



PAVE Parent Leaders' Statement of Beliefs
A Family-Centered Response to Coronavirus in DC

WHO WE ARE

Our Mission

PAVE connects, informs, and empowers parent leaders to give families in DC a voice and choice in the vision for education in our city.

Our Vision

Parents are partners and leaders with schools and policymakers to develop a diversity of safe, nurturing, and great schools for every child in every ward and community.



Our History

PAVE was founded in April 2016 because we believe that for too long, parents have been informed of our education policy decisions after they have already been made instead of being invited to the table to help make them. Since 2016, PAVE has grown into a network of 3,000 DC parents and caregivers united behind a vision for an education system that is created not just for, but by and with families and guided by the following core values:

- Value #1: All families have access to high-quality schools and the information they need to make the best decisions for their children.
- Value #2: All schools have adequate and equitable funding to support the needs of children and families.
- Value #3: All students have a safe, healthy, and welcoming school environment.
- Value #4: All students have access to out-of-school time and summer school programs that allow them to foster their passions and enrich their learning.
- Value #5: All parents have the resources they need to support the success of their children at home and in school.

You can find more about PAVE parent leaders and their incredible work and accomplishments [here](#).

A Family-Centered Response to Coronavirus in DC

As an organization, PAVE's mission is to connect, inform, and empower parent leaders so they have a **voice and a choice** in the vision for education in our city. Ultimately, our goal is for parents to be partners and leaders with schools and policymakers in developing safe, nurturing, and great schools for every child in every ward and community. To make this a reality, PAVE parent leaders work to advocate for all children to be taken care of at school, at home, and in the broader community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coronavirus and the resulting impact on our communities has created an unprecedented crisis within the District of Columbia. This will require an unprecedented response and an unprecedented commitment to long-term recovery - all of which should be centered in equitably addressing the needs of kids and families. **We want to be partners with our city leaders as they plan our path forward and use our experience as parents to ground these critical decisions in the voices of those that are most impacted: the District's kids and families.**

Over the past few weeks, we have surveyed a diversity of parents from all across the city and met virtually to develop OUR vision for how the city should approach *response* and *recovery* in the wake of this crisis.¹ Based on those discussions, we are now calling on our city leaders to do the following:

Part One: Response - What DC Should Do Right Now

Schools and Learning

- *Fund critical supports for children during distance learning.*
- *Develop and share best practices to partner with families and communities.*
- *Improve cross-sector coordination and communication with families.*

Access to Food and Groceries

- *Continue to ensure the food and grocery needs of families are met, including access to healthy food and support with delivery for low-income families, families without access to a car, and/or families with underlying health risks.*
- *Expand work to distribute informational materials on available resources, health and safety measures, cooking/nutrition guidance, and updates on available items as appropriate.*
- *Ensure that stores are enforcing health and safety guidelines and that all frontline workers have access to PPE at all essential sites, especially those at grocery stores and other meal pick-up locations.*

Access to Resources (Income, Housing, Utilities)

- *Allocate additional emergency funding to ensure all residents are able to access unemployment benefits and support during this time - including undocumented immigrants.*
- *Ensure all families have access to information and guidance on what support/relief options are available and guidance on how to access them.*
- *Explore mortgage and rent deferral and/or assistance programs that allow residents to delay payments and repay them overtime, rather than large sums at once.*

Access to Health Care and Child Care

- *Allocate funding for a child care stabilization package so existing centers can provide emergency care and reopen after the crisis.*

¹ PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

- Work with all schools to communicate health care and insurance information to families and guidance around Coronavirus and testing as well as traditional medical requirements for schools.
- Work with schools and community partners to provide supplemental cleaning supplies for families during work packet or food pick-up, in order to ensure safe and healthy environments for our kids.

Part Two: Recovery - What DC Should Do For Next School Year

Support Schools in Planning for the Next School Year

- Provide support and resources for schools around planning for family engagement, redesigning school culture, adjusting academic plans, health and safety measures, and implementing mental health supports and special education services.
- Ensure schools and related agencies have what they need to support families as the year continues and have support in adjusting and adapting plans in this uncertain climate.

FULLY Fund Schools and Mental Health Supports: Make BOLD Investments in Our Kids and Our Schools

- **Invest in Mental Health Supports in School**
 - **Urgently** ensure schools have access to **mental health professionals** by fully funding the Department of Behavioral Health school mental health expansion.
 - **Estimated Cost: \$16 million** for an additional 60 schools.
 - Ensure all schools have the resources they need to provide **social emotional learning programs as well as trauma-informed training and restorative practices for all staff at each school.**
 - **Estimated Cost: \$10.6 million** (\$45,000 per school at 236 schools).
 - Fully fund the expansion of the **Healthy Futures Program** for children under three.
 - **Estimated cost: \$1.5 million**
- **Fully Fund Schools through the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula to the Recommended Adequacy Level**
 - This should be based on the 2013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available). The UPSFF should be \$11,840 (when adjusted for inflation). The UPSFF is currently set at \$10,980 **which is a gap of \$80 million.**
 - We recommend this gap be closed over two years: **minimally 4% in FY21**, and 3% in FY22.
- **Fully Fund the At-risk Weight in the UPSFF to the Recommended Adequacy Level**
 - This should be based on the 2013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available).
 - The at-risk weight should be 0.37, or \$4,062 per student. The at-risk weight is currently set at 0.225, or \$2,437 per student, **which is a gap of \$68.8 million.**
- **Increase Funding for Out of School Time Programs**
 - **Estimated cost: \$5 million** to increase access to programs for all students in DC who are at-risk.
- **Develop and Share Best Practices around Partnering with Families and Communities**
- **Increase Equity, Accountability, and Sustainability in School Based Mental Health Supports**

- ***This should include:*** a school mental health landscape analysis, improving the coordination of services and care, developing a clear accountability system, and creating a pipeline of mental health professionals to serve in schools.

More details on our exact vision for each of these necessary steps can be found in the document that follows. **We know these investments are significant but that is exactly what this moment requires in order to ensure that the gap between the haves and have-nots in our city does not become further exacerbated by this crisis.** As parent leaders, we commit to working with our public officials to turn these proposals from vision to reality, and we hope our city leaders make the same commitment to partnering with us in the weeks and months ahead.

THE PROBLEM

Coronavirus, or COVID-19, has exacerbated existing systemic issues and created new problems that have put our city in an unprecedented crisis. Coronavirus has drastically impacted our health, economy, education system, and, **for many DC parents, the ability to meet their family's basic needs.**

- As of April 19th, over 2,900 people have confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 105 people have lost their lives to the virus in DC - undoubtedly leaving many more with trauma, grief, and loss.
- The majority of deaths have been people of color. Over [75% of the people who have died are Black, despite Black people representing only 46% of the population](#).² Structural and institutional racism have long led to a cycle of poverty and disparate access to health care and healthy living environments, therefore causing disproportionately negative health outcomes.
- Over 70,600 people have filed for unemployment in DC, and many more face ever-increasing anxiety about how to put food on the table, pay rent, or get basic medicine and supplies for their families due to loss of work and income - especially those who are excluded from relief benefits like undocumented immigrants.
- Learning loss for students will be tremendous. A [recent report](#) estimates that 15,600 fewer students will read on grade level and over 9,800 fewer students will perform on grade level in math.³ History and data teach us that **low-income students and students of color will be most at risk of falling behind** which will impact their long-term college and career opportunities and the city for generations to come.

In the wake of this crisis, city leaders convened nine response working groups and one recovery working group to determine what policies, resources, and systems should be put in place to support families and communities now and in the future. And yet, student, community, or family voices are missing at many of those tables. This is a disservice to the city - we cannot effectively respond to a crisis without the voices of the people who are most impacted speaking their needs and what will work for them.

OUR PROCESS

As parents, we are committed now more than ever to do what it takes to support our kids, schools, communities, and our city to persevere through this immensely difficult time. We came together to look at what DC was already doing in response and what plans were being made to recover, discussed how that aligned with the real lived experience of families, and envisioned what we wanted to be different.

After [surveying](#) over 320 parents about how Coronavirus has impacted them and engaging in robust conversations with parents and [school staff](#) from all across the city, we have put together our vision - centered in the needs of kids and families - for what we want to see from our city leaders now (DC's Response) and when we return back to school (DC's Plan for Recovery) in order to weather this storm⁴.

² DCFPI [Blog: The Black Burden of COVID-19](#)

³ Study done by [EmpowerK12: Impact of COVID-19 on DC Student Achievement](#)

⁴ PAVE [Coronavirus School Leader Impact Survey](#)

OUR SOLUTION

PART ONE: Response - What DC Should Do Right Now

We are just beginning to understand the implications that Coronavirus will have on our global community, our nation, and our city. While there is much to be done to prepare for the future, first, we need to focus on the immediate needs of kids and families - especially for those who are furthest from opportunity and whose wellbeing, safety, and education are most at-risk. We believe DC should focus on addressing the following areas, with specific requests for each below.

- [Schools and Learning](#)
- [Access to Food and Groceries](#)
- [Access to Resources \(Including Income, Housing, and Utility Support/Relief\)](#)
- [Access to Health Care and Child Care](#)

SCHOOLS AND LEARNING

School should provide a safe, nurturing environment for kids to learn and grow while preparing for college and careers. It should be a place where kids and families find and build community, where there are people who care for you, and where kids can chase their dreams. Even before Coronavirus, our schools and our kids were struggling, with just over one third of children performing on grade level and significant opportunity gaps across race and socioeconomic status. Now, in the face of a crisis, we must invest in and lift up schools in order to support our kids and make sure they have all the tools they need to be successful later in life.

What We Heard From Families

- **Managing learning at home** has been the most challenging or very challenging for 59% of parents.
- **Lack of technology or access to the internet** has been the most challenging or very challenging for 26% of parents. This is most acute for parents East of the River, of which 40% listed lack of access as a top challenge.⁵

What Is Working

- There are **bright spots across individual schools and teachers** who are doing a great job of supporting students and families by checking in on them and maintaining strong distance instruction.
- Many **schools and organizations have been able to provide families with additional support**, like devices for students.

⁵ PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

What Isn't Working

- Many parents are struggling with **balancing work while supporting children's learning** - either while working from home or having to leave for their jobs as an essential or emergency worker.
- It is difficult for many **parents to truly support kids in their learning** or create/maintain a routine, *especially for parents with multiple children who must manage multiple grade levels, lesson plans, schedules, and platforms.*
- It is not easy for parents to **practice self-care**, even though it is more important now than ever.
- It is hard to **find outlets for kids** when they aren't in class or doing schoolwork and they cannot go outside or physically be with their friends.
- There is a **wide disparity in access to technology and reliable, high-speed internet**. Roughly a [third of DC households don't have access to the internet at home](#),⁶ and this is closer to half for those living East of the River.

What Parents Want to See

- **ALL schools should have clear, consistent, and open communication with families and actively work to ensure information and support reaches ALL families.**
 - **To lessen the burden on families with multiple children in multiple schools/sectors, education system updates and guidance for parents from the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME) should be consistent across DCPS and public charter schools.**
 - Cross-sector coordination is critical to this effort, as families navigate the many changes.
 - Over 40% of families reported they got Coronavirus updates and information from their child's school. The DME should support schools in providing information about resources and supports available (food locations, unemployment services, health and child care updates, etc.) to families.
 - This should be done using multiple methods of communication - and in multiple languages - in order to reach all families.
 - **Schools should meaningfully engage parents in their child's education - especially distance learning.**
 - Schools should work to build and deepen relationships with families in authentic and creative ways as we navigate this together.
 - Schools need to support parents in understanding the expectations for schedules, online learning tools and platforms, lessons, grading policies, and any other school activities.
 - This is especially important for families with high school students, who may have more flexible schedules or independence, meaning information doesn't always get to parents.
 - Schools should ensure that any virtual meetings or social media used during distance learning complies with relevant laws and regulations, including consent around recording and/or sharing content.

⁶ Urban Institute's [Findings](#) on the Digital Divide in DC

- Schools should work collaboratively and leverage community relationships to connect with families that schools haven't been able to reach.
 - City leaders should look at what has been going well with distance learning and support schools with implementing those best practices. Examples could include practices from neighboring districts, the PCSB webinars, DCPS town halls, Flamboyant's wellness call script, charter schools sharing ideas through First Fridays, and other online platforms that allow students to choose their own learning paths.
- **Communication with families should be two-way, including:**
 - Personal calls/wellness check-ins from teachers and school staff.
 - Surveys to understand what families need and to get feedback on their experience.
 - Additional virtual opportunities for parents and students to engage in the school community.
- **Schools should be realistic and honest about their plans and expectations.**
 - Parents understand this is an unprecedented and challenging time for everyone and want to partner *with* schools. This requires direct and transparent communication about what schools are putting in place, what the limitations and challenges are, and any plans for the future.
- **All parents should have access to resources to help support their kids at home, including:**
 - **Mental health supports**
 - The education system should support schools in providing virtual access to social emotional learning programs, school staff trained in trauma-informed practices, and high-quality mental health professionals for *kids and families*.
 - Importantly, teachers and school staff should also have access to mental health supports and resources.
 - Families and communities should be partners in supporting mental wellness.
 - Schools should share resources with families in order to support kids' social emotional learning and development and overall mental health at home.
 - City agencies and schools should build central resource hubs to house information for families in one easy-to-use place.
 - This should include guidance/strategies to talk about COVID with kids, information about how to access mental health services over the phone/video chat, and ways to assess kids' mental health needs while at home and connect them to support, especially if this is their first time.
 - **Resources to help support instruction and learning at home, including:**
 - Resources for parents/caregivers to learn the academic content so they can help teach it to kids, i.e. curriculum/study guides, answer sheets, etc.
 - Strategies on how to keep kids engaged/create structures or routines.
 - Learning supplies like paper, notebooks, markers, pencils, construction paper, books, etc.

- Students with IEPs and 504s should still be receiving specialized instruction and supports - and parents should be empowered with resources and strategies to support their children's unique learning needs at home.
- Schools need to provide resources, guidance, and support for parents who are not able to stay at home with their children and support their learning, especially parents who are essential or health care workers.
- **Technology and internet**
 - Devices should be made available to all families - especially those who are most in need or have multiple children at home and may need additional devices. This is critical for both learning and to access telehealth appointments.
 - Reliable, high-speed internet must be made accessible to all families (either free or low-cost), especially those East of the River.
 - There should be a clear, equitable, and simple process for families to get additional devices. This process should be communicated through multiple channels to make sure families have access to the information.

What DC Should Do in Response

In order for this to be true for all families in all wards and communities, DC must:

1. Fund Critical Supports for Children During Distance Learning

- *The Mayor and Council should allocate additional funding for **mental health and other student support professionals providing in-person services**, including hazard pay (time and a half), adequate personal protection equipment (PPE), and cleaning supplies.*
- *The Mayor and Council, alongside the philanthropic and private business community, should make funding available to provide **devices** for all families that need them, to subsidize **high-speed, reliable internet access** for every family during the public health emergency, and any additional funds needed for **school supplies**.*
 - *It would cost about \$4.2 million to provide 70% of public school student households with basic internet through Comcast at a rate of \$10/month or \$120/year.*
 - *This work should build upon the work of the [DC Education Equity Fund](#) which has distributed over \$1 million in funding to support families. This is a great start - but more is needed.⁷*

2. Develop and Share Best Practices to Partner with Families and Communities

- *OSSE, DME, PCSB, and DCPS should work together to provide all school leaders with professional development, best practices, exemplar resources, and additional support to improve communication and engagement with families and support kids and families with learning at home.*
- *The Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) should work with mental health providers and community partners to create a robust resource hub for schools and families to address these*

⁷ [Grant information](#) from the DC Education Equity Fund

needs, work to make this hub accessible for everyone, and offer robust and flexible options for kids and families to receive mental and behavioral health counseling and services.

- *The Department of Behavioral Health, the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME), and OSSE should leverage federal guidance and work with school leaders and community providers to shift to telehealth, including guidance on mandated reporting, privacy requirements, and any other necessary protections and considerations. They should then communicate any decisions to schools and families so all are clear on their respective rights and expectations.*

3. Improve Cross-Sector Coordination and Communication

- *The DME should provide consistent education system updates and guidance for parents across DCPS and public charter schools.*
 - *So as not to overwhelm parents every week, these updates should be saved for important, substantive information that is clear, concise, and actionable (i.e. important date changes, opportunities to engage, or sharing resources).*
- *A robust communication system should be put in place that utilizes multiple methods of informing families about system updates and ways to access resources and support. Methods should include robocalls/texts, mailers, emails, social media posts, etc. and be translated into multiple languages.*

ACCESS TO FOOD AND GROCERIES

We know physical wellbeing is directly connected to how well kids can learn, and we know that children cannot achieve their full potential when they are hungry. Kids need healthy, nutritious meals, **and decades of studies have proven that without them, kids' academic achievement suffers** and they can suffer from **toxic stress, depression, anxiety, or a number of other health challenges.**⁸ The same is true for their families. In this city, no one should go hungry and have to put their health at risk because of lack of food.

What We Heard From Families

- 23% of parents listed **access to food** as most challenging or very challenging, but this issue is biggest for our families who are receiving benefits and East of the River, where it is a top challenge for 35% and 28% of families respectively.⁹

What Is Working

- There are **many sites around the city offering free meals and/or groceries** to kids, their families, and community members.
- DC **increased the number of meal pick-up locations and adjusted requirements** quickly in response to community feedback, which made accessing food much more convenient and safe for families.
- Many **community members and organizations have come together** to support those in need.

What Isn't Working

- Despite the response from the city, **loss of work and resulting food insecurity is causing great stress** for some families.
- **Access to basic yet critical items has been extremely limited.** Stores in DC are often out of stock - especially meat, produce, and cleaning supplies - which means parents often have to make multiple stops, increasing their health risk, or travel to Maryland or Virginia, which not all parents have the means to do.
- There are many **food deserts in DC** - there are only two grocery stores in Ward 7 and 8 - and this problem is exacerbated in a time of crisis and a major challenge for parents.
- Many parents are worried about the **health risk for themselves and their families as they go out to get food and critical supplies** - especially those with preexisting conditions or those who don't have child care at home, and therefore have to take their children out with them.
- Many parents are managing okay right now but feel **very uncertain about being able to provide food in the coming weeks/months.**
- **Not all meal sites have food and groceries that all families can eat** (i.e. vegetarian, dairy or gluten-free, kosher options) or know how to prepare.

⁸ [Findings from the American Psychological Association on Child Hunger](#)

⁹ PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

What Parents Want To See

- **All parents should have access to nutritious food and groceries without risking the health and safety of their families.**
 - All families should receive clear information about available options for accessing food and groceries.
 - DC should work with community partners to offer delivery to support families with exceptional needs.
 - In accordance with DC Health guidance, the city should work with local community gardens and farmers market operators to provide families with fresh, local, and healthy food.
 - All pick-up sites and community centers should have clear guidance on sanitation and safety measures for families to follow and ensure that all frontline workers have access to Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).
 - Information about availability of critical food and grocery items, including cleaning supplies, diapers, formula, etc., should be publicly posted to the extent possible in order to cut down on stops and travel time for parents.
 - Information about price-gouging regulations should be made publicly available so parents can swiftly report the situation in the event food or grocery items are made unreasonably unaffordable.
- **Food and grocery pick-up options should meet the diverse needs of communities.**
 - More food and grocery options should be made available to meet the dietary and cultural needs of communities (i.e. vegetarian, gluten- or dairy-free options, kosher meals, etc.).
 - When possible, relevant organizations and agencies should share recipes and resources to help parents learn to cook healthy meals for their families with the groceries provided.

What DC Should Do In Response

In order for this to be true for all families in all wards and communities:

1. *DC Health should work with schools and community partners to ensure the needs of families are being met around food and groceries, including exploration of meal/grocery delivery for residents with exceptional needs and providing additional dietary food options.*
2. *DC Health should work with schools and community partners to distribute informational materials on available resources, health and safety measures, cooking/nutrition guidance, and updates on available items as appropriate.*
3. *DC Health should ensure that all frontline workers - many of whom are working parents - have access to PPE at all essential sites, especially those at grocery stores and other meal pick-up sites. They should also ensure that stores are vigilant about health and safety measures like social distancing in line, providing PPE for those that don't have it, and take steps to minimize customers' time in the stores like opening more lines.*

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

(Including Income, Housing, and Utility Support)

If we are going to truly set students up for learning and success, we must consider the whole child and their environment. Having safe and secure housing and access to vital utilities and the internet are critical for students' ability to learn and thrive - especially as we navigate distance learning for the foreseeable future.

- Prior to Coronavirus, almost 7,500 students were homeless.¹⁰ As gentrification increases along with the cost of housing in the District, the number of students facing homelessness has been on the rise every year. Research shows that students that are facing homelessness are more likely to be below grade level, to be held back, and to have mental health issues.¹¹
- Now, as tens of thousands of DC parents must stay at home and/or are out of work and don't have access to income, housing, or necessary utilities, kids' ability to learn at home is at risk. If we move the classroom to kids' living rooms, we need to do all that we can to make sure families have what they need.

What We Heard From Families

- 42% of parents have said the impact on work/income has been the most challenging or very challenging issue for them.
- 22% of parents said not feeling secure in their housing has been the most challenging or very challenging issue for them.¹²

What Is Working

- Overall, there is a wide spectrum of how this is impacting families, but the city has worked quickly to put emergency supports in place - especially unemployment benefits and pauses on evictions/utility shut-offs.

What Isn't Working

- Not everyone is aware of or knows how to access the support/resources that are available, especially those that are online, which creates further challenges and risks.
- Not all residents are included in federal or local relief efforts, i.e. undocumented immigrants, those with informal means of income, or college students.
- There is immense stress and anxiety amongst low-income families about their ability to meet their family's basic needs. More broadly, many parents feel that they can manage things for now, but fear the uncertainty of times ahead.

¹⁰ National Center for Homeless Education [Report](#) on DC's Homeless Population

¹¹ [Findings](#) from Seattle University Graduate School Research

¹² PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

What Parents Want To See

- **Access to - and information about - services, support, or relief benefits should be available to all DC residents.**
 - All residents should be able to receive support - regardless of documentation status.
 - College students who are over 18 years of age should also be eligible for financial support, as should children over 18 who are severely disabled and living at home.
 - DC should provide everyone with clear guidance around all available supports, including federal programs and stimulus payments.
 - Programs offering payment waivers, deferrals, freezes, or other supports should proactively reach out to families about their options and necessary action steps through multiple modes of communication (websites/email, social media, paper mail, phone calls, texts, etc.).

What DC Should Do In Response

In order for this to be true for all families in all wards and communities:

1. *The Mayor and DC Council should allocate additional emergency funding to ensure all residents are able to access unemployment benefits and support during this time. This should include excluded workers like undocumented immigrants and those who have more informal sources of income.*
2. *The Mayor and all appropriate agencies should ensure all families have access to information and guidance on what support/relief options are available, how to apply, and any rights and protections they are guaranteed, through a robust outreach effort using mailers, robocalls/texts, DC's Coronavirus website, and social media, all in multiple languages.*
3. *The Mayor and DC Council should review [mortgage and rent deferral](#) and/or assistance programs that allow for skipped payments to be repaid over the next year after the public health emergency or direct financial coverage for those with the greatest needs.¹³*

¹³ Oregon's [Home Forward](#) program

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND CHILD CARE

Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our children - from birth and beyond. It is absolutely essential that every family have access to health care and a safe place for their children to be while parents are working or away.

- DC is a leader in the percentage of residents who have health insurance.¹⁴ Still, as we face an unprecedented public health emergency, it is important that **we take bold steps to get everyone insured and connected to the care that they need.**
- **Not all communities have access to quality health care options close to where they live**, especially families in Ward 7 and 8, where there is only one hospital for over 160,000 residents.
- While DC has pioneered universal Pre-K to much success in its early years, there are still many families who do not have access to child care, especially for children under three.
- Access to quality, affordable, and consistent child care is important for the healthy development of children and for the economy, as it allows parents to work while knowing their children are safe and supported.
- Studies show that high quality early learning environments help **address the growing achievement gap between low-income children and their higher-income peers** and boosts income later in life - something we must make accessible to everyone in our city.¹⁵

What We Heard From Families

- 51% of parents said not knowing how this will impact the health of their family has been the most challenging or very challenging for them.
- As reported above, managing caring for children as they are home all day has been the greatest challenge for most parents. This is true across the board, including parents that are working from home, those that are not able to work, and especially for those that have to leave for work at their essential job.¹⁶

What Is Working

- The city has six child care centers open to provide emergency child care for health care workers and children with serious medical conditions and is taking steps to make that care affordable¹⁷.
- DC Health Link's special enrollment period allows all families to sign up for health insurance. The public charge test has also been suspended, meaning all DC residents should be able to get coverage and care.
- Most health care providers have swiftly transitioned to telehealth, which is covered by Medicaid.

¹⁴ DC Health Link [Press Release](#) on DC Insurance Coverage Rate - Sept. 2019

¹⁵ Heckman [Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program](#)

¹⁶ PAVE [Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

¹⁷ [Information](#) on DC's Emergency Child Care Initiative for Health Care Professionals

What Isn't Working

- It is extremely difficult for parents to work (at home or elsewhere) and manage the household with kids at home the whole day.
- Right now, most child care centers are closed. For many centers, the amount they would receive from the city to open and provide emergency child care is not enough to mitigate the cost of work and risk for their staff.
- While the city has DC's Child Care Connections Resource & Referral service, there are not enough spots for all families that need them, especially spots that are affordable. Many essential workers still need access to child care.
- Because of the financial strain of closures, some parents are getting requests from their child care provider about advanced payments or asking to release their spot - causing significant uncertainty for *both* parents and providers.
- Residents with pre-existing conditions or medical needs - even those that are not related to Coronavirus - are fearful of getting sick from going out to appointments or to get supplies, medicine, or therapy.
- Parents lack guidance around how to navigate the risk of coronavirus, how to handle regular check-ups, and how to get needed documentation for their kids, like annual physicals.
- Stress, anxiety, and having to stay at home are all having serious impacts on families' mental health and wellbeing.
- Many families aren't able to get the cleaning and sanitation supplies they need. While some families are able to get supplies from stores on their own, many do not have the means or ability to travel safely and need support to get them.

What Parents Want To See

- **Child care is essential and therefore should be available for all essential workers.**
- **DC should take proactive steps to support child care centers now so they can continue to operate after the public health emergency.**
- **All families should have clear guidance about how to address medical needs during this time, including:**
 - How to sign up for insurance, including Medicaid.
 - When and how to access medical services that are not related to Coronavirus (regular check-ins and appointments, shifting to telehealth for diagnosis, treatment and prescription as needed, etc.).
 - How to recognize and respond to symptoms of Coronavirus.
 - Information about available testing and health services in the event a family or community member shows symptoms of Coronavirus.
- **All parents should have access to necessary cleaning supplies to keep their families safe and healthy.**
 - Parents should have adequate supplies to sanitize their living environments, protect their families' health, and stop the spread of the virus. This includes sanitizer/disinfectant, wipes, paper towels, and soap.

- Community partners and city agencies should support parents who do not have the means to buy supplies or the ability to travel safely to purchase them, especially those who may be facing homelessness and are living in shelters.

What DC Should Do In Response

In order for this to be true for all families in all wards and communities:

1. *The Mayor and DC Council must enact a child care stabilization package that includes funding for:*
 - *Relief grants for licensed center and home-based child care businesses serving young children under age 5.*
 - *Incentives for businesses offering child care to emergency and essential workers, including hazard pay, PPE, and cleaning supplies.*
2. *DC Health should work with all DCPS and public charter schools to communicate health care information to families, including how to sign up for insurance during the special enrollment period, how to sign up for Medicaid, and guidance around Coronavirus and testing as well as traditional medical requirements for schools.*
3. *DC Health should work with DCPS, public charter schools, and community partners to provide supplemental cleaning supplies for families during work packet or food pick-up.*

A Family-Centered Coronavirus Recovery Plan for DC Schools

There is no doubt that the impacts of Coronavirus will continue to reveal themselves - and compound on each other - over time. This is true not just in the immediate months as we look to reopen our city and our schools, but also in the years and generations to come. Kids, families, and communities have all experienced a great collective trauma and loss. There will be health, economic, and educational consequences, but these consequences will not hit all families and communities the same.

Early data, along with the stories of families, already demonstrate that **low-income communities and communities of color will suffer the most from this crisis**. We must make sure that DC centers equity in all plans to heal and recover from this pandemic and the impacts left in its wake so that those communities - who are an essential part of our city's fabric - are truly supported in this time of significant need, and we are all able to rise as a safer, stronger, and more connected DC. As parent leaders at PAVE, we want to start that work with schools, as it is now more clear than ever the critical role that they play in our communities.

OUR PROCESS

In coming together to develop our collective vision for what that recovery process for schools should look like, we grounded ourselves with the following core beliefs:

- The system we had BEFORE Coronavirus was **not working for all kids and families**. Therefore, our goal should not be to “get back to normal,” but rather create a “new normal” that is centered in racial, economic, and social justice.
- **Families and communities have immense knowledge, power, and resiliency** that can - and should - be tapped into and cultivated.
- With the above in mind, If we are to reimagine and redesign a system that really does better by each and every one of DC's residents, we must **connect with, listen to, and meaningfully engage communities** in all of our efforts moving forward.

We then closed our eyes and envisioned what coming back to school should look like after everything our communities have been through. We pictured what we wanted schools to say, do, and ask us. We thought about what we wanted to see over the summer, the week before school starts, the very first day, and about what school and education could look like moving forward in the future - either physically at school or at home, and then we asked those same questions of our kids, too! Together, we reimagined a plan recovery that is centered in what kids and families really need, and what the city should do to help make that vision a reality.

OUR SOLUTION

PART TWO: Recovery - What DC Should Do For Next School Year

The city should utilize every opportunity before we come back to school to support our children's education. This is our vision for what that should look like in DC.

- **Planning: Before School Starts**
 - Building Relationships with Families
 - Reimagining School Culture
 - Prioritizing Mental Health
 - Planning to Meet Students Where They Are in Their Learning
 - Planning for a Welcoming First Day Back
- **Implementation: As the School Year Continues**
 - Partnering with Families as the School Year Continues
 - Ensuring Families are Supported Outside of School
- **What DC Should Do To Support Schools and Families**

Planning: Before School Starts

Building Relationships with Families

The DME should convene LEAs and provide support and guidance to schools around family engagement and how to build relationships and trust after the spring school closures.

- **The city should provide schools with the resources and support to connect with families and build trust over the summer.**
 - Allow teachers and school staff to individually reach out to every family before we return.
 - These conversations and interactions should not be focused on academics, but can include it.
 - The goal should be to get to know each student and their family, understand how they are doing and how they've been impacted by Coronavirus, and find areas of common ground or interest in order to build trust and understanding across identities.
 - Provide resources for schools to host "Welcome Back" events that safely bring everyone - teachers, leaders, parents, students, and partners - in the school community together.
 - This should be an opportunity for all members of the school community to reconnect, i.e. kids, parents, teachers, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, coaches, etc.
 - School staff should use what they know/learned about their school community during their summer outreach to plan events that will bring different groups together, in safe numbers, like barbeques, game nights, art stations, etc. and schools should be able to share best practices with each other by grade band, Ward, or community.

- **Potential Partnerships:**

- Organizations that have researched and studied family engagement best practices like Flamboyan, Kindred, PAVE, and Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships.
- Community-based organizations who have deep ties to the family populations that schools serve AND have supported families throughout the closures like Black Swan, Briya, Mary's Center, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, LAYC, United Planning Organization, Martha's Table, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, and others.

Reimagining School Culture - WITH FAMILIES

OSSE's Health and Wellness team should provide support and guidance to schools to redesign their school culture.

- **School leaders should have resources and support to work with their staff, parents, and students to reimagine what school culture and environment should look like.**
 - The physical space at school should be clean, inviting, and bright to make students excited to come back and learn.
 - School leaders and staff should have access to professional development, communities of practice, and other learning opportunities to help them further develop, and continue to refine, a welcoming, caring, and trauma-informed mindset and culture for their school. This should be demonstrated in the language used, the policies put in place, through increased staff visibility and accessibility, and the communication and interaction with every member of the school community.
 - All existing school policies and procedures should be revisited with this trauma-informed lens, especially discipline policies. Because students and their families will have been away from school for so long, they will need restorative practices, support, and grace as they work to relearn and/or adjust to expectations and structures.
- **Schools should receive guidance on ways to get feedback from students and parents about what went *well* with distance learning and connecting with school staff virtually.**
 - This is especially important for students who may have been disengaged in school previously but were able to access learning better while at home.
- **Potential Partnerships:**
 - Organizations that have researched and studied trauma-informed practices like Transcend Education, Turnaround for Children, Restorative DC, and WISE.

Prioritizing the Mental Health Needs of FAMILIES - Parents, Children, Grandparents, and Caregivers

The Mayor should ensure that all schools have the mental health teams and socio-emotional learning programs that they need to support students in their return to school.

- **Schools need support to continue to check-in on, connect with, and find support for kids and their families.**

- This can include simple and safe ways to assess how students and families are doing (surveys, intermittent temperature/pulse checks, etc.) and ACEs screening in coordination with mental health professionals.
- **School staff should receive professional development, tools, and resources so they can reimagine, expand, and deepen the ways in which they engage with families throughout the year.**
 - This can include how schools communicate to families, how they get information or input from them, how parents are engaged in students' learning, how families are engaged in mental health supports, etc.
- **Schools should receive guidance on how to balance students' mental health needs and academic instruction.**
 - **This can include:**
 - How to incorporate social emotional learning into all lessons and best practices around building a supportive school culture to set students up for success.
 - How to best support teachers and staff with their mental health, as they have also experienced trauma and will need support as they navigate many competing priorities and challenges.
 - Ways to incorporate Out of School Time (OST) programs in planning for both social emotional development and academic growth.
 - Considerations for shifting to extended school schedules, especially around ways to incorporate breaks for students and staff to avoid burnout and how this can be informed by input from parents.
 - How to support students who may have lost parents or guardians. This should include both how to connect them to necessary support services and how staff can support their mental health at home.
- **Potential Partnerships:**
 - DBH should work in partnership with LEA's to assess school needs and understand practitioner and pipeline capacity.
 - DCAYA, DC Action for Children, the Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes, and leading OST Program providers, especially those that support students with their social emotional and academic growth.

Planning to Meet Students Where They Are in Their Learning

OSSE and the State Board of Education (SBOE) should ensure all schools have the resources and support they need to assess where students are and adjust their planning - early and often.

- **The city should support schools with:**
 - **Access to evidence-based and standard-aligned assessments to quickly assess what skills and standards students have mastered and where they still need to grow.**
 - Assessments should inform data-driven instruction, targeted interventions, and conversations with parents so that parents can also continue to support learning at home.

- The city should streamline processes like competency-based learning waivers for high school students that allow them to demonstrate their abilities outside of the classroom or “seat-time” that supports their promotion to the next grade.
- **Professional development, guidance, and resources to continuously adjust instruction.**
 - Math skills should be prioritized during interventions, as we know that math skills will take the hardest hit without formal instruction time and all skills build on one another. This necessity is explained further in EmpowerK12’s report: [COVID-19 on DC Student Achievement](#).
 - The city should be sure to provide robust professional development on:
 - How to differentiate instruction and personalize lesson plans to support students where they are to help them make the gains they need.
 - How to utilize educational technology to personalize and improve instruction and how to build on what worked well with distance learning during school closures.
 - Retention should be considered only in extreme or extraordinary circumstances.
- **Professional development and resources to support students with disabilities, who are most at-risk of learning loss and falling behind their peers.**
 - Because many students will not have received all of the services they needed while schools were closed and/or their IEP is out of compliance, schools should create an organized plan to have a meeting for every student with an IEP over the next year, prioritizing those that had reviews during school closures.
 - OSSE should provide special education coordinators with professional development over the summer on how to best ensure compliance, promote the quality of all IEPs and supports provided, and engage with families, i.e. every family with a student with an IEP receives a call within the first 30 days to ensure a smooth and timely transition back to school.
- **Guidance around creative and evidence-based practices to build upon existing relationships with families and ensure consistency and safety for students.**
 - This could include having teachers “loop” with their students from last year or utilizing blended learning models.

Planning for a Safe and Welcoming Return to School

The DME should convene LEAs and provide support and guidance to schools around best practices for a safe and welcoming return to school.

- This can include:
 - **How to clearly communicate updates and expectations leading up to the first day.**
 - Communication should be clear and comprehensive through multiple communication methods and translated into appropriate languages for the school community.
 - Parents should be aware of any new or updated policies or requirements and know exactly what to expect for them and their child on the first day back.
 - **How to create a warm, welcoming first day experience.**

- School staff should be out front, visible, and warmly engaging with kids and families as they arrive.
- The first day should not be business as usual - we must acknowledge the transition. Teachers and staff must have honest and age-appropriate conversations about the situation and prioritize making students feel safe, welcome, and excited about being at school again.
- **How to protect the health and safety of students.**
 - This should include guidance around the number of people per room, social distancing, cleaning procedures (including regular deep cleaning and communicating that schedule to families), taking temperatures, protocols for kids who have been sick and children with extraordinary physical or mental health risks being able to come back to school, and appropriate distribution and use of PPE.
 - Health care workers - like school nurses and providers - who are sharing social distancing strategies with schools, families, and students should be trained in how to communicate in ways that affirm and support the culture and language of the communities that they are serving.
 - When identifying policy solutions to prevent the spread of the disease, like staggered start dates for next school year or alternating days of school by grade band, these decisions should be made through an equity lens, specifically understanding the impact that these decisions will have on low-income and working families - by getting the input of families and communities before making decisions.

Implementation: As the School Year Continues

While planning is critically important, we know from experience that even the best plans fail without strong implementation. This work must be done with a focus on continuous improvement, including regularly evaluating progress and effectiveness, building on successes, adjusting areas for growth, and continuously partnering with families to understand their experiences and needs.

Partnering with Families as the Year Continues

The DME should continue to convene LEAs and provide ongoing support and guidance to schools around engaging and communicating with families.

- This can include:
 - **How to continue to engage families and communities in a meaningful, authentic, and proactive way, especially in a world where there are continuous closures until a vaccine is identified.**
 - As mentioned above, staff should continuously reach out to kids and families to understand how they are doing, what is working, what isn't, and what support may be needed.

- Schools should communicate with parents what they learned from relationship-building conversations over the summer and throughout the year, how they incorporated the insights and feedback from those conversations and adjusted their practice, and how they want to continue to engage parents in the work moving forward - whether that is in school or during additional periods of distance learning.
- **Support on how to continuously reevaluate, adjust, and communicate their plans.**
 - There are still many unknowns and uncertainties in the days, months, and years ahead. We don't know when we will be able to go back to school or if/when there will be future closures. Schools need to be prepared to reevaluate, adjust, and pivot their plans quickly and know how to effectively communicate - and get input on - those shifts and changes.
 - In order to do so, schools must be adequately resourced, i.e. enough staff capacity, additional professional development and planning time, and other necessary infrastructure like communication systems, translation support, etc.

Ensuring Families are Supported Outside of School

The Mayor should ensure that supports for parents and families are available and flexible as we navigate the uncertain challenges and schedules ahead.

- As the public health crisis continues, schools will need to be especially vigilant about safety at school. This means when students are sick, parents will need to pick them up and keep them home, possibly for extended periods of time. This will especially impact children with pre-existing medical conditions.
- The need for self-quarantining and the possible continued school and business closures will undoubtedly impact parents' ability to work, especially hourly workers or those who cannot work from home.
- DC should be sure to plan to continue to offer supports for parents and families to ensure that families are able to provide for their families and have safe, secure child care for all of their kids.

What DC Should Do To Support Schools and Families

The city should take urgent steps this year to:

1. Make Bold Investments in Our Kids and Our Schools: Fully Fund Schools and Mental Health Supports

- **Urgently ensure schools have access to mental health professionals** - especially those that support our students with the greatest needs.
 - Estimated cost to fund the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) school-based mental health expansion: \$16 million to expand from about 119 schools to 179.
- **Ensure all schools have the resources they need to provide high-quality, culturally-affirming and responsive, and evidence-based social emotional learning programs as well as trauma-informed training and restorative practices for all staff at each school.**
 - Estimated cost for K-12: \$10.6 million (\$45,000 per school x 236 schools)
 - Healthy Futures Program for Early Childhood Centers: \$1.5 million
- **Fully fund the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula to the recommended adequacy level based on the 2013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available). The 2013**

study said the base UPSFF should be \$11,840 (when adjusted for inflation). The UPSFF is currently set at \$10,980 which is a gap of \$80 million. We recommend this gap be closed over two years: minimally 4% in FY21, and 3% in FY22.

- **Fully fund the at-risk weight in the UPSFF to the recommended adequacy level** based on the 2013 adequacy study (until the forthcoming DME study is available). The 2013 study said the at-risk weight should be 0.37, or \$4,062 per student. The at-risk weight is currently set at 0.225, or \$2,437 per student, which is a gap of \$68.8 million.
- **Increase funding for Out of School Time Programs**, minimally to \$25 million, to increase access for all students in DC who are at-risk.

As we continue to do this work, we should also work to:

2. Develop and Share Best Practices around Partnering with Families and Communities

- The DME should direct the appropriate education agency/ies to develop a standard of best practices on how to consistently and meaningfully engage parents, families, and communities in the development of the school culture and the implementation of mental health supports.
- Since these best practices should improve the work of schools, rather than cause undue burden or distractions from educating students, it is essential that this work be done in partnership with schools.
- These evidence-based best practices should include:
 - Working with school leadership, instructional staff, mental health staff, behavioral support staff, and relevant medical staff (i.e. nurse, speech pathologist).
 - Engaging all stakeholders in conversations about mental health supports, services, and staff professional development.

3. Take Steps to Increase Equity, Accountability, and Sustainability in School Based Mental Health Supports

- **Produce and Share a School Mental Health Landscape Analysis**
 - The city should ensure that a comprehensive resource map of what mental health supports currently exist in each school and corresponding gap analysis is put together and made public to help create a comprehensive and long-term plan for the future.
 - These findings should be used to hold our city accountable for providing adequate supports as well as inform the allocation of funding mental health supports across schools and agencies, through a variety of opportunities beyond solely competitive grant application processes for schools.
- **Improve Coordination of Services and Care**
 - The city should create standards and create effective systems for agencies to collaborate in order to enhance the quality and level of care in schools, including but not limited to DBH, the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), public charter school Local Education Agencies (LEA), the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB), Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), Department of

Human Services (DHS), Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), and the Department of Health (DoH).

- *Coordination should also include practices that focus on:*
 - *Improving mental health staff retention*
 - *Appropriate mental health staff-to-student ratios*
 - *Prioritizing consistent services beyond one-time crisis response*
 - *Clarity regarding which agencies/institutions are accountable for effective implementation*
- *The city also should work together with all stakeholders to improve coordination and communication of services and support at the school level, including providing resources and support for school mental health teams and a school mental health team coordinator.*
- **Develop a Clear Accountability System**
 - *The DME and DMHHS should develop clear, publicly transparent, and robust accountability systems for any agency/organization providing mental health supports in schools. This includes, but is not limited to, groups providing technical assistance for social emotional learning and trauma-informed training as well as those that are providing mental health services in schools.*
 - *At minimum, these accountability systems should require agencies and community-based organization partners to:*
 - *Demonstrate the effectiveness and proper use of funds.*
 - *Evaluate how well agencies are coordinating with one another to enhance the quality and level of care in schools and implementing practices for engaging parents, families, and communities in the development of the school culture and the implementation of mental health supports.*
 - *Demonstrate how family and student voices are included in the evaluation of mental health services, staff, and systems.*
 - *How well schools are retaining mental health staff.*
 - *This work must ensure structures and policies are in place to eliminate barriers to supporting students with disabilities.*
- **Develop a Pipeline of Mental Health Professionals to Serve in Schools**
 - *The city should take steps to partner with surrounding colleges and universities to incentivize mental health professionals to serve in our schools.*
 - *This work should especially prioritize recruitment and retention of mental health professionals that look like and come from the communities they will serve.*
 - *To ensure mental health professionals are able to work in our schools, the city should:*
 - *Work to ensure qualifications and requirements between partners, city agencies, and schools are aligned in the best interests of kids and families.*
 - *Open opportunities through increased partnership with neighboring jurisdictions.*

APPENDIX

Appendix A

[Coronavirus Parent Impact Survey Results](#)

Appendix B

[Coronavirus School Leader Impact Survey Results](#)

Appendix C

[List and Photos of PAVE Parent Leader Meetings to Develop their Statement of Beliefs](#)