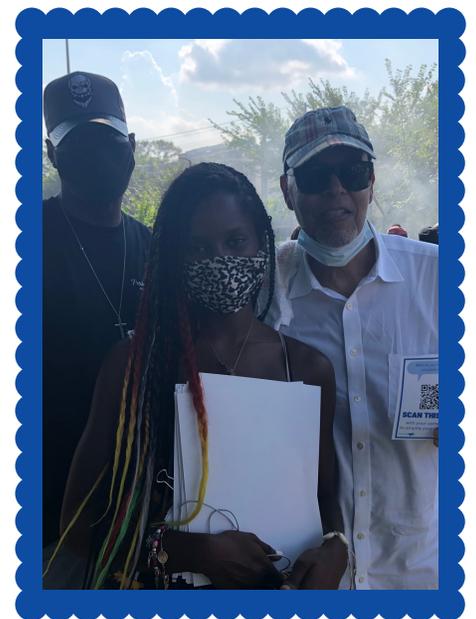
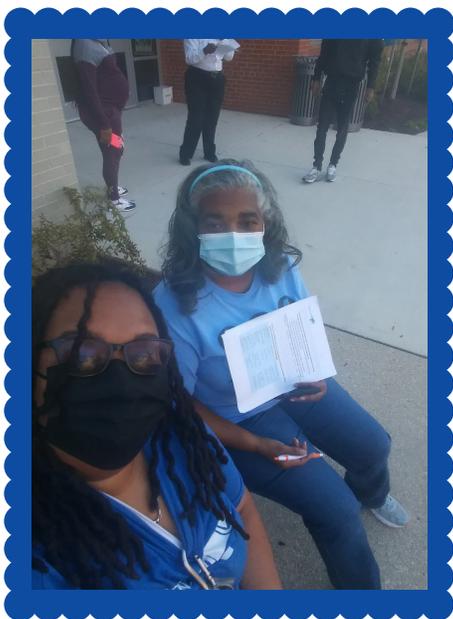


DC EDUCATION OPINIONS

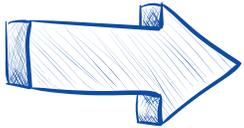
THE 2021 EMPOWERED PUBLIC EDUCATION CANVAS SURVEY

During the fall of 2021 EmpowerEd teacher leaders went ***to the people*** across DC to survey their opinions about the big issues in DC education.

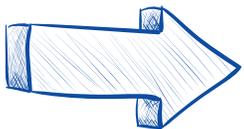


While too often education "engagement" solicits the opinions of the same very engaged few who can attend community meetings, focus groups or show up to hearings- we went directly to communities often unrepresented. We surveyed residents at community events, school drop off and pick up, and even interviewed residents like DC street vendors question by question who could not read the survey themselves. In these pages, we share their voices in hopes of spurring community-centered responsiveness from our leaders and to shape our own teacher-led advocacy for a more equitable education system for ALL DC students.

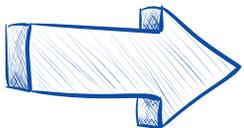
BIG TAKEAWAYS



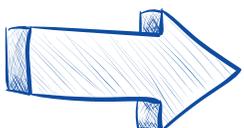
45 % of DC residents believe public education has improved in the past 10-15 years, 37 % are neutral and 18 % say no.



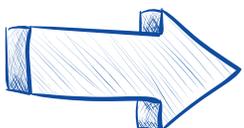
A majority of Black residents feel DC has made little to no progress closing achievement and opportunity gaps between White and Black and Latino students while a majority of White and Latino residents believe we have made "some" or "a lot" of progress



The overwhelming majority of residents across all races and wards (85 %) believe DC should focus on improving current schools vs. opening new schools/ expanding school choice. 63 % say we should focus investments on neighborhood public schools, just 3 % say to focus investments on public charter schools, while 35 % say invest equally.



Just 6 % of DC residents believe the mayor should have complete control of schools, 31 % say a school board should have complete control while the majority, 56 %, believe we should have a system of shared power.



A decisive 91 % of residents believe our current rate of teacher turnover is a problem because students lose mentors and schools lose stability while only 9 % believe it's a positive because bad teachers are being replaced by better ones.



When asked which are the most "valid and important ways to measure how well a school serves students" among over 25 options, high standardized test scores came in *second to last*. The top measures selected by residents were: 1. Strong school culture and climate, 2. Specialized programs like arts, STEM, outdoor and experiential education, etc... 3. Parent/ Family Satisfaction 4. High teacher/ staff retention, 5. Student Safety (see full results below...)

DIGGING DEEPER



1. Thoughts on how we govern DC schools

Education needs a specialized, dedicated group of people. The issues are too complex and too important for too many!

There should be a shared power between council, school board and the mayor because this is a democratic city and country.

I think the mayor should have the final say, but the school board is the one that focuses on improvements and growth of schools to make recommendations

Education is too important to have a singular voice.

The mayor is not an education professional and makes decisions based on the economy, not on the well being of children.

Why have elected school board members if they are not going to have more influence regarding education decisions in DC?

Mayoral control was needed before, when the school board was corrupt. We're not there anymore.. It's time to give schools back to those who know what they're doing and don't have a pro-business lens over education being the priority. I'd be willing to ease into it with a shared power for a time, but it should end up being school board control.

The mayor is tasked with running the city, not the schools; let those closer to and more invested in the schools make decisions about them.

The current structure leaves parents no opportunity to go to anyone other than City Council members to complain and/or problem-solve issues. City Council members lack the expertise to play that role, and the Mayor lacks accountability.

Three mayors have failed miserably in educating low-income students. Per pupil spending is significantly up, but is spent wastefully. Parents and community have almost nothing to say about how schools are run.

I think both options are ripe for influence from the outside and money driving decisions instead of what's best for children, especially those that need it the most.

DIGGING DEEPER



2. Invest in neighborhood schools or more school options?

Most people would prefer to be at neighborhood school if they believed it was good. Let's try to provide what people want!

There are many schools that would be GREAT if only they had the funding they needed to operate appropriately. There are very few schools that have enough adults in the building to teach and support students' social/emotional needs. Throwing money into fancy new buildings or curriculums that sounds good, but don't actually work is a WASTE of money. We should be investing in what we already have by making sure each school is funded appropriately.

Improve current schools and also open new models that are sufficiently innovative to really offer something new to students, families, and educators.

Children should not be limited to just the schools in their neighborhood.

We are currently not at capacity at our school. We shouldn't be opening new schools unless the ones that we have are at capacity.

In general, school choice often functions to give people with knowledge/privilege the opportunity to improve the education for their kids -- which isn't a great strategy for closing achievement gaps city-wide.

The city cannot afford to pay the blank check/funding cost of an unending number of schools. We have plenty of choice. Parents and students are overwhelmed.

Our schools lacks technology. DC should improve situations like that before building any other schools.

Both, actually. School improvements move slowly or not at all. In the interim, kids need quality education options now.

Fully and equitably invest in neighborhood schools--especially EOTR. Opening new charter schools EOTR in areas with enrollment struggles guarantees the systemic inequity, to include less \$ and resources going to the public schools due to lower enrollment.

Why not modernize and upgrade all the schools in DC?

63%

invest in neighborhood schools

35%

invest in charter + DCPS equally

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK AT: WWW.WEAREEMPOWERED.ORG

DIGGING DEEPER



3. Do students need more time in social studies & science, more time in reading in math or do we already have the right balance?

I believe it is all important but because there [is] still unfair testing I understand why teacher[s] focus on specific subjects.

The test to death model of the current system is only beneficial for testing contractors. Our children are suffering.

Children have to learn fundamentals first to be successful else where.

Students need a well rounded education that develops their full brain.

The curriculum is broken and will not prepare children for the changing world they must meet.

All core subjects are important, as is critical thinking and handwriting. Building the muscle to read and write for longer and longer periods is imperative for college readiness.

Kids need downtime to process and to learn social skills and 21st century skills.

Arts and music should be enhanced to promote creativity.

Students need to be exposed to a well-rounded education. If we over-focus on math and reading, then there will be other challenges that arise. With science and civics under attack by so many people, it seems clear that more focus should be on such topics!

Equal emphasis on the STEAM and Humanities is critical for creating well-rounded adults who have attained both "hard" (i.e., technical) and "soft" (i.e., intercultural, collaborative, creative) skills. Equitable exposure to a variety of fields and disciplines allows learners to be more globally competitive and to have more opportunities[.]

Reading seems to get all the focus because it is tested. Other subjects are equally important and literacy can be taught with them.

52%

said students should be spending more time in Social Studies, Science, Arts, & Languages

DIGGING DEEPER



3. Do students need more time in social studies & science, more time in reading in math or do we already have the right balance?

Students should get a complete immersive experience with all topics and extracurriculars they care about.

It's not so much the content, it's the over-emphasis on standardized testing, like how there aren't field trips until after the PARCC. That's ridiculous and sad.

Social studies and science play an important role in literacy development as well (e.g., by helping students learn background knowledge of the world). If we can't prioritize science during a pandemic and social studies during a year of social, racial, and political unrest, I'm not sure it would ever be possible.

I support holistic learning, not a focus on subjects that show good test scores.

Teachers should be supported to use these other subjects like social studies, science, etc to foster reading and math skills in a practical way that interests and motivates students to learn.

Students should be spending more time learning through play even in older grades

Art and other areas of focus help expand the mind and make for curious children. I would also like to see increased importance on mental health tools (mindfulness practices and tools centered on helping children focus and support around the mental health burden of Covid). Also we live in a vibrant international city - to the extent that can be done - having kids get out of the classroom and into the world.

We need more focus on reading because our kids aren't getting the support they need. We need better interventions. I don't think a better focus on reading has to take away from other subject areas.

We have a variety of needs to thrive into adulthood. Focusing too heavily two areas (math and reading), though essential, limits development of the whole person.

There should be more options for trade school.

Students need targeted supports in math and reading too, without losing out on enrichments.

DIGGING DEEPER



4. What should be taught in our schools that is not taught (or not taught enough) now?

Black History

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING:
If DC could model the German (Berufsausbildung) that starts job training and ed., with compensation, from 8th and ending upon 12th grade. DC can greatly minimize youth unemployment and build a "Pathway to the Middle Class" without attending college.

Driver's education should be taught in schools because students east of the river have a hard time actually getting their driver's license, and then access to a car to take the behind the wheel portion.

Technology, keyboard classes. My student can't type. How are students supposed to take their PARCC without that skill?

Financial Literacy

Mindfulness and social-emotional wellbeing

...We also need knowledgeable high school teachers to teach students how to budget, plan for retirement, and parse financial documents. Before getting to college, high school students should know how to find their credit score, the difference between a variable and fixed interest rate, and why paying only the minimum on your credit card bill is just a bad idea.

Social Studies and Science. I have been a teacher for 9 years and have not taught at school that gives as much priority to non-tested subjects as they do math and reading. In the end, our kids suffer because they're seen as racialized data points instead of individuals who deserve the opportunity to learn and explore others subjects and interests.

DCPS could do a better job building on the diversity of languages in the city including Spanish, Amharic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean[.]

Conflict management

Cross-curricular learning

Life Skills

Cursive and Handwriting

Civics

DIGGING DEEPER



5. How has teacher turnover in DC impacted you, your children or their school?

My son has been passed along many years through classrooms with a handful of temporary teachers and it's caused him to miss on continuity, relationship building, and identification of learning needs that needed to be addressed. Without consistent instruction in a school year he's been looked over.

It is hard to trust and build relationships with staff in the schools when they are new every year.

In the past five years, our neighborhood school has had one lead principal turnover and four APs turnover. Of the four leadership roles (one principal and 3 APs), only 1 has been there for more than 2 years.

Various substitutes remained in my son's classes for the entire year. I consider that educational neglect!

It is emotionally impactful for children, particularly those living with insecurity in their lives, to lose positive connections to people.

EVERY FEW YEARS IT'S A WHOLE NEW CROP OF TEACHERS

It creates too much instability.

Teacher turnover has wrecked my kid's school because children start trusting the teacher and next thing you know they quit or are ran off by unrealistic expectations from the administrators. Now there is COVID and it is just crazy. Like the wild west of education and no one is truly looking for sustainable efforts to actually address the inequities in our schools not just schools that have money via the PTO but real solutions.

Teachers burn out fast because these folks downtown who haven't been in a classroom in years believe they still know how to teach. No, you know how to micromanage

Observing turnover gets you wondering about morale. Teachers with low morale generally don't feel particularly inspired. Employees who don't feel inspired or supported have less motivation to give their best.

91%

said teacher turnover is a problem in DC

BIG TAKEAWAYS

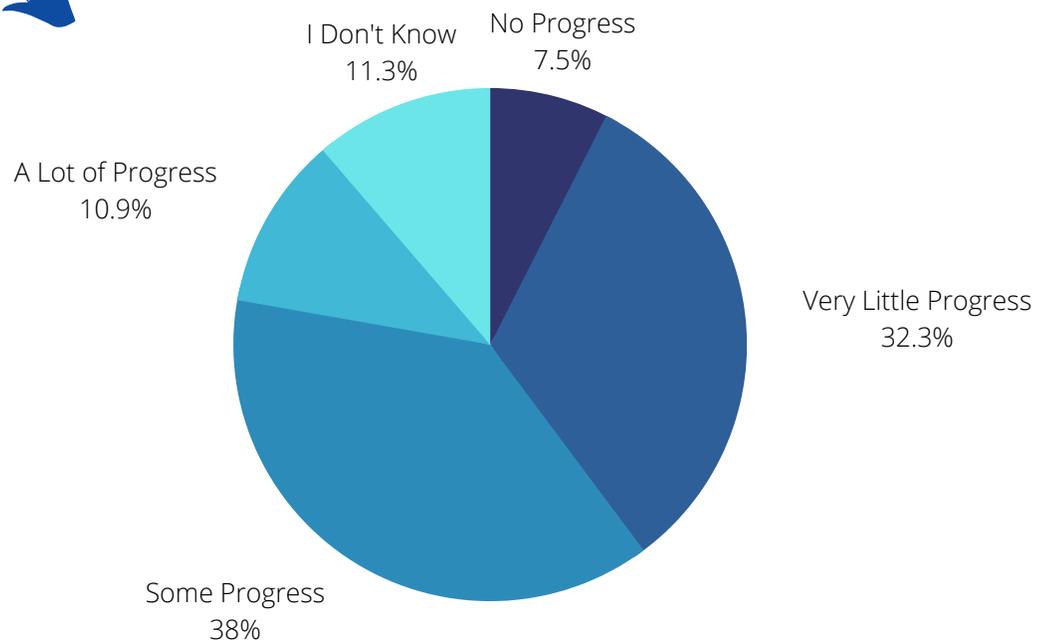


Do you think public education has improved in the past 10-15 years?



68% said, "Somewhat"

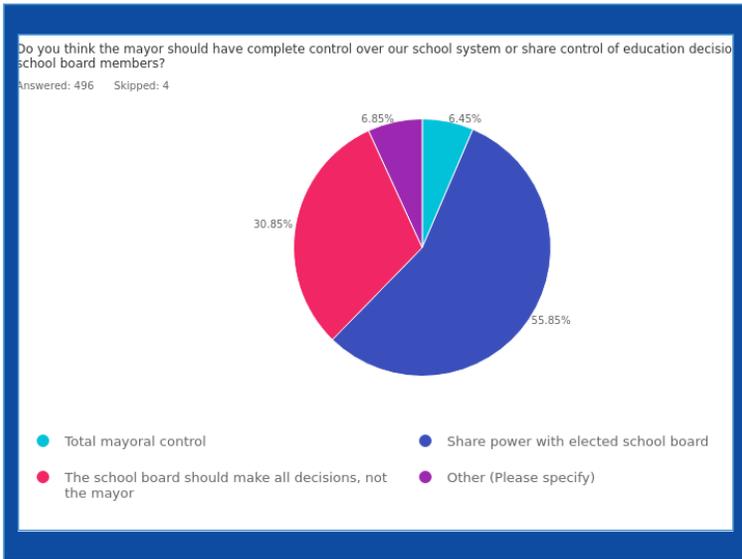
Do you think DC has made progress over the past 10-15 years closing the achievement and opportunity gaps between white children and Black and Latino children?



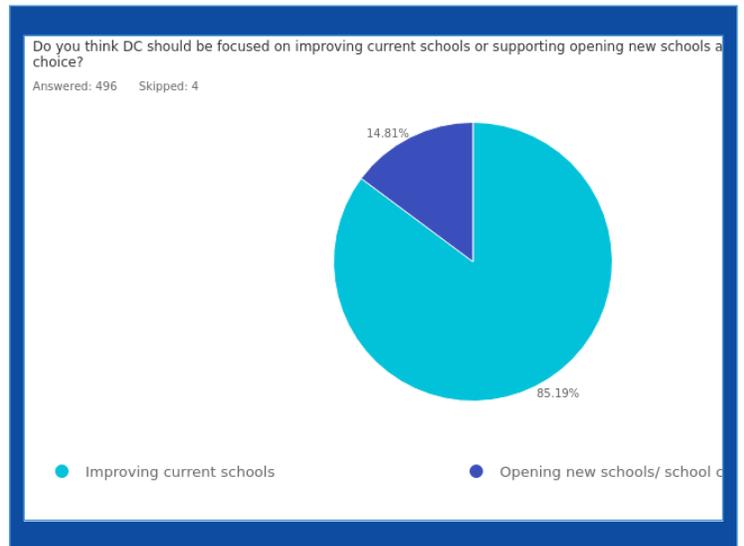
BIG TAKEAWAYS



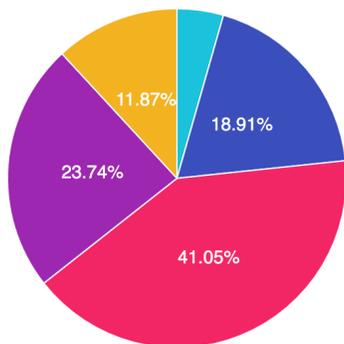
What approach should we take to school governance in DC?



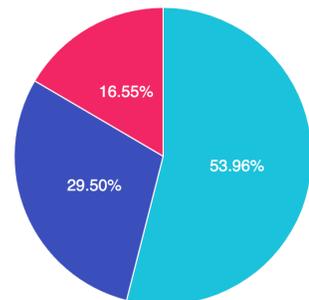
Focus on improving current schools or expanding school choice?



Do you think school upgrades, maintenance and repairs have improved a lot in the past 10-15 years in DC public schools?



Would you feel more comfortable sending your kids back to school if they were learning outdoors as much as possible?



● Not at all ● Very little ● Somewhat ● Yes, a lot ● I don't know

● Yes, more comfortable ● Not sure ● No, that wouldn't make me more comfortable

DEMOGRAPHICS



How do you identify? (select all that apply)

Comparison: DC overall population

Choices	Response percent
African-American/ Black	44.40%
Asian-American/ Pacific-Islander	5.60%
Caucasian/ White	41.00%
Hispanic/ Latino/a	16.20%
Native American	0.60%
Other (Please specify) Show 18 responses	3.60%

46 %

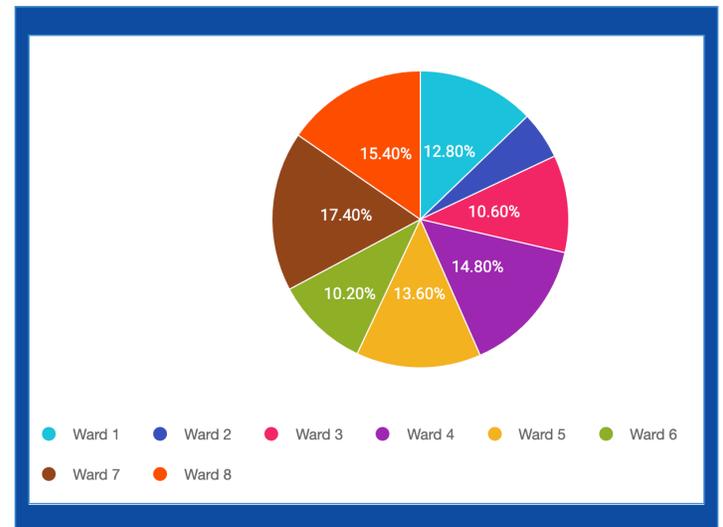
4.5 %

46%

11 %

0.6 %

What ward do you live in?



If you have students enrolled in DC schools, what age group do they belong to?

Choices	Response percent
PreK 3/ 4	29.67%
Elementary Grades (K-5)	58.54%
Middle Grades (6-8)	22.76%
High School (9-12)	28.05%