



FY2021 Budget Oversight Responses
Office of the Student Advocate
Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate
May 22, 2020

1. What are the Office of the Student Advocate’s performance goals and targeted outcomes for FY21? How will the proposed FY21 budget serve to achieve those goals?

FY2021 Performance Plan & Targeted Outcomes

For FY21, the Office of the Student Advocate will continue with a similar plan for performance while devoting capacity to programmatic work with students, families, schools, and the community. As we learned from our recent shift to distant education, incorporating student and family voice is vital for learning as we begin projecting what recovery means for school year 2020-21 (SY20-21). We must ensure that student and family voice is present throughout the recovery process. Our FY21 performance plan includes:

#1: Increase Office Awareness and Visibility/Outreach

Goal: Continue to build on current community engagement strategies and expand partnerships/collaborations to establish citywide office awareness. This engagement includes but is not limited to:

- Continuing to engage and partner with a variety of stakeholders across all eight wards, such as:
 - State Board of Education,
 - DCPS’s Office of Communications and Engagement, Office of Integrity, Student Support Division and other relevant divisions within DCPS,
 - Public Charter School Board,
 - Schools and school leaders,
 - Student organizations,
 - Parent organizations,
 - Civic groups and organizations (i.e. ward education councils, etc.)
 - Service providers and community-based organizations (i.e. family collaboratives, etc.)
 - Parents, students, and community members, and,
 - Governmental agencies and offices (i.e. any relevant agency or office that services families – traditional and non-traditional);
- Continuing to create and distribute materials across the District;
- Presenting and serving on panels, committees, advocacy coalitions, and working groups;
- Communicating the trends that we see in our work through reporting and communications;
- Sharing the data from our office on a more regular basis;
- Increasing communication efforts to non-English speaking communities and translate resource materials into those languages;

- Utilizing our existing partnerships with community-based organizations and service providers to increase communication and services to District at-risk students and families (e.g. non-English speaking communities, homeless families, child welfare, and justice involved populations).

#2: Increase Student Engagement and Advocacy

Goal: Work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to improve the capacity of students to navigate DC's educational landscape by equipping them to advocate for themselves. We will do so by:

- Working collaboratively with trusted stakeholders to develop access points for public students to contribute in the initial stages of the policy making process (i.e. Student Advisory Committee, focus groups, surveys).
- Increasing access for students using our RFA process by making it more youth friendly.
- Working with relevant stakeholders to support on-going student engagement efforts / student leadership organizations.
- Including student leaders as facilitators and thought partners to the programming our office provides.
- Providing support to student groups doing advocacy work that is aligned with the programming our office provides (i.e. safe passage and student safety, transportation, etc.).

#3: Parent Leadership and Advocacy

Goal: Improve the capacity of parents, guardians, and families to navigate the educational landscape and processes so that they are well-equipped to advocate for their families' interests. We will do so by:

- Helping parents and guardians develop an understanding of issues related to DC's public education structure, governance framework, and budgetary processes.
- Increasing access for public school parents and guardians to contribute in the development stages of policy making.
- Creating informational material for parents and guardians on areas related to special education, student discipline, student enrollment/school selection, and effective communication.
- Connecting families to additional resources provided by our partners in the community.
- Continuing to ensure that our office's web presence is user-friendly and interactive for students and families.
- Expanding our resource distribution efforts through various social media campaigns.
- Improving access to families of non-English speaking populations; offer materials online, and in printed form, in multiple languages outlining the services of our office.
- Providing resources regarding parental and student rights and responsibilities for available educational services and supports.
- Deepening and scaling our partnerships with other parent and family service organizations and government agencies to meet the needs of families.

#4: Collaborate and Expand Service Capacity

Goal: Build relationships with education stakeholders, community-based organizations (CBO), civic organizations, and community professionals to establish a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations. We will achieve this by:

- Expanding our outreach to District government agencies while maintaining our existing partnerships and collaborations.

- Continuing to work closely with CBO service providers, Local Educational Agencies (LEA), and District Agencies through partnerships that provide student and parent facing trainings on systemic trends highlighted through their work and to be responsive to student and parental advocacy needs highlighted through our individual and collective work.
- Engaging in conversations with community members, CBOs, and non-profit organizations regarding opportunities for collaboration.
- Continuing to develop avenues for public education stakeholders to share best practices for supporting underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations, their families.
- Expanding collaborative relationships with schools, service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's at-risk students and their families.
- Expanding collaborative relationships with schools, service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's non-native English-speaking communities, students, and their families in an effort to provide more supports, resources, and trainings.

#5: Improve Educational Outcomes by Effecting Systemic Change

Goal: The Office of the Student Advocate is committed to identifying and recommending strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students. We want to increase all students' and families' ability to achieve equal access to a quality public education. We will achieve this by:

- Building relationships and working collaboratively with students, parents, families, government agencies, CBOs, and all education stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students.
- Engaging in relevant conversations focused in education policy, such as testifying before DC Council, making recommendations to the State Board of Education, and participating on task forces and committees (i.e. Student Safety and Safe Passage Working Group; Every Day Counts! Truancy Task Force; Every Student Every Day Coalition).
- Providing quarterly and annual reports that identified trends for educational stakeholders that can contribute in ongoing conversations related to systemic change.
- Meeting quarterly with DCPS leadership to share our office's data, highlighting trends we are seeing in order to foster a closer working relationship and to find ways to work collaboratively to support their efforts (i.e. equity framework, special education, and student/family grievance process).
- Sharing with individual schools and LEAs the data and trends from our office on a monthly and quarterly basis. This effort will support their understanding of individual school level trends we see notice in addition to citywide level trends.
- Providing guidance and support to individual schools and LEAs on the implementation of new and existing citywide policies and procedures – specifically in the areas of special education, student discipline, and attendance.
- Continuing to annually collect and review individual LEA student handbooks and conduct an analysis of their policies. We will continue to share our findings with those LEAs and work with them to support the development and implementation of student and family centered policies and procedures that remove barriers to the access of equitable resources and services.

#6: Increase Interagency and Cross-Sector Collaboration

Goal: Work collaboratively across District government agencies, offices, and with CBOs to increase our interactions and support of families and students. In order to achieve this goal, we will:

- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and CBOs that work with the District’s at-risk students (homeless and justice involved) and their families.
- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and CBOs that work with the District’s non-native English-speaking communities, students, and their families in an effort to provide more supports, resources, and trainings.

How the proposed FY21 budget will serve to achieve these goals:

The budget as proposed for FY21 is below the baseline our office needs to fulfill all of our goals. Unfortunately, the current proposed funding levels only permits for a continuation of existing services to meet the needs of the students and families. The current public health crisis will completely reshape the way schools operate and the needs of students and families. The proposed levels will allow us to pivot our efforts to meet some of those new needs, but services, resources and supports from our office will be delivered in a more limited fashion.

During this current health crisis, we have seen the importance of offering accessible modes of communication for our city’s most vulnerable student and family populations. In FY20, we received additional one time funds to increase our outreach efforts. Those funds allowed us to print resources in multiple languages, place multilingual ads on WMATA buses, and place culturally competent posters in bus shelters in language diverse neighborhoods. The proposed FY21 budget is reflective of the current crisis and will require OSA to develop alternative resourcing to connect with some communities.

The proposed funding levels will require us to be selective with our priorities and programming, thus, challenging our ability to provide vital supports to all communities our office serves. The current proposed budget does not fund all of our programmatic needs. Without additional programmatic funds, our outreach and distribution of information and resources will be limited, and it will be challenging for our office to continue to scale our services and supports for families.

2. Will the proposed FY21 budget allow the Office of the Student Advocate to meet all of its statutory mandates?

Although the office will be able to fulfill its mission, the currently proposed FY21 budget does not provide funding to support all of the statutory mandates.

The currently proposed FY21 budget does not include funding to establish several public education resources centers (PERCs), as noted in the statute. Currently, our office serves as one PERC, but it is not easily accessible. In addition to our office, we have developed an online Education & Community Resource Guide to support the needs of families and community stakeholders. This guide is comprehensive, but our office does not have enough funding to fully promote, scale, and distribute this useful tool. We also rely on our trainings throughout the city to provide advice to students and families on all matters regarding public education, filling the void of centralized public education resource centers.

Additionally, the current proposed FY21 budget does not provide funding for the office to support and serve as an advocate for all students and families seeking in-person one-on-one support during educational conferencing and proceedings with individual schools or LEAs.

The FY21 budget will allow us to continue our current work – which entails operating a public education hotline to answer questions and provide information regarding relevant public education resources, agency and organization referrals through our Request for Assistance line and providing outreach to students, parents, and guardians regarding public education in DC through workshops, trainings and school visits.

3. Provide a narrative description on programmatic initiatives for the Office of the Student Advocate for FY21.

The mission of the Office of the Student Advocate is to support and empower DC residents to achieve equal access to a quality public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. Our office aims to play a critical role in amplifying the voices of our students, families, and communities in the DC education landscape. Within this system, the Office of the Student Advocate plays a unique role as the only DC government office that combines the access and influence of a government agency with the direct, grassroots outreach necessary to serve our families and communities.

The mission of our office has led us to undertake the following programmatic initiatives. This list is inclusive of ongoing, current, and future initiatives:

Request for Assistance Line

Our Request for Assistance (RFA) line is a “311 system” for public education through which our office provides relevant resources, information, and appropriate agency or organization referrals to meet the specific needs of the caller. The line also allows our office to provide one-on-one coaching to families on a variety of public education issues.

In FY20, we continued to operate our RFA line live, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. To date, for School Year (SY) 19-20, we have received 350 unduplicated requests for assistance. Prior to the current public health crisis we were outpacing our requests for assistance from SY18-19. Since stay-at-home orders were given, we saw an initial decline in families reaching out for educational support as families struggled with supporting their basic needs, from getting food to finding childcare, from orienting to new social distancing norms to obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE). Currently, we are returning to the previous pace of families seeking educational support through the RFA process, but distant learning related queries are the leading topic.

Community Outreach

In addition to the volume of calls through our RFA line, we significantly increased our interactions and contacts with families beyond our four walls. So far in FY20, we have engaged with over 1,759 education stakeholders at more than 100 events, in-person meetings and trainings pre-COVID. Since shifting to remote operations in compliance with social distancing orders, we have engaged with more than 1,100 students, families, and stakeholders virtually. These stakeholders include students who participated in focus groups we facilitated, numerous Zoom meetings with CBOs, nonprofits, and government agencies, and most notably a week long social media campaign series titled, “Don’t Mute Mental Health Week” focusing on the intersection between mental health and student success. Before stay at homes were implemented, we distributed more than 4,850 resources in English, Spanish and Amharic across every ward in the District.

We recognize there are families across the district dealing with issues outside of the school building that negatively impacts their student’s educational experiences. We have made the

commitment to support communities identified in the Families First initiative. We have been working with several CFSA awarded providers throughout their developmental stages. To date, we have connected with six out of the 11 identified communities. In addition to offering our services to residents within those communities, we have been connecting students and youth leaders from some of our organizational partnerships to be a part of the development of these centers by joining the Family First Center's Community Advisory Councils (CAC).

OSA will continue its efforts to increase student participation in policy development. Prior to the current health crisis, our office held focus groups with and surveyed more than 400 students regarding their safe passage traveling to school, their safety, and transportation. Many of the students highlighted in those focus groups were also active participants in our ward based working groups dating back to FY19. Since the health crisis began, we shifted our work with students online by facilitating virtual focus groups. We developed a mobile device-friendly survey regarding students' experiences with distant learning and social distancing. In FY21, we must continue to elevate student experiences in the conversation about how, as a city, we deliver public education.

Special Education Workshops & Resources

We continue to host workshops focused on providing information to families about provisions of federal and local special education law, the difference between 504 plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEP), prompting evaluation, determining eligibility for services and understanding procedural safeguards. This forum also gives families the opportunity to interact with local level special education experts to workshop their specific concerns.

We plan to continue our highly popular Special Education: Know Your Rights Series where families and stakeholders are able to connect immediately. FY21 sessions will more than likely be held virtually, aligning with current social distancing guidelines. Our FY20 partners included: Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) State Advisory Panel on Special Education, OSSE State Complaints Office, OSSE Strong Start, OSSE Office of Dispute Resolution, OSSE Division of Student Transportation, DC Special Education Cooperative, DCPS Division of Specialized Instruction, DCPS Section 504 and Accommodations Team, DCPS Early Stages, Advocates for Justice and Education, Children's Law Center, Decoding Dyslexia DC, and Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services. Resources developed for this series are available on our website at <https://sboe.dc.gov/node/1153932>.

In FY20, we collaborated with Decoding Dyslexia DC to produce a handbook for parents and schools seeking local and national resources regarding Dyslexia. This handbook is available online on our website and is intended to help inform families and educational stakeholders of the need to know facts about Dyslexia. The guide is a start point for families to navigate through the initial phase and common early stumbling blocks of getting support for their student. The guide is available on our website at studentadvocate.dc.gov.

Student Discipline & Bullying Work

In FY20, we paired our work with Student Discipline and Bullying so students, families and school staff can access this information in one workshop. We are continuing our partnership with the DC Office of Human Rights Citywide Youth Bullying Prevention Program as resource partners to ensure that parents, school staff, and students know the role they play in bullying prevention. We have joined conversations with SchoolTalk and the Juvenile Justice Initiative in various ways to support the climate and culture within school buildings. We have seen the growing need for more open conversations about bullying, what it means, and how to ensure

student safety is the school's number one priority. In FY21 we are anticipating that our work on bullying will need to incorporate more supports for students and families experiencing online harassment and cyberbullying.

We continued to work in partnership with the Howard University School of Law in FY20 to produce additional comparative analysis of student discipline policies for DCPS and each of the public charter LEAs. The analysis conducted this year was a review of compliance to date with the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018. Data collected from this work informs several other school selection resources produced for parents from teacher representation to restorative justice practice and student safety.

Safe Passage Initiatives

The safe passage of our students traveling to-and-from school is paramount, but we know incidents of community violence surrounding our schools and communities jeopardize the safety of our children. In FY20, we worked to engage the community on topics including student safety and safe passage. We continued our Ward 8 Student Safety and Safe Passage Working Group, which includes students, parents, non-profit and community-based organizations, government offices and agencies, and schools/ LEAs. These conversations aim to bring education, health and safety, and community leaders together to develop strategies on how to increase safety for students, schools, and communities. We replicated those efforts across the city, with our work expanding to Wards 4, 5, and 7. We have partnered with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in facilitating these conversations in Ward 7.

In addition to facilitating these working group sessions, our office has taken on three major projects regarding Safe Passage:

1. **Student Safety Needs Assessment:** Using student perspectives to influence policy and shape initiatives is a principle that navigates our work. Our office has spoken with and surveyed more than 430 students from across every ward in DC regarding their safety traveling to-and-from school (Prior to schools' closures in response to COVID-19). We have partnered with numerous students serving organizations including Global Kids, Black Swan Academy and Pathways 2 Power. For a month, our office facilitated small focus group discussions with 10 – 25 students per session. We were able to meet with more than 430 students from all eight wards attending 15 DCPS and 12 public charter schools. The students came from:

DCPS: Anacostia High School, Ballou High School, Banneker High School, Cardozo Education Campus, Columbia Heights Education Campus, Duke Ellington School for the Arts, Eastern High School, Hart Middle School, H.D. Woodson High School, Kramer Middle School, McKinley Technology High School, Roosevelt High School, Roosevelt STAY High School, School Without Walls, and Wilson High School.

PCS: Basis, Capital City, DC International, Friendship Collegiate Academy, Idea, Inspired Teaching, KIPP DC College Preparatory, Meridian Middle School, Paul, SEED, Thurgood Marshall Academy, and Washington Leadership Academy.

We strategically focused our efforts on speaking with middle and high school students first, but we recognize that the voices of parents and younger children are vital. Prior to school closures, we started developing surveying tools for parents and families of

younger children. We are currently finalizing a report highlighting the students' responses that should be available before the conclusion of FY20.

- 2. Safe Spots Initiative:** In partnership with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), our offices recruited about 40 businesses, organizations, and government agencies to serve as Safe Spots in Wards 7 and 8. Safe Spots are local businesses, organizations and agencies that agreed to be provide a safe space for students in times of need. Safe Spots currently exist in the Congress Heights and Anacostia communities of Ward 8, along with the Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road corridor of Ward 7. Plans are underway to expand Safe Spots to the Wards 1 and 5 along the Columbia Heights and NoMa communities. More information about Safe Spots can be found: <https://safepassage.dc.gov/page/safe-spots-students-initiative>
- 3. Congress Heights Walking School Bus:** In collaboration with the leadership of Principal Niya White from Center City Public Charter School in Congress Heights, our office has been an active partner in piloting a Walking School Bus. Center City PCS Congress Heights staff, along with community volunteers, walk with students, grouped by shared paths home, or to shared bus stops/routes. The success of this pilot has led to efforts to scale the model in school communities across the city. With the help of the Office of the DME, Center City will share out professional development sessions for interested schools, PTOs and community partners looking to replicate the program. Our office has also been meeting and supporting several Parent Teacher Organizations who are interested in creating similar programming for their schools.

Language Access and Accessibility

In FY20, we continue to implement additional language access improvements to be in compliance with the Language Access Act by translating portions of our website, materials, and our outreach brochure into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean). OSA workshops and community meetings in Ward 1 and 4 are conducted in both English, Spanish and when requested in other languages. We also use the Language Line service, to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English. We have met with Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs (OLA) to ensure that our student and family material is not only translated correctly, but culturally appropriate. OLA also distributes our family facing material during community outreach efforts. In FY21, we will continue to ensure that material is not only produce in home language of students, but efforts are made to increase access/connection to our office.

Creating Pathways to Teaching: Dual-Enrollment

In FY20, while analyzing student discipline data, our office noticed that schools with a demographically less representative teaching staff had higher rates of discipline of Black students. In particular, young Black boys receive the highest rates of suspension and expulsion locally and nationally among all students, while Black girls are disciplined at the highest rates for all female students.

Even though 45 percent of all public and charter school students are Black boys, only 16 percent of the teachers are Black men. With more focus being placed on teacher recruitment and retention in DC, we have connected with several universities' Schools of Education (SOE) to assist with correcting the lack of representation of Black male teachers:

- 1. American University (AU):** we are partnering with AU on recruiting more Black male students from high schools in Wards 7 and 8 to enroll in their SOE's dual-enrollment

program. AU's dual enrollment program has slots for students and scholarship opportunities for students who choose to enroll in their SOE.

2. **Howard University's, Bowie State University's and Trinity University's** SOE all are developing pathways and programs to increase male persons of color in the District's teaching force. OSA has agreed to make sure students, families and stakeholders are aware of these opportunities and develop resources to support navigating the early stages of those tracks.

In addition to establishing the partnerships listed above, we have created several new resources for families, one tool created from the research on teacher representation highlighted below. If you would like to learn more about teacher representation, please feel free to visit: <https://myteacher.dc.gov>

Resources developed and launched in FY20

1. **Don't Mute Mental Health:** Our office has recognized the need for additional conversations, guidance, and awareness on topics regarding mental health and our students. While we believe a focus on mental health is part of regular health care, most often, mental health is discussed in terms of crisis response or interventions at the Tier 2 and 3 level subsequent to a youth receiving a clinical diagnosis for a mental health disorder. While this level of care is important to addressing the needs in our communities, often times we lack focus on the Tier 1 strategies that can be implemented to support students across the board whether they display symptoms or not. In our work with parents and community members, we have found that many families do not always have access to quality mental health care resources or clarity regarding the process of clinical mental health care. As a result, our office created a podcast discussing topics related to the intersection of mental health and student success. Prior to COVID-19 the podcast premiered weekly on our Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube pages and features interviews with knowledgeable professionals across various fields, anecdotes from students, and highlights from CBOs specializing in care for youth. To date, the podcast has seen over 400 listeners and covered topics such as the Department of Behavioral Health's School Mental Health Expansion, empowering black boys, and how students access mental health services within their schools.
2. **DMMH Week:** In response to social distancing requirements and physical closure of schools, we decided to pivot our existing Mental Health based podcast to meet the needs of students and families. In partnership with the office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, we hosted virtually student focus groups and centered our conversations on listening to student needs and experiences with existing resources. In doing so, we recognized there was an abundance of information regarding COVID-19 and changes in various services, but very little of this correspondence targeted and engaged students in the District. In response we repurposed our existing podcast into a vehicle to communicate with students. Our goal was to create additional conversations around mental wellness and students, provide guidance regarding the systems of mental health care in DC, and present information that targeted and engaged students. We crafted a week long initiative entitled, Don't Mute Mental Health Week, consisting of a series of interactive Instagram Live conversations with speakers from DC Health, the Department of Behavioral Health, Children's National Hospital, the George Washington Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, DC Public Schools Department of Social Emotional Academic Development, the MedStar Georgetown Center for Wellbeing In School Environments, and Mary's Center. Topics included: a student friendly overview of COVID-19, maintaining mental wellness for youth, balancing school work with home responsibilities, time management and organization skills, maintaining friendships while

remaining physically distant, teacher wellness, and the role of parent support for students during this time. In addition, our office created infographics that were shared to our social media that shared tips and suggestions around these topics for families and students.

3. Dyslexia Guide: Our Office collaborated with Decoding Dyslexia DC to develop a DC centric Dyslexia Guidebook. This handbook was created to inform families and educational stakeholders about dyslexia. This toolkit includes need-to-know information regarding dyslexia including important terminology, signs and symptoms to look for, common myths, a guide of questions to ask school staff members, as well as important local and national resources for families with children diagnosed with dyslexia. This online resource provides families and stakeholders with pertinent information that will help guide them through the initial phase of navigating the current dyslexia supports. This resource can be found in the Information & Advocacy Resources and Tools section of our website: <https://studentadvocate.dc.gov>

4. My Teacher DC (Website): My Teacher DC is a resource for families to consider when choosing a school for their children. All students benefit from having diverse and representative teachers in school, but not all schools are able to recruit a representative teaching staff. Very specific information regarding students are readily accessible including their demographics, their academic achievements, and the services a school can provide them. Unfortunately, not as much information is given regarding the teachers of these schools. Teachers play a vital role in the culture and environment of a school and more information should be considered when choosing a school. A school's ability to recruit and retain a diverse teaching staff can give you a more accurate depiction of the culture and environment of a school.

There are three main components of this website: First, the My Teacher DC website provides families with the most current compilation of information regarding DC's teachers available; second, this resource provides research highlighting the relationship between the demographics of teachers, disciplinary rates, and student achievement; third this website provides a detailed set of questions parents should ask school administrators when choosing a school for their children. This resource explores issues influencing the achievement of all students. Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, White, Male, Female, Transgender, Gender Nonconforming, and English Language Learning student perspectives are all represented in this resource. This resource can be found at: <https://myteacher.dc.gov>.

5. Parent & Family Go-To Guide Expansion: The Parent & Family Go-To Guide, designed and developed by our office, is a quick, concise, and family-friendly public education resource reference for any stakeholder needing information about the DC education system. This guide is a collection of documents that serve as a reference for parents and families looking for information, policy guidance, and conversation starters on a host of education topics. The guide includes over 75 questions students and families can use to initiate conversations with schools.

In SY 19-20 we updated the guide with additional information for Mental Health, Bullying, Military/Service Families and Homeless Students. Also, the guide was made available in print in Spanish and Amharic. This resource can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/advocacy>.

6. Race, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit (Website): Race and class often serve as barriers to

engagement, leaving a void between students, families, communities, and schools. We created our Race, Equity, and Inclusion toolkit as a resource for families, schools, and community organizations looking to begin their work towards creating and maintaining equitable and inclusive spaces in education. The information and resources included in the toolkit have been pulled from organizations, educators, and scholars who have been instrumental in moving the conversation on race, equity, and inclusion forward both nationally and locally. In the toolkit, families, schools, and community organizations can access standardized definitions, articles, books, videos, and other informational materials addressing issues surrounding race, equity, and inclusion. This resource can be found at <https://reitoolkit.dc.gov>.

7. Student Discipline Guide: Families often feel alone and overwhelmed when figuring out how to move forward after the school makes a discipline decision for their student. All students and families should know their rights whether or not they seek to challenge a disciplinary decision. In FY19, our office, in partnership with the Every Student Every Day Coalition and the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, created District of Columbia Student Discipline Guide to help students, families, and school staff navigate the new law, the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018. This comprehensive guide not only explains the new rules for student/school discipline in all DC public schools, both DCPS and public charter schools, but it also highlights terms to know and breaks down organizational structures families and educators should understand. Furthermore, the guide connects families and educators to resources, both governmental and non-governmental, that can offer additional support as needed. In FY 20 we translated the guide in multiple languages and printed copies in Spanish and Amharic. This guide can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/discipline>.

4. Provide an update on any change in FTEs in the proposed FY21 budget. Please identify each position and the source of funding for the position.

OSA continues to operate with 3 FTEs and 2 fellows, no changes from FY20.

	Source of Funding
Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate	100% Local
Phillip Copeland, Student Advocate	100% Local
Renatta Landrau, Program Associate	100% Local

5. Does the proposed FY21 budget allow for the Office of the Student Advocate to meet legislative, statutory, or regulatory requirements?

Although the office will be able to fulfill its mission, the currently proposed FY21 budget does not provide funding to support all of the statutory and regulatory mandates.

The currently proposed FY21 budget does not include funding to establish multiple public education resources centers (PERCs), as noted in the statute. Currently, our office serves as one PERC, but it is not easily accessible, and we project on shifting from remote work in phases during the recovery, as well as limiting walk-in service to be in compliance with the current social distancing guidelines. The current health crisis will also mean shifting in person trainings, workshops and community conversation to virtual platforms. In the immediate past

we relied on our trainings throughout the city to connect with students and families on all matters regarding public education, filling the void of centralized ward based public education resource centers.

The current proposed FY21 budget will allow us to continue our current work – which entails operating a public education hotline to answer questions and provide information regarding relevant public education resources and agency and organization referrals through our Request for Assistance line and providing outreach to students, parents, and guardians regarding public education in DC through virtual workshops and school visits.

6. Describe any other programmatic expansions, initiatives or anticipated reductions for FY20 and FY21. Provide a breakdown by program and provide a detailed description, including FY20 and FY21 spending plans, the target population to be served, and the name and title of the Office of the Student Advocate employee responsible for the initiative.

Expanding Outreach and Engagement *Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate*

In FY20, our office was able to grow in several areas – from special education, student safety & safe passage, and student discipline. We are building a foundation and developing the resources to support students and families from all communities. We acknowledge that unique barriers exist for students and families based on experiences and circumstances created through no fault of their own. In FY21 we are seeking to connect and support more students and families that are unstably housed, language diverse, justice involved, and residents of Family First communities.

As we prepare to meet the challenges in a COVID-19 recovered environment, our office must find avenues to increase equity while continuing to elevate the voices of students and families. We are operationalizing that work currently by creating student facing surveys and conducting focus groups ranging from topics on student safety to experiences with distant learning. Communicating directly with students and families will lead us to solutions with built-in buy-in.

We are innovating new ways to engage families by utilizing low barrier technology such as Instagram Live features and SurveyPro, a mobile friendly online surveying tool. We will continue to connect with families across all wards, and are preparing on ways to meet them where they are. Engaging students and families while in compliance with social distancing guidelines will produce a number of barriers. As a District, we must ensure that we do not exasperate inequalities stemming from a digital divide by relying solely on digital/virtual platforms. We must create resources that families with or without internet connectivity can access.

Special Education Work *Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate; Renatta Landrau, Program Associate*

We will continue our Know Your Right Workshops on Special Education using a world café approach where families have the opportunity to engage with experts to learn more information, tips and strategies and to make the special education system work for their children. In this model of service, OSA fills a role of coordinator by directing logistics between the ten plus District agencies and community-based providers, by securing event cosponsors ensuring community buy-in, and by presenting information from basic provisions of special education law, to prompting an evaluation and determining eligibility for services. In FY20 and FY21 we are committed to hosting these workshops in Spanish and Amharic as well as in communities our partners serve through Families First.

Student Discipline Work *Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate; Phillip Copeland, Student*

Advocate

Our office continues our partnership with the Howard University School of Law (HUSL). Since SY 2018-19, we have collected and conduct a comparative analysis for all of the LEAs' student discipline policies in the city in order to have a better understanding of the variance in school policies. Understanding these differences allow us to offer policy recommendations toward the streamlining of these policies in order to better serve the needs of students and their families.

In SY 2019-20, we expanded this partnership to include the Advocates for Justice in Education (AJE). We again conducted a comparative analysis of the student handbooks from every LEA. In FY20 the focus was on compliance with the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018. The Compliance review focused on 7 areas:

1. Publication of updated Handbooks
2. Limits on the number of days a student may be suspended
3. Written justification for suspension of more than 20 cumulative days
4. Due Process Rights
5. Elimination of exclusionary discipline for certain behaviors
6. Continuity Plans for suspended students
7. Alternative Disciplinary Methods

From this analysis, our office worked with HUSL and AJE to help produce a snapshot of how our current system is complying with the law during its phased implementation. The report prepared by HUSL was submitted to the council along with testimony from HUSL students that highlighted LEAs who have handbooks that are meeting the intent of the law.

Student Discipline Guide: Families may often feel isolated and overwhelmed when determining their next steps after a school makes a disciplinary related decision for their student. All students and families should know their rights regarding school discipline and whether or not they should challenge that disciplinary decision. In FY19, our office, in partnership with the Every Student Every Day Coalition and the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, created District of Columbia Student Discipline Guide to help students, families, and school staff navigate the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018. This comprehensive guide not only explains the new rules for student/school discipline in all DC traditional public and charter schools, but it also highlights terms to know while breaking down organizational structures families and educators should understand. Furthermore, the guide connects families and educators to both governmental and non-governmental resources that can offer additional support as needed. This guide can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/discipline>.

Student Safety Work *Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate; Phillip Copeland, Student Advocate*

The safe passage of our students traveling to-and-from school is paramount, but we know that the instances of community violence surrounding our schools and communities jeopardizes the safety of our children. For FY21, we would like to continue our work in wards 8, 7, 5, 4, and 1, but we would like to expand our efforts to all wards within the District. Safe Passage looks very different in each ward, but student safety must be assured for all residents.

1. **Student Safety Needs Assessment:** Our office has spoken with and surveyed more than 430 students from across every ward in DC regarding their safety traveling to-and-from school. These students represented 15 DCPS and 11 public charter schools. We partnered with numerous student serving organizations and continue to build more partnerships. All of the students surveyed were in middle and high school. Prior to school closures, we started developing surveying tools for parents and families of younger children. We also must hear more from students from English language

learning households. We are finalizing a report highlighting the students' responses from the survey that will be done before the conclusion of FY20. We envision expanding this effort annually.

2. **Safe Spots Initiative:** We recruited about 40 businesses, organizations, and government agencies to serve as Safe Spots in Wards 7 and 8. Plans are underway to expand Safe Spots to the Wards 1 and 5 along the Columbia Heights and NoMa communities. For FY21, we would like to expand the number of Safe Spots currently in Wards 7 and 8, in addition to expanding in wards 1 and 5. We must create solutions in communities without a local business presence as well.
3. **Congress Heights Walking School Bus:** In collaboration with the leadership of Principal Niya White from Center City Public Charter School in Congress Heights, our office has been an active partner in piloting their community Walking School Bus. We hope to help schools and LEAs adopt similar programs in their school communities. We will continue to work with school leadership, in addition to parent teacher organizations to scale this program.

Mental Health Work *Renatta Landrau, Program Associate*

In our work with parents and community members, we have found that many families do not always have access to quality mental health care resources or clarity regarding the process of accessing mental health care. As a result, in February 2020, our office created a podcast discussing topics related to the intersection of mental health and student success. Prior to COVID-19 public health emergency, the podcast premiered weekly on our social media pages. The series featured interviews with school based clinicians, anecdotes from students, and highlights from CBOs specializing in care for youth.

In response to the public health crisis, we repurposed our existing podcast to meet the needs of students and families. Our goal was to create additional conversations around mental wellness and students, provide guidance regarding the systems of mental health care in DC, and present this information in a way that targeted and engaged students. We crafted a week-long initiative entitled, Don't Mute Mental Health week in collaboration with the DME office. This week consisted of a series of interactive Instagram Live conversations including from District Agencies and CBOs covering topics from maintaining mental wellness for youth, to parent support for students during this time. In addition, our office created infographics that were shared to our social media that shared tips and suggestions for families and students mental wellness. In FY21 we see a clear need to communicate and increase student agency on accessing mental health services as we all adjust to what school in SY 20-21 looks like.

Teacher Representation Work *Phillip Copeland, Student Advocate*

Even though 45 percent of all traditional public and charter school students are Black boys, only 16 percent of the teachers are Black men. Black boys are disciplined at the highest rates in the District while also having the lowest PARCC assessment scores. This disparity is prominent in the Latinx community as well. There is a disconnect within our public school system and we must find ways to recruit and retain a more representative teaching force. We hope to expand opportunities for students of color to explore the teaching profession.

In addition to launching the My Teacher DC tool for families and educational stakeholders to learn more about the impact of a diverse teacher workforce in DC, our office is connecting with several university partners, OSSE, and LEAs to encourage the development of dual enrollment opportunities that incorporated introductions to the teaching profession. We look to grow out

more resources to assist students and families in FY21 navigate the dual enrollment process.

Race, Equity, and Inclusion *Phillip Copeland, Student Advocate; Renatta Landrau, Program Associate*

In our work, we highlight the need for equity in public education through the lens of family engagement. We know that race and class serve as barriers to engagement and all too often go unaddressed in engagement efforts. These inequities show up in the work that we do daily and regularly come up as the undercurrent of conversations we have with families and schools. To further our commitment to tackling issues of race, class, opportunity gaps, and persistent disparities that plague the students and families we serve, we are creating a school-facing race, equity, and inclusion toolkit that would provide school communities with a framework to create and sustain race, equity, and inclusion training in schools. This interactive online toolkit will provide resources for school leaders to discuss issues of educational inequities with their school community, along with strategies for reaching out to neighbors and community members to collaboratively make our schools more equitable and just spaces. Conversations about equity with students, families, schools and stakeholders must continue. Our office in FY21 will look to connect, moderate, and be present to support all community members seeking to elevate conversations about equity.

Language Access and Accessibility *Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate*

In FY20, we implemented additional language access improvements to be in compliance with the Language Access Act by translating portions of our website, materials, and our outreach brochures into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean). We also utilize the Language Line service to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English. We are currently in the process of translating our online posted toolkits, Go-to-Guide, and other outreach materials as well as portions of our webpage into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean). In FY21, we will continue this work and strive for 100% compliance with the Language Access Act.

Spending Plan FY 2020

Our office committed to increasing access for all families in the District. We must connect our office to marginalized neighborhoods and communities who historically have been neglected and underserved. We must rebuild trust within our communities by reaching out and create new purposeful connections.

Outreach & Engagement

Our Office ran multilingual WMATA bus and bus shelter ads in wards 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8 during September and October 2019. We are shifting our plan in order to decrease cost during the current health crisis to produce a multilingual Back to School campaign that relies on social media and limited bus shelter advertisements in August of 2020. We are translating and printing when need all student and family facing material. We continue to host workshops targeting communities with limited English capacity and required interpretation services. We launched several online resources and supports for parents from Dyslexia, Race Equity & Inclusion, and Teacher Representation that require OCTO build out and support. In total, our dollar commitment to connect with students and families including technology support, graphic design, metro ads, and printing cost: \$38,000

Interpretation & Translation

Translation Services for several student and family facing guides, as well as interpretation services for workshops in language diverse communities. FY20 Cost: *\$17,000*

Office Operation

Our office's operation costs included software technology, day-to-day office supplies (paper, pens, ink, etc.) and annual report production. FY20 cost: *\$12,300*

Staff Development

OSA was scheduled to attend this year's Institute for Educational Leadership's Rise Up for Equity: A National Summit on Community Schools & Family Engagement this May in Los Angeles, California. OSA has presented in the past on equitable family engagement in the policy making process, but this year OSA adhered to the travel ban and will participate in several webinars on Distant Learning trends and practices instead. Cost: *\$3,000*

FY20 Reductions

OSA was responsive to the OCFO and CA request to reduce FY20 spending due to revised budgeting and project shortfall due to the public health crisis. OSA returned funds marked for office supplies, and staff conference/travel. Total Return FY20: *\$6,000*

Current FY20 Staffing & Operating Cost

Office of the Student Advocate – FY20 Spending Plan				
Position Title	FTEs	FY20 Salary	FY20 Fringe	Salary and Fringe Benefits
Student Advocate	1.00	\$90,000.00	\$17,640.00	\$107,640.00
Chief Student Advocate *	1.00	\$128,750.00	\$25,235.00	\$153,985.00
Program Associate	1.00	\$80,000.00	\$15,680.00	\$95,680.00
Fellow Fall-Spring	1.0	\$15,600.00	\$1,193.40	\$14,000.00
Fellow Fall-Spring	1.0	\$15,600.00	\$1,193.40	\$12,000.00
	Total:	\$329,950.00	\$60,941.80	\$ 390,891.80
Oct 2019 -Sept 2020				
Office Operations	\$13,300.00			
Outreach & Engagement	\$40,000.00			
Language Services	\$20,000.00			

Staff Development	\$7,000.00			
	\$80,300.00			
Covid-19 Related Return	-\$6,000.00			

Funding Needs for FY21:

The Office of the Student Advocate guides and supports students, parents, families, and community members in navigating the DC public school system in order to achieve equal access to public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. **An additional full-time employee (FTE):** Our office serves an important role in the landscape of DC public education because we are able to assist all stakeholders in finding resolutions for their problems. While our office has accomplished an incredible amount in the past four years, our outreach and impact is limited because our staff size is limited. Our staff of only three full-time employees and two part-time fellows allows us to only crack the surface of the needs of students, parents, and families in DC. The work done beyond our office hours happens because of the dedication of our staff. Adding another full-time employee would allow us to increase our outreach and maximize our impact in all eight wards. **Funding for a secure database:** We desperately need a software product that allows us to be more responsive with the data we collect and more intentional with the resources we produce. As our agency has migrated to Office365, we have shifted our data collection to Microsoft OneDrive, which is not a privately secure data application. When students and families contact our office with Requests for Assistance, they offer up private and sensitive information to us trusting that we will keep their information safe.

The following spending plan is a breakdown of the estimated or projected funding we need for the Office of the Student Advocate for FY21. All dollar amounts included in the spreadsheet are estimates based on our needs and funding request.

Requested FY21 Staffing & Operating Costs

Office of the Student Advocate – FY21 Spending Plan				
Position Title	FTEs	FY21 Salary	FY21 Fringe	Salary and Fringe Benefits
Student Advocate	1.00	\$92,700.00	\$18,169.20	\$110,869.20
Chief Student Advocate	1.00	\$132,612.50	\$25,992.05	\$158,604.55
Program Associate	1.00	\$82,400.00	\$16,150.40	\$98,550.40
Fellow Fall-Spring	1.0	\$15,600.00	\$1193.40	\$16,793.40
Fellow Fall-Spring	1.0	\$15,600.00	\$1193.40	\$16,793.40
		\$328,912.50	\$62,698.45	\$401,610.95
Oct 20-Sept 21				
Office Operations	\$15,000.00			

Outreach & Engagement	\$35,000.00			
Language Services	\$15,000.00			
Staff Development	\$6,000.00			
	\$72,000.00			

Homicide Reduction

- 1. Please describe three initiatives, programs, or projects currently underway within your agency directed at preventing homicide in the District of Columbia. If you currently do not have any initiatives, programs, or projects currently underway directed at homicide prevention, please describe three ways in which your agency could play a role in reducing homicides in the District of Columbia.**

Though our office was not created to address homicide directly in DC, we have worked to address underlying issues that negatively affect student safety. Our office has been active in addressing the safety of students traveling to-and-from school with our Safe Passage initiatives. Our office is becoming more engaged in providing information regarding mental health supports that exist for families within the District as well. Below is an overview of the initiatives, programs, and projects our office is conducting.

Safe Passage Work

The safe passage of our students traveling to-and-from school is paramount, but we know that the instances of community violence surrounding our schools and communities jeopardizes the safety of our children. In FY20, we worked to re-engage the community on topics including student safety and safe passage. Our ongoing Safe Passage and Student Safety Working Groups have worked to address issues contributing to the homicide rate within our city. We also will continue to expand the current initiatives we have taken on for FY 21:

- 1. Student Based Needs Assessment:** Our office has spoken with and surveyed more than 430 students from 15 DCPS and 11 public charter schools from every ward in DC regarding their safety traveling to-and-from school. We have partnered with numerous students serving organizations and continue to build more partnerships. We are currently developing a report highlighting the students’ responses that should be available before the conclusion of FY20 and we would like to expand this effort annually, which will include voices from younger students, families, and individuals who speak English as a second language.
- 2. Safe Spots Initiative:** We recruited about 40 businesses, organizations, and government agencies to serve as Safe Spots in Wards 7 and 8. Plans are underway to expand Safe Spots to the Wards 1 and 5 along the Columbia Heights and NoMa communities. For FY21, we would like to expand the number of Safe Spots currently in Wards 7 and 8, in addition to expanding in Wards 1 and 5. We also must create solutions for residential communities that lack commercial storefronts or public serving entities that have traditional fit the Safe Spot model.
- 3. Congress Heights Walking School Bus:** In collaboration with the leadership of Principal Niya White from Center City Public Charter School in Congress Heights, our office has been an active participant in this year’s piloted community Walking School Bus. We hope to help schools and LEAs adopt similar programs at their schools. We

will continue to work with school leadership, in addition to parent-teacher organizations.

Mental Health Work:

1. **Don't Mute Mental Health:** In our work with parents and community members, we have found that many families do not always have access to quality mental health care resources or clarity regarding the process of accessing mental health care. Our office's podcast discusses topics related to the intersection of mental health and student success. Prior to COVID-19 public health emergency, the podcast premiered weekly on our social media pages. The series featured interviews with school based clinicians, anecdotes from students, and highlights from CBOs specializing in care for youth. We see a clear benefit to increasing knowledge and access while decreasing stigmas related to mental health in our community, especially with students. Connecting students and families with service providers, tips and tools on how to manage their anxiety and stress leads to increase safety for all community members

- a. **Please describe the resources currently allocated to these initiatives, program, or projects, and describe what additional resources you would need to improve the efficacy or scale of these efforts. (Or resources you would need to implement the ideas detailed in response to the above question.)**

1. **Safe Passage & Student Safety Working Group Meetings:** We utilize various public meeting spaces across the District. We must devote 2 – 3 staff members to facilitate the meetings and break off into meaningful small group discussion. A .5 FTE would allow the office to dedicated more staff time to coordinate meetings more consistently across the entire District.

2. **Student Safety Needs Assessment / Survey:** We purchased a subscription to the Question Pro Survey software. This software allowed us to create and distribute digital surveys to students and families across the District. This platform also provides us with data analytic software too. At one point in FY20, all three of our current FTEs were involved in facilitating small focus group discussions with 10 – 25 students per session. We were able to meet with more than 430 students from all eight wards attending 15 DCPS and 12 public charter schools. An additional .5 FTE would allow more targeted outreach giving us an ability to connect with even more students at more schools across the District.

3. **Safe Spots Initiative:** Between one to three of our office's staff is devoted to expanding the Safe Spots initiative. One staff member is responsible for mapping out all of the business locations using the Google Drive platform. Two staff members gauge interest of businesses by making phone calls to those businesses that were mapped out previously. Two staff members then walk door to door to recruit those businesses in person and provide resources for those interested in becoming a Safe Spot. Additional resources would allow more personnel to recruit Safe Spots in highly concentrated areas of business (i.e. Columbia Heights).

4. **Walking School Bus Pilot:** One staff/fellow travels to Center City PCS in Congress Heights every Monday from 4pm – 5pm to ensure that the pilot has volunteer coordination and coverage for the multiple routes. There is interest among other schools in DC to adopt a similar Walking School Bus program. Additional resources would also

to support more schools and PTOs establishing walking school bus programs in their communities.

5. **Mental Health Work:** Currently, a portion of one FTE supports the planning, developing, and production of the podcast and related infographics. Additional language resources would allow us to reach more families and students with non English home languages.

2. Please describe how your agency works (or would work) collaboratively with other DC agencies toward the goal of reducing homicides.

We facilitated community centered conversations regarding Safe Passage and Student Safety throughout 2019 and 2020. Members of numerous agencies have been a part of these discussions, and are working on creating solutions to protect children from danger traveling to and from school. We are connected to the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD) Youth and School Safety Division, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD), members from the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) Roving Leaders program, Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) all participate in discussions regarding Safe Passage and Student Safety. School leadership from DCPS, and Charter LEAs are partners in our ward based working group conversations. We even see representation from the State Board of Education and DC Council.

Our office partnered with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to facilitate the Ward 7 Safe Passage Student Safety Community group. The partnership between our office and the DME's office led to the creation of the Safe Spots initiative. For FY21, we plan to continue to build on the relationships we have established regarding Safe Passage and Student Safety.

a. Please also describe how your agency engages (or would engage) non-governmental organizations and the community at large on the issue of homicide prevention.

In our work related to Safe Passage and Student Safety, we have seen active participation from numerous CBOs. We have worked with multiple LEAs in our Safe Passage initiatives, from Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS in Ward 8, to Friendship Collegiate Academy PCS in Ward 7, to Meridian PCS in Ward 1. We have connected with Far Southeast FSC, East River FSC, Edgewood Brookland FSC, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, LifeDeeds, ward based education councils and several smaller CBOs in neighborhoods with high concentrations of students on strategies to keep students safe.

We have partnered with numerous youth serving organizations like Young Women's Project Pathways 2 Power, Black Swan Academy, Global Kids, and Mikva DC. These partnerships allowed us to facilitate discussions with groups of students across the District regarding their safety traveling to and from school. We continue to hold focus groups with the help of those organization regarding student experiences with distance learning and social distancing.

We have a working relationship with numerous legal organizations, like the Advocates for Justice in Education and the School Justice Project. We collaborate on issues ranging from special education services to educational resources for incarcerated youth.

3. Please describe how you currently measure (or would measure) the efficacy of the aforementioned initiatives, programs, or projects. Additionally, if three metrics related to homicide prevention were added to your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), what should those metrics be?

1. Safe Spots:

- Number of active Safe Spots.
- Number of times students used a Safe Spot.

2. Community Based Needs Assessments

- Number of students surveyed:
 - From each ward
 - LEA
 - Transportation Mode
 - Qualitative Data on experiences

3. Walking School Bus:

- Number of Schools launching Walking School Bus.
- Incidents involving students while participating in a walking school bus activity.