D.C. Schools* is an annual systemwide overview of public education in the District of Columbia.

Read the full report at dcpolicycenter.org.

STRONG SYSTEM HEALTH

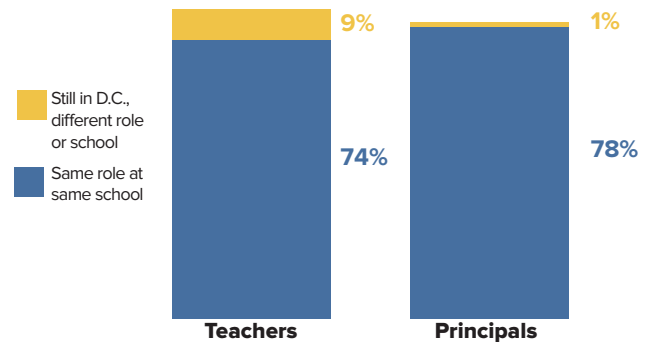
Growing enrollment

- ➔ **90,608** students were enrolled in school year 2023-24
- ➔ Total enrollment increased by **2.3%** in PK through Grade 12

- + **3.4%** Pre-kindergarten (PK) students
- + **1.4%** Elementary school students
- + **1.8%** Middle school students
- + **4.2%** High school students

Improvements to educator retention

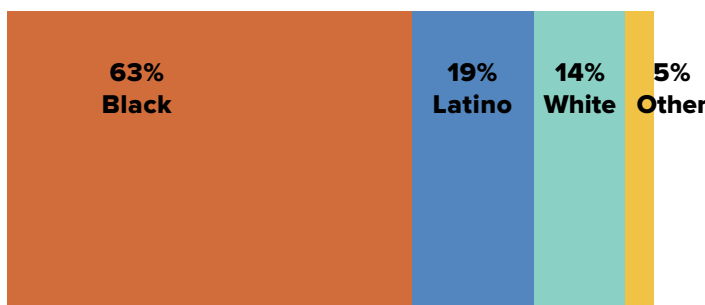
- ➔ **74%** of teachers remained in the same role and school, up 4 percentage points.
- ➔ **78%** of principals stayed at their school, up 4 percentage points.



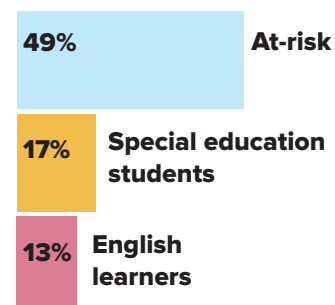
STABLE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The share of students designated as “at-risk” decreased by 3 percentage points. The representation of other student groups is similar to the previous year.

RACE & ETHNICITY



SPECIAL POPULATIONS

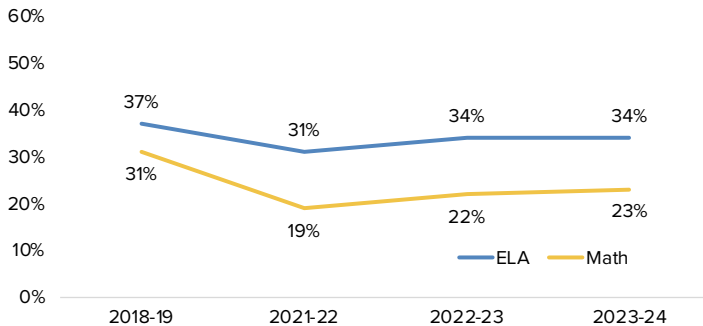


MODEST PROGRESS IN STUDENT OUTCOMES

Small gains in learning outcomes that remain below pre-pandemic levels

- ➔ **34%** students met or exceeded expectations in English Language Arts (ELA).
- ➔ **23%** met or exceeded Math expectations.

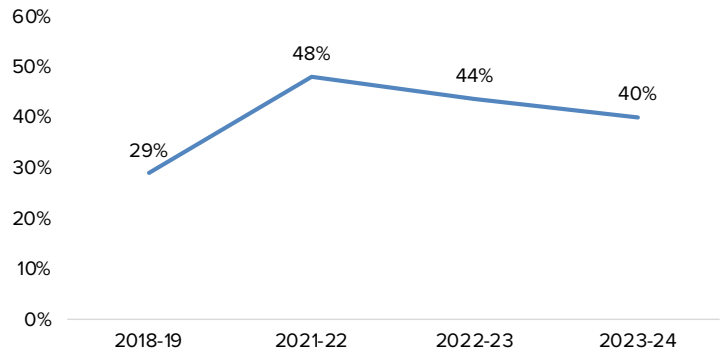
Learning outcomes on D.C.'s statewide assessment



Chronic absenteeism improved by 4 percentage points, but remains higher than pre-pandemic

- ➔ **40%** of students were chronically absent.

Chronic absenteeism rate



No change in metrics of graduation and suspensions

- ➔ Graduation rates remained steady at **76%** for the 9th grade cohort.
- ➔ **6%** of students were suspended out-of-school at least once.

Postsecondary enrollment improved



Postsecondary enrollment within six months of graduation increased by 3 percentage points to **56%**, back to pre-pandemic levels.

Perspectives on the evolving role of school

After contracting in some ways during the pandemic when families stepped in to support virtual learning, the role of school has changed to be more expansive.



Parents valued academic excellence, mental health, and safety as priorities.



Teachers viewed school as essential for education, emotional growth, and fostering community.



Students wanted school to focus on real-life skills, engaging teaching, and better preparation for the future.

MOVING FORWARD

School year 2023-24 showed strong system health but modest progress toward recovery, especially in terms of learning outcomes, at a time when there is an urgent demand. Although some recovery efforts may take multiple years to show results, there is a need to assess recovery strategies and better target how schools can move the needle.