

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Frequently Asked Questions:

Proposed FY15 Uniform per Student Funding Formula

In January, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) released the DC Education Adequacy Study, which recommended an increase in local public education funding and a revised Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), to meet current academic standards including the Common Core State Standards. Its recommendations, as well as stakeholder feedback on the study, were carefully considered in the development of the FY15 public education budget. The FY15 budget reflects significant additional educational investment. The budget includes \$112 million in new funds for DCPS and public charter schools flowing through the UPSFF, \$4.2 million in new funding for infant and toddler initiatives, an increase of \$2.8 million for the public charter school facilities allotment, and \$5 million to expand nursing coverage for public charter schools.

Q: What is the proposed UPSFF for FY15 and how does it compare to the current UPSFF?

A: See Appendix A.

Q: What is different about the formula?

A: In implementing the recommendations of the Adequacy Study, we prioritized areas with the greatest gap between current funding and the levels recommended in the study. These include increases in the weights and associated funding amounts for students in the following categories: middle school, high school, English language learners (ELL), alternative and adult. In addition, we have introduced a weight for students who are at risk of academic failure (see definition below). By focusing on these areas, the new funding formula will provide more resources for schools to meet these students' needs. In addition, the stand-alone weights for summer school and for special education capacity have been eliminated, and associated costs have been incorporated into the at-risk and special education level weights, respectively.

Q: Why hasn't the foundation or base funding increased more?

A: The foundation, or base funding amount, has increased from \$9,306 to \$9,492, an increase of 2%. This increase is similar to increases in the foundation level in recent years. It is fiscally impossible to implement the full cost of the Adequacy Study recommendations in this year. We have prioritized funding for categories of students where the greatest funding gaps were identified through the Adequacy Study, with the goal of accelerating progress for students in these categories.

Q: Why have some weights remained the same?

A: The Adequacy Study did not reveal significant gaps in funding levels in several areas, such as the elementary grade levels. As a result, we have not made changes to some of the weights. However, as the foundation amount has increased, these per pupil allocations have also gone up.

Q: What is the definition of “at risk”?

A: The at-risk weight applies to students who are homeless, in the District’s foster care system, qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or high school students that are one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the students are enrolled. The at-risk weight is cumulative to all other weights, with the exception of the adult and alternative weights. At-risk dollars are unrestricted in their use.

This definition is consistent with the “Fair Student Funding and School-Based Budgeting Amendment Act of 2013”. The definition of at-risk weight in the proposed FY15 Budget Support Act is broader than what was recommended in the Adequacy Study. For more information on how the at-risk weight will be implemented, see below.

Q: How are LEAs’ at-risk students identified and projected?

A: OSSE direct certifies students who meet at-risk criteria via data sharing agreements with the appropriate agencies (DC Department of Human Services for TANF and SNAP, DC’s Child and Family Services Agency for foster care, and the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness for homeless students). OSSE relies on the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data system (SLED) to determine the number of high school students, by LEA, who are one or more years older than the expected age for the grade in which the students are enrolled.

These numbers were determined based on October 2014 audited enrollment data that was direct certified for TANF, SNAP, and CSFA as of the same time period. The October 2014 audited data was also used to calculate the number of overage high school students. Direct certification for homeless students was based on homeless data from the prior school year because there is a lag in the collection of homeless data. However, going forward, OSSE is working to eliminate this lag. This total number of number at-risk students was then converted into a percentage of audited October enrollment, which was applied to each LEA’s projected student enrollment for FY15.

The direct certification process for identifying at-risk students is different from the direct certification process for Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARM). For the purposes of federal and local FARM funding, a student who is identified as FARM anytime throughout the school year is counted as FARM eligible. Direct certification for at-risk is different; it is a snapshot from October of the current school year, which coincides with the October enrollment audit. Thus, direct certification for at-risk students will not occur throughout the school year.

Q: What is the verification process if an LEA believes it has more at-risk students than identified in October of each year?

A: Going forward, in October of each year (coinciding with the enrollment audit count period) OSSE will share its list of at-risk students with LEAs and will give LEAs an opportunity to show any discrepancies between OSSE's numbers and LEAs' numbers. That number will set the percentage of an LEA's total enrollment that is at risk, for purpose of the following year's budget. Over the next several months, OSSE will consult with LEAs to establish the details of how this process will work. Note that for FY15, OSSE did not go through this verification process with LEAs due to timing constraints.

Q: Will public charter schools' payment for at-risk students be reconciled based on the October enrollment audit?

A: No, charter LEAs will not receive a "true up" of their projected at-risk enrollments during the FY15 auditing process, unlike the current practice for other enrollment categories. In this first year of implementation, and until we have more data on how these numbers change at the school level during the course of the school year, we have decided to use projections as the basis of this payment. This means that charter LEAs will neither lose nor gain dollars based on a difference between their projection of at-risk students and their actual number as of October 5. Over the coming months, we will work with LEAs to determine a long-term policy that is both fair and not overly burdensome from an implementation standpoint, given the fluidity of many of the at-risk eligibility categories.

Q: Will charter LEAs receive a supplemental if they have a net gain in at-risk students by the end of the year, the same as the process for ELL or special education students?

A: No, unlike ELL and special education students, OSSE will not provide a supplemental payment for at-risk students that an LEA enrolls after October. As noted above, in the first year of implementing the new at-risk weight, we will examine the data and work with LEAs to determine a fair and practical policy moving forward.

Q: Why is the number of free and reduced meals (FARM) students for some schools higher than their number of at-risk students?

A: There are multiple reasons why an LEA's FARM enrollment may be higher than its at-risk enrollment. First, the income eligibility for FARM is higher than TANF or SNAP, so more students qualify. Second, because the city has moved toward the Community Eligibility Option (CEO) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), an entire school can qualify to receive free meals if 40 percent or more of their student population receives TANF, SNAP, are homeless, or are in foster care. And finally, FARM counts are based on a cumulative count through the entire year while at-risk counts are based on a snapshot in time in October.

Q: How will payments for summer school and special education extended school year (ESY) be different?

A: Costs for summer school have been assumed in the funding generated by the at-risk weight. As a result, the UPSFF weight for summer school has been eliminated, and LEAs will not receive separate summer school payments. The at-risk weight of 0.219 for FY15

is 29% higher than the former summer school weight. Previously, the summer school weight was reserved, according to statute, for students who do not meet literacy standards according to promotion policies of District of Columbia Public Schools and public charter schools, though some schools were funded for students who did not meet these criteria.¹ The full summer school weight was also restricted to programs that enrolled students for at least 120 instructional hours outside the regular school year. The new at-risk weight is applied to all students who meet the at-risk definition described above and is not restricted in the way summer school dollars have been.

Weights for special education extended school year (ESY) (levels 1-4) have been retained and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will be responsible for submitting ESY enrollment data to the Public Charter School Board and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

The above changes will not impact this year's summer school, as the new policy does not go into effect until FY15.

Q: Has the facilities allotment changed?

A: The non-residential facilities allotment for public charter schools has increased to \$3,072 from \$3,000 – an increase of 2.4%. The public charter school residential facilities allotment has not changed.

Q: What is happening to services provided by other city agencies that have been funded outside of the UPSFF? Will the level of any services provided outside of the UPSFF change?

A: With regard to services that impact the health and safety of students (DDOT school crossing guards, MPD school resource officers, DOH nurses, and DBH social workers), we have determined that there is a benefit to providing these services centrally, both in terms of ensuring that students receive these services, and in terms of collecting critical data about our students' health and safety needs. In addition, it is important to note that costs associated with mental health services, along with other student support services, are also built into the funding assumptions underlying the UPSFF.

We are committed to ensuring that these services are provided equitably to LEAs based on student need, without regard to sector. To this end, DME is working with these agencies to ensure that the criteria for allocating these services are clear, transparent, and sector-neutral, and that there is more proactive outreach with schools, particularly public charter schools, to ensure that they are aware of these services.

With regard to expanding coverage, the FY15 budget includes an additional \$5 million to support increasing nursing coverage for public charter schools that do not currently have access to a DOH nurse.

¹ See D.C. Code §38-2905.

Q: Will DCPS continue to receive services from the Department of General Services funded outside of the UPSFF?

A: Although DCPS pays for the majority of the costs to maintain and operate school buildings, the Department of General Services (DGS) funds a portion of the overall costs of maintaining and operating DCPS schools. Because DCPS is a system of right that must accommodate students in every community across the city, at any point during the school year, it must maintain a network of neighborhood schools, even if some are underutilized. As a result, there will continue to be funding in the FY15 DGS budget to support the maintenance and operation of DCPS schools. However, the FY15 DGS budget for these services will be \$13.6 million lower than the amount that was budgeted in FY14, a decrease of 30%. In reviewing their budget, DGS determined that the budget lines attributed to DCPS included significant personnel costs for staff who were working on non-DCPS buildings. Reallocating those costs to appropriate budget lines, in addition to costs for closed DCPS schools that are now in the purview of DGS, results in the decrease noted above.

In addition, DCPS facilities are often used by other government agencies and by surrounding communities for various events and activities. The costs for additional security, utilities, and custodians are shouldered by DCPS, though in some cases community organizations provide payment to the DC government for that facilities use. In fiscal year 2013, pursuant to use agreements for DCPS facilities, the city took in approximately \$3.4 million in revenue that went directly to the General Fund (not to DCPS). While this number does not appear in either the DCPS or DGS budget, this revenue should be viewed as offsetting the cost of services that DGS provides to DCPS.

We will continue to look for opportunities to reduce this subsidy payment further, to the extent it does not undercut DCPS' ability to maintain a comprehensive network of neighborhood schools. DME will work with DCPS to identify opportunities for co-location of other government services, schools, and non-profits in DCPS schools with excess space. DME will also continue to offer surplus DCPS facilities to public charter schools.

Appendix A: Comparison of FY14 and Proposed FY15 UPSFF Base Funding Level and Weights

Category	FY14 UPSFF Weight	FY14 UPSFF Per-Pupil Allocation	FY15 Proposed UPSFF Weight	FY15 Proposed UPSFF Per-Pupil Allocation
Foundation		\$9,306		\$9,492
General Education				
Preschool	1.34	\$12,470	1.34	\$12,719
Prekindergarten	1.30	\$12,098	1.30	\$12,340
Kindergarten	1.30	\$12,098	1.30	\$12,340
Grades 1–3	1.00	\$9,306	1.00	\$9,492
Grades 4–5	1.00	\$9,306	1.00	\$9,492
Grades 6–8	1.03	\$9,585	1.08	\$10,251
Grades 9–12	1.16	\$10,795	1.22	\$11,580
Alternative ¹	1.17	\$10,888	1.44	\$13,668
Adult Education ²	0.75	\$6,980	.89	\$8,448
Special Education Schools	1.17	\$10,888	1.17	\$11,106
Special Education				
Special Education Level 1	0.58	\$5,397	0.97	\$9,207
Special Education Level 2	0.81	\$7,538	1.20	\$11,390
Special Education Level 3	1.58	\$14,703	1.97	\$18,699
Special Education Level 4	3.10	\$28,849	3.49	\$33,127
Special Education Capacity Fund ³	0.40	\$3,722	Costs are assumed in the special education level weights.	
Special Education Compliance				
Blackman-Jones Compliance	0.07	\$651	0.069	\$655
Attorneys' Fee Supplement	0.09	\$838	0.089	\$845
English Language Learners (LEP/NEP or ELL)				
	0.45	\$4,188	0.49	\$4,651
Special Education Residential				
Level 1	0.374	\$3,480	0.368	\$3,493
Level 2	1.360	\$12,656	1.337	\$12,691
Level 3	2.941	\$27,369	2.891	\$27,438
Level 4	2.924	\$27,211	2.874	\$27,280
English Language Learner (LEP/NEP) Residential				
	0.68	\$6,328	0.668	\$6,341
Residential				
	1.70	\$15,820	1.67	\$15,852
At-Risk Students⁴				
	N/A	N/A	0.219	\$2,079
Summer School⁵				
	0.17	\$1,582	Costs are assumed in the "at risk" weight.	

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**Appendix A: Comparison of FY14 and Proposed FY15 UPSFF Base Funding Level and Weights,
continued**

Category	FY14 UPSFF Weight	FY14 UPSFF Per-Pupil Allocation	FY15 Proposed UPSFF Weight	FY15 Proposed UPSFF Per-Pupil Allocation
Special Education Add-On/ESY				
Extended School Year Level 1	0.064	\$596	0.063	\$598
Extended School Year Level 2	0.231	\$2,150	0.227	\$2,155
Extended School Year Level 3	0.500	\$4,653	0.491	\$4,661
Extended School Year Level 4	0.497	\$4,625	0.489	\$4,642
Charter Facilities Allowances				
Non-Residential Facilities Allotment		\$3,000		\$3,072
Residential Facilities Allotment		\$8,395		\$8,395

Notes:

- 1 The proposed allocation assumes alternative school students will not also receive the at-risk allocation.
- 2 The proposed allocation assumes adult education students will not also receive the at-risk allocation.
- 3 Costs associated with special education capacity building are assumed in the proposed special education allocations.
- 4 "At-Risk" students include those who are homeless, in the District's foster care system, qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or high school students that are one year older, or more, than the expected age for the grade in which the students are enrolled. This is an add-on weight that is cumulative to all other weights with the exception of the adult and alternative weights.
- 5 Summer school is not assigned a separate weight in the proposed FY15 UPSFF. The cost of summer school is assumed within the at-risk weight.