

## **Budgeting and Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools**

October 30, 2017

### **Audit Team**

Candace McCrae, Analyst  
Lindsey Poole, Analyst  
Jason Juffras, Audit Supervisor

A report by the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor  
Kathleen Patterson, District of Columbia Auditor

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## Budgeting and Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools

### Why ODCA Did This Audit

ODCA conducted a discretionary review of budgeting and staffing in eight D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) elementary schools in order to: assess whether staffing complies with DCPS's Comprehensive Staffing Model (CSM) for elementary schools; examine the schools' use of funds provided through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, including supplemental funding for students at risk that was first implemented in school year (SY) 2014-2015; and compare and contrast budgeting and staffing among the schools.

### What ODCA Recommends

#### D.C. Public Schools should:

- Include clear guidance to LSATs and principals on providing input on at-risk funding allocations in its FY 2019 budget development guide. The guidance also should align with current D.C. Code provisions and the intent reflected in the legislative history, and include descriptions of at-risk funding options that schools can adopt or modify.
- Substitute actual salaries in school budgets as soon as practicable after staffing decisions have been made to improve transparency and budget execution and be consistent with the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- Create and make public a multi-year technology needs plan to define and provide adequate technology to each school. The plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources.

#### The D.C. Council should:

- Provide careful oversight on how at-risk funding is utilized, whether the uses are consistent with legislative intent, whether legislative intent is clearly reflected in the D.C. Code, and consider amending the law if necessary to better meet the goal of providing the additional funding.

For more information regarding this report, please contact Diane Shinn, Director of Communications, at [diane.shinn@dc.gov](mailto:diane.shinn@dc.gov) or 202-727-3600.

### What ODCA Found

- The eight schools generally complied with the staffing and instruction requirements of the CSM, but compliance was sometimes achieved by using funds earmarked by law to fund supplemental services for at-risk students.
- DCPS complied with the law requiring that at least 90 percent of at-risk funds be allocated directly to schools in SY 2016-2017.
- Local School Advisory Teams (comprised of parents, teachers, school staff, and community members), advised principals on their schools' budgets.
- All eight schools reallocated resources to support a variety of instructional, resource, and operational needs.
- Schools that implemented an alternative model of administrative staffing known as School Strategy and Logistics reported positive results.
- DCPS school budgets are based on projections of average position costs and do not reflect actual compensation figures, which are captured only in actual expenditures.
- Budgets for elementary schools did not in all cases keep pace with inflation between FY 2015 and FY 2017. This means that many schools were required to make spending decisions based on purchasing power that was effectively less from year to year.
- Interviewees from most of the eight schools reported limited numbers of key technology devices and resources that are outdated and unusable.

# Background

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The funding and staffing of schools in the District of Columbia is a longstanding topic of concern for parents, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers, and is likely to remain so given the importance of public education.

In the early 1990s, parents and other advocates pushed for greater stability in school funding through a per-pupil allocation that would determine how much the D.C. Council and Mayor would provide to D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) from the general fund. In 1995 the U.S. Congress enacted the “District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995,” as part of P.L. 104-134, the “Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996,” requiring the Mayor and D.C. Council to develop a per-capita student funding formula for DCPS and public charter schools.<sup>1</sup> Moving to a per-student formula met both the parent goal of improved year to year stability and the demand by charter advocates for charter students to have a per capita allocation at least equal to that provided for DCPS students. Under the new formula, annual payments to DCPS and to public charter schools would be based on enrollment multiplied by the per-capita funding for each student, which could be adjusted to reflect the cost of educating students at different grade levels, students who require special education services, and students who do not meet minimum literacy standards.

To implement the per-pupil funding formula required by federal law, the D.C. Council enacted the “Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public School and Public Charter Schools Act”.<sup>2</sup> This law set a minimum, or “foundation level” to reflect the cost of providing “adequate regular education services” to each student,<sup>3</sup> with adjustments to that funding level to reflect the higher costs of educating students in different grade levels as well as students who receive special education services, students with limited or no English proficiency, summer school students, and students attending residential schools.<sup>4</sup> The “Uniform Per Student Funding Formula” (UPSFF) has been modified periodically since its enactment, but the basic structure of a foundation per-student level plus added weights remains intact. The UPSFF was designed to bring year-to-year stability to school funding while also promoting equity.

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<sup>1</sup> Public charter schools are independently-operated schools that are overseen by the Public Charter School Board.

<sup>2</sup> D.C. Law 12-207, effective March 26, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See D.C. Official Code §38-2901(5).

<sup>4</sup> The law also authorized appropriations to support the school oversight functions typically managed by a state government, which are now administered by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

Although the UPSFF provides the bulk of funding for DCPS as well as the public charter schools, the schools receive additional funding from other sources, including federal funds. In the FY 2017 budget, DCPS received \$756.4 million (84 percent) of its \$905.7 million total budget through the UPSFF. The rest of the budget was financed by federal, private, special-purpose, and intra-district funds. DCPS must then perform a second round of budget allocations to distribute its UPSFF, federal, and other funds to individual schools while reserving funds for the operation of its central office.<sup>5</sup> D.C. law requires the Mayor to submit a budget each year that includes an allocation for each school.<sup>6</sup>

In School Year (SY) 1999-2000, DCPS began using a weighted student formula (WSF) to allocate funds to individual schools. The WSF allocated dollars to schools using a formula that was also: 1) adjusted to reflect student needs and characteristics, including their socioeconomic status<sup>7</sup>, and 2) designed to ensure a minimum or basic set of resources for all students and schools (known as the “floor plan”).

Although the WSF gave schools some flexibility in allocating their funds, the Board of Education’s FY 2006 budget request (submitted in January 2005) acknowledged that staffing patterns and educational programs varied widely among schools, making it difficult to enforce academic standards.

The Board stated that, “Certain key staffing decisions have become uneven and inconsistent across schools ... Full autonomy regarding how dollars are spent has led to 150 different decisions to determine an adequate ratio for counselors, appropriate levels of support in literacy or numeracy, and how (or even if) content areas such as art, music, and PE are delivered to students.”<sup>8</sup> An external study released in the fall of 2005 echoed this concern, reporting that only 58 percent of elementary schools employed a music teacher, only 55 percent employed an art teacher, and only 45 percent employed a librarian.<sup>9</sup> That year the Board also adopted

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<sup>5</sup> Public charter schools do not have to perform this second round of allocations, because the schools directly receive UPSFF dollars without going through a central administrative structure.

<sup>6</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-173 (a) and § 38-2831(b)(1).

<sup>7</sup> The WSF weights were for student grade level, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, special education needs, and limited or no English proficiency. The inclusion of free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, a measure of economic resources, represented a major difference from the UPSFF, which did not include any measures of economic status.

<sup>8</sup> Board of Education, *Keeping our Promise to the District’s Children: Proposed FY 2006 Operating Budget*, January 12, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> D.C. Voice, *Starting Off Right 2005: A School System in Transition*, December 2005, p. 11.

new academic standards, adapted from the well-regarded Massachusetts state standards designed to bring consistency as well as rigor to schools across the District.

Some adjustments were made to the WSF in 2006, such as replacing “floor plan” subsidies claimed by most schools with a small school allocation available only to schools with fewer than 300 students, and strengthening school-based staffing requirements.<sup>10</sup>

Then-Chancellor Michelle Rhee began replacing the WSF with a comprehensive staffing model (CSM) in SY 2008-2009.<sup>11</sup> The goal of the change, which was fully implemented in FY 2011, was to ensure that all students had the same academic opportunities, including art, music, and physical education classes, regardless of which school they attended. The model includes separate standards for elementary, middle, and high schools, and adjusts for student educational needs (such as special education and English language learner services) in trying to ensure equitable learning opportunities for children. DCPS also implemented a Non-Personnel Services Model to govern the allocation of school funding for supplies, equipment, and other non-staffing resources.

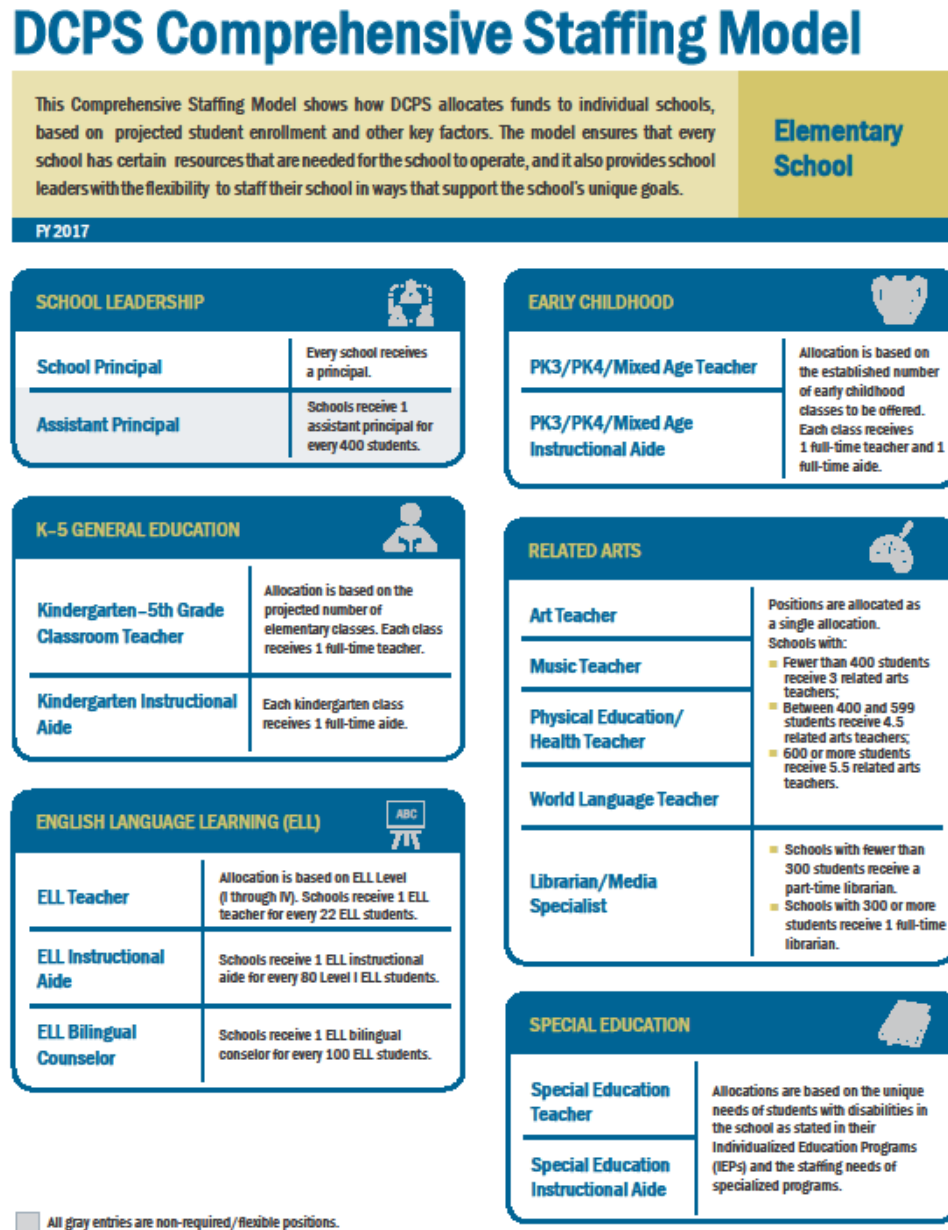
See Figure 1 on the next two pages for the DCPS infographic that explains the CSM for elementary schools in FY 2017.

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<sup>10</sup> Specifically, schools were required to employ a librarian on at least a half-time basis, to offer an art and music program (through school employees or a partnership with a community organization), and to maintain at least three custodians on staff.

<sup>11</sup> In 2008-2009, the first year of implementation, the CSM applied only to schools that were receiving students who attended schools that were closed as of that year.


Figure 1: DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model for Elementary Schools, Fiscal Year 2017




**Figure 1, continued: DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model for Elementary Schools, Fiscal Year 2017**

SCHOOLWIDE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT 	
<b>Instructional Coach</b>	Every school receives an instructional coach.
<b>Social Worker</b>	Allocation is based on a formula that considers the school's total number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessments (functional behavior, social history, and psychological) held during the past school year;</li> <li>Student Support Team (SST) meetings held during the past school year;</li> <li>Manifestation Determination meetings held during the past school year;</li> <li>Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);</li> <li>Behavior Support Service (BSS) hours present in the school's IEPs.</li> </ul>
<b>Psychologist</b>	
<b>International Baccalaureate (IB) Coordinator</b>	Candidate schools and schools continuing their authorized IB program in FY 2017 receive 1 full-time IB coordinator.
<b>Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) Coordinator</b>	Schools participating in the SEM program in FY 2017 receive 1 full-time SEM coordinator.

OTHER BUILDING STAFF 	
<b>Custodial Foreman and Custodial Staff</b>	Schools must have at least one foreman or custodian to open/close building. Custodial allocation is based on building size and unique situations like construction at the school.
<b>Business Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools with 300 or fewer students receive a part-time business manager.</li> <li>Schools with more than 300 students receive a full-time business manager.</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative Aide</b>	Every school receives an administrative aide.
<b>Clerk</b>	Schools receive 1 clerk for every 400 students.

 All gray entries are non-required/flexible positions.

Note: For all non-staffing allocations, please refer to DCPS Non-Personnel Services Model.

For complete guidance on the budget development process,  
please visit the Budget Development Guide website at [www.dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com](http://www.dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com).

**Source:** DCPS, "DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model," Elementary School, FY 2017, [dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps\\_csm\\_es\\_2017.pdf](http://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf).

The CSM for elementary schools has been modified over the years. For example, DCPS raised the minimum enrollment for allocating full-time art, music, and physical education teachers to schools from 250 in FY 2012 to 300 in FY 2013, and then implemented a



single allocation, tied to enrollment, for related arts teachers (art, music, physical education, and world language) in FY 2014. Special education coordinators were dropped from the funding formula in FY 2013. According to DCPS budget development guides, funding for non-personal services (such as supplies, equipment, and contractual services) fell from 3.5 percent of a school's budget in FY 2012 to 2.75 percent in FY 2013 and was further reduced to 2.25 percent of enrollment-driven funding in FY 2014.

In SY 2014-2015, a funding weight for at-risk students was added to the UPSFF by D.C. Law 20-87, the "Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act of 2013" ("Fair Student Funding Act"), effective February 22, 2014.<sup>12</sup> The Fair Student Funding Act stated that, "additional allocations shall be provided on the basis of the count of students identified as at-risk." The Act defined at-risk as a student at a DCPS or public charter school who is any of the following:

- Homeless
- In foster care
- Eligible for the federally-funded Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance programs.
- A high school student at least one year older than the expected age level for his or her grade.

Unlike other UPSFF weights which are set in statute, the applicable weight for at-risk students is determined by the Mayor.

The Fair Student Funding Act has direct implications for school-based budgets because of two other important requirements. First, it requires that no less than 90 percent of at-risk funding be allocated directly to school budgets and distributed proportionally to schools based on the number of at-risk students enrolled. Second, the Act stipulates that at-risk funds "shall be supplemental to the school's gross budget and shall not supplant any Formula, federal, or other funds to which the school is entitled."

The original language of the Fair Student Funding Act granted schools considerable autonomy in allocating at-risk funds, but was amended in 2015 to give the primary role to the Chancellor "in consultation with the principal and local school advisory team." Nevertheless, the Act represents an effort to target at-risk dollars directly to students rather than to the school system through the two provisions described above. The D.C. Council Committee on Education noted in its report on the Fair Student Funding Act that a

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<sup>12</sup> See section 4 of D.C. Law 20-87, the "Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act of 2013."

goal was to shift the focus “away from funding the school and its staff” under the CSM “to instead funding students by distributing UPSFF funds based on student characteristics, increasing principal autonomy over UPSFF funds,” and other purposes.<sup>13</sup>

Considering the numerous changes in school funding procedures, including the introduction of the at-risk funding weights, and the continuing effort to ensure sufficiency, equity, and effectiveness in school funding, the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) launched a study of budgeting and staffing in eight elementary schools, one from each ward of the city. This study was intended to assess whether the CSM is effectively implemented and providing the promised resources. ODCA decided to focus on elementary schools because they comprise the majority of DCPS schools (64 of 116 schools in SY 2016-2017) and set the foundation for success in secondary and post-secondary education.

The context for DCPS budgeting and staffing continued to evolve as this report was written. In discussions convened in January and February 2017, parents, school staff, and community members urged newly-appointed DCPS Chancellor Antwan Wilson<sup>14</sup> to increase school funding, allocate resources more equitably, and strengthen the curriculum and extracurricular activities.

The D.C. Council added \$11.5 million to DCPS’ FY 2018 budget in order to ensure that the foundation level for the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula would grow by 3 percent, rather than the 1.5 percent increase proposed by the Mayor. In August 2017, Chancellor Wilson announced a plan to use the 3 percent UPSFF increase, as well as additional funds reallocated from non-personal services, to support a variety of programs and initiatives. The allocations include \$7.7 million to support teacher pay increases reflected in a new collective bargaining agreement between DCPS and the Washington Teachers’ Union; \$5 million to add grades at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, MacFarland Middle School, and Van Ness Elementary School; and \$3.5 million to increase academic and extracurricular offerings at middle schools.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on Education, “Report on Bill 20-309, the ‘Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act of 2013,” November 25, 2013, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Antwan Wilson was nominated by Mayor Bowser to serve as DCPS Chancellor in November in 2016, and was confirmed by the D.C. Council in December 2016.

<sup>15</sup> See D.C. Public Schools, “D.C. Public Schools Report for the FY 2018 Budget Support Act of 2017,” August 2017.

# Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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## Objectives

Pursuant to District of Columbia Code § 1-204.55(b),<sup>16</sup> ODCA conducted a review of budgeting and staffing in eight DCPS elementary schools in order to achieve the following three objectives:

1. To assess whether staffing at the schools complies with DCPS's CSM for elementary schools.
2. To examine the schools' use of UPSFF dollars, including supplemental funding for students at risk that was first implemented in SY 2014-2015.
3. To identify similarities and differences in budgeting and staffing among the schools.

## Scope

This review covered budgeting and staffing during SY 2016-2017 at eight elementary schools: Bancroft, Hyde-Addison, Key, Barnard, Noyes, Miner, Nalle and Moten. This report contains brief descriptions of each school that was examined. ODCA also examined budgeting and staffing data from prior years in order to provide a broader context for the analysis of budgeting and staffing during SY 2016-2017. The additional resources that schools receive from other agencies, including the Metropolitan Police Department (school security officers), the Department of Health (school nurses), the Department of Behavioral Health (mental health counselors for some schools), and the Department of Transportation (school crossing guards) are not part of this review, which focuses on resources provided by DCPS.

## Methodology

ODCA chose to examine budgeting and staffing at eight elementary schools to incorporate a range of diverse contexts into this study. To ensure geographical diversity, ODCA chose one school from each of the District's eight wards, using a random-digit table to select each school.<sup>17</sup> As shown in Figure 2, the eight schools reflect considerable diversity in their student populations and academic programs.

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<sup>16</sup> D.C. Code § 1-204.55(b) provides that, "The District of Columbia Auditor shall each year conduct a thorough audit of the accounts and operations of the government of the District in accordance with such principles and procedures and under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe..."

<sup>17</sup> Although all students have the right to attend a neighborhood school, they can also enter a lottery to attend a school outside of their neighborhood or ward.

The schools vary widely in the size of the student body, ranging from 197 students at Noyes to 649 at Barnard. The percentage of at-risk students also ranged widely in SY 2016-2017, from less than 2.5 percent at Key to 84.0 percent at Moten. In SY 2015-2016, proficiency levels in math and English/language arts (ELA), as measured by the school system's standardized test, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, also varied sharply among the eight schools. Thus, this set of eight schools seems likely to offer insights about budgeting and staffing at DCPS elementary schools with different characteristics. Figure 3, on the following page, shows the range of per-pupil expenditures for the eight schools in FY 2016.

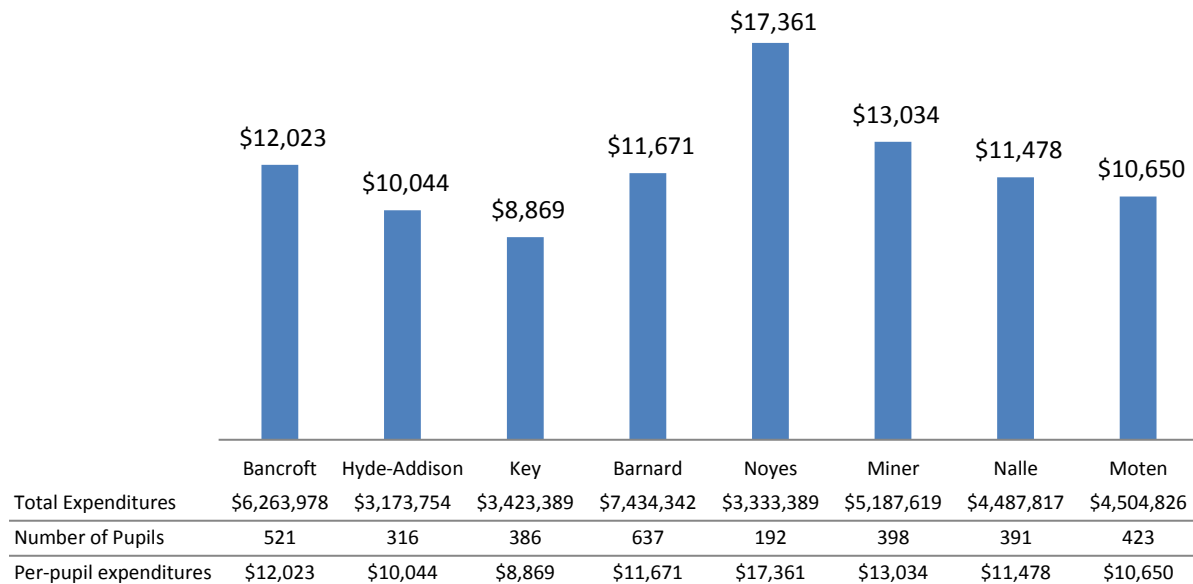
**Figure 2: Key Demographic and Program Data for Eight DCPS Elementary Schools in SY 2016-17**

School	Enrollment (SY 2016- 2017)	% At-Risk Students	Title I	% of Students Who Met/Exceeded Expectations in Math, English/Language Arts (SY 2015-2016)
Bancroft (Ward 1)	530	34.5%	Yes	Math: 30%; ELA: 20%
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	329	7.0%	No	Math: 73%; ELA: 61%
Key (Ward 3)	397	<2.5%	No	Math: 72%; ELA: 71%
Barnard (Ward 4)	649	46.5%	Yes	Math: 34%; ELA: 32%
Noyes (Ward 5)	197	72.6%	Yes	Math: 14%; ELA: 7%
Miner (Ward 6)	384	66.1%	Yes	Math: 24%; ELA: 9%
Nalle (Ward 7)	391	72.4%	Yes	Math: 20%; ELA: 10%
Moten (Ward 8)	405	84.0%	Yes	Math: 7%; ELA: 3%

**Source:** Total enrollment data are from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "Schedules of Student Enrollment and Independent Accountant's Examination Reports Thereon for the School Year Period Ended October 5, 2016," pp. 11-12, [osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report_0.pdf). At-risk enrollment data are from Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "2016-2017 School Year School-by School Enrollment Audit UPSFF Data," [osse.dc.gov/node/1223876](https://osse.dc.gov/node/1223876). Other data were provided by DCPS.

**Notes:** Enrollment data, which were independently audited, are as of October 5, 2016. At-risk elementary school students are any of the following: homeless, in the District's foster care system, or eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The federal Title I program provides financial assistance to schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families. The student performance data represent results from the SY 2015-2016 administration of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers exams.

**Figure 3: Per-Pupil Expenditures For Eight DCPS Elementary Schools in FY 2016.**



**Source:** ODCA calculated per-pupil expenditures from the System of Accounting and Reporting (SOAR) total FY 2016 per-school expenditures as of March 31, 2017 and from enrollment data from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education Audits of Student Enrollment and English Language Learner Student Enrollment,” Attachment B.1, [osse.dc.gov/node/1143912](https://osse.dc.gov/node/1143912).

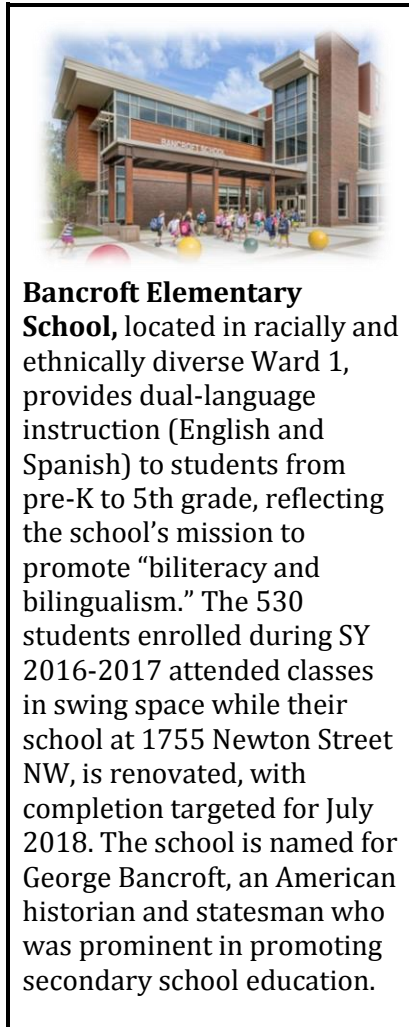
ODCA used a variety of methods to gather information on budgeting and staffing in the eight schools, as well as the tradeoffs reflected in budgeting and staffing patterns and their impact on the educational program. These methods included:

- Reviewing D.C. laws, regulations, and policies that govern school budgeting and staffing.
- Examining SY 2015-2016 and SY 2016-2017 budgets and staff rosters for each school.
- Interviewing school administrators, teachers, and parents of current students at each school.
- Interviewing officials from DCPS’s central office.
- Reviewing studies of DCPS budgeting and staffing by governmental bodies as well as external experts and groups.
- Calculating the real growth in expenditures and budgets for all DCPS elementary schools from FY 2015 to FY 2016.

This report was drafted, reviewed, and approved in accordance with the standards outlined in ODCA’s Policy and Procedure Manual.

# Evaluation Results

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**School staffing patterns at the eight schools generally complied with the CSM, but compliance was sometimes achieved by using funds earmarked by law to fund supplemental services for at-risk students.**

This section compares staffing at the eight elementary schools with the CSM by focusing on the following personnel categories:

1. School leadership and administration.
2. Early childhood.
3. English language learning.
4. Related arts.
5. Social-emotional.

These categories were selected to include both instructional and non-instructional job groupings.

## **School Leadership and Administration**

School leadership and administration represents a distinctive aspect of elementary school budgeting and staffing because the CSM designates all of the positions identified in the model, except for the principal, as "flexible," which means that the funding can be converted to other uses. The flexible positions include assistant principal, business manager, administrative aide, and clerk.

The CSM uses the following guidelines to allocate school leadership and administration positions to elementary schools:

- Every school has one principal.
- Every school receives an assistant principal for every 400 students (this allocation is pro-rated).<sup>18</sup>
- Schools with 300 or fewer students receive a part-time business manager, and schools with more than 300 students receive a full-time business manager.
- Every school receives an administrative aide.
- Schools receive one clerk for every 400 students (this allocation is pro-rated).

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<sup>18</sup> Pro-rated means that schools are allocated positions equal to the ratio of their enrollment to the enrollment needed for a full-time position. Therefore, a school with an enrollment of 200 would receive funding for .5 of an assistant principal position, because its enrollment is half of the 400 students needed for a full-time position. A school with an enrollment of 600 would receive funding for 1.5 assistant principal positions (600/400).

As shown in Figure 4, all the schools in this study used their discretion to depart from the CSM for leadership and administration positions. Four of the schools—Bancroft, Miner, Nalle, and Moten—adjusted their staffing to increase the number of positions devoted to leadership and administration; two schools—Key and Noyes—kept the number of leadership and administration positions the same while changing the mix of positions; and two schools—Hyde-Addison and Barnard—reduced the number of positions assigned to leadership and administration. Some of the school-based changes to administrative staffing involved implementing an alternative model known as “School Strategy and Logistics,” which is discussed in more detail later in this report.

Interviewees at the four schools that increased the number of leadership and administration positions stated that additional non-instructional staff members were needed to provide sufficient supports for learning, particularly by relieving principals and teachers of concerns related to discipline, supplies, and facility problems. One administrator stated that she could not imagine losing any of her administrative positions because, “The job of a principal at DCPS is mind-blowing,” while another administrator stated that, “School operations is a beast,” with “a lot of moving parts all the time.”

**Figure 4: Leadership and Administration Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**

School	Projected Enrollment	Leadership/Administrative Staffing Prescribed by CSM	Actual Leadership/Administration Staffing Fall 2016
Bancroft (Ward 1)	521	1 principal 1.3 assistant principal 1 business manager 1.3 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5.6 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 director, strategy & logistics 2 assistants, strategy & logistics 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 6 positions</b>
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	336	1 principal .8 assistant principal 1 business manager .8 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 4.7 positions</b>	1 principal 1 manager, strategy & logistics 1 assistant, strategy & logistics 1 clerk <b>Total: 4 positions</b>
Key (Ward 3)	407	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 business manager 1 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5 positions</b>	1 principal 2 assistant principals 1 business manager 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5 positions</b>

School	Projected Enrollment	Leadership/Administrative Staffing Prescribed by CSM	Actual Leadership/Administration Staffing Fall 2016
Barnard (Ward 4)	642	1 principal 1.6 assistant principal 1 business manager 1.6 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 6.2 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 business manager 1 clerk <b>Total: 4 positions</b>
Noyes (Ward 5)	196	1 principal .5 assistant principal .5 business manager .5 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 3.5 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal .5 business manager 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 3.5 positions</b>
Miner (Ward 6)	398	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 business manager 1 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 dean of students 1 manager, strategy & logistics 1 business manager 1 clerk 1 registrar <b>Total: 7 positions</b>
Nalle (Ward 7)	392	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 business manager 1 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 dean of students 1 director, strategy & logistics 1 assistant, strategy & logistics 1 parent coordinator <b>Total: 6 positions</b>
Moten (Ward 8)	421	1 principal 1.1 assistant principal 1 business manager 1.1 clerk 1 administrative aide <b>Total: 5.2 positions</b>	1 principal 1 assistant principal 1 director, strategy & logistics 1 administrative officer 1 business manager 1 registrar <b>Total: 6 positions</b>

**Source:** DCPS, "DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model," Elementary School, FY 2017, [dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps\\_csm\\_es\\_2017.pdf](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf); projected enrollment data for SY 2016-2017 as of December 2015 and staffing reports by school provided by DCPS.

**Note:** This figure shows *projected* enrollment, rather than actual SY 2016-2017 enrollment (which is shown in Figure 2) because DCPS uses projected enrollment when it builds the budget for the next school year. Thus, projected enrollment was used by DCPS to allocate the number of administrative staff shown here.



Nalle Elementary, a school that employed more leadership and administration staff (6) than prescribed by the CSM (5), added a dean of students, a parent coordinator, a director of strategy and logistics, and an assistant for strategy and logistics, while subtracting a business manager, clerk, and administrative aide. Interviewees contended that the modified, larger administrative staff was needed to serve a high-poverty student population more effectively. For example, one interviewee described efforts by the dean of students to engage and develop young people, which ranged from recruiting a ballet instructor for the extended-day program to starting a young men's group for fifth-graders. Similarly, an interviewee stated that the parent coordinator at Nalle performs a variety of tasks to support and engage children and their families in their schoolwork, such as holding parent workshops, ensuring that children get medical checkups, and helping families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, while another interviewee described the parent coordinator as a "bridge" connecting teachers and administrators to families.

Key Elementary, by contrast, departed from the CSM while maintaining the number of leadership and administration staff at five. Key employed a second assistant principal, but did not employ a clerk. Although an assistant principal costs more than a clerk, which increases the school's leadership and administration costs, Key uses its assistant principals to support the academic program. According to interviewees, one assistant principal is the content leader for math, and the other is the content leader for English/language arts.<sup>19</sup> In that capacity, both assistant principals serve as leaders for their respective program areas under DCPS's professional development program, Learning to Advance Our Practice (LEAP).

Barnard Elementary operated with a particularly lean administrative staff of four positions, less than the 6.2 positions that the CSM would provide for a school of its size. Barnard lacked an administrative aide, and employed only one assistant principal and clerk, respectively, when its size entitled the school to part of another position in each case. The result, according to one interviewee, was a "bare bones" administrative operation that required other staff, such as the special education coordinator, to pitch in as needed.

### **Early Childhood**

Early childhood programs at DCPS offer free, full-day pre-kindergarten education to three-year-olds (PK3) and four-year-olds

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<sup>19</sup> Key also did not have an instructional coach, who is classified under schoolwide academic support, and often plays a role as a content leader.

(PK4).<sup>20</sup> Following the staffing pattern outlined in the CSM for elementary schools, each of the schools in this study was budgeted for one teacher and one instructional aide for each early childhood class it offered (see Figure 5 on the following page). Principals, teachers, and parents interviewed by ODCA confirmed that the schools were adhering to this staffing pattern, although at one school—Nalle Elementary—three of the six early childhood aide positions were vacant and were being filled by substitutes at the time of our fieldwork.

Nevertheless, ODCA also found that the PK3 and mixed age preschool classes at Noyes, the PK4 classes at Key and Barnard, and the mixed-age PK classes at Nalle all exceeded DCPS’s guidelines for early childhood class sizes, which are as follows:

- PK3: One teacher and one aide per 16 students.
- PK4: One teacher and one aide per 20 students.
- Mixed-age (PK3/PK4): One teacher and one aide per 17 students.<sup>21</sup>

As shown in Figure 5 on the following page, the amount by which class sizes exceeded the guidelines was small. Key Elementary, for example, averaged 20.5 students in its PK4 classes, narrowly exceeding the 20-student guideline, but larger classes may still impede the quality of early childhood education.

A review of class size in preschool programs the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University stated that:

*In sum, preschool research strongly indicates that smaller class sizes are associated with greater educational effectiveness and other benefits ... the effects of class size have been found to be larger for younger children. Moreover, only those programs with small effective class sizes (15 or fewer) and high ratios of teachers to children have been found to produce very large educational benefits.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> A child must turn three years of age on or before September 30<sup>th</sup> to be eligible for PK3 in a given school year, and must turn four years of age on or before September 30 to be eligible for PK4 in a given school year.

<sup>21</sup> D.C. law requires pre-kindergarten programs for children up to three years of age to have an adult-to-child ratio of 1 to 8, and also mandates that pre-K programs for children who are four years of age or older to have an adult-to-child ratio of 1 to 10. See D.C. Code § 38-272.01(b)(1).

<sup>22</sup> National Institute for Early Education Research, “Class Size: What’s the Best Fit?” *Preschool Policy Matters*, Issue 9, December 2004, p. 5.

**Figure 5: Early Childhood Classes at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**

School	Classes (as of October 5, 2016)	Staff Budgeted for Early Childhood
Bancroft (Ward 1)	<b>PK3:</b> 3 classes with 44 students (average class size 14.7) <b>PK4:</b> 3 classes with 58 students (average class size 19.3)	6 teachers 6 aides
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	<b>PK3:</b> 1 class with 16 students (average class size: 16.0) <b>PK4:</b> 2 classes with 40 students (average class size: 20.0)	3 teachers 3 aides
Key (Ward 3)	<b>PK3:</b> no classes <b>PK4:</b> 2 classes with 41 students (average class size: 20.5)	2 teachers 2 aides
Barnard (Ward 4)	<b>PK3:</b> 4 classes with 61 students (average class size: 15.3) <b>PK4:</b> 4 classes with 85 students (average class size: 21.3)	8 teachers 8 aides
Noyes (Ward 5)	<b>PK3:</b> 1 class with 18 students (average class size: 18.0) 1 class with 17 students (average class size: 17.0)	2 teachers 2 aides
Miner (Ward 6)	<b>PK3:</b> 2 classes <b>PK4:</b> 3 classes <b>PK 3/4 (mixed age):</b> 1 class 93 students total (average class size: 15.5)	6 teachers 6 aides
Nalle (Ward 7)	<b>PK3/4:</b> 6 mixed-age classes with 104 students (average class size: 17.3)	6 teachers 6 aides*
Moten (Ward 8)	<b>PK3:</b> 2 classes <b>PK 3/4 (mixed age):</b> 1 class <b>PK4:</b> 2 classes 82 students total (average class size: 16.4)	5 teachers 5 aides

**Source:** Enrollment counts for PK3 and 4 are from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “Schedules of Student Enrollment and Independent Accountant’s Examination Reports Thereon for the School Year Period Ended October 5, 2016,” pp. 11-12, [osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report_0.pdf). Staffing data are from school community interviews and submitted FY 2017 school budgets, [dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17\\_submitted.html](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17_submitted.html).

**\*Note:** Three aide positions were vacant and staffed by substitutes at the time of ODCA’s fieldwork.

Interviewees generally expressed positive views about the preparation of teachers, the quality of the curriculum and instruction, and support services for the early childhood program in their schools. One parent described the early childhood program

as a “blessing and a gift” and stated that his child’s classroom is “stuffed full of engaging materials.”

Several concerns about early childhood programs were also raised during ODCA’s interviews, including the difficulty of funding early childhood supplies and services at non-Title I schools, which are not eligible for the technical assistance, family support services, supplies and materials, and furnishings that are funded by the federal Head Start program (the Head Start program is offered at all DCPS Title I schools, and the funding streams are blended). Other problems cited in our interviews included a lack of sufficient support by licensed professionals for students with special needs enrolled in early childhood classes, and a view that some parents do not understand the importance of regular attendance by their children.

### English Language Learning

The CSM’s staffing standards for English Language Learning (ELL) resulted from a corrective action agreement between DCPS and the Office for Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education which was finalized in 2003 in order to ensure equal educational opportunities for English language learners.<sup>23</sup> The agreement covers topics such as curriculum, professional development, and accountability mechanisms. As specified in the agreement, the ELL staffing standards for elementary schools in 2016-2017 were as follows:

- **ELL teachers.** Elementary schools receive one teacher, rounded to the nearest .5 FTE (full-time equivalent) for every 22 ELL students. Schools with only 11 to 16 ELL students receive a half-time ELL teacher. Schools with 10 or fewer ELL students are served by an itinerant ELL teacher provided by DCPS’ Language Acquisition Division.<sup>24</sup>
- **Bilingual guidance counselors.** Elementary schools receive one counselor for every 100 ELL students.
- **Translation aides.** Elementary schools receive one translation aide for every 50 Level 1 ELL students. Level 1 students are at the beginning, or lowest state of English language acquisition.

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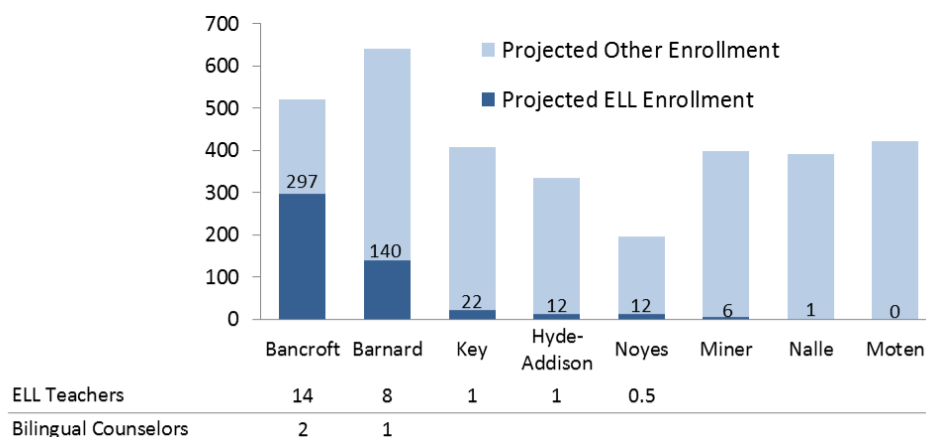
<sup>23</sup> DCPS, “DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model,” Elementary School, FY 2017, [dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps\\_csm\\_es\\_2017.pdf](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf), and DCPS, “School Budget Development Guide: Fiscal Year 2017, School Year 2016-2017,” p. 25, [dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com/fy17\\_budget\\_guide.pdf](https://dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com/fy17_budget_guide.pdf). District of Columbia Public Schools, “The Plan to Provide Services to English Language Learner Students,” Agreement for corrective action submitted to the US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, June 25, 2003, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> An itinerant teacher travels to multiple schools to work with students.

All ELL students within the DCPS system are supposed to receive at least 45 minutes of English as a Second Language services daily, with some students needing additional support depending on their proficiency levels. DCPS policy further establishes that a bilingual guidance counselor is responsible for serving linguistically and culturally diverse students and their families, and cannot be used to support the counseling needs of the general student population. A translation aide may need to accompany ELL students at the lowest level of English proficiency to content and elective classes to ensure they understand what is being taught.

As shown in Figure 6, staffing levels at the eight schools in this study complied with the ELL standards set forth in the CSM.<sup>25</sup> However, at Bancroft and Barnard Elementary Schools—the two schools in this study with the highest numbers of ELL students—the required number of bilingual guidance counselors was achieved only through the allocation of at-risk funds. As discussed in more detail in a later section on at-risk funding, this funding stream is required by law to be used for additional services for at-risk children, and “shall not supplant any Formula, federal, or other funds to which the school is entitled.”<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 6: English Language Learner (ELL) Projected Enrollments and Actual Staffing for Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**



**Source:** Projections of total and ELL enrollment from data provided by DCPS. Staffing information from data provided by DCPS and school community interviews.

**Note:** This figure shows projected enrollment, rather than actual school year 2016-2017 enrollment (which is shown in Figure 2) because DCPS uses projected enrollment when it builds the budget for the next school year. Thus, projected enrollment was used by DCPS to allocate the number of ELL staff shown here.

<sup>25</sup> According to DCPS, neither Bancroft nor Barnard (the only schools in our study with at least 50 ELL students) had 50 students at the Level 1 level of proficiency. As a result, none of the schools in this study qualified for a translation aide.

<sup>26</sup> D.C. Code § 38-2907.01(b)(3).



**Hyde-Addison Elementary School** was established in 2008 after the Addison School, which closed in 1944, was renovated and combined with the adjacent Hyde School. Located in the heart of Georgetown in Ward 2, Hyde-Addison enrolled 329 students in SY 2016-2017; students will attend class in swing space until 2019 during a renovation of their campus at 3219 O Street NW. The renovation will add approximately 30,000 square feet while connecting the Hyde and Addison buildings.

Figure 6 shows the projected ELL enrollment for SY 2016-2017, which serves as the basis for budgeting and staffing, for each of the eight schools. Projected ELL enrollment ranged from zero at Moten to 297 at Bancroft, more than half of Bancroft's total projected enrollment.

Because the enrollment of ELL students among the eight schools in this study was highly concentrated, Bancroft and Barnard were the only schools that employed more than one ELL teacher. At Bancroft, the ratio of ELL students to ELL teachers was 21.2 to 1, while at Barnard the ratio was 17.5 to 1, both within the prescribed cap of 22 to 1.

Bancroft and Barnard were also the only two schools in the study with ELL enrollments large enough to employ a bilingual guidance counselor. Bancroft was in compliance with the ELL staffing standards by employing two bilingual counselors for its 297 ELL students. The school would have needed an enrollment of 300 ELL students to qualify for a third bilingual counselor, because the allocations are not pro-rated. Similarly, Barnard was in compliance with the ELL staffing standards by employing one bilingual counselor for its 140 ELL students (the school would have needed an enrollment of 200 ELL students to qualify for a second bilingual counselor).

Key Elementary, with a projected ELL enrollment of 22 and one ELL teacher, was also in compliance with the 22:1 standard for the ELL teacher-to-student ratio, while Hyde-Addison with a projected ELL enrollment of 12 and one ELL teacher, exceeded the standard. Likewise, Noyes, with a part-time ELL teacher for its projected 12 ELL students, as well as Miner and Nalle, which were served by itinerant ELL teachers for their small projected ELL enrollments (six students and one student, respectively), were also in line with the staffing standards.

### Related Arts Instruction

The term "related arts" refers to instruction in four subjects— art, music, physical education/health, and world language—as well as library/media services. The CSM prescribes separate staffing standards for teachers of the four subjects and for library/media specialists, respectively. Those standards are as follows:

- Schools with fewer than 400 students receive three related arts teachers; schools with 400 to 599 students receive 4.5 related arts teachers; and schools with 600 or more students receive 5.5 related arts teachers.

- Schools with fewer than 300 students receive a part-time librarian, while schools with 300 or more students receive one full-time librarian.

As shown in Figure 7, six of the eight schools in this study—Hyde-Addison, Barnard, Noyes, Miner, Nalle, and Moten—met the related arts staffing standards for their projected enrollment level. Key, which is one of five schools whose students receive art and music instruction at the Fillmore Arts Center, did not meet the related arts staffing standard even if one adds back the two related arts positions that Key gives up to reflect the service provided by Fillmore. The situation with Bancroft Elementary was unclear because the school, which provides dual-language instruction in English and in Spanish, does not need a foreign language teacher.

Five of the eight schools in this study—Bancroft, Barnard, Miner, Nalle, and Moten—funded some of their related-arts positions using supplemental at-risk dollars. Without the positions funded by at-risk dollars, Barnard, Miner, and Moten would have fallen short of the related arts staffing levels prescribed in the CSM. This is a problem because at-risk funds are required by law to support additional services intended to assist at-risk students, while the related arts positions are part of a core curriculum that serves all students. This pattern is like that discussed in the previous section about ELL instruction, where two schools met staffing standards for bilingual guidance counselors only by using at-risk funds.

**Figure 7: Related Arts Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**

School	Projected Enrollment	Prescribed by CSM	Actual Staffing	Compliance
Bancroft (Ward 1)	521	4.5 related arts positions 1 librarian	3 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Not clear</b> if school meets standards because as a dual-language immersion school, it does not need foreign language teachers. 1.5 positions funded through at-risk dollars
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	336	3 related arts positions 1 librarian	2 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards because school receives art and music instruction through Fillmore Arts Center and thus loses at least one related arts position

School	Projected Enrollment	Prescribed by CSM	Actual Staffing	Compliance
Key (Ward 3)	407	4.5 related arts positions 1 librarian	2 related arts positions 1 librarian (two part-time positions)	<b>Not Compliant</b> with standards. Key loses two positions because it receives art and music instruction through Fillmore Arts Center, but would still not comply if the two positions were added back
Barnard (Ward 4)	642	5.5 related arts positions 1 librarian	6 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards, but only because 2.5 related arts positions were funded through at-risk dollars
Noyes (Ward 5)	196	3 related arts positions .5 librarian	3.5 related arts positions .5 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards
Miner (Ward 6)	398	3 related arts positions 1 librarian	4 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards, but only because 1.5 related arts positions were funded through at-risk dollars
Nalle (Ward 7)	392	3 related arts positions 1 librarian	4 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards. School received 1.0 related arts position through at-risk funding, but would have complied regardless
Moten (Ward 8)	421	4.5 related arts positions 1 librarian	4.5 related arts positions 1 librarian	<b>Compliant</b> with standards, but only because 1.5 related arts positions were funded through at-risk dollars

**Source:** Staffing standards from DCPS, “DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model,” Elementary School, FY 2017, [dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps\\_csm\\_es\\_2017.pdf](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf). Projected enrollment from data provided by DCPS. Staffing information from school community interviews, submitted SY 2016-2017 school budgets ([dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17\\_submitted.html](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17_submitted.html)) and data provided by DCPS. Fillmore Arts Center participation from [fillmoreartscenter.org](https://fillmoreartscenter.org).

**Note:** This figure shows *projected* enrollment, rather than actual SY 2016-2017 enrollment (which is shown in Figure 2) because DCPS uses projected enrollment when it builds the budget for the next school year. Thus, projected enrollment was used by DCPS to allocate the number of related arts staff shown here.



## Social-Emotional

Social workers and psychologists serve as primary sources of social-emotional support for DCPS elementary school students. DCPS states that school mental health teams are comprised of social workers and psychologists who assess students for barriers to learning and provide services “that promote development of healthy relationships, sound decision making, and regulation of emotions and behavior.”<sup>27</sup> Although the eight schools in this study employed other staff members who are classified by DCPS as social-emotional, including attendance counselors, behavior technicians, and in-school suspension coordinators,<sup>28</sup> social workers and psychologists are the only social-emotional positions included in the CSM for elementary schools. Unlike the four position categories previously discussed in this section (school leadership and administration, early childhood, English language learning, and related arts), which involve specific ratios of staff members to students, the CSM staffing guidelines for social workers and psychologists is based on a formula that considers the following factors:

1. Functional, social history and psychological assessments conducted during the past school year.
2. Student support team meetings held during the past school year.<sup>29</sup>
3. Manifestation determination meetings held during the past school year.<sup>30</sup>
4. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students.<sup>31</sup>
5. Behavior support service hours identified in students’ IEPs.

Each of the elementary schools in the study was allocated a social worker and psychologist, either part- or full-time, although Hyde-Addison’s half-time psychologist position and Nalle’s full-time psychologist position were both vacant during ODCA’s field work.

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<sup>27</sup> DCPS, “Student Mental Health Support,” downloaded from DCPS website, <http://dcps.dc.gov/service/student/student-mental-health-support>.

<sup>28</sup> DCPS, *School Budget Development Guide: Fiscal Year 2017, School Year 2016-2017*, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup> DCPS states that student support teams coordinate “services and initiatives related to academics, attendance, positive school culture, and health and wellness to ensure that all students receive appropriate support and necessary intervention ...” The teams may be composed of guidance counselors, teachers, administrators, social workers, school nurses, other support staff, and parents.

<sup>30</sup> Manifestation determination meetings are reviews required by federal law when a student with a disability is removed from his or her current educational setting due to disciplinary reasons.

<sup>31</sup> An IEP is a written document that sets forth an educational program for a student with a disability who meets federal and state requirements for special education. The IEP must be designed to provide the student with a free appropriate public education that meets the child’s unique needs and prepares him or her for further education, employment, and independent living.

Figure 8 shows the social workers, psychologists, and other staff designated by DCPS as social-emotional for each school during SY 2016-2017. The percentage of students receiving special education services at each school is included in the figure because the number of students with IEPs is one of the factors that affect the allocation of social workers and psychologists, as described above. Schools must develop an IEP for every student with a disability who meets federal and state requirements for special education.

**Figure 8: Social-Emotional Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-2017**

School	Projected Enrollment	Projected % Receiving Special Education	Social-Emotional Staffing
Bancroft (Ward 1)	521	9	1 social worker 1 psychologist
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	336	5	1 social worker .5 psychologist (vacant during ODCA field work)
Key (Ward 3)	407	7	.5 social worker 5 psychologists
Barnard (Ward 4)	642	12	1 social worker .5 psychologist 1 attendance counselor
Noyes (Ward 5)	196	21	1 social workers .5 psychologist 1 behavior technician
Miner (Ward 6)	398	16	2 social workers 1 psychologist
Nalle (Ward 7)	392	10	1 social worker 1 psychologist (vacant during ODCA field work)
Moten (Ward 8)	421	10	1 social worker 1 psychologist 1 in-school suspension coordinator

**Source:** Staffing information from submitted FY 2017 school budgets, [dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17\\_submitted.html](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17_submitted.html), data provided by DCPS, and school community interviews. Projected total and special education enrollment from data provided by DCPS.

**Note:** This figure shows *projected* enrollment, rather than actual SY 2016-2017 enrollment (which is shown in Figure 2) because DCPS uses projected enrollment when it builds the budget for the next school year.

In addition to the staff funded by DCPS and shown in Figure 8, five of the schools in this study supplemented their social-emotional staff through support from non-DCPS sources, including the School

Behavioral Health Program in the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health.<sup>32</sup>

The additional social-emotional staff members were as follows:

- A therapist funded by Mary's Center at Bancroft and Barnard Elementary Schools, respectively.<sup>33</sup>
- A clinician funded by the D.C. Department of Behavioral Health at Noyes and Moten Elementary Schools, respectively.
- Two social workers provided by the National Center for Children and Families at Nalle Elementary.<sup>34</sup>

Even though all the schools in this study were allocated at least a half-time psychologist and half-time social worker, most of the principals, teachers, and parents interviewed by ODCA expressed the view that social-emotional resources were insufficient. Some interviewees described the shortfall in broad terms while others cited areas of need, such as an additional assistant principal or dean of students (both of which are classified as "school leadership" positions but can play a role in social-emotional issues), or additional social worker or psychologist. Regardless of those distinctions, interviewees who called for additional social-emotional resources emphasized that more attention to behavioral issues would reduce disruptions and impediments to learning, thereby benefiting all students.

At four schools—Noyes, Miner, Nalle, and Moten—interviewees stated that the challenge of serving needy students from struggling communities overwhelmed the social-emotional resources of the school. There is "never enough mental health support," one teacher stated, because "students see so much outside of school that they bring to the classroom." Another teacher explained that even the outstanding social-emotional staff at her school cannot meet the needs of children who have limited capacity to learn because they are trying to survive. Similarly, a parent who stated that his school needed more counselors noted that, "A lot of these kids are raising themselves."

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<sup>32</sup> This program offers school-based prevention, early intervention, and clinical services to youth and their families. The Department of Behavioral Health reported that the program placed clinicians in 46 DCPS schools and 22 public charter schools during FY 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Mary's Center is a community health center that provides health care, educational, and social services.

<sup>34</sup> The National Center for Children and Families is a non-profit child and family welfare agency.

## Local School Advisory Teams played their intended role in school budgeting.



Local School Advisory Teams (LSATs) are groups of parents, teachers, non-instructional school staff and community members that advise the principal of every DCPS school on issues that impact the budget and factors that promote achievement for all students.<sup>35</sup> Overall, LSATs at the schools in this study played an important role in advising principals on their schools’ budgets, consistent with DCPS policy.

DCPS guidelines state that the purpose of an LSAT is to:

- Provide school leadership with advice about ways to achieve the school’s academic goals.
- Be a thought partner for the principal.
- Raise school community concerns and suggestions to the school administration.
- Work with the principal to develop the local Comprehensive School Plan (CSP) and the supporting budget.
- Review data to be informed about school needs.
- Monitor the implementation of the CSP.
- Use assessment results to develop specific strategies for research-based school improvement.
- Align the school with the goals of DCPS.<sup>36</sup>

According to DCPS guidance for FY 2018, during the budget season that takes place in late January to late February of each year, the LSAT should meet several times to advise the principal on priorities and goals, align the LSAT’s priorities with school priorities, review data to be informed about school needs and trends, and discuss budget options. The principal is responsible for attending all LSAT meetings and providing copies of materials, such as data, budgets, and DCPS policies that are necessary for the LSAT to make informed recommendations. The principal should also share the school’s performance goals on test scores and benchmarks set in a CSP.

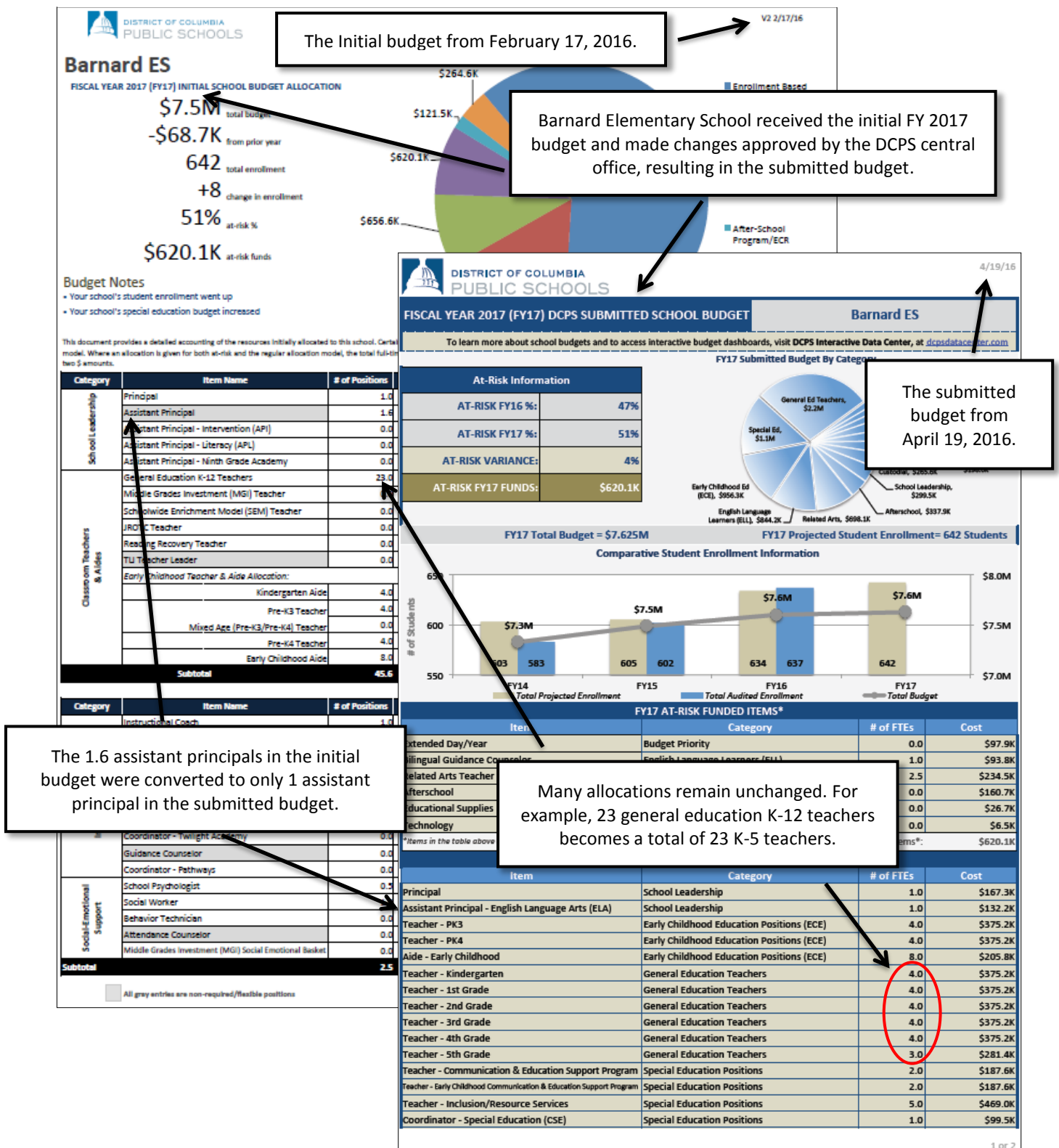
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<sup>35</sup> LSATs were established in 1992 as Local School Restructuring Teams (LSRTs) in order “to serve in an advisory capacity to the principal for the purpose of improving student outcomes.” The collective bargaining agreement between the Washington Teachers’ Union and DCPS assigned the LSRT (and now, the LSAT) the responsibility to make recommendations to the principal when DCPS determines that staff positions must be eliminated. Additionally, the LSAT serves as the School Improvement Team for any Title I school.

<sup>36</sup> Available from the LSAT website in spring of 2017, guidelines are from SY 2015-2016.

The principal is responsible for making final budget decisions, but should inform the LSAT of the final budget to be submitted. Figure 9 on the following pages compares the FY 2017 initial budget with the FY 2017 submitted budget for Barnard Elementary School. When school budgets are submitted to DCPS, the LSAT Chairperson should indicate in the school's QuickBase budget application whether the LSAT was briefed about the budget.

**Figure 9: Barnard Elementary School's Initial and Submitted Budgets for FY 2017.** This page shows similarities and differences between page one of Barnard's initial FY 2017 budget and page one of its submitted budget, including changes requested by the school and approved by DCPS.



**Figure 9 (continued): Barnard Elementary School's Initial and Submitted Budgets for FY 2017.** This page shows specific instances of staffing changes to Barnard's initial budget from the second pages of the initial and submitted budgets.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

V2 2/17/16

# Barnard ES

FISCAL YEAR 2017 (FY17) INITIAL SCHOOL BUDGET ALLOCATION

The initial budget.

Category	Item Name	# of Positions	\$ Amount
Administrative	Business Manager	1.0	\$75,673
	Administrative Aide	1.0	\$53,397
	Clerk	1.6	\$65,336
	Receptionist	0.0	\$0
Custodial			\$64,700
			\$150,703
			\$40,039

Category	Item Name	# of Positions	\$ Amount
Special Education	Special Education Teacher	9.0	\$844,249
	Special Education Aide	8.0	\$205,824
	ELL Teacher	7.0	\$636,638
	ELL Aide	0.0	\$0
English Language Learners	ELL Counselor	1.0	\$0
	Related Arts Teacher Allocation (Elementary Grades only):		

Barnard successfully petitioned to change one of eight special education aide positions into a new, year-round instructional aide.

Barnard submitted 7 special education aides in the budget.

The submitted budget totals \$7.6M, slightly more than the \$7,531,184 initial budget.

Item	Item Name	# of FTEs	Cost
Aide - Special Education	Special Education Positions	7.0	\$180.1K
Teacher - ELL	English Language Learners		
Guidance Counselor - 10mo (Bilingual)	English Language Learners		
Teacher - Art	Related Arts		
Teacher - Music	Related Arts		
Teacher - Health/Physical Education	Related Arts		
Teacher - World Language	Related Arts	1.0	\$93.8K
Specialist - Library/Media	Related Arts	1.0	\$93.8K
Aide - Library/Technology	Related Arts	1.0	\$41.5K
Aide - Kindergarten	Classroom Instructional Support Positions	4.0	\$102.9K
Aide - Instructional - Year Round (80hr)	Classroom Instructional Support Positions	1.0	\$33.3K
Psychologist	Social-Emotional Positions	0.5	\$46.9K
Social Worker	Social-Emotional Positions	1.0	\$93.8K
Attendance Counselor	Social-Emotional Positions	1.0	\$57.3K
Instructional Coach - English Language Arts (ELA)	Schoolwide Instructional Support Positions	1.0	\$93.8K
Instructional Coach - Math	Schoolwide Instructional Support Positions	1.0	\$93.8K
Business Manager	Administrative	1.0	\$75.7K
Clerk	Administrative	1.0	\$40.8K
Custodial Foreman	Custodial Staff	1.0	\$64.7K
Custodian (RW-5)	Custodial Staff	4.0	\$200.9K
After School Teacher	After School Programs	0.0	\$130.5K
After School Aide	After School Programs	0.0	\$143.9K
After School Administrative Aide	After School Programs	0.0	
After School Coordinator	After School Programs	1.0	
Administrative Premium (General)	Other	0.0	
Custodial Overtime	Other	0.0	
Custodial Services	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	
Educational Supplies	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	
Ed Tech and System Support	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	
Local Travel (Including Field Trips)	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$10.0K
Professional Development	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$5.0K
Contractual Services	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$36.0K
Electronic Learning	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$24.0K
Equipment and Machinery (Large Purchases)	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$16.5K
Library Books	Non-Personnel Spending	0.0	\$12.8K
Total FY17 Budget:			\$7.6M

Item Name	# of Positions	\$ Amount
Art Teacher		
Music Teacher	5.5	\$281,416
Health/Physical Education Teacher		
World Language Teacher		
Library/Media	1.0	\$93,805
Related Arts & Library		\$0
		31.5 \$2,081,934
Item Name	# of Positions	\$ Amount
After School Program Teacher	22.0	
After School Program Aide	22.0	\$121,478
Program Administrative Assistant	1.0	
Recovery (ECR)		\$0
for HS Computer Lab		\$0
		\$0
		\$0
		45.0 \$121,478
Item Name	# of Positions	\$ Amount
After School Program Teacher		\$244,665
After School Program Aide		\$3,988
Program Administrative Assistant		\$15,925
Recovery (ECR)	0.0	\$0
for HS Computer Lab		\$0
		\$0
		0.0 \$264,578
Number of Positions Allocated (excluding ASP)		88.2
Total Dollar Amount Allocated		\$7,531,184

For complete guidance on the budget development process, please visit the Budget Development Guide website at [www.dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com](http://www.dcpsschoolbudgetguide.com).





**Barnard Elementary School** in Ward 4 enrolled 649 students in school year 2016-2017 and hosts DCPS's flagship program for students with autism, serving students from across the District. Located at 430 Decatur Street NW, Barnard's building was fully rebuilt in 2003. The school is named for Job Barnard, who was a judge in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia from 1899 to 1914.

At all schools in this study, interviewees described a model in which the DCPS central office transmits an initial budget to the school, followed by LSAT meetings to discuss possible changes. Some interviewees stated that the LSAT submits recommendations to the principal or school administration. One of the principals interviewed by ODCA expressed pride that he always engages the school's LSAT in an "up-front conversation" about staffing priorities, such as the need to maintain an assistant principal position because the school has so many students with social-emotional behavior problems.

Interviewees from more than one school stated that the LSAT also prepared to make budgeting decisions by outlining school priorities. Interviewees from one of those schools noted that the LSAT collected feedback from parents and synthesized it for the principal, including preparing written materials, hosting meetings, and staffing a table during parent-teacher conferences.

Some principals at schools in this study seemed to actively shape LSAT meetings. At some schools, interviewees stated that the principal took a stronger role in shaping the meetings, for instance creating the agenda, or giving the LSAT examples of trade-offs that could be made. Interviewees from two of the schools whose principals took a strong leadership role in LSAT meetings were the only ones in this study to explicitly characterize the decision-making process of the LSAT as collaborative.

Perceptions of the latitude enjoyed by principals in budgeting also varied. There were schools where interviewees felt that discretion in allocating the budget was very limited, and one school where an interviewee described the principal's latitude over the budget as significant.

Interviewees from many schools reported that school budgeting required tradeoffs, in many cases due to limited resources, and created a high level of stress for school communities. A principal described the budget process as something that "creates a lot of angst. You know that something has to be sacrificed." Similarly, another principal stated that, "We hear the budget is coming out, and we begin to cringe." Other comments noted the "huge fear" associated with the initial budget allocation from DCPS, which was described as "like opening a Christmas present, and you just see what you got."

Interviewees' views of the weight the LSAT's recommendation carried with the principal varied within and between schools. One interviewee expressed doubt that the LSAT had authority and stated that recommendations are "heard, to a degree," whereas other interviewees clearly expected that the LSAT could eliminate a



position if the incumbent was not fulfilling the intended role. The first characterization is most consistent with the description of the role of the LSAT in DCPS guidance, which states that the LSAT advises the principal, the principal makes budget decisions, and that the principal then informs the LSAT of the final budget to be submitted.

**Each of the eight schools reallocated resources during the budget development process to support a variety of instructional, resource, and operational needs.**

The DCPS central office presented initial budget allocations for FY 2017 to schools in February 2016, beginning a process in which schools could make or request revisions to their budgets before they were finalized in April 2016. As described in the previous section, principals propose budget changes after consulting with LSATs that include teachers, other school staff, parents, and community members.

As shown in Figure 10, each of the eight elementary schools in this study successfully petitioned the central office to reallocate funds included in the initial FY 2017 budgets. The DCPS central office approved 42 of the 49 petitions (86 percent), while only denying two petitions (4 percent). The other five petitions (10 percent) were deemed “no longer needed.”

**Figure 10: Outcomes of Budget Petitions Submitted By Eight DCPS Elementary Schools for FY 2017**

School	Number of Petitions	Outcome of Petitions	Funds Reallocated and % of Budget Reallocated
Bancroft (Ward 1)	12	10 approved 1 denied 1 no longer needed	\$683,567 (10.1%)
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	3	3 approved	\$103,589 (3.1%)
Key (Ward 3)	4	2 approved 2 no longer needed	\$107,101 (2.8%)
Barnard (Ward 4)	5	5 approved	\$183,992 (2.4%)
Noyes (Ward 5)	8	5 approved 1 denied 2 no longer needed	\$208,380 (6.3%)
Miner (Ward 6)	6	6 approved	\$358,105 (7.0%)
Nalle (Ward 7)	7	7 approved	\$510,097 (11.1%)

School	Number of Petitions	Outcome of Petitions	Funds Reallocated and % of Budget Reallocated
Moten (Ward 8)	4	4 approved	268,930 (5.5%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>42 approved (86%) 2 denied (4%) 5 no longer needed (10%)</b>	<b>\$2,423,761 (6.2%)</b>

**Source:** School budget petitions provided by DCPS.

The amount of funding reallocated ranged from \$103,589 at Hyde-Addison to \$683,567 at Bancroft, and the percentage of the budget reallocated ranged from 2.4 percent at Barnard to 11.1 percent at Nalle. The ability of each school to reallocate funds in the FY 2017 budget, combined with the high approval rate for the schools' budget petitions, suggests that principals, teachers, other school staff, and community members can play an important role in the DCPS budget process. Although the percentage of funds reallocated may seem small, there are limits on budget flexibility created by class size guidelines established by the collective bargaining agreement between DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union, statutory mandates on the size of early childhood classes, and an agreement between DCPS and the U.S. Department of Education on ELL staffing standards.

As discussed earlier in this report, schools also have flexibility to reallocate school leadership and administration positions, such as assistant principals, business managers, clerks, and administrative aides.<sup>37</sup> These positions and the funds associated with them can be converted to other uses, providing an additional source of budget discretion that does not require a petition to the central office.

The budget and staffing revisions that resulted from successful petitions by the eight schools varied widely in their scope and purpose. Some of the petitions explicitly involved academic or instructional resources, while others affected school support services or reflected accounting changes needed to place funds in more appropriate budget categories.

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<sup>37</sup> The exception is the principal's position. Each elementary school must have a principal.

The following are examples of successful budget petitions with an academic or instructional focus:

- Bancroft’s petition to shift a teacher position from ELL to special education because the school includes many English language learners who also need special education services.
- Noyes’s petition to convert its reading specialist into a TLI teacher leader<sup>38</sup> for English/language arts who “would spend some time each day providing direct services to students but more time observing teachers, coordinating and leading professional development.”
- Nalle’s petition to exchange three classroom teachers (from first, fourth, and fifth grade, respectively) for two TLI teacher leaders in math and one TLI teacher leader in English/language arts.

Several other successful budget petitions filed by the eight schools sought to improve instructional support by purchasing, upgrading, or replacing computer hardware or software. Each school receives \$20 per pupil for a “placeholder line” in the budget called “at-risk technology investment,” and schools where more than 75 percent of students are designated to be at risk receive an additional \$20 per-pupil. Schools must then petition the central office to shift the at-risk technology funds to specific budget codes. Bancroft, Barnard, Miner, and Moten each won approval to shift funds from “At-Risk Technology” to “Equipment and Machinery (Large Purchases)” in order to upgrade computer hardware and equipment such as laptops and desktops.<sup>39</sup> In endorsing the Miner petition, a central office staff member noted that, “Miner student technology is in desperate need of an upgrade.” Noyes and Nalle received approval to transfer funds from “At-Risk Technology” to “Electronic Learning” to subscribe to software programs such as Lexia (differentiated literacy instruction), ST Math (game-based mathematics instructional software), and myON (a reading program).<sup>40</sup>

School changes to custodial staffing illustrate the flexibility schools were granted to balance instructional needs with non-instructional services needed to run a school effectively. Two of the schools in this study—Barnard and Nalle—upgraded an RW-3 custodian position to an RW-5 position, while Hyde-Addison downgraded an

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<sup>38</sup> “TLI” refers to the “Teacher Leadership Innovation” program. A “TLI Teacher Leader” teachers for at least 50 percent of the day, and spends the remainder of the day coaching and leading his or her peers. All TLI teacher leaders have a content focus, such as math or English/language arts.

<sup>39</sup> Specifically, Bancroft reallocated \$3,880, Barnard reallocated \$6,500, Miner reallocated \$5,580, and Moten reallocated \$14,800.

<sup>40</sup> Specifically, Noyes reallocated \$2,760 and Nalle reallocated \$12,200.

RW-5 custodian to an RW-3 and Miner downgraded two RW-5 custodians to RW-3s (a critical difference is that RW-3 custodians cannot open and close a building, whereas RW-5 custodians can). Miner also sacrificed an RW-3 custodian position in order to pay half the salary of a reading teacher.

With regard to technical or accounting changes, each of the schools in this study received approval to shift supply funds from four supply categories—art, music, physical education/health, and science— designated as “placeholder lines” to budget codes such as “educational supplies” and “recreational materials.” In addition, four schools—Barnard, Noyes, Miner, and Nalle—received approval to shift funds for extended-day programs into their budgets for “administrative premium” in order “to ensure that extended day funds are loaded into the correct budget codes for FY 17.”<sup>41</sup> Administrative premium refers to supplemental pay for teachers who do extra work during summer school, Saturday school, or afterschool programs.

One of the two unsuccessful petitions reflected DCPS’s policy of providing “related arts” instruction at all schools. Specifically, Noyes’s request to convert its part-time world language position to a clerk position was denied because world language instruction is “required for every DCPS Elementary site, per the Chancellor and the FY 17 Scheduling Requirements.” Noyes had argued that it was very difficult to attract and retain qualified world language teachers, particularly for half-time positions. In addition, Bancroft’s request to shift funds from an afterschool aide position to educational supplies, field trips, and stipends for outside vendors and experts was denied because funds for Out of School Time programs can only be used for afterschool personnel.

**DCPS followed the statutory requirement to allocate at least 90 percent of at-risk funds directly to schools in SY 2016-2017, but did not ensure that at-risk allocations supplement, rather than supplant, existing resources.**

As noted earlier in this report, the Mayor and Council enacted a major change to the UPSFF by adding a new funding weight for at risk students, which was first implemented in the fall of 2014. The new weight was required by D.C. Law 20-87, the “Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act of 2013,” which states that, “additional allocations shall be provided based on the count of students identified as at risk.”<sup>42</sup> Elementary school students are defined as at risk if they are homeless, in foster care,

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<sup>41</sup> In the case of Nalle, it reallocated extended-day funds not only to administrative premium, but also to custodial overtime.

<sup>42</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-2905.01(a).

or eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance programs.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike other UPSFF weighting factors that are set by statute, the applicable weight for at-risk students is determined by the Mayor.<sup>44</sup> For FY 2017, Mayor Bowser proposed an at-risk weight of 0.22, translating into an additional allocation of \$2,120.36 per at-risk student. The District's FY 2017 budget provided that amount of additional funding for 24,858 at-risk DCPS students, yielding \$52.7 million in total at-risk funding for DCPS in FY 2017. The at-risk funds comprised 7 percent of DCPS's local budget of \$756.4 million, and 5.8 percent of DCPS's gross, or total budget of \$905.7 million for FY 2017, which includes special-purpose, federal, private, and intra-district funds as well as local funds.

Although the DCPS central office distributes UPSFF dollars to schools based on the CSM and other district-wide funding procedures, the at-risk funding provisions reverse this pattern by directing money to individual schools based on their number of at-risk students and for the specific purpose of improving the performance of at-risk students rather than the entire academic program. The law sets the following three key statutory requirements governing the use of at-risk funds:

1. At least 90 percent of at-risk funding be allocated to school budgets and distributed proportionally to schools based on the number of at-risk students enrolled.<sup>45</sup>
2. The DCPS Chancellor shall direct the allocation of at-risk funds for the purpose of improving student achievement among at-risk students, in consultation with school principals and local school advisory teams (LSATs).<sup>46</sup> By October 1 of each year, the Chancellor must make publicly available an annual report explaining the allocation of at-risk funds by individual schools.<sup>47</sup>
3. At-risk funds must supplement each school's budget and must not supplant any UPSFF, federal, or other funds to which the school is entitled."<sup>48</sup>

Based on an analysis of DCPS budget documents and policy statements, ODCA found that DCPS met the first requirement,

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<sup>43</sup> See D.C. Official Code §38-2901(2A)(A-C).

<sup>44</sup> See D.C. Official Code §38-2905.01(b).

<sup>45</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-2907.01(a)(3).

<sup>46</sup> As discussed earlier, the Local School Advisory Team is a group of elected and appointed members at every DCPS school, comprised of parents, teachers, other school staff, a community member, and in some cases students, who advise the principal on school policies and programs, including budget decisions.

<sup>47</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-2907.01(b)(1).

<sup>48</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-2907.01(b)(3).



**Noyes Elementary School** is located at 2725 10th Street NE in Ward 5. Fully modernized in 2004, Noyes enrolled 197 students in school year 2016-2017. Noyes participates in Turnaround Arts, a program founded by President Obama to assist struggling schools by using art instruction to help students better understand math, reading, social studies, and science. The school is named for Crosby S. Noyes, the publisher of the Washington Evening Star.

allocating 90 percent of at-risk funding to school budgets in FY 2017 and distributing the funding proportionally to schools based on the number of at-risk students enrolled. For each of the schools in the ODCA study, DCPS budgeted \$1,908.00 per at-risk student, which equals 90 percent of the formula funding for each at-risk student (\$2,120.36).

At the same time, ODCA's interviews showed that LSAT members were often unaware of the opportunity to propose alternative uses of at-risk funds to supplement or add programs or services aimed at at-risk students. Instead, in some instances the DCPS administration used at-risk funding to increase the local funds to which schools were entitled as part of the CSM without targeting the funds to at-risk students.

In February 2016, schools received initial budget allocations for SY 2016-2017 from the DCPS central office. After consulting with their LSATs, schools were then able to propose funding shifts before submitting final budgets to DCPS for approval in April 2016. In the initial budget, at-risk funding allocations were not among the line items identified as "flexible" and therefore subject to school-based discretion, but schools were allowed to petition the central office to shift at-risk funds before the final budget submission in April.

Hyde-Addison Elementary was among the schools that successfully petitioned to reallocate its at-risk funding for SY 2016-2017. Hyde-Addison's initial budget allocation from DCPS, released in February 2016, included \$13,934 in at-risk funding for related arts and library supplies as well as \$20,410 for a general "at-risk payment." The Hyde-Addison principal proposed using all her school's at-risk funding (\$34,344) to pay a portion (40 percent) of the salary of a reading specialist, reflecting her preference to expand the certified teaching staff, and this revision became part of Hyde-Addison's SY 2016-2017 budget. Similarly, Nalle's principal was able to reallocate at-risk funds from several different categories to hire an instructional aide and pay for Reading Partners, a literacy tutoring provider.

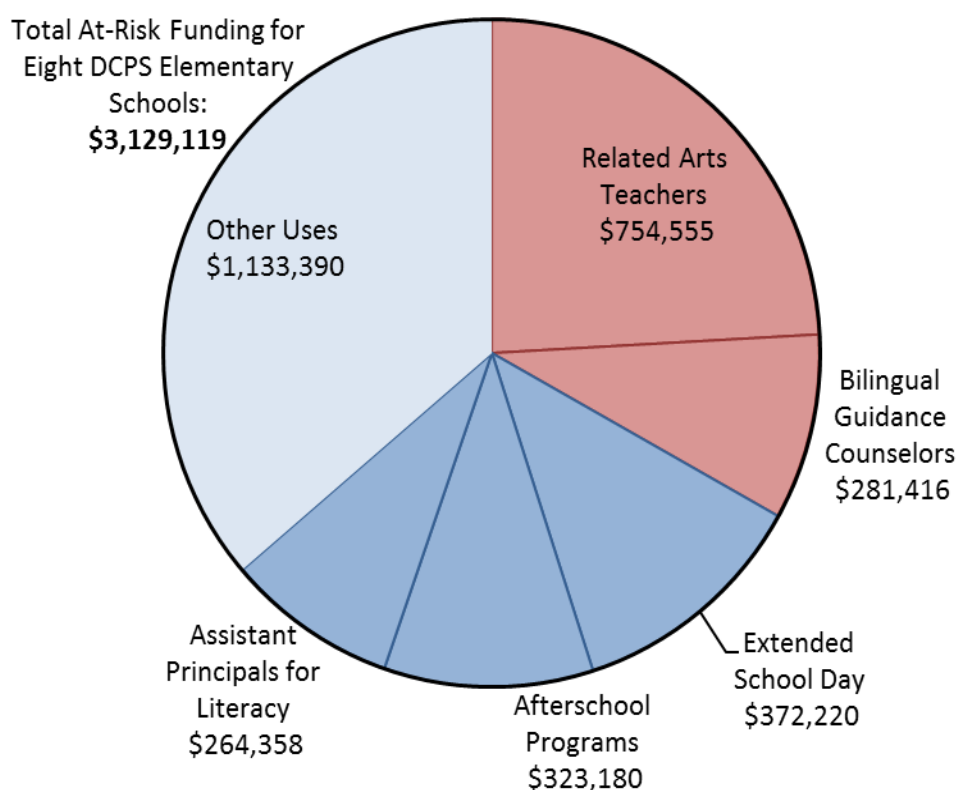
Nevertheless, LSAT members interviewed by ODCA often did not know how at-risk funds were used at their school, or did not believe that the LSAT had any input into or impact on the allocation of at-risk funds. One LSAT member stated that, "I believe that money was locked" (not subject to school-based input or discretion), and another stated she had never heard of at-risk funding. School administrators interviewed by ODCA echoed some of these points. One administrator characterized at-risk funding allocations as "one of the pieces we didn't have flexibility with," while others described at-risk funding "definitely a top-down

experience” and “closer to them (DCPS central office) telling us how they would be used.”

The eight elementary schools in this study received a total of \$3.1 million in at-risk funding for SY 2016-2017. As shown in Figure 11, almost \$2 million of those funds (64 percent) were allocated to the top five uses, which were:

1. Related arts teachers (art, foreign language, health/physical education, and music).
2. Extended day/year programs.
3. Afterschool programs.
4. Bilingual guidance counselors.
5. Assistant principals for literacy.

**Figure 11: Uses of At-Risk Funds by Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**



**Source:** ODCA calculation from summary of submitted FY 2017 school budgets ([dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17\\_submitted.html](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17_submitted.html)) provided by DCPS.

The top five uses of at-risk funding described in Figure 11 seem to mix programs of general educational value with programs that are more focused on helping at-risk or struggling students, as required by the Fair Student Funding Act. The top use of at-risk funding shown above—to hire related arts teachers—absorbed almost



25 percent of at-risk funding at the eight elementary schools. Related arts instruction (art, foreign language, music, and physical education) has long been cited as a basic element of the academic program, and does not directly target the problems of at-risk or struggling students.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, extended day programs, the second highest use of at-risk funds for these eight schools, have been a main strategy for DCPS to raise student achievement at low-performing schools by adding instructional time, and therefore seem tailored to help at-risk students, as required by the Fair Student Funding Act. Similarly, DCPS has funded assistant principals for literacy to boost achievement at low-performing schools, making this initiative seem like a reasonable way to assist low-performing or at-risk students.

ODCA identified a number of allocations of at-risk funds for the eight elementary schools in SY 2016-2017 that are actually promised by DCPS's CSM for elementary schools, representing the resources that all schools are supposed to have. These allocations include:

- Bancroft Elementary School's allocation of at-risk funding to fund both of its bilingual (ELL) counselor positions. Because the CSM states that schools shall receive a bilingual counselor for every 100 ELL students, and Bancroft had a projected enrollment of 297 ELL students, Bancroft was entitled to two bilingual counselors as part of its regular academic program and should not have had to use at-risk funding.<sup>50</sup> The situation at Barnard Elementary was similar; it was entitled to a bilingual counselor according to the CSM, but Barnard's only bilingual counselor was funded by at-risk dollars.
- Barnard Elementary School's allocation of at-risk funding to support two related arts positions (art, language, music, and physical education) that it should have received through regular funding. Barnard was allocated six related

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<sup>49</sup> In emphasizing the importance of related arts for all students, then-Chancellor Michelle Rhee told a Senate subcommittee in 2009 that art, music, and physical education are "an integral part to any broad-based, robust curriculum. So what we did was to say that there was a core staffing model so that every school ... all of those students deserved to have access to art, music, PE, to librarians, to full-time nurses." See U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "D.C. Public Schools: Taking Stock of Education Reform," hearing before the Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and District of Columbia Subcommittee (U.S. Government Printing Office, Senate Hearing 111-359, July 23, 2009, p. 17).

<sup>50</sup> Because the allocation of bilingual counselors is *not* pro-rated, Bancroft would have needed to enroll 300 ELL students in order to qualify for a third bilingual counselor under the staffing guidelines.



arts positions for SY 2016-2017,<sup>51</sup> with at-risk dollars supporting 2.5 of the six positions. Nevertheless, the CSM establishes that a school of Barnard's size (Barnard's projected enrollment for SY 2016-2017 was 642) should receive 5.5 related arts positions, meaning that at-risk funding should have paid only for an additional part-time position, at the most.

- Moten Elementary School's allocation of at-risk funding to fund its only assistant principal position. Because the CSM prescribes that each elementary school shall receive an assistant principal for every 400 students (Moten's projected enrollment for SY 2016-2017 was 421), Moten was entitled to funding for an assistant principal as part of its regular academic program. The situation at Nalle was similar; it was entitled to an assistant principal according to the CSM, but Nalle's only assistant principal was funded by at-risk dollars.

A citywide analysis by Mary Levy (an expert in public school finance in the District of Columbia) covering all DCPS schools found that 47 percent of at-risk funds included in schools' initial (February 2016) budgets for FY 2017 would supplant existing funds because they would finance core services promised by the CSM, rather than supplemental programs targeted at at-risk students. Ms. Levy cited extended school day or year programs, after-school programs, reading specialists, and assistant principals for literacy as examples of programs or positions that are funded by at-risk allocations and are consistent with the statutory at-risk funding provisions.

In an October 27, 2016, public roundtable held by the D.C. Council's Committee on Education, then-Interim DCPS Chancellor John Davis acknowledged difficulties in complying with some requirements of at-risk funding, while stating that DCPS's use of at-risk funding conformed to the "vision" reflected in the law. Mr. Davis described DCPS's policy in allocating at-risk funds as one of "bounded autonomy" in which schools select from various options. Because funding at each school combines separate local and federal funding requirements,<sup>52</sup> he added, it is difficult to layer at-risk funding on top of other funding to ensure that at-risk funding supplements, rather than supplants, other resources. According to Mr. Davis, a related problem is that DCPS seeks to help struggling

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<sup>51</sup> The six related arts programs were allocated as follows: two for art teachers, two for health/physical education teachers; one for a world languages teacher; and one for an art teacher.

<sup>52</sup> An important restriction on local school funding is that schools must receive at least 95 percent of their prior-year allocation of formula funds, unless there are other factors justifying a lower funding level, such as the elimination of one or more grade levels at the school, or a substantial instructional or programmatic change. See D.C. Official Code § 38-2907.01(a)(2).

students by upgrading the regular curriculum, rather than separating those students into remedial programs—a policy that is at odds with a separate funding stream earmarked for at-risk students. A final concern is that students who meet the statutory definition of at risk may be doing well in school, while others who don't meet the definition may be doing poorly. This dynamic may also make it difficult to meet the needs of struggling students through a funding stream targeted at students who fit a risk profile.

Although a policy of limited autonomy in allocating at-risk funds is consistent with D.C. law, the process for ensuring school input is not clear. DCPS's School Budget Development Guides for FY 2017 and FY 2018, respectively, provide instructions on numerous budget topics such as school counselors and substitute teachers, but do not cover the allocation of at-risk funding.

### **Recommendations**

1. Under the current provisions in the D.C. Code and using intent reflected in the legislative history, DCPS should draft clear guidance on how school principals and local school advisory teams can provide input on at-risk funding allocations in its FY 2019 budget development guide, including a description of at-risk funding options that schools can recommend or modify.
2. The D.C. Council should provide careful oversight on how at-risk funding is utilized, whether the utilization is consistent with legislative intent, whether legislative intent is clearly reflected in the D.C. Code language, and consider amending the law if necessary to better meet the goal of the additional funding.

### **School budgets are based on projections of average position costs and do not reflect individual salaries, which are captured only in actual expenditures.**

Preparing and executing an annual budget for DCPS schools involves the following major steps (the first two of these steps have been touched on previously):

**Step 1:** The DCPS central office transmits initial budget allocations to schools in February. Positions for each school are budgeted based on the projected average cost for the position, which for some positions includes school-wide support costs such as substitute teachers, the management of which will ultimately be shifted to the central office.

**Step 2:** School principals propose changes to their initial budgets after consulting with their LSATs. The proposed changes are reviewed by the DCPS central office and the approved revisions become part of the submitted budget. Each position is still budgeted based on its projected average total cost.

**Step 3:** The third version of the individual school allocation is published in the District's overall budget submitted to the D.C. Council and, when finalized, submitted to the Congress. Salaries included in the published budget are still based on projected average cost, but the school-wide support costs described above are subtracted and managed by the DCPS central office.

DCPS budget documents and budgeted funds loaded into DCPS programs in the District's System of Accounting and Reporting (SOAR) are not updated to reflect individual salaries at any point in the school year. Actual outlays based on true salary and benefit costs are only reflected in expenditures made available after the end of the fiscal year. Budgets are based on projected average salaries for two reasons. First, Article 41 of DCPS's collective bargaining agreement with the Washington Teachers' Union specified that, "In order to ensure equity and prevent possible discrimination against senior Teachers and to maintain a successful balance of senior and newer teachers, DCPS agrees to maintain 'average Teacher salary' as the formula for charging Teacher salaries to local schools."<sup>53</sup> Second, DCPS officials stated that the employees who will fill each position (along with their salaries) are not all known in sufficient advance time to adjust the budget.

The DCPS budget is organized by categories such as school leadership (which includes principals) first, with each individual school drawing funding from multiple categories. Personnel are paid their respective salaries and receive benefits from the appropriate category, regardless of any difference between a school's personal services budget and the actual cost of salaries and benefits for a school's personnel. An official from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) explained that school expenditures, which are determined by pay grade classification, may differ from school budgets since budgets are based on average salary. The official also suggested that elementary schools

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<sup>53</sup> See "Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Washington Teachers Union and the District of Columbia Public Schools: 2007-2012," Article 41.1, p. 103. Even though the collective bargaining agreement expired on September 30, 2012, it remained in effect for five more years due to language providing for automatic annual renewal during any period of negotiating a successor contract. On August 14, 2017, the Mayor and the Washington Teachers' Union announced an agreement on a successor contract, which was ratified by the WTU membership and then approved by the Council on October 3, 2017. The new agreement, which covers the period from October 1, 2016, to September 30, 2019, includes the same language that was found in Article 41.1 of the 2007-2012 agreement.

may appear to run surpluses since elementary school teacher salaries are lower than the average teacher salary, and that schools with teachers with salaries higher than the average may appear to run deficits. ODCA analysis of most DCPS elementary schools found that about half overspent their budgets in FY 2015 and 44 out of 57 overspent their budgets in FY 2016, the last year for which data are available. Seven of the eight schools in this study overspent their budgets in FY 2016 (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Fiscal Year 2016 Budget and Expenditures for Eight DCPS Schools**

School	Budget	Expenditures	Difference	Per-Pupil Spending
Bancroft (Ward 1)	\$6,239,329	\$6,263,978	(\$24,649)	\$12,023
Hyde-Addison (Ward 2)	\$3,075,976	\$3,173,754	(\$97,778)	\$10,044
Key (Ward 3)	\$3,256,602	\$3,423,389	(\$166,787)	\$8,869
Barnard (Ward 4)	\$7,064,082	\$7,434,342	(\$370,259)	\$11,671
Noyes (Ward 5)	\$3,191,103	\$3,333,389	(\$142,287)	\$17,861
Miner (Ward 6)	\$4,685,162	\$5,187,619	(\$502,457)	\$13,034
Nalle (Ward 7)	\$4,349,477	\$4,487,817	(\$138,340)	\$11,478
Moten (Ward 8)	\$4,600,549	\$4,504,826	\$95,723	\$10,650

**Source:** FY 2016 budgets and expenditures from SOAR as of March 31, 2017. Per-pupil expenditures from ODCA calculations using expenditure data from SOAR and independently audited enrollment data from the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “Audits of Student Enrollment and English Language Learner Student Enrollment, October 5, 2015,” Attachment B.1, [osse.dc.gov/node/1143912](https://osse.dc.gov/node/1143912).

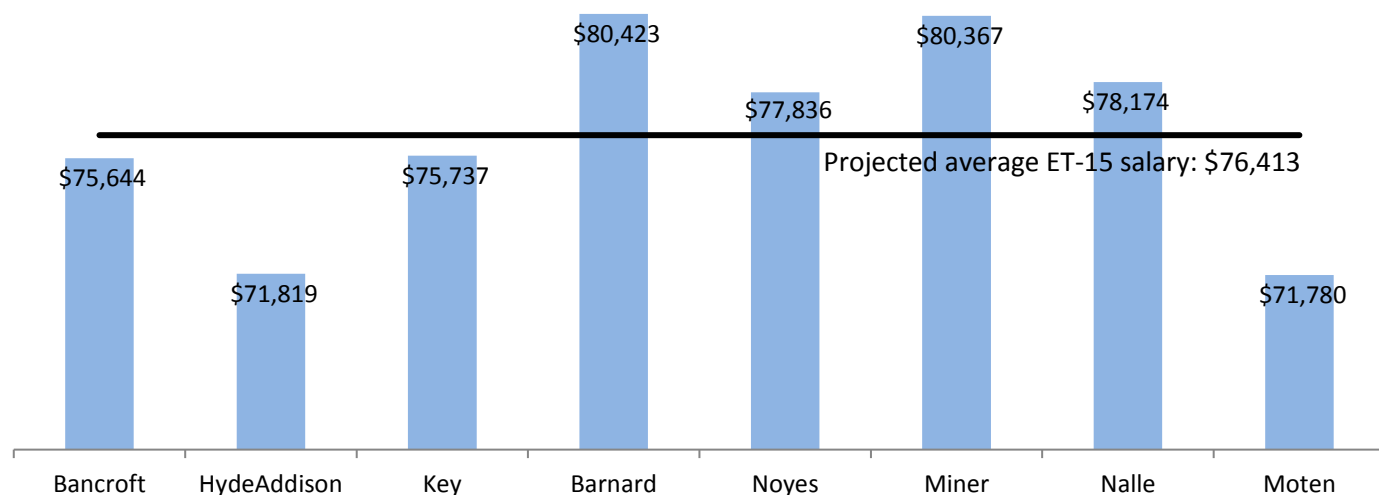
In FY 2017, DCPS used a value of \$76,413 as the projected average base salary for ET-15 personnel, which includes not only teachers but other school staff such as guidance counselors and librarians, with salary schedule defined by the WTU contract.<sup>54</sup> In the initial and submitted budgets (Steps 1 and 2 above), this was reflected as a cost of \$93,805 for each ET-15 position, which includes the base salary, benefits with a cost of \$10,316, and school-wide support of \$7,076 per position. After school-wide support funds were reassigned to central management, the projected average cost for an ET-15 position included in school budgets was \$86,729 (Step 3 above).

Using FY 2017 salary data provided by DCPS, ODCA found that actual full-time salaries for ET-15 personnel at the eight schools in this study covered the full range given in the WTU salary schedule,

<sup>54</sup> The FY 2017 budget development guide identified the following positions as ET-15, meaning that they were budgeted at the projected total average salary of \$93,805: early childhood, general education, vocational, senior JROTC, special education, ELL and related arts teachers; guidance counselors and bilingual guidance counselors; library/media specialists; instructional, technology instructional, and intervention coaches; reading specialists; psychologists, and social workers.

from \$51,539 to \$106,540. The mean value of full-time ET-15 salaries in the DCPS data from all eight schools was \$76,863, about \$450 higher than the projected average for a full-time ET-15 position. Figure 13 shows the actual average full-time ET-15 salary for each school based on the data provided by DCPS, compared with the DCPS-wide projection.

**Figure 13: Average of FY 2017 Full-Time ET-15 Salary Data Provided by DCPS, By School** (Note: Horizontal line shows the projected average ET-15 salary used in budgeting.)



**Source:** ODCA analysis of salary data provided by DCPS for only those full-time positions for which the average position cost in the FY 2017 budget development guide was equal to the total average teacher salary. See DCPS, “DCPS Comprehensive Staffing Model,” Elementary School, FY 2017, [dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps\\_csm\\_es\\_2017.pdf](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf), and DCPS, “School Budget Development Guide: Fiscal Year 2017, School Year 2016-2017,” pp. 80-84, [dcpsdatacenter.com/fy17\\_budget\\_guide.pdf](https://dcpsdatacenter.com/assets/docs/csm/dcps_csm_es_2017.pdf).

The budgeting process, which is based on average position costs, determines school staffing allocations, but actual school expenditures, which are based on actual salaries that may differ from the projected averages, differ from school budgets. In fact, ODCA analysis of finalized budgets and expenditures for 57 DCPS elementary schools<sup>55</sup> found that budgets and expenditures were sufficiently different that the average change in budgets from FY 2015 to FY 2016 was a decrease, while the average change in expenditures was an increase, when accounting for inflation.

<sup>55</sup> The analysis includes schools that enrolled students in grades 1 through 5 but not 6 during SY 2014-2015 and SY 2015-2016. (Noyes was an education campus, which included middle school grades, during SY 2014-2015, so it was excluded from the analysis.) The analysis is limited to FY 2015 and FY 2016, because FY 2016 was the most recent year for which complete data were available and DCPS extensively reorganized its budget structure between FY 2014 and FY 2015. Therefore, years before FY 2015 were excluded for accuracy and comparability.



**Miner Elementary School**, located at 601 15th Street NE in Ward 6, was fully rebuilt in 2003 and enrolled 384 students in school year 2016-2017. Miner's community partners include the Kennedy Center and the State Department. The school is named for Myrtilla Miner, an educator and abolitionist who founded the Normal School for Colored Girls, the first school for young African-American women, in 1851.

DCPS's current practice of publishing local school budgets based on projected average compensation costs rather than individual expected compensation limits transparency to stakeholders. New federal legislation called the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, which is the latest reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, requires increased transparency from states that receive federal Title I funds, including publishing annual report cards with per-pupil expenditures by school including actual personnel expenditures.<sup>56</sup>

### Recommendation

3. To improve transparency and budget execution and be consistent with the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, DCPS should substitute actual salaries in local school budgets as soon as practicable after staffing decisions have been made.

### **Budgets for elementary schools did not in all cases keep pace with inflation between FY 2015 and FY 2017. Seven of the eight studied schools had effectively less purchasing power in 2017 than in 2016.**

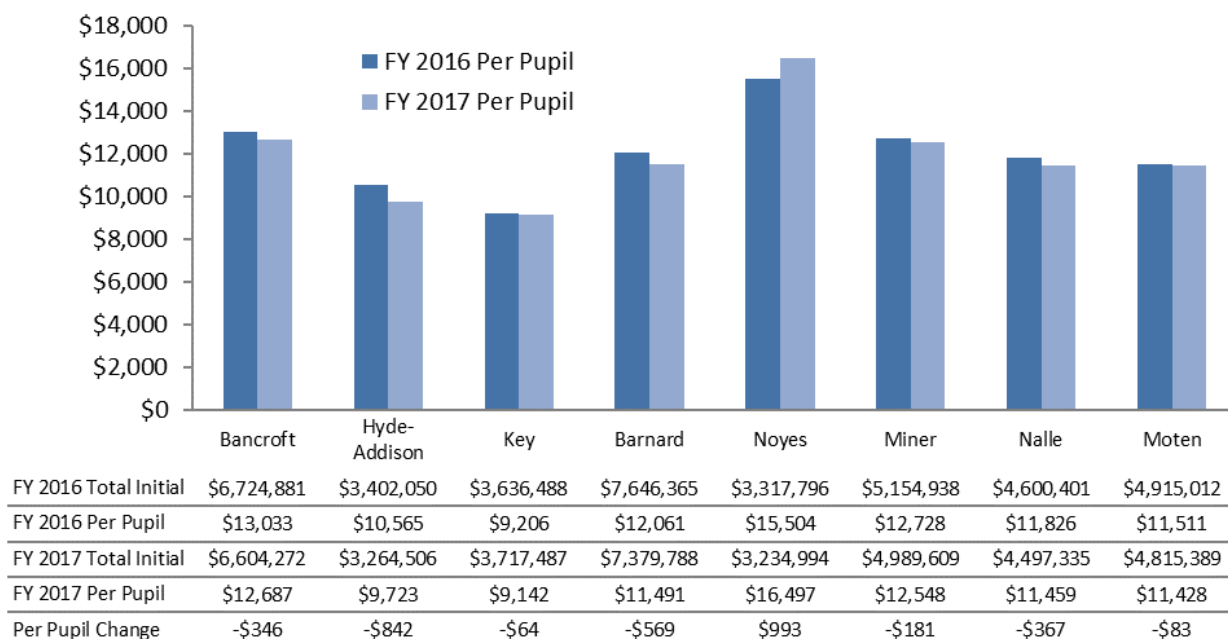
An important question in examining the capacity of DCPS elementary schools to implement the CSM is whether the resources increase by a sufficient amount to sustain school purchasing power—the ability to maintain the same level of staffing and other resources from year to year. During ODCA's field work for this project, several principals and other school staff members stated that the annual budget process involved a struggle to maintain existing resource levels.

Although schools are often able to modify initial budgets, they reflect the resources made available to schools by the DCPS central office at the beginning of the budgeting process, and largely shape staffing decisions. During the budget process, DCPS uses projected enrollment at each school to determine the number of positions for various types of staff prescribed by the CSM. Therefore, to address the change in purchasing power of budgets from FY 2016 to FY 2017, it makes sense to measure the initial budget per projected pupil. From FY 2016 to FY 2017, per-pupil initial school budgets decreased for seven of the schools in this study when adjusted to FY 2016 dollars to account for inflation (see Figure 14). The loss of purchasing power at these seven schools ranged from a decrease of about \$65 per projected pupil at Key to a decrease of about \$850 per pupil at Hyde-Addison. On the other hand, Noyes

<sup>56</sup> See § 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended through P.L. 114-95, Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 6311.

saw an increase of almost one thousand dollars per projected pupil from FY 2016 to FY 2017.

**Figure 14: Initial Budgets Per Projected Pupil at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools, FY 2016 and FY 2017**



**Source:** [www.dcps.dc.gov](http://www.dcps.dc.gov): FY 2016 initial school budgets, from individual school initial budget worksheets published in March of 2015. [www.dcpsdatacenter.com/budget\\_process.html#data](http://www.dcpsdatacenter.com/budget_process.html#data): FY 2017 budgets, from FY 2017 initial allocation data; projected enrollments for FY 2016 and FY 2017 from budget data documents for the respective year.

**Note:** Values are inflation-adjusted to FY 2016 dollars using the CPI-U, U.S. city average.

Because budgets are the financial documents that reflect annual staffing decisions made for each local school, the fact that the budgets did not keep pace with inflation is an indication that individual school purchasing power diminished from 2016 to 2017, giving credence to the view of principals who expressed their concerns with the challenge of maintaining services year to year. Additionally, ODCA noted the same trend in finalized budgets for most elementary schools from FY 2015 to FY 2016.

Because final budgets and expenditures are available for all elementary schools for FY 2015 and FY 2016, ODCA was able to analyze the annual funding changes at 57 DCPS elementary schools, including seven of the eight schools in this study. The analysis includes schools that enrolled students in grades 1 through 5 during SY 2014-2015 and SY 2015-2016.<sup>57</sup> Noyes, one of the eight schools, was excluded from this analysis

<sup>57</sup> The analysis is limited to changes in funding between FY 2015 and FY 2016, because FY 2016 was the most recent year for which complete data were available and DCPS extensively reorganized its budget structure between FY 2014 and FY 2015. Therefore, years before FY 2015 were excluded for accuracy and comparability.



because it was an education campus, which included middle school grades, in SY 2014-2015. As above for initial budgets, values were adjusted to their equivalents in FY 2016 dollars, using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), a conventional measure of inflation which is published monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>58</sup>

From FY 2015 and FY 2016 (which approximately correspond to SY 2014-2015 to SY 2015-2016),<sup>59</sup> finalized budgets for the 57 elementary schools did not keep pace with enrollment and inflation. Final budgets for these schools increased nominally (before any inflation adjustment), by 1.0 percent on average. Enrollment in elementary schools also increased by 2.6 percent, according to the annual enrollment audit. As a result, per-pupil final budgets adjusted for inflation decreased by 2.4 percent, from an average of \$11,309 per pupil in FY 2015 to \$11,034 per pupil in FY 2016.

From FY 2015 to FY 2016 average per-pupil expenditures increased enough to keep pace with inflation. Among DCPS elementary schools during FY 2015 and FY 2016, expenditures increased by 2.8 percent in FY 2016 dollars (accounting for inflation) from FY 2015 to FY 2016, reflecting an increase in real per-pupil expenditures from \$11,245 in FY 2015 to \$11,562 in FY 2016, or \$317 per student.

The average expenditure increase from FY 2015 to FY 2016 reflects higher real expenditures at 35 elementary schools, and lower real expenditures at 22 elementary schools. Among the schools in this study, per-pupil expenditures adjusted for inflation decreased for Hyde-Addison, Barnard, and Miner, and increased for Moten, Key, Bancroft, and Nalle from FY 2015 to FY 2016. Of these seven schools, inflation-adjusted expenditures decreased the most at Barnard and Miner, by \$224 and \$290 per pupil, respectively. Inflation-adjusted expenditures increased the most at Nalle, where they went up by \$725 per pupil from FY 2015 to FY 2016.

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<sup>58</sup> ODCA used the U.S city average of the CPI-U, not seasonally adjusted, for October 2014-September 2015 for FY 2015, and the average for October 2015-September 2016 for FY 2016 to correspond with the D.C. and DCPS fiscal year.

<sup>59</sup> For example, fiscal year 2016, which began on October 1, 2015 and ended on September 30, 2016, approximately corresponded to SY 2015-2016, which started on August 24, 2015 and ended on June 16, 2016.

### **Schools reported positive results from implementing an alternative model of administrative staffing known as School Strategy and Logistics.**

The standard model of administrative staffing for DCPS elementary schools in FY 2017 consisted of a business manager, administrative aide, and clerk. As discussed earlier, DCPS elementary schools receive allocations for these positions based on projected enrollment.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, five of the eight schools in this study (Bancroft, Hyde-Addison, Miner, Nalle and Moten) opted to bypass the standard model and adopted an alternative administrative staffing model known as “School Strategy and Logistics” (SSL) during SY 2016-2017. Principals and teachers at these schools generally had a positive view of the SSL model and spoke highly of SSL staff members.

First started as a pilot program in 2014 and recently highlighted by National Public Radio, SSL allows participating schools to “structure their non-instructional staff differently than other schools to increase operational efficiency and instructional gains.”<sup>61</sup> A school wishing to participate must apply for approval from the DCPS central office. SSL positions have more flexible job descriptions, which allow principals to design roles to meet the needs of their school, and staff roles are intended to be more cross-functional than traditional front-office roles such as business manager and clerk. Any school operating the model must have either a director or manager of strategy and logistics (DSL or MSL), who has greater authority and responsibility than traditional front office staff positions. If the school has more than 400 students, the position must be a director. The school may also choose to have a coordinator or assistant for strategy and logistics, or both, to support the DSL or MSL.

Schools must fund the SSL positions from within their budgets, and the positions are more expensive than standard administrative staffing positions, since one of the intended outcomes of the program is for more highly compensated positions to attract stronger candidates. The average total cost that DCPS used to budget for SSL positions in FY 2017 was \$113,072 for a director, \$92,441 for a manager, and \$52,804 for an assistant. By contrast, the average total cost that DCPS used to budget for standard administrative positions included in the CSM in FY 2017 was \$75,673 for a business manager, \$53,397 for an administrative aide, and \$40,835 for a clerk.

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<sup>60</sup> All DCPS elementary schools receive an administrative aide; business managers are part-time at schools with less than 300 students and full-time otherwise, and each elementary school receives 1 clerk for every 400 students.

<sup>61</sup> DCPS, “FY 2017 (FY 17) School Budget Development Guide,” p. 49.

Interviewees described benefits from the model consistent with the intended roles of DSL and MSL positions, such as managing operational tasks and allowing the principal (and the assistant principal, when a school had both) to focus on instruction. In addition, the SSL teams were reported as playing a secondary role in addressing behavioral issues at some schools.

At least one interviewee from each school that used the SSL model characterized the SSL team's role as taking responsibility for a broad range of facility and logistical issues. Interviewees used language like "anything that comes up" and "a lot of everything" to convey the broad responsibilities of the SSL team, and in particular the DSL or MSL. One principal who stated that a principal's workload in DCPS "is rigorous—very, very rigorous," explained that the strategy and logistics position at the school is very important, because "Otherwise, all of [the logistical and facility responsibilities] would fall onto *moi*." Another principal echoed this point, stating that the principal and director of strategy and logistics could work at the school 24 hours per day, seven days a week, and still have work to do.

The schools in this study that implemented SSL hired different numbers and complements of SSL staff members who were combined with traditional front office staff to handle administrative duties. For example, at Bancroft three of the four administrative positions were SSL positions (director of strategy and logistics and two assistants for strategy and logistics), supplemented by an administrative clerk. By contrast, Moten employed a director of strategy and logistics and three non-SSL staff members (administrative officer, business manager, and registrar).

Overall, teachers and principals at most of the five SSL schools seem to value this approach to administrative staffing. ODCA's observations suggest not only that the SSL model is a beneficial option for schools, but also that schools have flexibility to use their budgets to meet their unique needs, with the SSL model as a good example.

**Interviewees from most of the schools reported limited amounts of key technology resources, some of which were also outdated and of low-quality, and therefore frequently unusable.**

DCPS students use technology resources for both testing and learning. Elementary school students in grades 3 and higher<sup>62</sup> take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test, which is computer-based. In addition, principals, teachers, and parents stated that it was important for students to practice computer skills used in PARCC tests to prepare for the exam.

Software is also an important instructional tool in many DCPS elementary schools, part of an approach called “blended learning” that is intended to integrate “high-quality digital content with traditional teaching to personalize learning for students.” More than half of DCPS elementary schools use a blended learning program called ST Math, for example, and DCPS’s Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Development Guide lists four other blended learning programs approved for use in SY2016-2017, which are available to students using a computer at school or out of school. Most of the schools in this study used at least one of the education technology programs in SY 2016-2017 that are tracked by DCPS’s Office of Teaching and Learning.<sup>63</sup>

To use education technology programs, support learning and test preparation, and enable computerized test-taking, schools need devices, such as tablets or computers. Learning at DCPS elementary schools also involves the use of projectors and interactive whiteboards to display content. DCPS defines a menu of devices that can be purchased with DCPS funds and are included in centralized technology support, including laptops, desktops, tablets, carts, interactive whiteboards, networked projectors, adapters, and printers. DCPS budgeting standards recommend one student device for every three students in testing grades, to be replaced every five years or more frequently, and one interactive whiteboard in each classroom.

The DCPS recommended device-to-student ratio falls short of the recommendation of one device per student from national organizations such as the State Education Technology Directors

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<sup>62</sup> DCPS students in grades 3-8 as well as those enrolled in Algebra I, Geometry, and English I and II take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test.

<sup>63</sup> DCPS or individual schools purchase the software licenses, and access to some programs is free.

Association.<sup>64</sup> ODCA did not directly measure the quantities of technology resources in this study, so we cannot say if DCPS meets either its targets for student devices or interactive whiteboards. Nevertheless, interviewees at two schools in this study stated that their schools did not have working interactive whiteboards in each classroom.

Interviewees reported limited amounts of key technology resources (six of eight schools), and said that existing technology was frequently unavailable because it was outdated and of poor quality (seven of eight schools). Technology resources that were described as lacking included computers, both desktops and laptops, as well as tablets, projection equipment such as SMART Boards, and assistive technology for students receiving special education.



**Nalle Elementary School**, located at 219 50<sup>th</sup> Street SE in Ward 7, enrolled 391 students in school year 2016-2017. Nalle follows a community schools approach and has partnered with Freddie Mac and the National Center for Children and Families to provide wraparound services to students and their families. The school is named for John C. Nalle, who served as a DCPS teacher, principal, and administrator from the late 1800s to early 1900s.

Regarding technology that was unused or unusable due to condition or age, the problems reported at each school varied but included desktop and laptop computers that were non-operational, sometimes due to keyboards that were broken or missing pieces, as well as SMART Boards that did not work. At one school, interviewees reported that their five-year-old computers were outdated and subject to frequent breakdowns. At another school, a teacher stated that technology support personnel had informed her that computers were too old to be fixed. Interviewees expressed concern that the outdated computers at two schools represented a security risk.

There was wide variety in the information technology (IT) resource limitations described at the eight schools. One teacher stated that his school did not have one laptop cart per grade, while a teacher from another school judged technology insufficient because the school did not provide one computer or tablet per student. ODCA also heard several perspectives on the issue of technology and test-taking. A teacher at one school complained that technology was not available for learning while it was in use for testing, while several interviewees from another school expressed their concern that students did not have enough time to practice using computers to do well on exams. Many interviewees emphasized that many students do not have access to computers and the internet at home, making it even more important that they have computer access at school.

At the schools in this study, several factors may contribute to the perceived lack of IT resources, including a legacy of low investment in technology, insufficient funding, and limited support. At one

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<sup>64</sup> Fletcher, G., Schaffhauser, D., and Levin, D. (2012). Out of Print: Reimagining the K-12 Textbook in a Digital Age, Washington, DC: State Educational Technology Directors Association, p. 28.

school, interviewees said some computers were 11 years old, and that 80 were removed due to security risks created by outdated systems. The interviewees expressed frustration that DCPS had not replaced the computers earlier, and stated that the school had to install second-hand computers that were donated. More generally, interviewees commented that technology support was limited because there were long delays before an item would be repaired, that support was not available, that technology support staff members were not competent,<sup>65</sup> or that relatively inexpensive repair inputs were unavailable, such as replacement lightbulbs for projectors.

Insufficient working technology has been detrimental to students, according to educators and community members at the schools in this study. End-of-grade exams are computer-based, and limited numbers of working computers decrease student preparation for the tests (as noted earlier), while extending the duration of the testing period for a grade. One teacher reported that the result is a longer period during which no new learning happens, as students cycle through the limited number of computers to take the exam and teachers are assigned outside their classrooms to serve as impartial proctors. Additionally, interviewees at one school noted that software investments, such as those that require projection to implement, are not fully utilized in classrooms that lack the necessary technical support (such as projection capacity). Moreover, schools with limited resources of sufficient quality provide students with less exposure to digital content. Interviewees from several schools noted that the students must take turns to use limited numbers of computers or tablets. One administrator indicated that his school limits computer use to conserve computers for administering exams, while a teacher stated that it is difficult to plan lessons that rely on technology that might fail.

As noted earlier, each school receives \$20 per pupil for a “placeholder line” in the budget called “at-risk technology investment,” and schools where more than 75 percent of students are designated to be at risk receive an additional \$20 per-pupil for this purpose. Schools must then petition the central office to shift the at-risk technology funds to specific budget codes. This technology funding is part of DCPS’s “Non-Personnel Services Model.” While these comments reflect a limited number of interviews at only eight schools, the consistency among the comments was sufficient to suggest that DCPS should review its

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<sup>65</sup> At two schools, the interviewees were referring to technology staff on the school’s payroll; at the third school, the interviewee was referring to technology support provided by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer.

technology funding formula to ensure that it provides all schools with high-quality, up-to-date, and working technology resources.

### **Recommendation**

4. DCPS should create and make public a multi-year technology needs plan to define and provide adequate technology to each school. The plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources.



## Additional Observations

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**Principals, teachers, and parents interviewed by ODCA largely expressed the view that their schools need additional resources, but some interviewees also stated that existing resources could be used more effectively.**

Most of the principals, teachers, and parents interviewed by ODCA called for more money and staff for their schools, but some interviewees described resource shortfalls as being more pervasive while others focused on areas of need. Some of the perceived resource shortfalls are discussed in other sections of this report, such as those on technology and social-emotional resources. In addition, some interviewees expressed the view that existing funds and personnel could be used more effectively.

Several interviewees contended that school resources were insufficient to deal with the learning challenges faced by students living in difficult economic or family circumstances. A teacher who stated that her school needed additional resources, particularly in special education and social-emotional support, noted that homelessness, mental health, and parental drug abuse curtailed parental involvement and hampered students' ability to learn. A parent cited similar problems, stating that her children's school needed additional resources to help students dealing with homelessness and mental health problems, as well as additional staff members (such as an assistant principal and a dean of students) to address behavior problems so that teachers could spend more time on instruction.

Nevertheless, the perceived need for additional resources was not limited to high-poverty schools. A parent with children at a school with a very small percentage of at-risk students called for smaller class sizes and more special education resources, adding that, "Every budget year, we feel like we're starting from scratch."

Many interviewees expressed general satisfaction with funding and staffing levels while pinpointing specific areas of deficiency. A principal described her school as adequately funded, but noted that social-emotional resources were insufficient, and that special education resources were stretched thin. Similarly, a teacher noted that most of her school's needs are met, but added that the school could benefit from a lower student-to-teacher ratio, more resource teachers, and better technology. Another principal characterized staffing levels at her school as adequate, but viewed non-personal

services (such as supplies and technology equipment) funding as insufficient.

Interviewees from Noyes and Miner Elementary Schools expressed concern about large class sizes in some grades. Class sizes are governed by the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between DCPS and the Washington Teachers Union, which provides that class size in kindergarten through grade 2 shall not exceed 20, and that class size in grades 3 through 12 shall not exceed 25 (the CBA allows exceptions such as a lack of classroom space or personnel, or the need to place students in the only class available for a given grade level). Although interviewees noted that class sizes fluctuate as children move or change schools, Miner interviewees cited class sizes as large as 24 in the early grades (K through 2), and Noyes interviewees stated that the school's 2nd- and 3rd-grade classes were overcrowded, with enrollments of approximately 30 students each.

At Bancroft Elementary, where instruction is conducted in English and Spanish, several interviewees stated that the school needed more materials in Spanish. Facilities also emerged as a resource issue in several interviews. For example, several interviewees from Hyde-Addison Elementary noted that the school did not have a gymnasium and that physical education was held on the playground or in hallways or a basement when the weather was unfavorable. Hyde-Addison is undergoing a modernization project that will provide the school with a gym, additional classrooms, and a new cafeteria when it is completed in July 2019.

Two principals interviewed by ODCA acknowledged that it would be unusual for them not to call for greater school funding and that there will always be unmet needs at a school. One principal stated that, "I don't think any school leader worth his or her salt will ever say that (funding) is enough." Another principal who described working strenuously during each budget cycle to maintain the current level of staffing and programs said, "We could always use more money."

Several interviewees noted that effective resource use depended not only on the number of employees but also on their abilities. A principal stated that poor custodial work at her school "had nothing to do with numbers," but was rather a matter of "skill and will." Another principal stated that his school had an adequate number of special education teachers, "but the issue is getting the right people." Parents at one school expressed the view that their children's school did not use money effectively to hire highly capable staff, citing as an example a technology coordinator who lacks the necessary skills. One of the parents stated that, "On paper, we have a tech person."

A teacher who described significant resource shortfalls at his school also stated that the support structure needed to ensure effective use of existing resources was often lacking. As examples, he noted that the school had projectors but no money to replace the projector's bulbs when they burned out, and that the school provided SMART Boards but no training on how to use them.

Regardless of their views, many interviewees stated that they and their colleagues work to make the most of the resources at hand. One principal stated that, "We have to be extremely creative in terms of budgeting." A teacher who cited classes that were too large, supply shortages, and the difficulty of meeting the needs of children with behavior problems stated that, "We're doing the best we can," and, "We have to make it work with what we're given." Many interviewees also noted that PTAs or PTOs helped to close resource gaps, as did supply purchases by teachers and administrators from their own pockets, as well as private donations.

**The eight elementary schools in this study had widely-varying levels of financial support from parent organizations.**

ODCA characterized the annual spending by parent organizations<sup>66</sup> on school staff and programs as follows:

- Significant—annual expenditures of \$50,000 or more.
- Moderate—annual expenditures of \$20,000 or more.
- Low—annual expenditures of less than \$20,000.
- None.

The categories listed above reflect the judgment of ODCA staff, but the definition of "significant" seems reasonable because \$50,000 could fund at least half of a teacher's or librarian's salary and benefits,<sup>67</sup> or fully fund some administrative positions as well as instructional aides.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, the definition of "moderate" seems

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<sup>66</sup> The parent organizations at schools in this study were either parent-teacher associations (PTAs) or parent-teacher organizations (PTOs). PTAs are dues-paying members of the National Parent Teacher Association, whereas a PTO is an independent parent group that is not part of a national organization.

<sup>67</sup> For fiscal year 2017, DCPS calculated the average cost of employing a teacher or a library/media specialist as \$93,805, which includes the cost of benefits and support services such as start-up supplies, bonuses, and background checks. See DCPS, "School Budget Development Guide: Fiscal Year 2017, School Year 2016-2017," pp. 79-83.

<sup>68</sup> For fiscal year 2017, DCPS calculated the average cost of employing a registrar as \$46,136, the average cost of employing a clerk as \$40,835, and the average

reasonable because it could allow a school to purchase supplies, enhance professional development, or support enrichment activities.<sup>69</sup>

The funding estimates presented in this section do not represent the total annual spending of the respective parent organizations. Rather, ODCA sought to include only expenses that directly support the academic program (such as books and other supplies, curricula, technology, professional development, and staff augmentation), and not the operational costs of the parent organization (such as the costs of fundraising and holding events, bank fees, insurance, and postage).

According to the categories described above, two of the schools in this study (Key and Hyde-Addison) benefited from significant amounts of additional financial support from their parent organizations during SY 2016-2017. The additional funding provided by Key's parent organization translates into per-pupil spending of more than \$500.<sup>70</sup> Key and Hyde-Addison had by far the smallest shares of at-risk students (less than 2.5 percent and 7 percent, respectively) among the eight schools ODCA studied. By contrast, Nalle and Moten, which had two of the three highest percentages of at-risk students (72.4 percent and 84 percent, respectively) were not able to draw on contributions from parent organizations to enhance their school programs. Bancroft fell into the "moderate" category (\$20,000 to \$49,999), while Barnard, Miner, and Noyes fell into the "low" category (\$1 to \$19,999) with regard to financial support by parent organizations. Figure 15 on the following page summarizes the information that ODCA gathered about the amount and type of parental support for the eight elementary schools in this study.

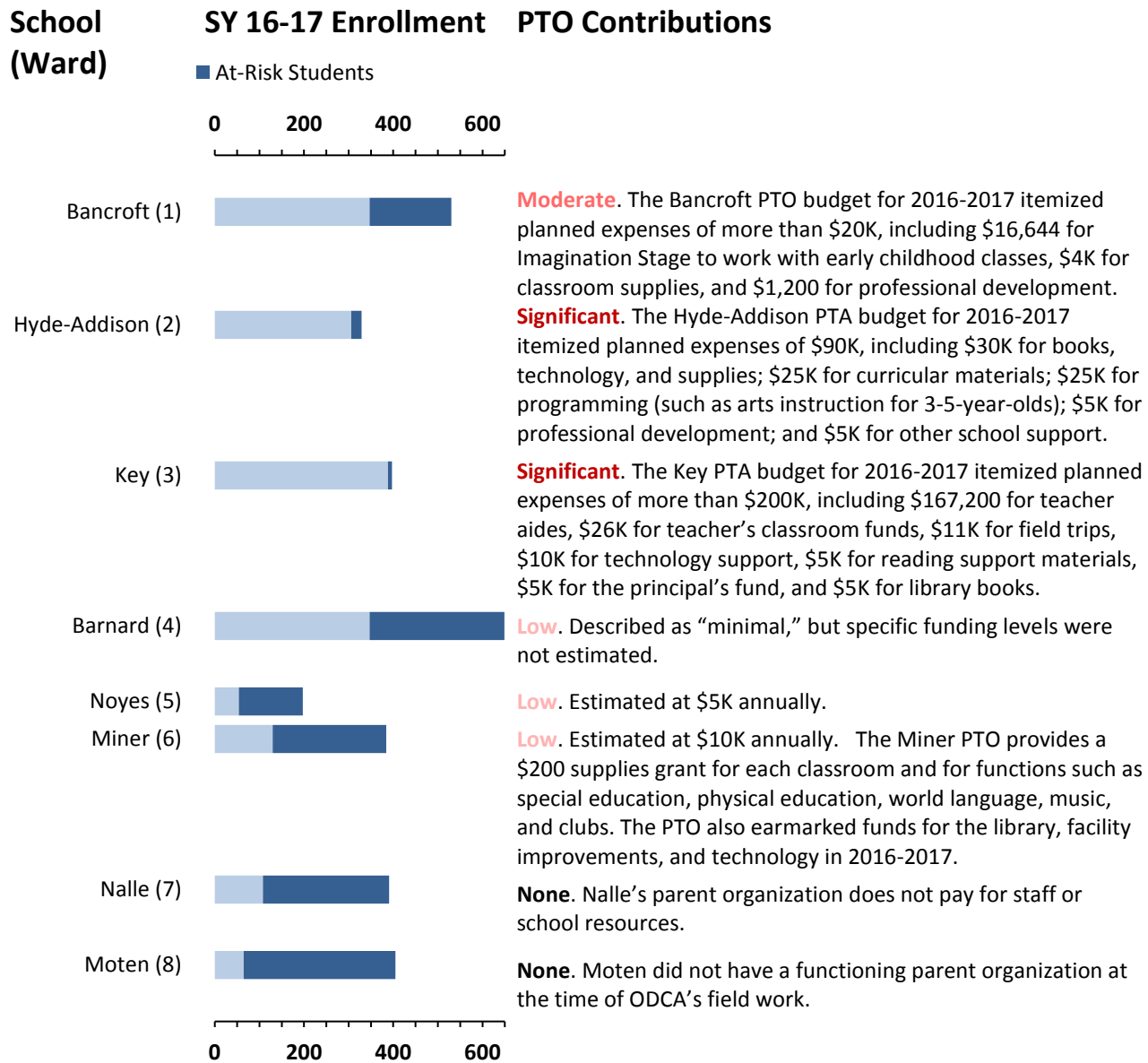
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cost of employing an instructional aide as \$25,728. See DCPS, "School Budget Development Guide" Fiscal Year 2017, School Year 2016-2017," pp. 82-83.

<sup>69</sup> At-risk funding allocations provide an example of the services that schools can buy with \$20,000 or more in additional money. For example, Bancroft Elementary received \$21,602 to purchase educational supplies; Miner Elementary received \$23,376 for contractual partnerships, and Moten Elementary received \$22,852 to enhance its after-school program.

<sup>70</sup> Key's Parent Teacher Association planned to spend more than \$200,000 to support the school's academic program. The school's audited enrollment for SY 2016-2017 was 397 students.

**Figure 15: School Characteristics and Funding Provided by Parent Organizations for Eight Elementary Schools, SY 2016-17**



**Source:** Total enrollment data are from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "Schedules of Student Enrollment and Independent Accountant's Examination Reports Thereon for the School Year Period Ended October 5, 2016," pp. 11-12, [osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report_0.pdf). At-risk enrollment data are from Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "2016-2017 School Year School-by School Enrollment Audit UPSFF Data," [osse.dc.gov/node/1223876](https://osse.dc.gov/node/1223876). Parent teacher organization budget information is from budgets provided by those individual organizations. Information also came from school community interviews and from school profiles at [profiles.dcps.dc.gov](https://profiles.dcps.dc.gov).

**Notes:** Enrollment data, which were independently audited, are as of October 5, 2016. Unlike several previous figures, this figure uses actual enrollment rather than projected enrollment, because projected enrollment is the basis for DCPS budgeting but is not relevant for PTO/PTA budgeting. At-risk elementary students are those are any of the following: homeless, in the District's foster care system, or eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.



**Moten Elementary School**, located in Ward 8 at 1565 Morris Road SE, enrolled 405 students in school year 2016-2017 and was fully modernized in 2012. Moten also participates in Turnaround Arts. The school is named for Lucy Ella Moten, an African-American educator and doctor and principal of The Miner Normal School from 1883 to 1920. She is credited with training many of D.C.'s African-American teachers during that period.

The significant resources provided by Key Elementary School's PTA (more than \$200,000 in SY 2016-2017) were described as playing a critical role in helping Key resolve budget gaps and maintain the quality of its academic program. By paying for teacher aides in early childhood classes (\$167,200 budgeted in SY 2016-2017), supplies (\$26,000 budgeted for classroom supplies in SY 2016-2017) and technology support (\$10,000 budgeted in SY 2016-2017), the Key PTA enables the school to devote resources to other purposes, such as a second assistant principal. The Key PTA also helps the school handle glitches that could disrupt school operations and classroom instruction. For example, the PTA replenished the school's supply of copier paper when it ran out, and purchased bulbs needed to operate the school's SMART boards.

Funding of school programs or operations by parents has a similar impact at Hyde-Addison, where the PTA allocated the second-highest amount (\$90,000) for school support in SY 2016-2017 among the schools in this study. As at Key, the PTA at Hyde-Addison defrays the cost of purchasing non-personal services, allowing the school to devote more of its budget to funding the staff. Interviewees stated that the Hyde-Addison PTA plays an essential role in closing any funding gaps, maintaining the quality of the academic program, and helping the school deal with supply bottlenecks or other short-term needs.

Because Hyde-Addison and Key had low percentages of low-income students, they were the only schools in this study that were not eligible for federal Title I funding during SY 2016-2017. Schools in this study that had no or minimal parent organization support benefited from significant Title I resources, which ranged from \$75,746 at Noyes to \$391,356 at Moten during SY 2016-2017.

Several of the schools in this study with low or no parent organization support for school expenses were also able to draw on private grants and donations. Moten and Noyes both received resources (financial and in-kind) from the Turnaround Arts program, an arts education program administered by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Moten, for example, had four resident artists during SY 2016-2017 provided by Turnaround Arts. In SY 2016-2017, Nalle was in the last year of a Freddie Mac Foundation grant that provided the school with two extra social workers from the National Center for Children and Families.

Other schools in this study also benefited from private grants, donations, and partnerships. As described earlier, Bancroft and

Barnard Elementary Schools received additional services through Mary's Center, a community health center that provides health care, educational, and social services. At Miner Elementary School, the United Planning Organization and the AARP Experience Corps provided student mentors, and State Department employees served as tutors.

**Principals, teachers, and community members expressed concern about the speed and effectiveness of DCPS purchasing systems.**

In addition to complaints about inadequate budgets for supplies and materials, principals, teachers, and community members interviewed by ODCA also expressed concerns about the speed and effectiveness of the purchasing process. The problems cited by interviewees included rigid or cumbersome rules and procedures that impaired the daily operations of the school, as well as unexplained delays. One principal simply referred to the procurement process as “generally a challenge” because of its length.

Another principal described the D.C. government's fiscal year, which starts on October 1 and ends on September 30, as a problem because supplies are needed when the school year begins in late August. To make sure that supplies are sufficient when school starts, this principal added, it is necessary to stockpile items in June, particularly because finance staff curtail access to purchase cards in September as the fiscal year is about to end. A teacher echoed these concerns, noting that once schools get an infusion of funds after the October 1 start of the fiscal year, they can initiate new procurements but will not receive the relevant goods or services before a significant part of the school year has elapsed.

Shortages of paper, one of the most basic educational commodities, illustrate the nature and impact of school procurement problems. One parent organization official expressed exasperation that he had to go to Staples to purchase \$115 worth of copier paper because his children's school had used its entire annual allotment of paper. Similarly, a local school advisory team member at another school stated that teachers had to purchase paper for the school once its annual supply ran out, and compared a school lacking paper to “a service station having a shortage of gas.”

A math teacher interviewed by ODCA noted that supply problems at her school threatened her ability to implement a new math curriculum known as “Eureka Math.” The school had received the Eureka Math modules for the first half of the school year, but was still waiting for the delivery of the second batch of modules.



Although supply budgets were often described as insufficient, one principal also stated that the school supply budget was further strained by price markups of 50 percent to 80 percent that result from requirements to use local vendors. Whether supplies were inadequate because of insufficient funding or procurement glitches, many teachers noted that they responded by purchasing pencils, markers, and paper for their schools with their own money.

**School principals and teachers interviewed by ODCA expressed mixed views about DCPS's new professional development program, Learning Together to Advance Our Practice.**

In discussing staffing decisions at the elementary school with administrators, teachers, and parents, ODCA staff heard a range of views, both positive and negative, on DCPS's new professional development program called Learning to Advance Our Practice (LEAP). The LEAP program was launched in the fall of 2016 and is designed to help teachers master the Common Core curriculum that DCPS adopted in 2010.

Under LEAP, core content teachers (those who teach English/language arts, math, or early childhood education in elementary schools) are assigned to LEAP teams by subject and grade band. At the elementary level, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and TLI teacher leaders can serve as LEAP team leaders. Teachers participate in weekly cycles of professional development that involve three steps: a 90-minute seminar, a 15-minute observation of teachers by the LEAP team leader, and a debrief involving the team leader and teacher. The weekly professional development cycles are part of six- to eight-week modules focusing on DCPS's curriculum standards while emphasizing support and collaboration among the school staff.

Interviewees who cited positive aspects of LEAP emphasized the opportunities it creates for collaboration and coordination among teachers and curriculum specialists within the school. By granting leadership roles to assistant principals, instructional coaches, and TLI team leaders based at the school, LEAP gives educators more latitude to tailor professional development to the school's needs, according to several interviewees. For example, Bancroft Elementary school staff adapted LEAP to help teachers work with the school's large number of ELL students.

Another benefit cited by interviewees is that LEAP can help the teachers implement the curriculum effectively and build on what students learn in each grade, because it organizes all of the English/language arts and math teachers, respectively, into professional development teams. Finally, several interviewees praised

the sequencing of LEAP activities, noting that the teacher observations and feedback sessions that are designed to follow LEAP professional development sessions provide a way to reinforce and put into practice what is learned.

On the other hand, interviewees who cited negative aspects of LEAP often stated that it took too much time away from other activities, including planning time and classroom instruction. Moreover, several teachers stated that their LEAP leaders themselves may not have adequate time to do their jobs properly, including conducting observations and providing timely feedback. This was a concern with assistant principals who have other major responsibilities such as student discipline. Even though LEAP leaders are school-based staff, one interviewee characterized LEAP as being imposed by central office staff who do not understand the needs of the schools. One teacher also pointed out that LEAP does not address the needs of special education teachers, although they are required to participate.

# Recommendations

Most of the recommendations in this report are budget neutral and all help to advance the strategic goals of DCPS.

Recommendation	Budget Neutral	Potential for Revenue Generation or Savings	Agency or District-Wide Goals Advanced by Recommendation
1. Under the current provisions in the D.C. Code and using intent reflected in the legislative history, DCPS should draft clear guidance on how school principals and local school advisory teams can provide input on at-risk funding allocations in its FY 2019 budget development guide, including a description of at-risk funding options that schools can recommend or modify.	x		<p><b>DCPS Strategic Plan:</b> “We work proactively to eliminate opportunity gaps by interrupting institutional bias and investing in effective strategies to ensure every student succeeds.”<sup>71</sup></p> <p>“Prioritize budgeting and resources for students who need them most;”</p> <p>“Ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community.”<sup>72</sup></p> <p><b>At-Risk Funding Act of 2015:</b> “[At-risk funds] provided to schools...shall be available for school utilization at the direction of the Chancellor in consultation with the principal and local school advisory team, for the purpose of improving student achievement <b>among at-risk students.</b>”<sup>73</sup></p>

<sup>71</sup> Values, from DCPS Strategic Plan, “A Capital Commitment 2017-2022.” Page 2. Accessed 19 Sept. 2017 at

<https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/DCPS%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20A%20Capital%20Commitment%202017-2022-English.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> Strategic priorities, from DCPS Strategic Plan, “A Capital Commitment 2017-2022.” Page 3.

<sup>73</sup> See §108a of Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended through D.C. Law 21-36, §4092, At-Risk Funding Act of 2015, D.C. Code §38-2907.01.

Recommendation	Budget Neutral	Potential for Revenue Generation or Savings	Agency or District-Wide Goals Advanced by Recommendation
2. The D.C. Council should provide careful oversight on how at-risk funding is utilized, whether the utilization is consistent with legislative intent, whether legislative intent is clearly reflected in the D.C. Code language, and consider amending the law if necessary to better meet the goal of the additional funding.	x		<b>Committee on Education Report:</b> “The Committee is concerned that...that at-risk funds [...be] used solely to supplement investments in schools rather than supplant. For instance, several schools are using at-risk funds for general education teachers, [and] related arts teachers....These were not some of the things members of the Council felt at-risk funds would be spent on. The Committee has required that DCPS submit an annual report on how at-risk funds will be spent and <b>will continue to monitor and work with DCPS</b> on this issue for the FY17 budget.” <sup>74</sup>
3. To improve transparency and budget execution and be consistent with the Every Student Succeeds Act, DCPS should substitute actual salaries in local school budgets as soon as practicable after staffing decisions have been made.	x		<b>DCPS Strategic Plan:</b> “Ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community; Improve communication with and listen to families.” <sup>75</sup>
4. DCPS should create and make public a multi-year technology needs plan to define and provide adequate technology to each school. The plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources.			<b>DCPS Strategic Plan:</b> “Ensure excellent schools; Ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community.” <sup>76</sup> “Double the percent of students who are college and career ready; 100 percent of schools are highly rated or are improving.” <sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Committee on Education, Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Education on the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget for Agencies under Its Purview. Page 18. Accessed 19 Sept. 2017 at <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/33645/B21-0158-CommitteeReport2.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Strategic priorities, from DCPS Strategic Plan, “A Capital Commitment 2017-2022.” Page 3.

<sup>76</sup> Strategic priorities, from DCPS Strategic Plan, “A Capital Commitment 2017-2022.” Page 3.

<sup>77</sup> Goals, from DCPS Strategic Plan, “A Capital Commitment 2017-2022.” Page 4.

## Conclusion

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As noted in the introduction, D.C. government policymakers and DCPS school leaders have made concerted efforts in recent decades to fund schools adequately and equitably, while balancing the need for clear and effective standards for school curricula and staffing with adequate flexibility for principals and school staff to tailor programs and services to the needs of their students. These are not easy tasks.

This study of budgeting and staffing in eight DCPS elementary schools identifies significant accomplishments as well as ongoing problems and challenges. At the schools in this study, DCPS had implemented its staffing model with strong fidelity, providing schools with prescribed numbers of general education, early childhood, and ELL teachers, as well as instructional coaches, teacher aides, and other staff. A frequently-cited deficiency from 10 to 15 years ago—that many elementary schools lacked art teachers, music teachers, and librarians—was not evident in the eight schools that ODCA studied.

Within the constraints of DCPS budget and staffing standards, the collective bargaining agreement between DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union, and other commitments such as the ELL corrective action agreement between DCPS and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, DCPS has attempted to provide schools with flexibility in budgeting and staffing. The school-based budgeting process, in which schools propose revisions to initial budgets prepared by the central DCPS office, was taken seriously at the schools in this study and LSATs played their intended role.

DCPS has used a supplemental funding stream for at-risk students established by the D.C. Council in 2014 to fund a variety of initiatives and positions. Some of these uses, such as extended school-day and school-year programs, after-school programs, and assistant principals for literacy, seem intended to meet the needs of at-risk students, but at-risk dollars were also used to fund core positions that are promised to all schools as part of the CSM thereby undermining the purpose of the supplemental funding and signaling the CSM may not be fully funded.

Chancellor Antwan Wilson's presentation to the Council Committee on Education on September 17, 2017, said DCPS will "develop and implement a school budgeting model that prioritizes resources for students who need them the most," but he has not provided details on how a new budget model will address the issues highlighted here.

Budget transparency remains an issue. School principals and LSAT members seemed unsure whether they could influence the use of at-risk funds allocated to their schools, and if so, how. Although initial and final budgets for each school are posted online and school budgets are included in the District's annual budget submission to the D.C. Council and U.S. Congress, these budgets do not reflect the true resource needs of or uses by the schools because they are based on average position costs rather than actual position costs. Finally, the current DCPS funding provisions for non-personnel services fail to adequately and consistently fund educational technology, potentially depriving students of important resources needed to support learning and prepare them for college and careers.

## Agency Comments

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On September 20, 2017, we sent a draft copy of this report (without the appendix) to DCPS for review and written comment. DCPS responded with comments on October 6, 2017. Agency comments are included below in their entirety, followed by ODCA's response.



September 28, 2017

Kathleen Patterson  
District of Columbia Auditor  
Office of the District of the Columbia Auditor  
717 14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Patterson:

We are in receipt of the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor's *Budgeting and Staffing at Eight DCPS Elementary Schools* report dated September 20, 2017. We appreciate the time that you have taken to provide a review of and feedback on budgets and staffing at eight of our DCPS schools, as well as allowing us an opportunity to respond and provide input. Ensuring our schools have the needed staffing, supports, and services is critical to the academic and social emotional learning of our students. We hold this responsibility with the highest regard in respect and support of our students, families, school staff, and community.

We have noted the evaluation results and recommendations of the draft report, and are providing our responses below. DCPS has launched a new strategic plan, covering the next five years. In recognition of feedback heard from more than 3,000 stakeholders, including students, families and community members, teachers and instructional staff, school leaders, and central office staff members, the plan includes key initiatives regarding prioritizing resources for students who need them the most. Therefore, it is worth noting that due to the nature of the recommendations in this report and it coinciding with the strategic planning that DCPS has undertaken since my appointment in February of this year, there are several references to A Capital Commitment 2017-2022. A copy of this plan is attached to our response.

### **Recommendation #1:**

Under the current provisions in the D.C. Code and using intent reflected in the legislative history, DCPS should draft clear guidance on how school principals and local school advisory teams can provide input on at-risk funding allocations in its FY 2019 budget development guide, including a description of at-risk funding options that schools can recommend or modify.

### **DCPS Response:**

**We agree with recommendation #1.** DCPS acknowledges that although DCPS ensures that at-risk funding follows the student, school communities have expressed varying levels of concern over how funding is attributed to initiatives across schools that receive at-risk funding. Ever since the at-risk weight was created, DCPS has been committed to utilizing these funds in a way that would support students who need the most support.



One of our strategic priorities in A Capital Commitment is to “Promote Equity.” As part of this strategic focus area, DCPS will prioritize the budgeting and resources for students who need them most, which embodies the spirit and intent of the at-risk funding as outlined in the Fair Student Funding Act of 2013. Also, worth highlighting is a key initiative associated with this strategic priority which includes “increasing transparency and engagement in our budget development process and improving school leader autonomy and flexibility.” A specific example of how we plan to increase transparency is by leveraging the use and functionality of the School Budget Development Guide. DCPS is currently developing plans as part of the strategic planning process and fiscal year 2019 (FY19) budget development process to improve and better leverage the School Budget Development Guide as one of various tools that will be used to communicate with our school budget stakeholders. DCPS will ensure that the improved School Budget Development Guide has a section that references how at-risk dollars are utilized in D.C. Public Schools.

### **Recommendation #2:**

The D.C. Council should provide careful oversight on how at-risk funding is utilized, whether the utilization is consistent with legislative intent, whether legislative intent is clearly reflected in the D.C. Code language, and consider amending the law if necessary to better meet the goal of the additional funding.

### **DCPS Response:**

Although this recommendation is directed to the D.C. Council, DCPS is committed to allocating at-risk funds in a way that is aligned to the intent and spirit of the law, and is always committed to working with the D.C. Council through timely and accurate reporting.

### **Recommendation #3:**

To improve transparency and budget execution and be consistent with the Every Student Succeeds Act, DCPS should substitute actual salaries in local school budgets as soon as practicable after staffing decisions have been made.

### **DCPS Response:**

**We partially agree with recommendation #3.** Transparency around how schools are funded and how allocations are made to schools is extremely important to us over the next five years, beginning in FY19. DCPS is committed to complying with the information reporting requirements of Section 1111(h) of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and to identifying ways to provide this data at the school level in a way that maintains staff anonymity and does not violate the relevant articles of the DCPS collective bargaining agreement with the Washington Teachers’ Union.



#### **Recommendation #4:**

DCPS should create and make public a multi-year technology needs plan to define and provide adequate technology to each school. The plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources.

#### **DCPS Response:**

**DCPS agrees with recommendation #4.** Prior to the issuance of this draft audit report, DCPS' Office of Information Technology began work to develop a comprehensive Technology Roadmap. Our roadmap includes five key areas: devices, infrastructure services, shared technology platforms, technology proficiency and data reporting. These core focus areas will provide mass enhancements in all areas of concern as detailed in the report. To date, the initial draft of our Technology Roadmap has been shared internally within DCPS' central administration to obtain feedback from internal stakeholders. Additional feedback will be sought from school-based leaders, teachers, students, parents, and members of the community. Upon completion and approval of the Technology Roadmap, the associated funding requests will be presented during the FY19 budget process.

Thank you again for your evaluation and for assisting DCPS in improving how we fund our schools to meet the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

Antwan Wilson  
Chancellor

## ODCA Response to Agency Comments

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ODCA appreciates the constructive comments on the draft report provided by DCPS. Chancellor Wilson noted that the four-page, five-year strategic plan, “A Capital Commitment: 2017-2022,” introduces initiatives intended to target resources to students who need them most, and touches on many of the findings and recommendations presented in ODCA’s report.

ODCA is encouraged by the Chancellor’s pledge to increase transparency and engagement in the budget development process, and to improve school leader autonomy and flexibility. The Chancellor’s promise to provide more information in future versions of the School Budget Development Guide about ways that principals and local school advisory team members can modify the allocation of at-risk funds is a concrete step in that direction. At the same time, ODCA reiterates that the allocation of at-risk funds, and new guidance provided to schools about how they might modify those allocations, must comply with D.C. Law 20-87, the “Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budget Amendment Act of 2013,” as amended. This law states that at-risk funding “shall be supplemental to the school’s gross budget and must not supplant” any other funding to which the school is entitled.

DCPS states that it “partially” agrees with our recommendation that budgets that reflect actual local school expenditures be published as soon as practicable, and reiterates its commitment to transparency. The reference to confidentiality is misplaced, however, since all District salaries are public information based on D.C. Code. And while an approved collective bargaining agreement must be adhered to while it remains in effect, DCPS management has discretion regarding subsequent labor agreements as well as in interpreting the current provision on teacher salaries.

ODCA also acknowledges DCPS’ work to draft a comprehensive “technology roadmap” covering devices, infrastructure services, shared technology platforms, technology proficiency, and data reporting, which will be translated into fiscal year 2019 funding requests. Nevertheless, ODCA emphasizes the need for a multi-year technology plan that will define and fund the school system’s technology needs while providing for ongoing maintenance and upgrades. A detailed, multi-year technology plan will help advance the goals the Chancellor hopes to achieve by 2022, such as ensuring that all students in kindergarten through Grade 2 are reading on or above grade level, and doubling the percentage of students who are college- and career-ready.

## Appendix A

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) is a conventional measure of inflation. The CPI-U measures price increases for urban consumers. Using it for schools probably underestimates inflation, since schools face higher price increases for their purchases, including labor and specialized supplies, than urban consumers. Using an underestimate for inflation like the CPI-U could lead to erroneous conclusions that school budgets and expenditures kept pace with inflation when, in fact, they did not. ODCA also completed the analysis with a higher measure of inflation, the Employment Cost Index (ECI) for elementary and secondary schools (see Figure 16). The ECI is a measure of the increase in school labor costs, which made up more than 90 percent of expenditures at most DCPS schools in FY 2015. ODCA found that even with the higher inflation rate, average per-pupil expenditures for DCPS elementary schools rose slightly between FY 2015 and FY 2016 and budgets decreased by a higher percentage.

**Figure 16: Changes in Expenditures and Budgets Between FY 2015 and FY 2016 for All DCPS Elementary Schools, Using CPI-U and ECI to Adjust for Inflation**

	Values adjusted for inflation with:	
	CPI-U (presented in text)	Employment Cost Index for elementary and secondary schools
Average per-pupil expenditures rose from FY 2015 to FY 2016	Expenditures rose from \$11,245 to \$11,562 per student, which is an increase of 2.8 percent, or \$317.20 per student	Expenditures rose from \$11,435 to \$11,562 per student, which is an increase of 1.1 percent, or \$127.70 per student
Expenditures increased per pupil at decreased per pupil at	35 schools 22 schools	30 schools 27 schools
Per-pupil expenditures at schools in this study (Ward):		
Nalle (7)	Increased \$725	Increased \$544
Bancroft (1)	Increased \$258	Increased \$60
Key (3)	Increased \$133	Decreased \$14
Moten (8)	Increased \$20	Decreased \$158
Hyde-Addison (2)	Decreased \$50	Decreased \$220
Miner (5)	Decreased \$224	Decreased \$447
Barnard (4)	Decreased \$290	Decreased \$491
Per-pupil budgets decreased	From \$11,309 to \$11,034, a decrease of 2.4 percent	From \$11,499 to \$11,034, a decrease of 4 percent
Elementary schools averaged a surplus in FY 2015 but a deficit in FY 2016	Available balance dropped from \$64 to -\$528	Available balance dropped from \$65 to -\$528

**Source:** ODCA analysis. Budget and expenditure data from SOAR for FY 2015 (as of April 14, 2017) and FY 2016 (as of March 31, 2017). Independently audited enrollment values for SY 2016-2017 from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "Schedules of Student Enrollment and Independent Accountant's Examination Reports Thereon for the School Year Period Ended

October 5, 2016,” pp. 11-12, [osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2016-17%20School%20Year%20Enrollment%20Audit%20Report_0.pdf). Independently audited enrollment values for SY 2015-2016 from the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “Audits of Student Enrollment and English Language Learner Student Enrollment, October 5, 2015,” Attachment B.1, [osse.dc.gov/node/1143912](https://osse.dc.gov/node/1143912). CPI-U (Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers) and ECI (employment cost index) from US Bureau of Labor Statistics. ODCA used the CPI-U monthly index for all US cities, not seasonally adjusted, and the ECI for total compensation for all civilian workers in elementary and secondary schools, monthly national index, not seasonally adjusted.

**Note:** ODCA used average inflation indices (CPI-U and ECI) for October 2014-September 2015 for FY 2015, and for October 2015-September 2016 for FY 2016, corresponding with the D.C. and DCPS fiscal year, to adjust values to FY 2016 dollars.