TRYING TO NAVIGATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA?
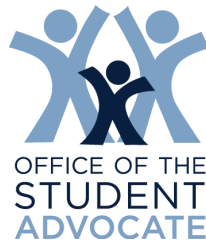
OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

PARENT & FAMILY

GO-TO GUIDE

We Can Help. Start Here. ➡

OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

The Office of the Student Advocate is committed to ensuring that all families are able to navigate public education in the District of Columbia. Knowledge and access should not be limited or restricted by race, economic status, language or mobility.

Our Parent & Family Go-To Guide is a collection of parent-centered documents and resources designed to help families navigate the public education system in the District. Some of the tools are most useful paired with a greater understanding of the policies and procedures at your child's school.

By placing these resources in one guide, DC parents and families have access to information they have the right to know in one handy document.

Dan Davis
Chief Student Advocate

PARENT & FAMILY GO-TO GUIDE

In the District of Columbia we have **more than 60 local education agencies (LEAs)** or **i**ndividual school districts. DC Public Schools (DCPS) and each of the individual public charter school networks are school districts.

How Schools in DC Work

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Mayor ──────────────────────────► DC Council
  │                         ▲  ▲        ▲
  ▼                         ·  ·        ·
Deputy Mayor of             ·  ·        ·
Education                    ·  ·        ·
(DME)                       ·  ·        ·
  │                        ·   ·        ·
  ▼                       ·    ·        ·
State Board of    Office of the State      Local Education          Schools
Education (SBOE) ◄·· Superintendent of ──► Agency (LEA) ──────────► 
                  Education (OSSE)
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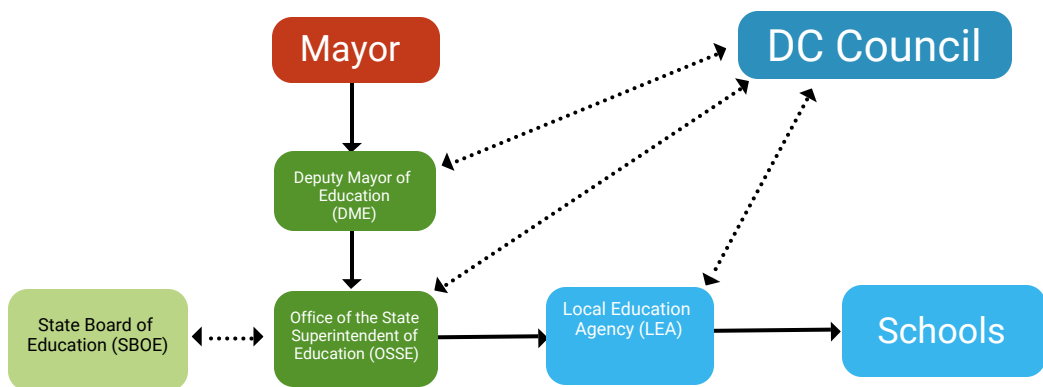
Your child's public school has an LEA with its own organizational structures, policies, and procedures – all of which can be found on its respective website.

Deputy Mayor for Education: https://dme.dc.gov
Office of the State Superintendent of Education: https://osse.dc.gov
DC Council: http://dccouncil.us/council
State Board of Education: https://sboe.dc.gov
DC Public Schools: https://dcps.dc.gov
Public Charter School Networks: http://www.dcpcsb.org/find-a-school

More regarding the structure of public education in DC can be found on our website at studentadvocate.dc.gov under the *Informational & Advocacy Resources and Tools tab*.

TERMS TO KNOW

Deputy Mayor for Education (DME)
Develops and implements the Mayor's vision for academic excellence from birth to 24; oversees District-wide education strategy; manages interagency and cross-sector coordination; provides oversight for education-related agencies

Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
The official state education agency for the District of Columbia; provides information, policy guidance, and resources on education matters to LEAs and parents

State Board of Education (SBOE)
Advises the State Superintendent of Education; approves state-level policies affecting DC public education

Local Education Agency (LEA)
An entity that operates public elementary and secondary schools; DCPS is its own LEA and each charter network is its own LEA; each LEA creates its own sets of policies and oversees implementation of federal and state policies

DC Public Schools (DCPS)
The traditional school system in the District of Columbia; central authority is the Chancellor of DC Public Schools

In-boundary
A school within DCPS that a student has a right to attend ("matter-of-right") based on their address; every home address has an assigned DCPS elementary, middle, and high school

TERMS TO KNOW

Out-of-boundary
A school within DCPS that is not a matter-of-right school; schools outside of a student's neighborhood boundary

DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
Authorizes public charter schools in DC; after the comprehensive application process, PSCB provides oversight and support to the schools it authorizes

Public Charter Schools (PCS)
Independent, tuition-free schools under agreements approved by PCSB; a public charter school is not a matter-of-right school to students in a given neighborhood; requires an application through the lottery

Lottery
A process that allows students to gain entrance to participating public charter schools, out-of-boundary DCPS, DCPS pre-k programs, and DCPS city-wide selective high schools through a single, random lottery process

My School DC
Administers the lottery process for participating schools; non-participating charter schools have their own lottery process; matches are based on the number of available spaces in each school

The following questions are helpful conversation starters when considering student achievement.
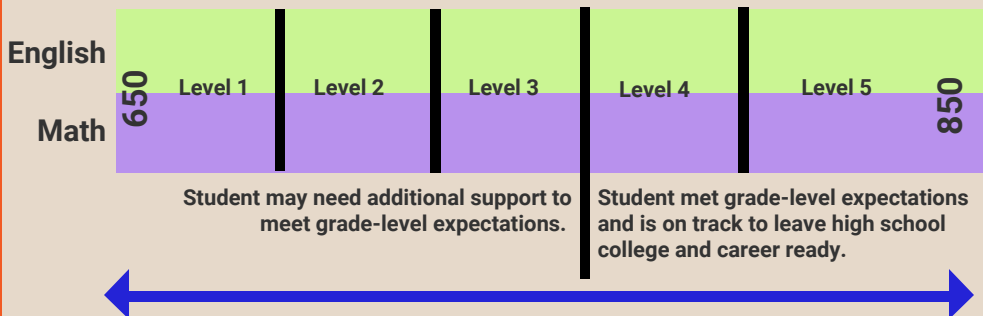
Ask Yourself

- Does my child seem challenged by the material he/she brings home?

- Do I know how my child learns best? What can I do at home to help my child succeed?

- Am I doing all that I can to encourage my child to read for leisure?

- Do I know the resources the school has for me regarding graduation and standardized assessments?

- Do I display a positive attitude about education around my child?

- Have I researched state standards for my child's grade? Am I assisting my child with standards mastery at home?

- Have I requested/sought academic services if my child needs additional help?

- At home, do I have clear expectations, responsibilities, and consequences that address my child's social and emotional needs?

- Have I developed a partnership with my child's teachers? How do I communicate with them?

Ask Your School

- Is my child working on or above grade level?

- How do you typically differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of my child?

- Is there an academic performance gap in your school?

- What are the graduation/promotional requirements for my child's grade? Are there required standardized assessments?

- What is the school's philosophy about how children learn best?

- What standards are you assessing in this unit of study?

- Does my child know and understand what an exemplar looks like?

- What are the structures that I need to have in place to meet my child's social and emotional needs? How does he or she respond with peers?

- What opportunities are available for me to volunteer in my child's school? What is the best way for me to contact you regarding my child's progress?
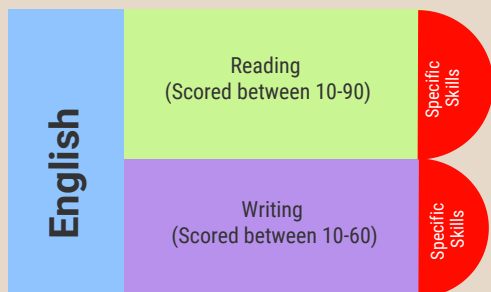
PARCC Scores

The following tips are helpful when interpreting PARCC scores.

PARCC is a national standardized assessment designed to measure how well students have learned grade-level material in mathematics and English.

English

650 Level 1   Level 2   Level 3   Level 4   Level 5 **850**

Math

Student may need additional support to meet grade-level expectations.

Student met grade-level expectations and is on track to leave high school college and career ready.

- For <u>English and Math</u>, a student is given an overall score between the <u>650 and 850</u>.
- The overall score range, 650 - 850, is divided into <u>five levels</u>.
- The overall score is usually indicated using an arrow pointing to a number on a bar.

English

Reading
(Scored between 10-90)

Specific Skills

Writing
(Scored between 10-60)

Specific Skills

Math

Specific Skills

There are two main subcategories: Reading and Writing. Each subcategory is scored (using a number) and divided into specific skills. The specific skills are rated using symbols.
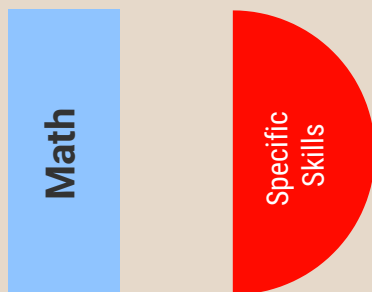
Math is divided into specific skills (there are no subcategories for math). Those specific skills are rated using symbols.

Symbols for Specific Skills Ratings

↑ Above grade-level expectations

↔ Nearly meets grade level expectations

↓ Below grade-level expectations

For more information, visit https://parcc.pearson.com/ or https://osse.dc.gov/parcc.

Pathway to Graduation

Courses & Requirements

1. All students must earn 24 Carnegie Units (CUs) to graduate:

- Mathematics (4.0)
  - must include Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra II at a minimum
- Science (4.0)
  - must include three lab sciences
- Social Studies (4.0)
  - must include World History 1 and 2, United States History; United States Government, and District of Columbia History
- English (4.0)
- World Language (2.0)
- Art (0.5)
- Music (0.5)
- Physical Education/Health (1.5)
- Electives (3.5)

*If you transfer LEAs or from a school in another state, be sure to ask which classes transfer.

*If you attend a selective or citywide school there maybe some additional coursework to graduate.

2. All students must complete 100 hours of community service to graduate.

Grade Disputation

1. Attempt to speak with your teacher about your grade.
2. File a formal grade appeal/complaint form with your principal. Check with your counselor/school handbook for clearer instructions.
3. Submit a final appeal to your LEA's board or DCPS Instructional Superintendent.

*Unexcused absences may cause you to receive a grade reduction in that class.

Credit Recovery

Your school may offer other ways to earn course credit after a student has fallen behind academically.

Popular options:
- after-school classes
- twilight (evening) academies
- summer school
- alternative settings

* Check with your school to what options are available to you and how they are recorded on your transcript.

WHAT'S THE BEST ROUTE?

OFFICE OF THE STUDENT ADVOCATE

First Steps

- Figure out how many credits you need to graduate.
- Are you over 16?
- Has someone at your school talked to you about going to another school or program?

State Diploma is an Option

DC residents can earn a state high school diploma through the GED exam or the National External Diploma Program (NEDP).

See programs below.

Truths About Your Situation

Life Happens. Often plans need to be adjusted. Determining how you finish high school is a decision you can make!

Roadblocks Students Face

- Pregnancy
- Language/Immigration Barriers
- Justice System Contact
- Homelessness

Is finishing at my high school an option?

YES, if you have an IEP you may have until your 22nd birthday to earn a diploma in a traditional high school;

YES, if your school offers a credit recovery program like twilight classes or evening instruction;

NO, if you are 18 or older and more than a full year behind;

NO, if you have a history of discipline or attendance problems.

Facts and Benefits

- To get a HS diploma you need to earn 24 credits between 9th and 12th grade.
- Most students, in a typical year, earn close to 6 credits.
- You have a right to a Free and Appropriate Education.
- If you are under 18 you are legally required to attend school in the District of Columbia.

Various Programs

- Academy of Hope Adult PCS
- Ballou STAY Senior High School
- Briya Public Charter
- Carlos Rosario Public Charter
- Community College Prep
- LAYC Career Academy
- Luke C. Moore Academy
- Maya Angelou Young Adult Learning Center
- Next Steps Public Charter
- Roosevelt STAY Senior High School
- Washington Metropolitan High School
- Youth Build

Before you go, check out the resources available:

- backontrack.osse.dc.gov
- dcps.dc.gov/alternativehs
- dcpcsb.org
- studentadvocate.dc.gov

The following questions are helpful conversation starters when considering student behavior.

Ask Yourself

- Do I know how my child is expected to behave at school or on the bus?

- Am I aware of any behavior issues that I need to address with my child?

- Have I read the policies and rules regarding discipline at my child's school?

- How do I communicate with the school when there are problems at home that I am aware of?

- Do I know the behavior violations and their corresponding consequences?

- Does my child understand that violence is unacceptable?

- How can I support school policies and procedures for behavior at home?

- At home, are there expectations and consequences? Do I hold my child accountable for his/her choices?

Ask Your Teacher

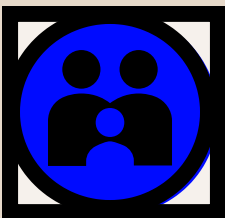- How does the school inform my child of his/her behavior expectations?

- How can you help me keep/ prevent my child from having behavior problems? (Share any behavior issues with the school.)

- Does my child truly know and understand what is required in order for him or her to avoid disciplinary action?

- What is being done to ensure that all students are well– behaved and safe?

- What are Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)?

- What are the discipline policies that I, as a parent, need to be aware of and enforce at home?

- What is the best way for me to communicate with the school regarding anything that I need to share with you? Is there a phone list available?

- Do you view your behavior plan as punitive or restorative? Are suspensions a last resort?

- If my child is suspended, is there an independent appeal process? What does the appeals process entail?

BULLYING QUICKSHEET

THINGS TO KNOW

Office of the
STUDENT
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1 WHAT IS BULLYING?

- Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that causes significant harm to the target and involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

- Bullying may be based on, but is not limited to, a specific personal characteristic such as race, gender, national origin, color, sexual orientation, personal appearance, disability, gender identity or expression, or familial status.

2 YOUTH BULLYING PREVENTION ACT OF 2012

- Signed into law on June 22, 2012

- All D.C. public and public charter schools as well as DC youth agencies must have a policy.

- Created the Youth Bullying Prevention Task Force, comprised of District government agencies, teachers, school administrators, parents, mental health professionals, and more.

3 TYPES OF BULLYING

Verbal
ex. teasing, name calling, taunting

Physical
ex. hitting, kicking, pushing

Social
ex. Purposefully excluding someone, spreading rumors about someone

Electronic
ex. mean or threatening text sent through text, email, or social media

4 BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

All schools, DC youth-serving agencies and non-profit organizations are required to have a bullying prevention policy.

This bullying prevention policy must include: definitions, consequences and flexibility, reporting, investigation & appeals.

More info on the Bullying Prevention Policy can be found here:
https://ohr.dc.gov/bullyingprevention/policy.

5 USEFUL CONTACTS

All schools have a designated bullying point of contact.

Find yours at:

https://ohr.dc.gov/page/knowyourpolicy .

HELPFUL TIP:
Provide support to youth who are bullied or who bully others, because both can lead to serious and long-lasting problems.

6 USEFUL RESOURCES

The Office of Human Rights, Bullying Prevention page has helpful resources; tips, more information about the Bullying Prevention Act, and policies about bullying.

Visit their website at
https://ohr.dc.gov/page/bullyingprevention.

Right to Know

Bullying Investigation Process

Bullying is a complex issue that can be isolating not only for students, but for parents and families as well. We have provided more clarity on the process for investigation below to help families understand the procedures in place to address bullying and establish a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Initial Investigation

Written documentation of the incident must occur within 2 days and must:
1) include appropriate protections for students involved,
2) inform target and parents of target,
3) inform initiator and parent of initiator.

2

Documented Report

Written report of the incident must occur within 30 days and include: description of the event, names of persons involved, locations where alleged event occurred, whether or not bullying occurred, actions taken

30

Appeals Process

After an investigation has been completed and a decision has been reached, both the target and the initiator have the right to appeal the final decision. Appeals may be made through OHR.
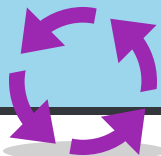
Target

During the investigation the school must make reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of the child, as well as inform the parents if deemed safe for the child. If the child has an IEP it must be taken into account. Confidentiality must be ensured throughout the process and both the student adn guardian must receive a final report.

Initiator

During the investigation, the school must inform the initiator of the investigation as well as the parents if deemed safe for the child. If the child has an IEP it must be taken into account. Confidentiality must be ensured throughout the process and both the student adn guardian must receive a final report.

School Point of Contact

Each school is required to have a bullying prevention point of contact responsible for addressing bullying concerns.

Find yours at ohr.dc.gov

Mental Health Resources

The following questions are helpful conversation starters when supporting students with their mental health.

School Mental Health Program

Each public and public charter school has a school-based program with a behavioral health clinician operated by The Department of Behavioral Health. The program offers prevention, early intervention, and clinical services to youth and their families. Contact your school to identify your school-based counselor. For more information visit: **https://dbh.dc.gov/service/school-behavioral-health-program**

Department of Behavioral Health Access HelpLine

The Access HelpLine is operated by behavioral health professionals and is available 24/7. Professionals can refer a caller to immediate help or ongoing care. You may call the Access HelpLine to get emergency psychiatric care, help with problem solving, or to determine whether to seek ongoing mental health services or other types of services, and/or find out what services are available.
Call: 1(888)7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357

Community Based Organizations

Mental health services are available to District residents via community based organizations certified by DBH. Services include diagnostic assessment, medication, counseling, and community support. Residents can choose a provider from the list found on the DBH website or by calling or visiting a provider.
http://dbh.dc.gov/page/list-community-based-service-providers

Children and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Services (ChAMPS)

ChAMPS is an emergency response service for children, teenagers and adolescents experiencing a mental health or behavioral health crisis. ChAMPS is partnered with the DBH, local hospitals, and the District of Columbia's Metropolitan Police Department and provides help for children living in the District. ChAMPS comes to a school the same day at no charge and is available 24/7 for youth ages 6-18, or up to age 21 for fostered youth.
(202) 481-1440 https://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/champs/

Discipline Policies

Factors to Consider

Availability

Knowing where, when and how your school makes the discipline policies available is key. Some schools policies are only posted online or issued to parents once a year.

Punishable Behaviors

Each school may have different punishable behaviors. Charter schools may differ how particular offenses are disciplined. Some LEAs have discipline policies that rely on tiers that outlines the offense and consequence(s).

Suspension Data

Each year, OSSE publishes a discipline report that includes the number of suspensions and expulsions reported by each LEA. This report can be found at:

https://osse.dc.gov/page/discipline-report.

Alternative Arrangements

LEAs differ in how they allow suspended students to complete class assignments.

Due Process

LEAs differ in how they interpret due process rights. For example, some schools allow students to appeal to a third party while others do not.

Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline

Trauma Centered

Schools promote emotional health as a way to prevent student misbehavior.

PBIS

Schools create individualized plans to help prevent student misbehavior. The plans should include interventions based on the student's needs and the severity of the misbehavior.

Restorative Justice

Students are able to identify their own misbehavior using community exercises in an effort to restore the relationship between the student and the victim/community. There are not severe punitive consequences at risk. The school offers the opportunity for the student to learn about the impact of their misbehavior on the victims. The school facilitates a conversation between the offender an victim. The school implements measures to prevent future misbehavior.

Discipline Law

Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018*

Limits out-of-school suspension of students in kindergarten through eighth grade unless it's due to serious safety incidents & bans its use for minor offenses in high school. If suspended, this law protects a child's right to an education while they are off the premises and requires a plan for the student to successfully return to the classroom.

Goes into effect for grades PK3-5 by SY 18-19, grades 6-8 by SY 19-20, & grades 9-12 by SY 20-21

Schools can...	Schools can not...
• uninvite a student based on their behavior • involuntarily dismiss a student for the remainder of the school day for disciplinary reasons • suspend a student for incidents of violence • count tardies as absences after reaching a maximum amount of tardies	• suspend pre-K students • issue an out of school suspension or expulsion for attendance • require a parent to accompany the student or attend a conference upon conclusion of an out of school suspension • issue an out of school suspension for longer than five consecutive school days for K-5, ten consecutive school days for 6-12 • deny a student access to academic work during suspension or deny the right to earn credit toward promotion or graduation

OSSE
- provides LEAs with guidance and materials regarding developments in the field of school climate and behavioral management
- provides regular professional development opportunities for LEAs and school personnel
- submits an evaluative school report at the conclusion of each school year

LEA
- submits reports to OSSE regarding disciplinary actions
- creates school discipline policies that uphold criteria set by OSSE
- fosters positive student environments

DC Council
- reviews recommendations and makes changes to discipline policies as necessary
- manages spending and fiscal impact

Behavior

14

Attendance

The following are helpful points to remember when considering school attendance.

truancy: being absent from school without a permission or valid reason (unexcused absences)

4

After **four excused or unexcused absences**, the school MUST make a phone call home to discuss student's attendance.

3

After **three days of unexcused cumulative absences**, the school MUST send 3-day unexcused absence letter to parent or guardian.

1

After **one unexcused absence**, the school MUST make personal contact with the parent or guardian on the same day.

7

After **7 cumulative unexcused absences**, the school MUST send a MPD warning letter to the parent or guardian.

5

After **five cumulative unexcused absences**, the student is referred to Student Support Team (SST) for an attendance intervention conference.

5

After **five cumulative unexcused absences**, the school must send a 5-day unexcused absence letter to parent or guardian.

20

After **twenty consecutive unexcused absences**, the school must notify the parent or guardian that the student is eligible for withdrawal.

15

After **fifteen cumulative unexcused absences**, the school MUST submit referral to Court Social Services (CSS) within two days to for students aged 14-17.

10

After **ten cumulative unexcused absences**, the school MUST contact CFSA if the student is 13 years or younger, SST will notify school leader of action plan within two weeks.

A student is considered chronically truant after 10 days of cumulative unexcused absences.

For more information, visit https://attendance.dc.gov/.

Tardiness

School start times in DC vary by school and type; check your school's handbook for exact times.

Students must be present for 6 hours of the day in order to be counted present.

If a student is tardy or misses 20% of the school day, they will be marked absent for the whole day.

Each LEA determines how many tardies equals an absence.

Schools may un-enroll a student after 20 cumulative unexcused absences.

Schools cannot suspend or expel a student as a consequence to unexcused tardies or absences.

* DCPS students who are out-of-boundary or attend a selective school may be uninvited to re-enroll due to excessive tardies.
** Charter students maybe uninvited to re-enroll due to excessive tardies.

For more information, visit https://attendance.dc.gov

Excused Absences

The following is a list of absences that each school must accept as excused:

- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Illness or other bona fide medical cause experienced by the student (doctor's note is required for a student absent 5 or more days);
- Exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Death in the student's immediate family;

- Observance of a religious holiday (up to 5 cumulative days);
- School visits for elementary and middle school students (one day);
- College visits for high school students (up to 3 cumulative days);
- "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day";
- Employment or other volunteer work approved by the school, provided that the student is seventeen (17) years of age, and provided further that any excused absences under this paragraph shall not adversely impact the student's academic performance or timely graduation;

- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;

- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes;
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student; Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Illness of a child for parenting students (doctor's note is required for a student absent 5 or more days);

- An emergency or other set of circumstances approved by an LEA, independent, private or parochial school (in accordance with policies distributed to parents and guardians).

An education institution can:
1. add to this list and
2. require a written statement to verify the excuse. The school can require the written statement before or after the absence.

For more information, visit https://attendance.dc.gov/.

Enrollment

The following questions are helpful conversation starters when considering enrollment.

Ask yourself

Ask your teacher

- Do I know my in-boundary school? Have I registered for my in-boundary school?

- Do I plan on remaining at my in-boundary school?

- Have I visited MySchoolDC.org? Have I created an account?

- Do I know the timeline for the common lottery for DC public schools? Have I applied for the lottery?

- What is important for me in a school? (location, special programs, before/aftercare, uniforms, international baccalaureate , dual language immersion)

- Is there anything about the enrollment process that I do not understand?

- What am I not asking that I should be?

- Are you a DCPS school or a charter school?

- Do you offer preferences for enrollment? If so, what are they?

- Is your information on MySchoolDC.org accurate/up-to-date?

- Do you participate in the lottery? If not, how do I apply?

- May I access your student handbook online? May I sit down with someone to discuss it before I register my student?

- Do you have an open house for potential families? Are there additional ways for me to see the staff and review the curriculum?

- What am I not asking that I should be?

For more information about schools/enrollment, visit https://myschooldc.org.
For information about out-of-school time opportunities, visit https://learn24.dc.gov.

Pre-K3 and Pre-K4

Factors to Consider

Transit

Students in DC ride public transportation for free, transportation will only be provided by the school as part of special education services.

Before/After Care

Some schools allow parents to drop students off early or pick students up later. Some of the schools that offer before/after care charge a fee. In some cases, that fee can be covered or supplemented by a voucher.

Language

Some elementary schools offer a language other than English as a program or class option.

Uniforms

Not all public schools require students wear uniforms. A school that requires uniforms may not allow a student who is not in uniform to attend his/her classes.

Specialized Schools

Montessori and Reggio Emilia approaches utilize a type of learning that focuses on supporting students as they learn more freely and independently. Most Montessori elementary schools require that the student have attended a Montessori pre-kindergarten.

Feeder Schools

Each DCPS elementary school has a middle and high school to which its students automatically receive an invitation to attend. Some charter schools have similar partnership/agreement in place.

Factors to consider:

Charter Schools

Each charter school develops its own curriculum for pre-K3 and pre-K4. Some charters use the federal Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

DCPS

DCPS uses the federal Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework which sets the curriculum and the student/teacher ratio requirements.

Community-Based Organizations

Service providers that are not DCPS or within a charter school use the OSSE Early Learning Standards which set the curriculum and the student/teacher ratio requirements.

For more information, visit https://osse.dc.gov/page/how-find-pre-kindergarten-program/ or http://www.myschooldc.org/.

Enrollment

19

Homelessness

The following are helpful conversation starters when facing homelessness.

The **McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act** is a federal act that ensures assistance to homeless families as they navigate the public education system.

"Homeless students" include students who:

Based on the best interest of the student, t**he LEA shall …**

- Lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.;

- Reside in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;

- Live in emergency or transitional shelter (including DC transitional housing);

- Are abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care placement;

- Have a primary nighttime residence that is not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

- Are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian AND meet any of the above circumstances; OR

- Are migratory children who are living in the circumstances described above.

Assist the student in obtaining necessary immunizations, medical records, uniforms, or other necessities for school.

Continue the student's education at the student's current school.

Immediately enroll the student in the neighborhood school If not currently enrolled in a school.

Immediately enroll the homeless student even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment.

The District of Columbia ensures that all homeless children and youth will have access to and be enabled to participate fully in all educational programs for which they are eligible and interested.

Enrollment

For more information, visit https://osse.dc.gov/service/education-homeless-children-and-youth-program.

Office of the Student Advocate
Homelessness
Resource Kit

Documents
Homeless students are allowed to enroll without full documentation. Families without proof of residence or proof of immunization may still enroll their student.

Transportation
Schools must provide transportation for homeless students. This includes providing metro fare for students to get to and from school. Parents with small children may also receive metro fare to take their students to school.

Uniforms
Homeless students may get free uniforms from their school. Some schools even provide access to washer and dryer units. Check with your counselor to see what your school provides.

Resources
Every school has a Homeless Liaison. Homeless Liaisons may help homeless students pay for school supplies, immunizations, and SAT/ACT/GED testing. Homeless families that also need help with finding or paying for counseling, tutoring, or similar services should also contact their school's Homeless Liaison. Ask your principal or your favorite teacher to tell you who yours is. Schools may have additional funds to help families in need.

What does "homeless" mean?
Students are considered homeless if they do not have a permanent and adequate place to sleep at night. This includes staying with friends or families for extended periods of time, sleeping at a shelter, or participating in a temporary housing program.

Agencies

Youth Friendly Agencies

Sasha Bruce Youthwork
Emergencies: (202) 547-7777
Information: (202) 675-9340

Covenant House
(202) 610-9600

Latin American Youth Center
(202) 695-1278

SMYAL
(202) 546-5940

Casa Ruby
(202) 355-5155

Wanda Alston House
(202) 733-3643

Re-Engagement Center
(202) 671-2539

Homeless Children's Playtime Project
(202) 329-4481

More Agencies

DC Coalition for the Homeless
(202) 347-8870

DCPS Homeless Children and Youth Services
(202) 724-1338

Bread for the City
NW : (202) 265-2400
SE : (202) 561-8587

Calvary Women's Shelter
(202) 678-2341

Community of Hope
(202) 526-0017

Catholic Charities
(202) 772-4300

Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
(202) 328-5500

Friendship Place
(202) 364-1419

Miriam's Kitchen
(202) 452-8926

OSSE Homeless Education Program
(202) 727-6436

So Others Might Eat (SOME)
(202) 797-8806

Thrive DC
(202) 737-9311

Housing Up
(202) 291-5535

Virginia Williams Family Resource Center
(202) 526-0017

OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

studentadvocate.dc.gov   (202) 741-4692   @DC_Advocate

Military Families

Children in grades PK-12 with a parent who actively serves in the military and lives on a military installation within the boundaries of DC can enroll, at any point during the school year, in the DCPS school of their choice, subject to classroom and/or program availability.

⭐ ⭐ ⭐ ⭐ ⭐

Transportation?

While not available for all schools, the Department of Defense provides transportation for families residing on JBAB. Contact the JBAB School Liaison Officer or the JBAB School Bus Coordinator for more information.

Moving post lottery?

Families can apply to schools using the MySchoolDC application during the post lottery period. A student is guaranteed a spot at their right to attend school, but other options are subject to availability.

No housing orders?

Families who do not yet have their housing orders may still participate in the MySchoolDC Lottery process. Contact the School Liaison Officer for information on the process.

Change of Station?

The school reserves the right to make the final decision at this time. Families are encouraged to contact the school immediately and explain the situation prior to the station change.

Transferring Schools?

Mid-year application transfers between DC schools are available but not guaranteed. Call the MySchoolDC hotline for more information on your specific situation.

Right to Attend?

To find your child's right to attend, in-boundary, school in which they are guaranteed a seat, visit the MySchoolDC website and use the school finder tool.

Behavior

JBAB School Liaison Officer: (202) 404-1014 **JBAB School Bus Coordinator:** (202) 767-8138

MySchoolDC Hotline: 202-888-6336

Special Education

The following questions are helpful conversation starters when considering special education services.

Ask yourself

- Do I suspect that my student has a disability that may make my student eligible for an Individual Education Plan?

- Have I requested the school evaluate my child for a disability? Was this request orally or in writing?

- Do I have documentation of my request for the evaluation of my student?

- Do I have the dates of all of the meetings? Am I prepared to attend?

- Do I need an advocate present in the meeting?

- Have I read and kept a copy of all of the paperwork I have received and/or signed?

- Have I provided the school with all of the requested information?

- Am I aware that my student's school could be changed if the school cannot accommodate my student's disability?

- What am I not asking that I should be?

Ask your teacher

- What data have you already collected to determine my student needs more intensive support?

- Do you understand that I have requested for my student to be evaluated for a disability that negatively impacts my child's ability to learn?

- Have you documented my request?

- What can I expect next?

- Who will contact me and who can I contact if I have questions about this process?

- What is the reasonable amount of time that I can receive the **informed consent** request form, the **prior written notice** of testing, and the **procedural safeguards**?

- Is there more information you need from me?

- Are there disabilities that you are unable to accommodate in this environment?

- What am I not asking that I should be?

Special Education

23

Overview of
Special Education Law

Three federal laws guarantee the rights of students with disabilities:

1. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
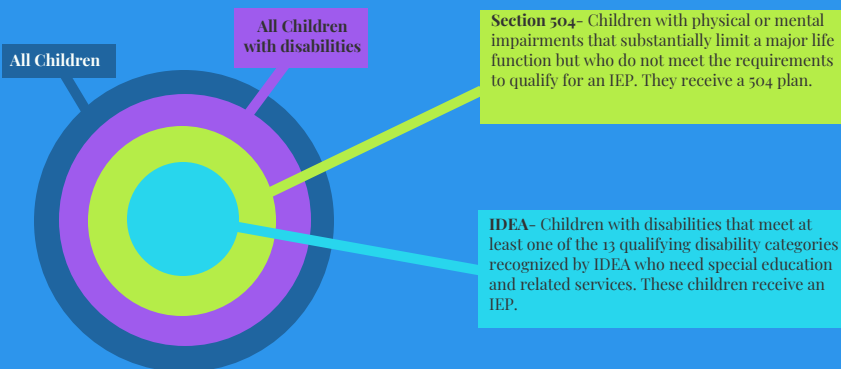
2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504) $\rightarrow$ 504 Plan

3. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") $\rightarrow$ IEP

Section 504 & IDEA
At-a-Glance

Eligibility for Section 504 and IDEA

All Children

All Children with disabilities

Section 504- Children with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit a major life function but who do not meet the requirements to qualify for an IEP. They receive a 504 plan.

IDEA- Children with disabilities that meet at least one of the 13 qualifying disability categories recognized by IDEA who need special education and related services. These children receive an IEP.

roughly
14%
Students who receive special education and related services (vs. 13% national average)

approx.
8,000
Special education students in traditional DC public schools (DCPS)

approx.
5,000
Special education students in DC public charter schools

Learning Disability
Most common disability type

Inclusion
Most students in special education spend most of their day in general education classes

In 2014, DC Council passed a legislative package that overhauled special education. This legislation includes: Special Education Student Rights Act, Enhanced Special Education Services Act, and Special Education Quality Improvement Act.

① Special Education Student Rights Act

- Right to copies of evaluation & draft IEPs 5 business days before meeting
- Right to observe child in current placement & observe proposed placement
  (can also have someone do this on parent's behalf)
- Right to copies of final IEPs within 5 business days after meeting

② Enhanced Special Education Services Act

- Children referred for special education evaluation must be evaluated within 60 days from parent consent or 90 days from referral

③ Special Education Quality Improvement Act

designed to provide clear responsibility and increased oversight for more effective special education programs

504 Plan or I E P

What Is It?

A 504 Plan is a plan for how a child with a disability or impairment will be provided with a "Free Appropriate Public Education" to ensure a child has **the same access to the learning environment** as their non-impaired peers.

An IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a plan for how a child with a **qualifying** disability will be provided a "Free Appropriate Public Education" to ensure a child can make **meaningful educational progress.**

504 Plan or I E P

What's In The Program/Plan?

May Include:

- specific accommodations, supports, or services
- names of who provide services
- name of person responsible for ensuring implementation of the plan

***504 plans are flexible, meaning that it can include many things an IEP includes; however, this flexibility also means that the school has discretion (with parent input) to decide what needs to be included in the plan.

Must Include:

- child's present levels of academic and functional performance
- annual education goals and how they're tracked
- services the child will receive
- timing of services (when, how long, how often)
- accommodations (changes to the learning environment)
- modifications (changes to what the child is expected to learn
- time spent in general education v. special education classrooms

Child Find

Child Find is the process that ensures all children with disabilities and in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated.

Depending on the child's age, responsibility shifts from different agencies:

Age/Grade Level	Agency Responsible
Birth to 2 1/2 years old	OSSE: Strong Start
2 1/2 years old to Kindergarten	DCPS Early Stages or charter PK providers
1st Grade through High School	LEA & Individual School (with support from OSSE, if needed)

Procedural Safeguards

IDEA provides an extensive range of procedural safeguards for parents should they believe that there has been a denial of FAPE:

- Formal Mediation
- State Complaint
- Due Process Complaint

As the state education agency, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)'s Office of Dispute Resolution helps ensure that schools do not violate federal and local special education law. Parents may file a complaint with OSSE to initiate an investigation of potential denial of FAPE.

OSSE State Complaints Office
202-742-7860
https://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education-state-complaints

OSSE Office of Dispute Resolution
202-698-3819
https://osse.dc.gov/service/office-dispute-resolution-odr

Response to Intervention

The following are helpful conversation starters when considering academic or behavioral interventions.

Response to intervention (RTI) is a process used by educators to help students who are struggling with a skill or lesson; every teacher will use interventions (a set of teaching procedures) with any student to help them succeed in the classroom—it's not just for children with special needs or a learning disability.*

* https://www.specialeducationguide.com/pre-k-12/response-to-intervention/

- Who is on the Response to Intervention (RTI) Team?

- Who refers a student to RTI?

- Does RTI mean my child is being tracked for special education?

- How long is he RTI process? Does my child have to complete the RTI process before I can request an evaluation for special education?

- What interventions have you already started to ensure the success of my student?

- When does RTI begin? How often will I be updated on RTI progress?

- What type of educational interventions are provided during the RTI process? What type of positive behavior supports are provided during the RTI process?

- How do you monitor the success of interventions? How often do you monitor my student's progress?

- When are the RTI meetings? May I be present? How will I be notified of the findings?

- What am I not asking that I should be?

For more information, visit https://sboe.dc.gov/node/1153932.

ONLINE SUPPORT

Community Resource Guide

On our website we host a comprehensive resource guide with over 400 resources categorized into 20+ different topic areas. For a more comprehensive list of resources and supports, please visit our website at https://studentadvocate.dc.gov.

Resource Tools

Head to

www.studentadvocate.dc.gov

Click

Informational & Advocacy Resources and Tools

Explore

Our Resource Tools

- Advocacy & Lobbying Toolkit
- Attendance & Truancy
- Behavioral & Mental Health
- District Governance Structure
- Effective Communication
- Enrollment
- Graduation Requirements
- Homelessness

- Parent Leadership Toolkit
- Right to Know Ask Sheets
- Safe Passage
- Special Education & Other School Supports
- Student Leadership
- Testing & Assessments

* This Parent & Family Go-To Guide is also available online.

Office of the State Superintendent of Education.......................................(202) 727-6436
OSSE Division of Transportation Parent Resource Center........................(202) 576-5000
Ombudsman for Public Education..(202) 741-0886
DCPS Grievance...(202) 442-5405
My School DC..(202) 888-6336
Public Charter School Board...(202) 328-2660
Deputy Mayor for Education..(202) 727-3636

✓ Need to give us a call for immediate assistance?

Our Request for Assistance (RFA) Line operates Monday through Friday from 9 am-5 pm. Our staff members answer live and are prepared to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding your student or public education in the District.

RFA Line: 202.741.4692

The Office of the Student Advocate was established by the Council of the District of Columbia through the Parent and Student Empowerment Act of 2013 . The office provides guidance and resource supports for families in order to assist them in navigating our complex system of public education in DC.

For more information, visit studentadvocate.dc.gov.

The Office of the Student Advocate is an independent office housed within the DC State Board of Education.