

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 307 | Washington, DC 20004

August 11, 2020

DC Public Education Stakeholders,

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) is pleased to announce the release of the 2020 Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF) Study. This work was completed by Afton Partners, LLC during Fiscal Year 2020, following Mayor Muriel Bowser’s allocation and the Council of the District of Columbia’s approval of funding for a study on four key components of the UPSFF. Initiated in October 2019, the 2020 UPSFF Study includes in-depth analysis of the students covered by the at-risk weight, the consideration of school-level at-risk concentration funding, the structure of the English Language Learners (ELL) weight, and the cost drivers of the formula’s foundation level.

The UPSFF is our single best tool for achieving funding equity for young people in the District of Columbia. This study—both its undertaking and its delivery—represents our community’s commitment to providing all students with the resources they need to achieve success and build family-sustaining careers. This body of work will strengthen and ground conversations about the UPSFF and school funding among our city’s education stakeholders for years to come.

The realities of our current situation are very different from when this work began nearly a year ago. We are reminded and driven to even greater urgency to address persistent challenges of anti-Black and racist systems that underlie too many of our institutions. Our community also faces the unforeseen challenge of educating students amidst a global public health crisis and its mounting economic and social impact. Ultimately, as we consider these challenges, the District is faced with a question: what can we do?

Equity is our guiding principle and demands we provide all students with what they need to achieve success in addition to an obligation to direct greater resources to those who need more. Grounded in an analysis of student achievement and a firm belief this moment provides a unique opportunity to reimagine and improve the ways we target education funding, this study aims to influence student outcomes we should expect to realize from the intentional allocation of resources. While our public education system celebrates significant growth in the past ten years, this study shows that there is much work to be done. Among the 2020 UPSFF Study’s key findings:

- Among students designated at-risk, performance data shows that students specifically designated as over-age or CFSA are most significantly behind both students not designated at-risk and their at-risk student peers;
- Compared to those with a single at-risk factor, students with multiple at-risk factors tend to underperform on the PARCC standardized test; and
- For ELL students, the highest achievement gaps for math are in grades 6-8, following a significant decline in proficiency from grade 5 to 6; ELA gaps are highest in grades 6-10, with proficiency levels mixed for all grades.

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Although the UPSFF does not explicitly include race as a formula component, it is evident some components of the formula are highly correlated with race in DC. The at-risk weight, for example, provides additional resources for students who meet at least one of the at-risk definition's characteristics, none of which are explicitly race-based. Practically speaking, however, we know this funding is most targeted toward black and brown students. It follows, therefore, that any change increasing the at-risk weight's allocation provides an increase for these students as well.

Recognizing that outcomes for these students have been unacceptable for far too long, we move forward with this understanding and embrace the opportunity to consider a series of options the study provides to direct resources to those that need it most. This study is more than a collection of analyses and alternatives for consideration; it is a chance for us to effect meaningful change and achieve true racial and economic justice.

It is our responsibility to get this formula right for the future of our city. I am both humbled by and eager for the work ahead. I look forward to engaging with you as we work to build a more equitable city for the students and families of the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,



Paul Kihn

Deputy Mayor for Education