



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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April 15, 2020

Dear DC Public School Families,

I hope you are doing well in this unprecedented moment. In January, we reached out to our elementary school families with information about how federal Head Start funding at your school may change next school year. In our commitment to be transparent with our communities we are today providing an update.

DC Public Schools (DCPS) ensures high-quality early learning programming across all of our Pre-K classrooms, and we are proud to have nearly 7,000 Pre-K students in our schools this year. With funding from the federal Head Start program, we have been able to enhance the Pre-K programs in our Title I schools by offering additional supports and wraparound services that promote early learning, health, and family well-being.

Following an evaluation of our re-application process for Head Start funds, we have come to the decision to voluntarily relinquish our Head Start grant. This decision will not reduce the number of Pre-K seats at DCPS schools next school year; it allows us to better strive for exemplary programming in all of our Pre-K classrooms. Access to high-quality, affordable childcare is a critical need for families across the district, and DCPS is proud to provide free, universal Pre-K in a school environment to ensure all of our young learners are ready for kindergarten. Through an investment in local funding, our early childhood division will become more aligned to the DCPS cluster support model and will be structured to provide both instructional and family service supports to schools to ensure that our classrooms are able to continue providing high quality Pre-K services.

However, for some impacted schools, we expect some grant-funded support staff and resources — including family services and instructional coaching — will be reduced. DCPS has been planning for this possibility. Due to the shifting demographics of our schools that resulted in fewer Head Start-eligible students — as well as implementing systemic changes to enhance student supervision and safety — we anticipated a reduction in Head Start funding for Fiscal Year 2021.

Looking ahead, we will continue to support families furthest from opportunity with wraparound services either at the school level or through community partners. In addition to the instructional, clinical, and family services provided to families, DCPS remains acutely focused on the implementation of effective supervision practices in our Pre-K classrooms. Please find attached a FAQ for families that address some questions that may be top of mind.

As a result of steadfast commitment to our youngest learners, DCPS has seen significant improvements in our classroom quality ratings over the last five years and we look forward to charting your child's success together. DCPS remains committed to providing high-quality early childhood education programs that we know have a significant and lasting impact on a child's school readiness, achievement throughout their education, and positive life outcomes. Thank you for your continued support of DCPS' Early Learning.

