

**On Behalf of the Ward 1 Education Council
Committee of the Whole Public Roundtable on DCPS Initial School Level Budgets
April 2, 2021, 9:30am**

Good morning Chairman and Councilmembers. My name is Alexandra Simbana, a parent of a 3rd grader at Cleveland Elementary, a member of my school's LSAT and member of the Ward 1 Education Council.

As always schools are in flux and in a state of uncertainty during Term 3 and into Term 4; dividing time and resources over their unknown future. A universal feeling of not knowing what you will lose and how you will still meet the needs of your students in the next year is not unusual but THIS YEAR is a burden the schools, staff and families should not need to balance, when so much Federal funding is available to help stabilize the overwhelming needs which have only worsened during the pandemic. **The city must allow DCPS schools to use federal and other pandemic special funding on staff. By not doing so, we are asking schools to cut school-based staff who already have strong relationships with students, while hiring for temporary programs which are less effective, all in the hope of makeup for the loss of school-based staff on top of the trauma caused by the pandemic.**

As one community member states: **"We don't know exactly what we will lose in this budget cycle and schools try to retain staff but that comes at the cost of other resources like professional development, classroom materials, and extracurricular programming. DCPS can claim budgets are rising when functionally they are not due to increased costs."**

While all our Ward 1 schools are unique and they have varying needs, each community has significantly varied ability to cover school priorities outside of school budget allotments. The financial costs of what is needed to supply additional personnel support is too much for ANY school PTA/PTO to cover on their own and that approach would only continue the inequities between schools who have funds and those who don't.

In Ward 1 four of our schools will experience a loss of funding ranging from \$223k - \$437K. Most of our schools are known for their high concentration of English Language Learning students within the City. The pandemic has hit their community particularly hard and all our schools anticipate a greater need to service these students. Given the populations at our schools, most will not be able to mitigate even a fraction of the losses to their school budgets to help support the students who will require more assistance when returning to class in the Fall. And yet, we hear reports of funding cuts across the City to ELL positions. Given the vulnerability of this community, it is extremely irresponsible and inequitable to remove the support they will need. As we all have experienced in the past, once positions are removed from the school budgets they very rarely are returned the next year.

Cardozo which is set to lose \$437.1K in this budget cycle. This school which serves as a combined middle school and high school in addition to their International Academy has an 80% At-risk population. Cardozo is also a school who will more than likely see the greatest number of additional students arrive for SY21-22 because of the population and programming they offer. How can we realistically expect these schools to service their students with such high impact changes?

For all our Ward 1 schools maintaining staff positions for janitorial staff, security personnel and support staff positions will be critical in any phased in reopening plan which will require more

staff coverage per smaller cohort units, ensuring adherence to safety protocols and mandatory cleaning regimes to ensure pandemic protocols are followed as more students return to in person learning in the coming months. Just as important to maintaining physical health will be to provide emotional support and resources which is why we ask that school staff be kept whole at ALL our schools.

The school which will have significant cuts again this year is **CHEC**. They **will lose \$265.3K in this budget cycle**. For the last several years CHEC has experienced a significant reduction in their school budget. In SY 2019, they already suffered a \$250k reduction in budget but come the Fall they had an additional 119 students to service. A CHEC LSAT member said: There is no mechanism to correct these budget miscalculations and again our DCPS schools, staff and students are made to pay the price [of] being under resourced. The staff reductions implications to this school will further traumatize this school community. Once these budgets are approved there will be no recourse for these schools and they will again need to service their larger school population with less resources

The CHEC budget is of great concern, because they're losing four positions, and their funding is the lowest per pupil based on enrollment in the City. The At-Risk funds are being designated for general education purposes. According to the preliminary budget analysis by the Coalition for DC Public Schools and Communities, per pupil funding for "general education" varies greatly among schools. General education is the remainder when at-risk, special education, ELL and federal funding are filtered out. One would expect general education per pupil funding among schools with the same grade levels to be similar except for adjustments for size, since small schools have higher costs. Yet some schools of similar size have general education per pupil funding differing by many hundreds of dollars. This has substantial repercussions for CHEC because of its high number of at-risk, special education and ELL students. Among DCPS high schools, CHEC consistently receives the lowest amount of discretionary funding (Specialty Funds, Stabilization Funds, Chancellor's Budget Support, and Per Pupil Minimum Payment), can this disparity be reversed? How can the adverse impacts of these inequities be mitigated for all the Ward 1 schools whose student populations include significant ELL, special needs and homeless populations?

There are also many questions about the criteria or method used to derive the additional stimulus funding allotments. During the education hearings DCPS was asked for this information and no response was ever provided.

Our students are paying attention and they see how the system is not prioritizing their needs. As a student leader says, "Why do the decisions (sic) about the budget have to lead to schools having to cut staff? **We all know that next year will be all about recovery.** Students will need every support accessible to them to feel welcomed, feel like they belong, feel supported, [and] have someone to talk to, feel less stressed, and just recover! We can't justify or say that the summer activities are going to be (sic) enough. We can't cut off staff and say that you have been given the choice to add another psychiatrist, psychologist, or therapist and [make] it seem right. **We can't say that we want the best for our students when we know they need every resource [available] to have a transition as smooth and supportive as possible when we are continuing to do the opposite.**"

Our school budgets must reflect our value of the work schools do, the work and learning we ask students to do academically and socially as the mechanism to become members of our

community after they graduate. Unless we prioritize Federal and surplus local funds, we are merely giving lip service to the idea that education matters or that every day counts.

Thank you.

BANCROFT: Unaffected

BRUCE MONROE: Unaffected

CLEVELAND: **Losing \$-228K in this budget.**

HD COOKE: Unaffected

MARIE REED: Unaffected

TUBMAN: **Losing \$-223.3K in this budget.**

ADAMS MS: Unknown due to combined Oyster budget

CARDOZO: **Losing \$-437.1K in this budget.**

CHEC: **Losing \$-265.3K in this budget.**

BANNEKER HS: Unaffected