

For immediate release

Contact: diane.shinn@dc.gov, 202-727-8991

[Read the report](#)

Auditor: Schools Largely Comply with Comprehensive Staffing Model, But All Used “At-Risk” Funds to Meet Staffing Goals

Budgets didn’t all keep pace with inflation; purchasing power dipped from FY16 to FY17

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30, 2017—D.C. elementary schools are generally complying with the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) staffing model instituted to ensure that students across the District receive consistent services, but some schools only achieved compliance by tapping funds set aside for at-risk students, according to a report released today by the Office of the D.C. Auditor (ODCA).

“Using funds for 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 funding model,” said D.C. Auditor Kathy Patterson. “Using funds ear-marked for a sub-group of students to benefit an entire group of students defeats the purpose of the supplemental funding,” Patterson said, adding that “if schools need to use those supplemental funds to be compliant, it’s a sign that the model may not be fully funded.”

ODCA conducted the audit to assess whether staffing at D.C. schools complies with DCPS’s Comprehensive Staffing Model (CSM) for elementary schools, to examine the schools’ use of funds provided through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), including supplemental funding for students at risk, and to compare budgeting and staffing among schools. Eight D.C. elementary schools were evaluated: Bancroft, Hyde-Addison, Key, Barnard, Noyes, Miner, Nalle, and Moten.

In 1999, the D.C. Council established a uniform per student funding formula (UPSFF), setting a “foundation level” to reflect the cost of “adequate regular education services” for each student. In 2011 DCPS began implementing the Comprehensive Staffing Model to ensure the same package of instructional support in each of the system’s schools. In 2014, the D.C. Council added a funding weight for at-risk students, defined at the elementary level as a student who is homeless, in foster care, or eligible for the federally-funded Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance programs.

In response to the use of at-risk funding to comply with the CSM, the Auditor issued two recommendations that:

- DCPS should include clear guidance on at-risk funding allocations in its FY 2019 budget development guide, and that 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.

- The D.C. Council should provide careful oversight on how at-risk funding is utilized and whether the uses are consistent with the legislative intent. The Council should also consider amending the law if necessary to better meet the goal of providing the additional funding.

Another finding in the report was that District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) budgets for elementary schools did not in all cases keep pace with inflation between FY 2015 and FY 2017, which means that many schools lost purchasing power when making staffing decisions. In seven of the eight schools studied the initial budget was less on a per-student basis in FY17 than FY16.

“One of the assumptions of the CSM is that funding will permit a local school to meet the requirements of the plan in terms of staffing, and that where a local school community seeks to exercise flexibility, it would be within the total funding called for by the CSM,” Patterson said. “Our report shows funding did not always keep pace with inflation when considering the projected enrollment.”

In addition, the Auditor found that 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. The Auditor recommends that DCPS 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 federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

Based on the report’s finding that interviewees from most of the eight schools reported limited numbers of key technology devices and resources that are outdated and unusable, the Auditor also recommends that DCPS create and make public a multi-year technology needs plan to define and provide adequate technology to each school, and that the plan should include expected costs and planned funding sources.

In a written response to the draft report, DCPS Chancellor Antwan Wilson pledged additional transparency in school system budgets and said the FY2019 budget development guide will include spending options for at-risk funds. He also said a new technology plan is in the works and will be included in the FY2019 DCPS proposed budget.

Other report findings include that:

- 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.

—30—

The mission of the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) is to support the Council of the District of Columbia by making sound recommendations that improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the District government. Learn more at www.dcauditor.org.

[Read the report.](#)