



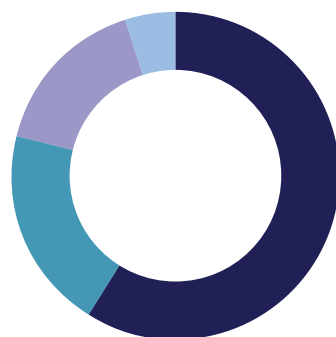
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



51,000
STUDENTS



74% ARE
ECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED



■ BLACK: 59% ■ WHITE: 16%
■ HISPANIC: 20% ■ ASIAN,
 MULTI-RACIAL
 OR OTHER: 5%

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS INEQUALITY AND CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

Investments in strong postsecondary pathways—the meaningful connections between K-12 education and college and career—are vital to ensuring a better future for our young people.



Invest Forward is an initiative that encourages districts and states to prioritize investing a significant portion of their American Rescue Plan resources in helping students successfully access postsecondary education and succeed in future career pathways. As part of the effort to equip district and state leaders with high-impact strategies to guide their investments, Invest Forward will continue to highlight the work of **innovative local and state leaders** who are using the once-in-a-lifetime stimulus funding to give students a better tomorrow by investing in postsecondary pathways today.



“This is important to us because our commitment to our students for their success and ability to earn a living wage... doesn’t end on graduation day when they walk across our stage. In fact, we see this as a continuum of responsibility and accountability... for our students to thrive.”

—LEWIS FEREBEE, *Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools, and board member, Chiefs for Change*

As part of its collaborative city-wide approach to pandemic recovery, **District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**, under the leadership of Chancellor Lewis Ferebee, a board member of Chiefs for Change, is working with the mayor’s office, the State Superintendent of Education Christina Grant, also a member of Chiefs for Change, and others to implement a thoughtful and multi-faceted student support strategy. **To bolster students’ successful journeys** to and through postsecondary education and training in the face of ongoing challenges, the district is investing its stimulus funds in a number of areas, including: targeted tutoring, near-peer alumni coaching, expanded career exploration and career and technical education options in middle school, and last-dollar scholarship awards.

One area of particular focus for DCPS when it comes to pathways—**focused stimulus spending** is expanding dual enrollment opportunities for its students. **Below is a deeper dive** into the district’s strategy and plans to open up postsecondary coursework.

OPENING THE DOORS TO DUAL ENROLLMENT



As federal relief funds became available in late spring 2021, DCPS partnered with Bard College (building upon an existing partnership to run an early college high school within the district) to launch a **summer dual enrollment program** for rising high school seniors, graduating seniors, and first-year college students who had not taken advantage of other dual enrollment opportunities. Typically, dual enrollment applications for the following school year close in the spring; with an infusion of new stimulus funds, DCPS was able to make a quick pivot to ensure that students who had missed the initial opportunity could still take advantage of dual enrollment over the summer.

The expanded eligibility to recent high school graduates—who were ineligible under the pre-existing opportunity—was particularly notable, since a summer opportunity gave them a chance to **build academic momentum** and **earn college credit** at no cost to them heading into their official fall postsecondary enrollment. In addition, through its DCPS Persists initiative, which provides support to college-bound DCPS graduates after they finish high school, the district was able to **specifically target recent college enrollees** who were a course or two behind on their track to college graduation. The new dual enrollment opportunity offered these students a chance to get caught up without taking on the burden of extra tuition costs.

MAXIMIZING AN EXISTING PARTNERSHIP



DCPS' ability to leverage and expand upon a **pre-existing partnership with a higher education institution** meant that the district was able to quickly put together an opportunity through which students would be able to earn college credit. **Bard College** was ready to deliver online course content, having already developed the model and infrastructure prior to the pandemic through its efforts to collaborate with DCPS on an early college high school. This capability proved crucial as all other in-person summer dual enrollment opportunities in Washington, D.C. were being canceled due to the pandemic. Bard College also played a key role in approaching the home institutions of DCPS Persistents students to ensure that credits earned over the summer would transfer and result in progress toward their degrees.

SPREADING THE WORD



DCPS leaders saw the stimulus funds as an opportunity to not only increase the availability of dual enrollment opportunities, but to beef up efforts to ensure that every student and family was aware of these opportunities and understands their value. To that end, the district has conducted **district-wide dual enrollment information sessions** in English and in Spanish, **translated informational materials** into multiple languages for families, and launched a district-wide **text messaging campaign**. Outreach efforts are targeted not only at students who are currently eligible for dual enrollment opportunities, but aim to increase early awareness as well; outreach to students as young as rising high school freshmen and their families allows students to better understand their options and plan ahead.



LOOKING AHEAD:

GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

As it continues to use stimulus funds to support students' postsecondary pathways, DCPS plans to build on the summer dual enrollment model it established last year, working to ensure that more students take advantage of the opportunity this year. **The district hopes to expand** on the three courses offered last summer (Writing and Composition; Global History of Disease: Medicine and Society; and Topics in U.S. History, 1960-Present) to include a mathematics course and other potential options.

In considering the sustainability of new initiatives initially funded by stimulus dollars, DCPS leaders offered a few **ideas and priorities**:

- **Figure out what works.** The stimulus opportunity is just that—an opportunity. This is a chance to be creative and test different strategies, learn from the outcomes, and embed successes into longer-term strategies.
- **Work smarter, not harder.** Though there may be an impulse to use stimulus funds to do something completely new, that may not always be the best move. Consider existing efforts with promise and use additional funding to improve or bring this work to scale.
- **Capture the learnings from this unique opportunity.** Collect data, testimonials, and other outcomes information resulting from stimulus innovations to serve as proof points for continuation.