

SCHOOL CHOICE MATTERS

Washington, D.C. Policy Report

Introduction

PURPOSE

A combination of well-designed policies give all students access to the broadest range of educational opportunities, including key core policies and helpful policy enhancers. The purpose of this document is to provide insight to how well your territory is doing at implementing the Ecosystem of School Choice Policies. This territory report summarizes evidence across the seven policy buckets, with each policy component detailed in individual cells.

CORE POLICIES

Key policies expand student opportunities.



[Open Enrollment](#)



[Charter Schools](#)



[Private School Choice](#)



[Homeschooling](#)

POLICY ENHANCERS

Supporting policies enhance those opportunities.



[Part-time Enrollment/Course Access](#)



[Learn Everywhere](#)



[Transportation](#)

CORE POLICIES



Open Enrollment in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
<p>Transfers Between Districts</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Does not qualify for policy rating</p>	<p>Washington D.C. comprises only one school district.</p> <p>Non-resident families can enroll students in a public school or public charter school in D.C., provided they pay tuition.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-302 Tuition required of nonresidents; deposit of payments)</p> <p>Non-resident enrollment is allowed where there are no DC residents on the waitlist for the school of choice; the student receives an offer from the school to enroll; or there is a signed and completed tuition agreement that is filed with OSSE.</p> <p>(OSSE, Office of Enrollment & Residency: Supporting Families & Students)</p>
<p>Transfers Within Districts</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Mandatory policy allowing students to transfer schools</p>	<p>D.C. Administrative Regulations allow students to request transfers to a school of their choosing within the District.</p> <p>(5-B DCMR 2106 School Selection Transfers)</p> <p>Through My School DC, students can choose what school within the District they would like to attend. Through this lottery system, students can apply to attend any DCPS school outside their boundary or feeder pattern for any grade, including DCPS citywide schools, DCPS selective high schools and programs, and participating charter schools. Each student may apply to up to 12 schools.</p> <p>(My School DC, About My School DC)</p>

<p>Year-round Transfer Window</p>	<p>LIMITED Restricted transfer window</p>	<p>The lottery conducted through My School DC has a specific transfer window but does allow for applications to be submitted outside that timeline. (My School DC, The Public School Lottery)</p>
<p>Tuition-Free Public Schools</p>	<p>YES Prohibition on parent tuition</p>	<p>Non-resident families can enroll students in a public school or public charter school in D.C., provided they pay tuition. The amount of tuition is set by the State Education Office. (Code of D.C. 38-302 Tuition required of nonresidents; deposit of payments) OSSE explains that tuition must be paid annually. OSSE posts the tuition payment scale for each school year. FAQ My School DC All DCPS schools are free to DC residents.</p>
<p>School Capacity Transparency</p>	<p>YES Districts must report capacity by school and grade level</p>	<p>Through My School DC, schools report grade capacity by the number of lottery seats available, waitlist information, information on Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) scores at the school, enrichment offerings, and other general information for parents to make informed choices. (My School DC, School Finder SY 2024-2025)</p>
<p>Transfer Data Transparency</p>	<p>N/A Does not qualify for policy rating</p>	<p>Washington, D.C. comprises only one school district. D.C. collects open enrollment data through the My School DC webpage, which allows stakeholders to see what schools are available for enrollment.</p>
<p>Transparent Appeal Process</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>D.C. Administrative Regulations provide that parents have the right to appeal the denial of eligibility for transfer to their requested school through the student grievance procedure. (5-B DCMR 2106 School Selection Transfers) The student grievance procedure in regulations requires the student to first appeal to the principal or other school official. This decision, if unfavorable to the student, may be appealed to the Instructional Superintendent at DCPS who has jurisdiction over the school. Following this, the issue may be brought before a grievance review panel.</p>

(5-B DCMR 2405 Student Grievance Procedure)

SOURCE CITATIONS

Statutes

[Code of D.C. 38-302 Tuition required of nonresidents; deposit of payments](#)

Administrative Code

[5-B DCMR 2106 School Selection Transfers](#)

[5-B DCMR 2405 Student Grievance Procedure](#)

State Department of Education

[OSSE, Office of Enrollment & Residency: Supporting Families & Students](#)

[OSSE, Tuition Payment Scale for Non-Resident Students – School Year 2023-2024](#)

[My School DC, The Public School Lottery](#)

[My School DC, School Finder SY 2024-2025](#)



Charter Schools in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
<p>Multiple Charter Authorizers</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Multiple authorizers</p>	<p>Petitions for charter schools must be filed with eligible chartering authorities for approval.</p> <p>Eligible chartering authorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Education • The Public Charter School Board • Any one entity designated as an eligible chartering authority by enactment of a bill by the District of Columbia Council after April 26, 1996. <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1800.02 Definitions)</p>
<p>Charter Appeal Process</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Independent appeals process</p>	<p>If a chartering authority denies a petition, the chartering authority must specify in writing the reasons for the decision and determine how the applicant may revise and resubmit the petition.</p> <p>A decision by an eligible chartering authority to deny a petition to establish a public charter school shall be subject to judicial review by an appropriate court of the District of Columbia or by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. In the case of review by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education shall issue procedures for the submission and review of appeals.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.03 Process for approving or denying public charter school petitions)</p>
<p>Charter Regulatory Flexibility</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Automatic exemption from most state and local regulations</p>	<p>The D.C. Code provides that charter schools have exclusive control over expenditures, administration, personnel, and instructional methods, outside of requirements in the law. Further, charter schools are exempt from D.C. statutes, policies, rules, and regulations established by the Superintendent, Board of Education, Mayor, District of Columbia Council, or Authority.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.04 Duties, powers, and other requirements, of public charter schools)</p>

<p>Equitable Charter Funding</p>	<p>LIMITED Disparities exist</p>	<p>The D.C. Code provides for a formula for uniform per student funding. The Code makes clear the formula applies to operating budget appropriations for students in public charter schools.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-2902 Applicability of Formula)</p>
<p>Charter Facilities Funding</p>	<p>LIMITED Some or no facilities funding</p>	<p>Through the Direct Loan and Credit Enhancement revolving funds, public charter schools can receive financing for facilities. Public charter LEAs may apply for loans up to \$2 million or credit enhancements of up to \$1 million to support facilities projects.</p> <p>(Public Law No. 108-7, District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 2003, Section 143; OSSE, Facilities Financing for DC Public Charter Schools)</p> <p>The D.C. Code provides that the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization may provide services, including facilities maintenance, to public charter schools, subject to an agreement.</p> <p>The D.C. mayor is required to give the right of first offer to purchase or lease an excess school facility to eligible entities. The first preference is for an existing tenant that is a public charter school occupying the facility or property; the second preference is a public charter school board that is determined to be high-performing and financially sound; and the third preference is any other entity.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.09 District of Columbia public school services to public charter schools)</p> <p>Charter schools in D.C. are exempt from property and sales taxes.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.10 Application of law)</p> <p>The D.C. Code provides for facility allowances for charter schools, calculated as follows: DCPS approved capital budget divided by the previous school year DCPS total pupil count. Beginning in FY2024 and beyond, the per pupil facility allowance must be 3.1% greater than the previous fiscal year’s per pupil facility allowance. The per pupil facility allowance must be multiplied by the number of students established to attend the charter school to determine the actual facility allowance payments to be received.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-2908 Facilities allowance for Public Charter Schools)</p>

<p>Options for High-Performing Charters</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>High-performing charter schools receive incentives and a favorable regulatory environment</p>	<p>The D.C. mayor is required to give the right of first offer to purchase or lease an excess school facility to eligible entities. The first preference is for an existing tenant that is a public charter school occupying the facility or property; the second preference is a public charter school board that is determined to be high-performing and financially sound by the Public Charter School Board; and the third preference is any other entity.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.09 District of Columbia public school services to public charter schools)</p>
<p>Charter Zoning Exemptions</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The same exemptions are provided</p>	<p>Zoning Administrative Regulations in D.C. define public school buildings to include those chartered by the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board. Further charter schools are included within the education category for use throughout the regulations.</p> <p>(11 DCMR 100 Zoning)</p>

SOURCE CITATIONS

Statutes	Administrative Code	State Department of Education
<p>Code of D.C. 38-1800.02 Definitions</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-1802.03 Process for approving or denying public charter school petitions</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-1802.04 Duties, powers, and other requirements, of public charter schools</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-1802.09 District of Columbia public school services to public charter schools</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-1802.10 Application of law</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-2902 Applicability of Formula</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-2908 Facilities allowance for Public Charter Schools</p> <p>Public Law No. 108-7, District of Columbia Appropriations Act of 2003, Section 143</p>	<p>11 DCMR 100 Zoning</p>	<p>OSSE, Facilities Financing for DC Public Charter Schools</p>



Private School Choice in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	OVERALL RATING	PROGRAM OVERVIEW
<p>Universal Eligibility</p>	<p>LIMITED</p> <p>Eligibility less than 100%</p>	<p>Established through the Code of the District of Columbia, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program is the only Congressionally enacted and federally funded private school choice program in the nation. It provides vouchers to eligible students to attend private schools. Funds are used to pay tuition, fees, and transportation expenses.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. Chapter 18N Scholarships for Opportunity and Results)</p> <p>Eligible students must be residents of D.C. and come from a household that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receiving assistance under the supplemental nutrition assistance program; or • whose income does not exceed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 185% of the poverty line; or ○ 300% of the poverty line, in the case of a household with a student participating in the opportunity scholarship program in the preceding year. <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1853.13 Definitions)</p> <p>D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Funds may be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniforms (\$350 maximum annually) • Before and after care • Books • Field trips • Public transportation <p>Funds may not be used for punitive fees; supplies and select uniform items; other fees not related to academic success.</p> <p>(Serving Our Children, How it Works)</p>

<p>Comparable Student Funding</p>	<p>LIMITED Funding below 90%</p>	<p>Beginning in 2011-2012, students received \$8,000 in grades K-8 and \$12,000 in grades 9-12. In all following years, the Secretary of Education is required to adjust the maximum amounts of assistance for inflation. (Code of D.C. 38-1853.07 Use of funds)</p>
<p>Uncapped Student Access</p>	<p>LIMITED Funding or enrollment cap</p>	<p>From 2012-2023, D.C. authorized \$60,000,000 to be appropriated for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. (D.C. Code 38-1853.14 Authorization of appropriations)</p>
<p>Extended Application Window</p>	<p>LIMITED Application period or periods</p>	<p>The Opportunity Scholarship program does have a deadline for submission of scholarships – the program guide indicates the deadline is usually around the beginning of October. The deadline for the next scholarship year is not yet posted. (D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program Guide)</p>
<p>Student Testing Options</p>	<p>LIMITED Rigid mandates, multiple tests, or no accountability</p>	<p>D.C. Code provides that the Mayor and Secretary of Education must jointly enter into an agreement with the Institute of Education Sciences to evaluate annually the opportunity scholarship program.</p> <p>D.C. Code requires the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In general. — Each participating school shall comply with any testing requirements determined to be necessary for evaluation under § 38-1853.09(a)(2)(A)(i). (2) Administration of tests. — The Institute of Education Sciences shall administer nationally norm-referenced standardized tests, as described in § 38-1853.09(a)(3)(A), to students participating in the evaluation under § 38-1853.09 for the purpose of conducting the evaluation under such section, except where a student is attending a participating school that is administering the same nationally norm-referenced standardized test in accordance with the testing requirements described in paragraph (1). (3) Test results. — Each participating school that administers the nationally norm-referenced standardized test described in paragraph (2) to an eligible student shall make the test results, with respect to such student, available to the Secretary as necessary for evaluation under § 38-1853.09(a). <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1853.08 Nondiscrimination and other requirements for participating schools; D.C. 38-1853.09 Evaluations)</p>

<p>School Autonomy</p>	<p>LIMITED</p> <p>Silent language or adverse regulations</p>	<p>The D.C. Code does not ensure participating providers have protection from interference and overregulation.</p> <p>The D.C. Code provides that the assessment used to assess student progress must be the same reading and mathematics assessment used by D.C. public schools.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1853.09 Evaluations)</p> <p>The D.C. Code requires scholarship entities to give priority to certain students, including those students who attended one of the lowest-performing schools under the D.C. accountability system; students whose household includes a sibling or other student who is participating; and target resources to students and families that lack the financial resources to take advantage of available educational options.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1853.06 Priorities)</p>
<p>Accessible School Participation</p>	<p>LIMITED</p> <p>Accreditation requirement</p>	<p>The D.C. Code provides that participating private schools must be fully accredited by an accrediting body.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1853.07 Use of funds)</p> <p>The Code provides for the following recognized accreditation organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools • The Association of Independent Maryland Schools • The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools • The Virginia Association of Independent Schools • American Montessori Internationale • The American Montessori Society • The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.02 Contents of petition)</p>

ESAs and Parent-Directed Spending		
Freedom to Customize	NO No ESA or microgrant program	Washington, D.C. does not have an education scholarship account or microgrant program.
Freedom to Access	NO No ESA or microgrant program	
Carry-Over Funding	NO No ESA or microgrant program	
Tax Credits		
Full Tax Credit	NO No choice program	Washington, D.C. does not have an education tax credit program.

SOURCE CITATIONS

Statutes

[Code of D.C. 38-1802.02 Contents of petition](#)

[Code of D.C. Chapter 18N Scholarships for Opportunity and Results](#)

[Code of D.C. 38-1853.06 Priorities](#)

[Code of D.C. 38-1853.07 Use of funds](#)

[Code of D.C. 38-1853.09 Evaluations](#)

[Code of D.C. 38-1853.13 Definitions](#)

[D.C. Code 38-1853.14 Authorization of appropriations](#)

Other Resources

[The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program](#)

[D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program Guide](#)

[Serving Our Children, How it Works](#)



Homeschooling in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
Homeschool without Prior Approval	<p>YES</p> <p>No permission required</p>	<p>D.C. policies do not require parents to receive permission from local school boards or other administrative bodies.</p>
No Extra Homeschool Notifications	<p>NO</p> <p>Annual notification</p>	<p>At least 15 days before the first date of home instruction, a parent must submit written notification of the intent to homeschool on an official form developed by the OSSE. This must indicate consent to the requirements in the homeschool chapter.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5202.1 Written Notification)</p> <p>The parent must then file an annual Home Schooling Notification Form, no later than August 15th of each year.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5203.1 Annual Verification and Discontinuation)</p>
No Certification to Homeschool	<p>YES</p> <p>No certification requirement</p>	<p>D.C. Regulations require parents who are instructing their children to have a high school diploma or its equivalent. If a parent does not have a high school diploma, or the equivalent, the parent may petition OSSE for a waiver.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5207 Parent or Legal Guardian Qualifications)</p>
Flexible Assessment Options	<p>YES</p> <p>Flexible academic accountability</p>	<p>Homeschool program must provide “thorough, regular instruction of sufficient duration to implement the home school program”, and must include instruction on language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5204.1 Home Schooling Program)</p>

		<p>Parents are required to maintain a portfolio of homeschooling materials that includes evidence of the student’s work that demonstrates that the child is “engaged in thorough, regular educational activities in a range of subjects.”</p> <p>This must be maintained for at least one year.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5205 Educational Materials)</p> <p>Parents in D.C. are given the discretion to participate, free of charge, in regularly scheduled standardized testing programs that are administered in the public school the child is eligible to attend.</p> <p>(5-E DCMR 5209.1 Voluntary Participation in Standardized Testing)</p>
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SOURCE CITATIONS

Administrative Code	State Department of Education
5-E DCMR 5202.1 Written Notification	OSSE, Homeschooling in the District of Columbia
5-E DCMR 5203.1 Annual Verification and Discontinuation	
5-E DCMR 5204.1 Home Schooling Program	
5-E DCMR 5205 Educational Materials	
5-E DCMR 5207 Parent or Legal Guardian Qualifications	

POLICY ENHANCERS



Part-time Enrollment in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
Resident Course Access	<p>NO</p> <p>No policy</p>	<p>Washington, D.C. does not have policies for homeschool students and private school students to access individual courses at schools. Local schools establish their own policies for participation.</p>
Nonresident Course Access	<p>N/A</p> <p>Does not qualify for policy rating</p>	<p>D.C. is one district. Therefore, access to courses outside a student’s district of residence will depend on neighboring state policies.</p> <p>Non-resident families can enroll students in a public school or public charter school in D.C., provided they pay tuition.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-302 Tuition required of nonresidents; deposit of payments)</p> <p>Non-resident enrollment is allowed where there are no DC residents on the waitlist for the school of choice; the student receives an offer from the school to enroll; there is a signed and completed tuition agreement that is filed with OSSE.</p> <p>(OSSE, Office of Enrollment & Residency: Supporting Families & Students)</p>

<p>Virtual Course Access</p>	<p>LIMITED</p> <p>Access denied to some resident students, or students must take at least one class in a public school</p>	<p>Washington, D.C. does not offer fully accessible virtual providers. School districts may offer blended learning. There are several virtual school options, but it is not clear if students may take individual courses.</p> <p>(See DCPS, Blended Learning; Friendship Public Charter School Online)</p> <p>D.C. Administrative Regulations require postsecondary institutions that would like to offer online instruction to students to be licensed by the District of Columbia Higher Education Licensure Commission or authorized to operate.</p> <p>(5-A DCMR 83 Delivery of Online Instruction by a Postsecondary Educational Institution; OSSE, Distance/Online Education Inquiries)</p>
<p>Extracurricular Access</p>	<p>LIMITED</p> <p>Access denied to some resident students, or students must take at least one class in a public school</p>	<p>D.C. Administrative Regulations provide for student eligibility for interscholastic athletics. In order to be eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics at a member school, the student must meet residency requirements. Students attending D.C. charter schools are eligible. If the student is a non-resident, the student may be enrolled in a private, independent or parochial member school to participate. Further, the student is eligible if they are a resident of D.C. and are homeschooled and meet the following requirements:</p> <p>For homeschool students, the principal and athletic director of the member school must give the student written authorization and request and be granted a waiver of student eligibility requirements.</p> <p>(5-F DCMR 104 Student Eligibility to Participate)</p> <p>(5-F DCMR 106 Student Eligibility to Participate: Desired Sport at Other School)</p>

SOURCE CITATIONS			
Statutes	Administrative Code	State Department of Education	Other Resources
Code of D.C. 38-302 Tuition required of nonresidents; deposit of payments	5-A DCMR 83 Delivery of Online Instruction by a Postsecondary Educational Institution 5-F DCMR 104 Student Eligibility to Participate 5-F DCMR 106 Student Eligibility to Participate: Desired Sport at Other School	OSSE, Office of Enrollment & Residency: Supporting Families & Students DCPS, Blended Learning	Friendship Public Charter School Online



Learn Everywhere in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
Provider Qualification Standard	<p>NO</p> <p>No program</p>	<p>Washington, D.C., has not established a Learn Everywhere program.</p>
Course Credit Standard	<p>NO</p> <p>No program</p>	
Core Course Opportunities	<p>NO</p> <p>No program</p>	
Central State List	<p>NO</p> <p>No program</p>	



Transportation in Washington, D.C.

POLICY	RATING	POLICY OVERVIEW
<p>Open Enrollment Transit</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Does not qualify for policy rating</p>	<p>The D.C. Code allows the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to transport elementary and secondary school students at subsidized or free fares.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 35-242 Transit subsidy agreement)</p> <p>D.C. has created the Kids Ride Free Program. This program provides free transportation for students if they meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student is a resident of D.C. • The student is between the ages of 5 and 21 • The student is enrolled in an elementary or secondary public, private, charter, or parochial school located within the District or youth in the care of the District. <p>(District Department of Transportation, Kids Ride Free)</p>
<p>Fair Transportation Access</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Charter School Students</p> <p>The D.C. Code provides that students attending public charter schools are eligible for reduced fares on the Metrobus and Metrorail Transit System on the same terms and conditions as a student attending a D.C. public school.</p> <p>(Code of D.C. 38-1802.08 Reduced fares for public transportation)</p> <p>Private School Students</p> <p>Through D.C.’s Kids Ride Free Program, any student who is a resident of D.C. and enrolled in an elementary or secondary private school located within the District may ride public transportation for free.</p> <p>(District Department of Transportation, Kids Ride Free)</p>

<p>Vehicle Flexibility</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Washington D.C. does not provide school buses for district schools.</p>
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SOURCE CITATIONS

Statutes	State Department of Education	Other Resources
<p>Code of D.C. 35-242 Transit subsidy agreement</p> <p>Code of D.C. 38-1802.08 Reduced fares for public transportation</p>	<p>OSSE, Student Transportation</p>	<p>District Department of Transportation, Kids Ride Free</p>

