



2022 DC

**Bold  
Performance  
Schools**



 EmpowerK12



# EMPOWERK12'S BOLD SCHOOLS

In spring 2015, students across the District of Columbia participated in the first administration of a rigorous, Common Core-aligned state assessment, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in math and reading for students in grades 3-8 and in high school. The first year's data showed an average 26.8 percentage point performance gap between students designated as at-risk\* and their more affluent peers. That gap grew to 27.0 percentage points in 2016.

Yet, several schools serving a large high-priority student population, defined as students designated as at risk and students with learning disabilities, had significantly better outcomes than other schools serving similar student populations. EmpowerK12 developed a mathematical model to calculate every school's Percent Proficient above Expectations (PPAE), based on their at-risk student population, to identify the schools that are boldly performing above expectations. In 2016, we identified our first 11 Bold Performance Schools across both DC Public Schools and DC charter schools and continued to identify and celebrate the Bold Performance Schools annually with every PARCC release.

In 2018, we created and recognized Bold Improvement Schools, schools where equitable growth rates for students designated as at-risk would, if continued, close national performance gaps within five years. Bold Improvement Schools will return in spring 2024 once growth data is available for PARCC in fall 2023.

\* Students whose family receives SNAP or TANF benefits, are homeless, in the foster care system, or overage for their high school grade level.



Bridges ES

**Bold Performance Schools are the DC schools that are boldly supporting priority students — students designated as at-risk, students with disabilities, and students of color — to reach academic success.**

The 14 schools designated as Bold Performance Schools are DC Public Schools (DCPS) and DC charter schools, across elementary, middle, and high school grades; and serve student populations where students designated as at-risk make up at least 30% of the student population. This year’s Bold Performance Schools have 2022 PARCC proficiency rates that were an average of 9.1 percentage points better than other Bold-eligible schools, and their 2022 PARCC 4+ proficiency rates were 2.6 percentage points better than the pre-pandemic average for schools serving similar demographics.

- 2022 BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS**
- Burroughs ES
  - Center City Congress Heights ES/MS
  - Burrville ES
  - Langdon ES
  - Washington Global MS
  - Roots ES
  - KIPP DC Legacy College Prep HS
  - Garrison ES
  - Payne ES
  - Digital Pioneers HS
  - Paul MS
  - Cesar Chavez MS/HS
  - Friendship Southeast ES
  - Bridges ES

## THE BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS UTILIZED SIX KEY STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR SUCCESS:

- 1 Intentional relationship-building among students, educators, and families to create an effective team that meets high expectations
- 2 Emphasize the importance of fun and joyful environments for adults and students
- 3 Extended learning time opportunities for students
- 4 Targeted small-group and individual student interventions that allow students to access rigorous, grade-level content, even when they have unfinished learning gaps
- 5 Teacher observation, collaboration, coaching feedback cycles, and professional development that provide educators with support to improve
- 6 Weekly data and student-work analysis, progress-monitoring, and goal-setting conversations with educators and students

### EMPOWERK12 RECOMMENDS:



**Set citywide bold goals** for a full academic recovery within three years where achievement rates meet or exceed pre-pandemic 2019 rates and to close academic gaps for priority students with their national peers by 2030.



**Adopt and implement strategic plans**, aligned with bold goals and commit to funding the solutions working at Bold Performance Schools.



**Invest in research and improvement** to quickly learn what's working and for whom and course-correct when it's not.

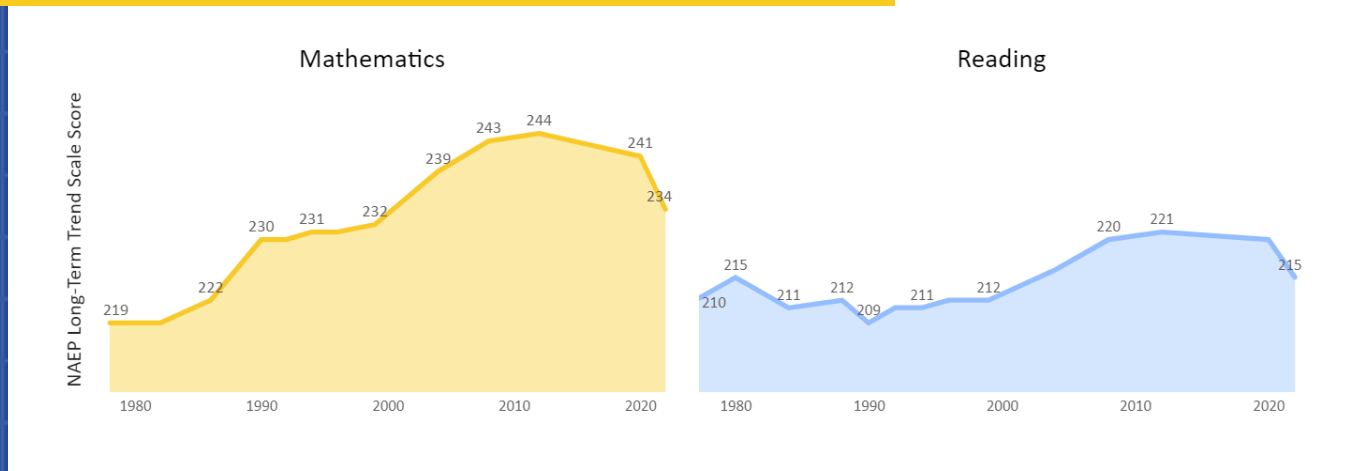
DC students need bold goals to move beyond recovery to an era where all DC students thrive in an increasingly global labor market.

# Pandemic's Impact on Unfinished Learning

Nationwide, schools abruptly transitioned from in-person learning to virtual learning in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most DC students continued learning virtually throughout the entire 2020-21 school year. This past fall, all DC students returned for in-person learning, and educators faced significant academic and social-emotional challenges in their classrooms amid quarantine impacts due to emerging variants.

National academic achievement research from the last two years show significant declines in math and reading performance, especially for students of color and those from higher poverty neighborhoods. In September 2022, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) published Long-Term Trend results from a nationally representative sample of nine year old students, showing the first statistically significant drop in U.S. math scores since the assessment began in 1978, and the first reading drops since 1984. NAEP's Nation's Report Card for 4th and 8th grade math and reading scores for every state and a sample of urban districts (including for DC Public Schools) will be released later this month, giving even more context to the national picture on unfinished learning.

Figure 1. NAEP Long-Term Trend National Average Scores



EmpowerK12's DC report, using a sample of LEA-administered computer-adaptive tests from Spring 2020-21, found disproportionately larger amounts of unfinished learning for students designated as at-risk in both math and reading. Additionally, student wellbeing survey data found that DC's most vulnerable students were more likely to have experienced significant trauma and unhealthy physical, social, and emotional stress during COVID-19's first year.

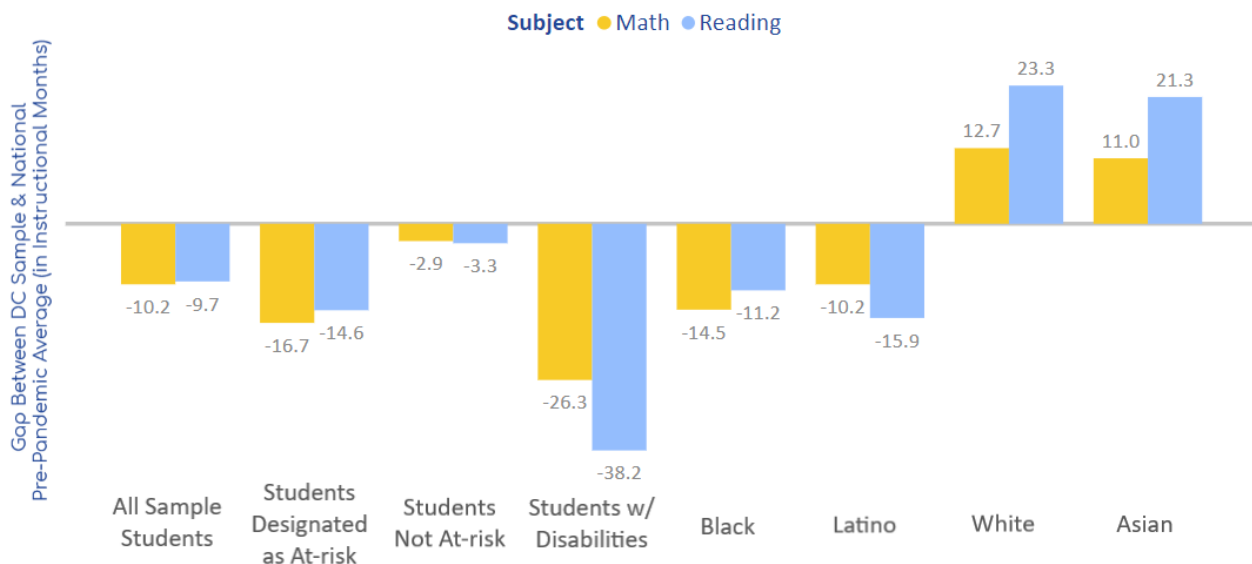
Our Spring 2021-22 update on DC unfinished learning found that student growth rates in grades 3-8 for math and reading began rebounding to typical pre-pandemic growth rates and academic achievement improved during the spring semester. However, students designated as at-risk were an average of **15-18 instructional months behind** pre-pandemic national averages, and more affluent students were **4-5 instructional months behind**.



Friendship Southeast ES

If the rate of improvement from Spring 2022 continues at the same pace, we estimate that **DC will regain pre-pandemic 2019 achievement levels in 2027 – five years from now.** The rate of improvement for students designated as at-risk, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners, who together represent approximately 60% of DC’s public school student population, was slower than their peers. The estimate for their pre-pandemic recovery is **2030 – eight years from now.**

Figure 2. Pandemic Unfinished Learning Gaps in Instructional Months as of Spring 2022



# 2022 PARCC Score Results and the 2021-22 School Year

When students returned for in-person learning in fall 2021, many faced significant academic and social-emotional wellbeing challenges.

DC schools were able to access additional resources to address students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing needs with federal recovery funds. However, new challenges (including the COVID-19 variants, staffing shortages, chronic absenteeism, and student bullying and fighting) required problem-solving. Winter 2021-22 assessment data showed that many unfinished learning gaps continued to widen during the fall semester, but by spring 2022, academic growth rates had returned to pre-pandemic averages and unfinished learning gaps began to shrink.

Student wellbeing, which is associated with academic gains, significantly improved compared to the 2020-21 school year. Students attending schools with higher Student Wellbeing Index scores were more likely to have larger spring academic growth rates than at schools with lower Student Wellbeing Index scores.

In August, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) released results for the 2022 PARCC assessment. **The percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations in math and reading in DC dropped from 34% in 2019 to 25% in 2022. The average gap in performance between students designated as at-risk and their peers grew from 27 percentage points in 2019 to 36 percentage points in 2022.**

Figure 3. Average

Spring Median

Growth Percentile

by the School's

Student Wellbeing

Index Score Rank

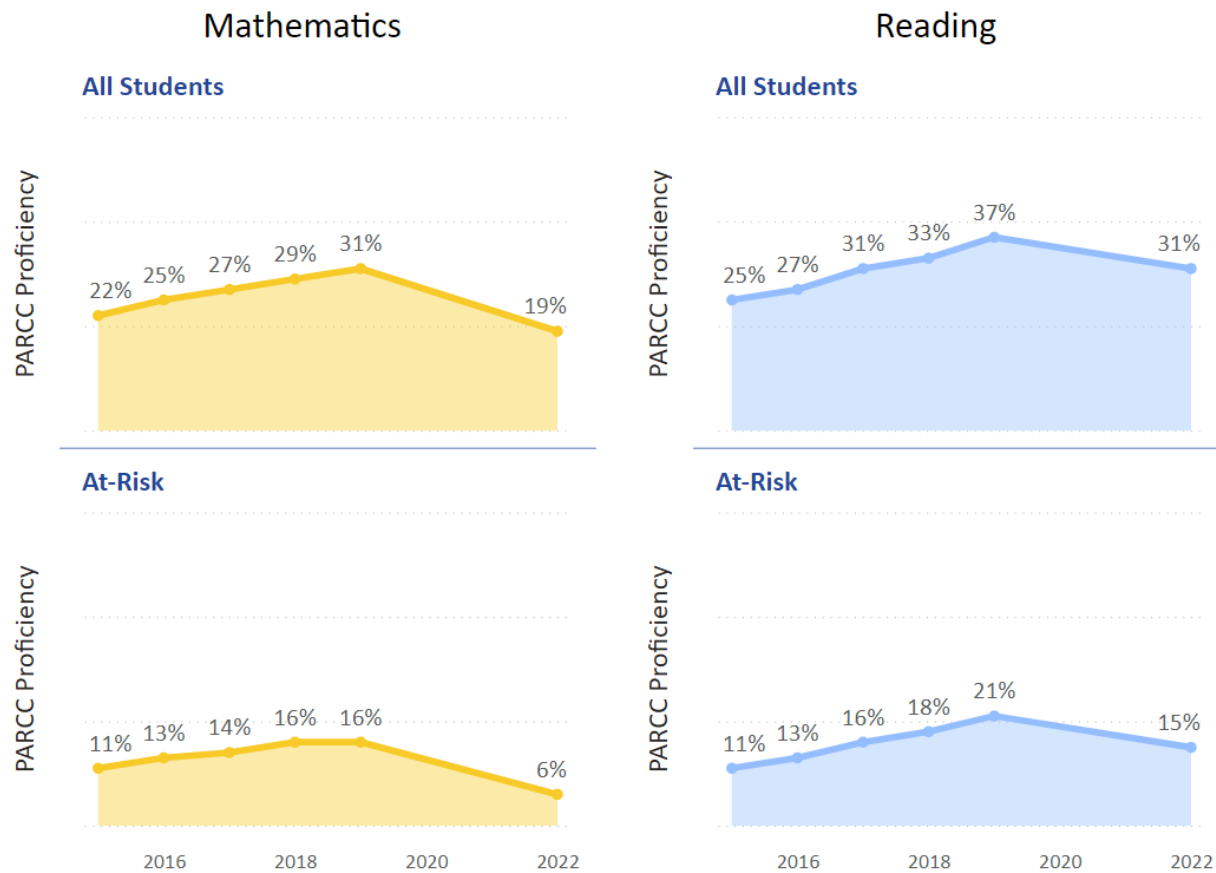


Digital Pioneers HS



Figure 4. DC 2022 PARCC 4+ Math and Reading Proficiency

for All Students and Students Designated as At-Risk



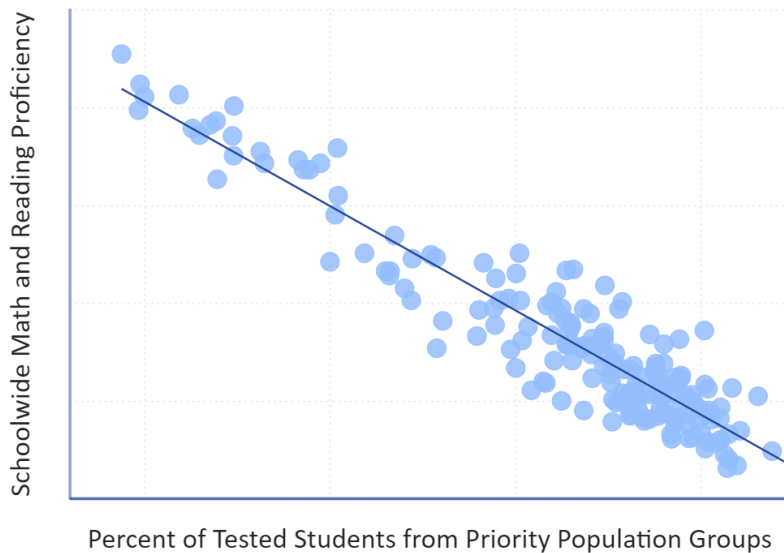
Despite these lower scores and growing gaps, some schools showed promising achievement scores, in the face of setbacks from the pandemic.



# Identifying Bold Performance Schools

In DC and across the country, there is a strong correlation between the number of students from priority populations a school serves and schoolwide math and reading proficiency rates. Priority populations include students designated as at-risk (In DC, at-risk is defined as a student whose family receives SNAP or TANF, is homeless, or in foster care), students with disabilities, and who identify as students of color. The larger the priority population at the school, typically, the lower the school's reported state assessment proficiency rate.

Figure 5. Correlation Between Schoolwide 2022 PARCC 4+ Proficiency and Size of Priority Population in Tested Grades at the School



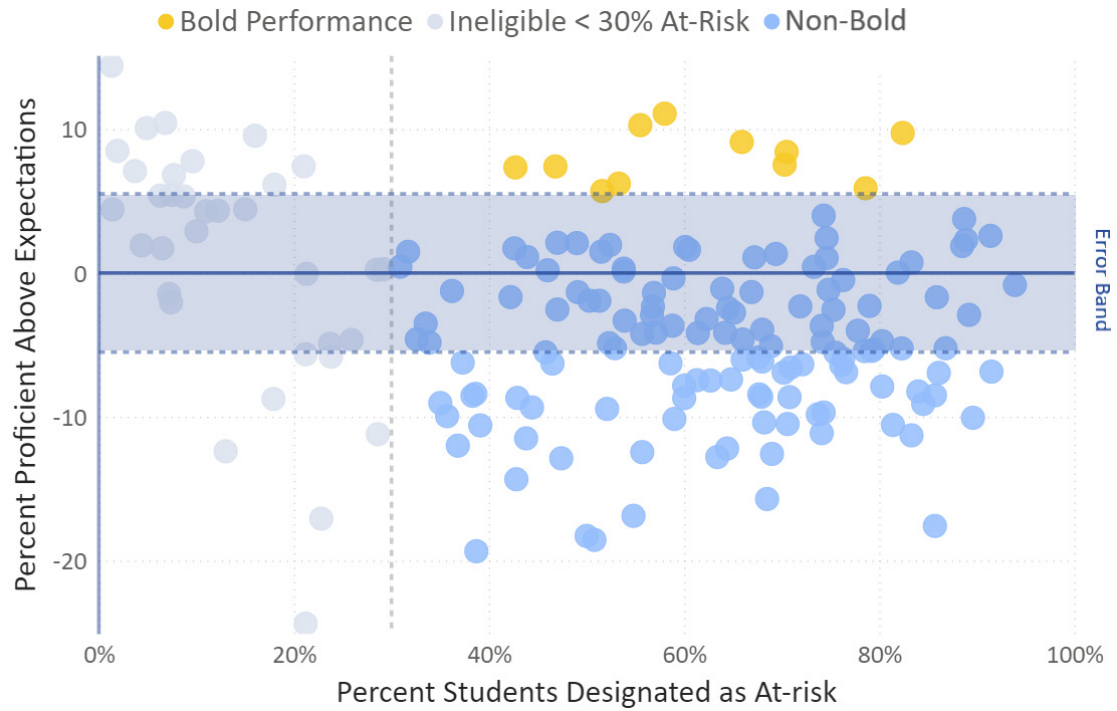
However, **Bold Performance Schools** prove that **correlation and causation can be two different things by demonstrating student proficiency rates significantly higher than schools serving similar populations, and, this year, even beating pre-pandemic achievement expectations.**

EmpowerK12 utilizes multiple mathematical methods to understand how variables such as grade levels tested and priority student group population size interact with student performance. We employ a robust ensemble model similar to the kinds of sophisticated models supercomputers use to forecast weather conditions to identify Bold Performance Schools. We combine multiple mathematical algorithms to generate the best

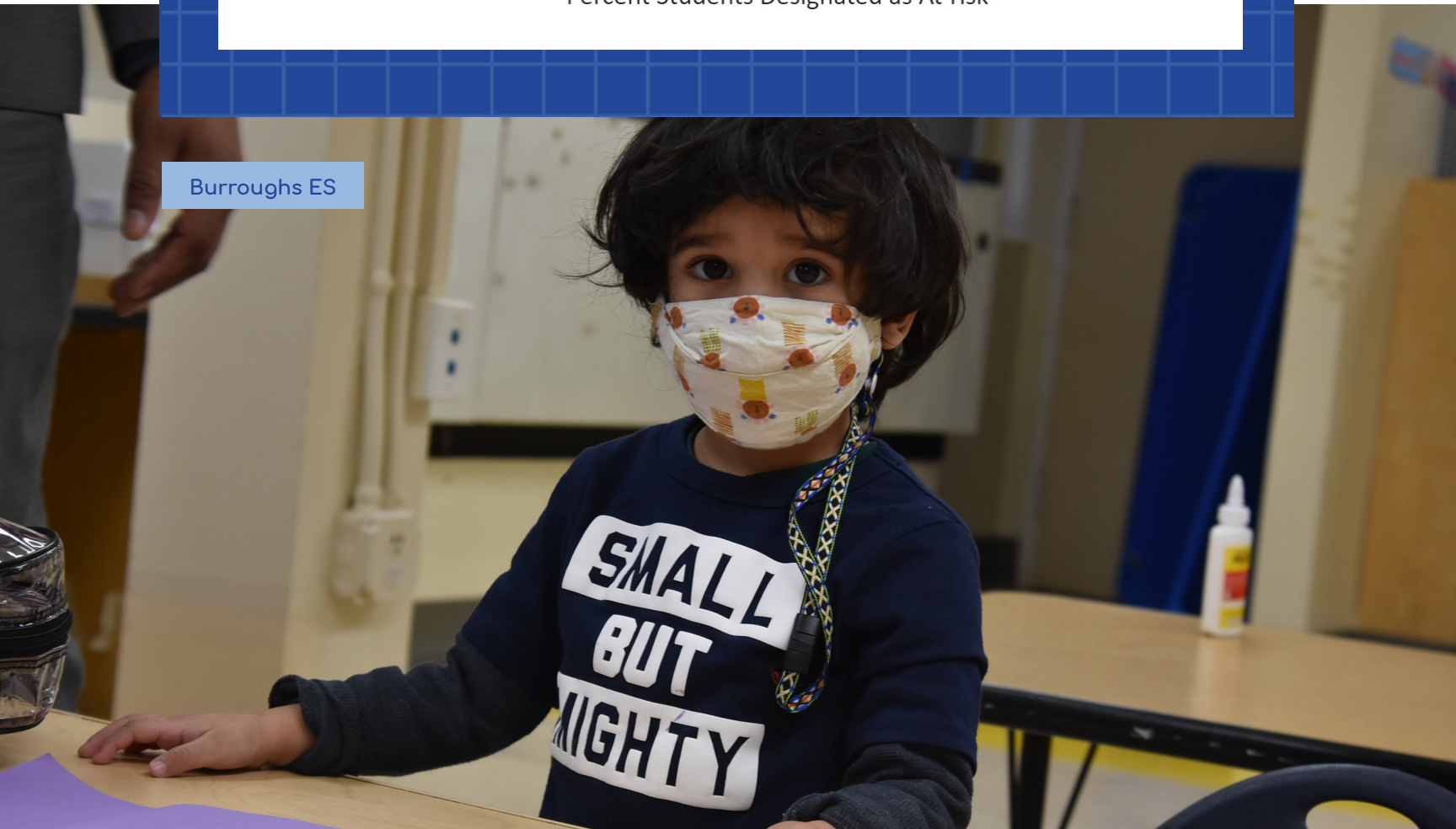
predictions for math and reading proficiency rates a school should expect given the unique student population and grade levels it serves. Our Bold Performance modeling process this year is the same as how we identified schools from 2016 to 2019 before COVID-19. See the technical discussion in a separate appendix document for more detail about this process.

After we run the models to predict each school's expected proficiency rates in math and reading, we calculate a school level Percent Proficient Above Expectations (PPAE) value that is the difference between actual and expected performance. As with all predictions, there is some amount of uncertainty in the prediction, so we only select schools with a PPAE that exceeds the absolute error in measurement for the Bold Performance designation. Schools must serve at least 30% students designated as at-risk and have an open enrollment policy to be eligible for the designation.

Figure 6. 2022 Bold Performance PPAE and Percent At-Risk by School and Bold Status



Burroughs ES



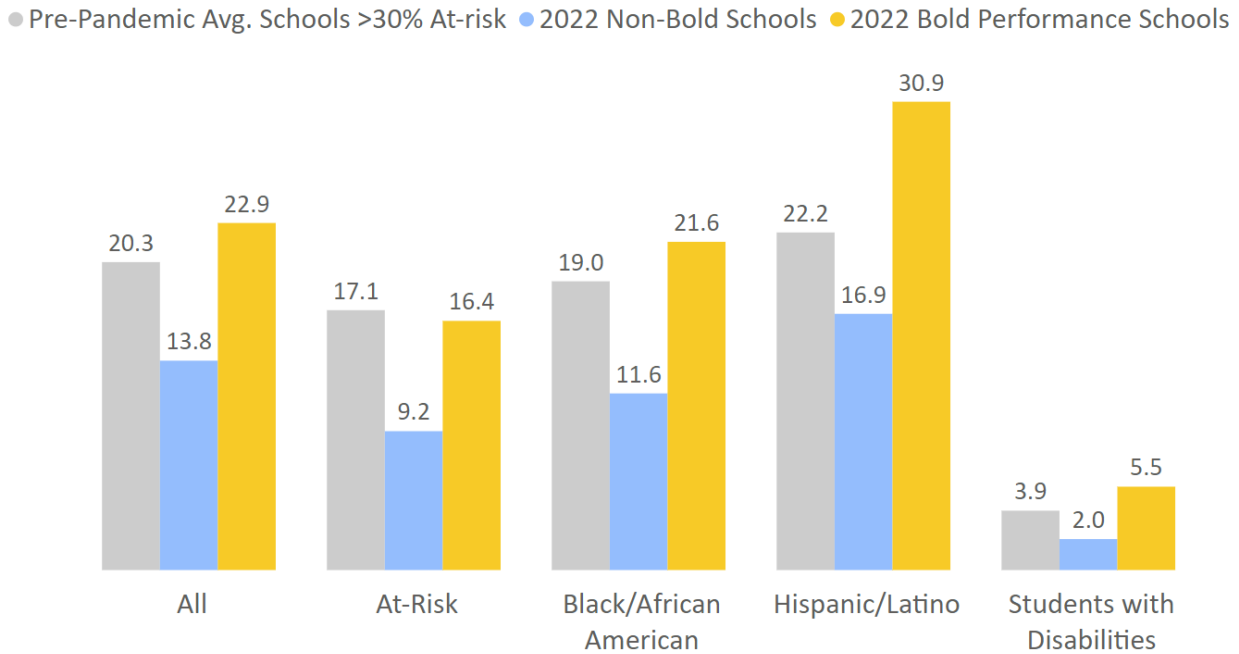
# THE 2022 BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS

This year's Bold Performance Schools educate 3,800 students in grades PK3 through 12th grade, including 2,250 students designated as at-risk. Collectively, their 2022 PARCC proficiency rates were an average of 9.1 percentage points better than other Bold-eligible schools serving at least 30% students designated as at-risk, and their 2022 PARCC 4+ proficiency rates were 2.6 percentage points better than the pre-pandemic average for schools serving similar demographics.

Figure 7. 2022 Bold Performance School List

SCHOOL	PPAE	AT-RISK	PARCC 4+	PARCC 3+
Burroughs ES	11.1	58%	30.3	64.5
Center City Congress Heights ES/MS	10.3	56%	28.0	64.1
Burrville ES	9.7	82%	20.8	44.1
Langdon ES	9.1	66%	29.4	46.6
Washington Global ES	8.4	71%	20.1	44.4
Roots ES	7.5	70%	23.4	54.1
KIPP DC Legacy College Prep HS	7.4	78%	13.2	33.1
Garrison ES	7.4	47%	30.1	52.7
Payne ES	7.3	43%	39.8	59.0
Digital Pioneers HS	6.6	79%	13.3	33.4
Paul MS	6.2	53%	24.7	48.3
Cesar Chavez MS/HS	6.0	76%	13.8	31.7
Friendship Southeast ES	5.9	79%	20.8	46.6
Bridges ES	5.7	52%	25.6	42.9
State Average Schools Serving >30% At-Risk	-4.7	62%	13.8	35.0

**Figure 8. 2022 PARCC 4+ Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations for Schools Serving >30% At-risk by 2022 Bold Performance Status Compared with Pre-Pandemic Average**



We analyzed data from the 2020-21 virtual year DC School Report Card and 2021-22 data to see if there was anything substantially different about conditions at Bold Performance Schools versus the non-Bold Performance Schools.

The data table on the following page shows that Bold Performance Schools tended to have slightly better data in key metric areas such as student attendance and educator experience during the virtual year. However, none of the differences between Bold Schools and non-Bold Schools are statistically significant. OSSE will publish new report card data from the 2021-22 school year later this fall.

### Figure 9. 2020–21 Report Card Data

#### Elements for Schools Serving >30%

#### At-Risk by Bold Performance Status

METRIC	BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS	NON-BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS
In-seat attendance rate for all students	89%	86%
In-seat attendance rate for students designated as at-risk	86%	82%
Chronic absenteeism rate for all students	42%	48%
Chronic absenteeism rate for students designated as at-risk	34%	39%
Re-enrollment rate for all students	85%	85%
Re-enrollment rate for students designated as at-risk	86%	85%
Teacher average years of experience (estimate)	9	8
School leader average years of experience (estimate)	6	5
Per pupil expenditure rate	\$23,695	\$24,960

For the 2021-22 school year, we utilized OSSE data published in an educator workforce report in May and a sample of attendance data from our spring unfinished learning study. Bold Schools had a slightly higher, but not statistically significantly different, overall teacher retention rate of 75% versus 72%. **The two most distinguished Bold Performance Schools, Burroughs ES and Center City at Congress Heights, had teacher retention rates of 83% and 91%, respectively.**

Bold Performance Schools and non-Bold Performance Schools appear to be similarly affected by ongoing pandemic-related absenteeism for students and staff during 2021-22. Student attendance data from our spring unfinished learning sample, which included 78% of students enrolled in grades K-8, showed Bold Performance Schools had an 83% student attendance rate, compared to 82% for non-Bold Performance Schools. Bold Performance School leaders reported an average of 40% of teachers missed more than five days of school last year due to COVID-19 infection or exposure.

The available school performance data from 2020-21 and 2021-22 were unable to tell a narrative of what makes the Bold Performance Schools unique and effective, so we conducted a survey of their school and teacher leaders, held interviews, and conducted virtual site visits with staff at the Bold Performance Schools to better understand their strategies and promising practices.

# WHAT MAKES THE BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS SPECIAL?

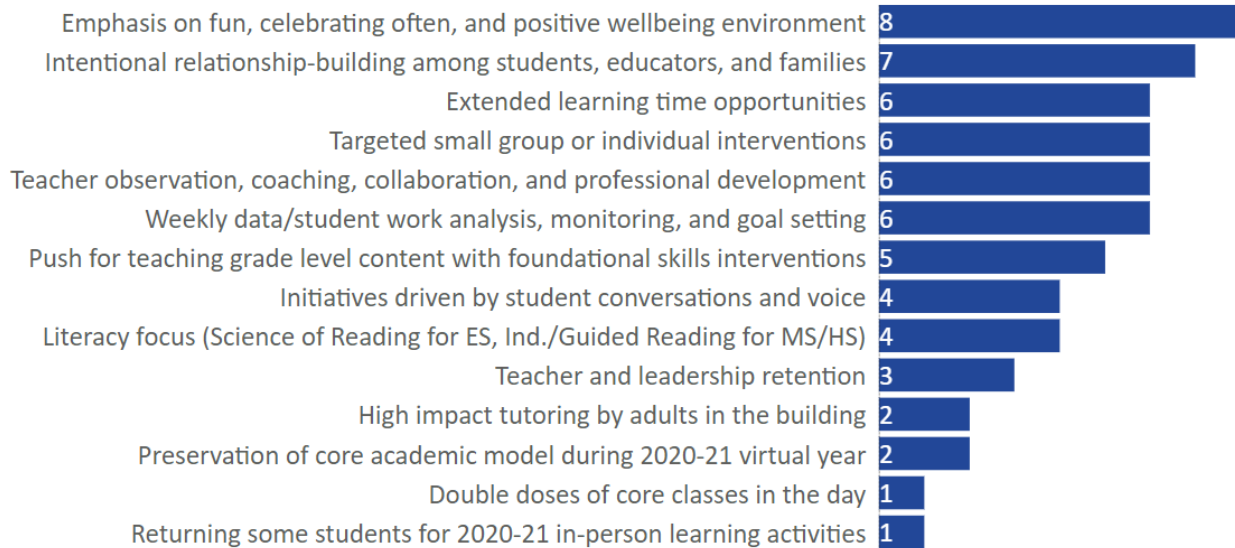
The following is a summary of lessons learned from 25 in-person interviews of Bold Performance School leaders, teachers, and students, as well as survey responses from 28 staff members across schools. Eleven of the 14 Bold Schools were able to participate in the qualitative data collection window.

From our interviews and site visits, one common theme we noticed from teacher and assistant principal responses is the presence of a great school leader and at least one strong instructional leader, who oftentimes, but not in every instance, was identified to be the same individual. It's not a question we asked during the interviews or on our Bold School educator survey, but educators frequently described their school leader as a smart, fun, and caring individual who enabled them to be a great instructional coach or teacher.

The school leaders tend to be delegators with a "trust but verify" mantra. One of their strengths is ensuring their team has the support required to fight daily fires on their own, instead of taking ownership of fighting the fires themselves. The Bold Performance School principals also create an environment where asking for help is a sign of strength rather than weakness, and they seek collaborative input on creative solutions to address the needs that arise.







Beyond a great leader, Bold Performance educators offered several strategies they believe helped their school exceed pre-pandemic achievement expectations and become a Bold School. The EmpowerK12 research team coded the key strategy responses into 14 groups. This report provides additional context and details about the top six strategies that schools identified as key to their Bold Performance.

**Figure 10. School-Identified Keys to 2022 Bold Performance**



## Bold Performance School Strategies

### THE TOP SIX KEY STRATEGIES TO BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS' SUCCESS IN 2022 ARE:

-  Intentional relationship-building among students, educators, and families to create an effective team that meets high expectations;
-  Extended learning time opportunities for students;
-  Emphasize the importance of fun and joyful environments for adults and students;
-  Targeted small group and individual student interventions that allow students to access rigorous, grade-level content, even when they have unfinished learning gaps;
-  Teacher observation, collaboration, coaching feedback cycles and professional development that provide educators with support to improve; and
-  Weekly data and student-work analysis, progress-monitoring, and goal-setting conversations with educators and students.

## Emphasize the importance of fun and joyful environments for adults and students.

Friday attendance at Center City Congress Heights, a PK3-8 school in Ward 8, was typically lower than the other days of the week, so Principal Niya White and her team created “Fun Fridays.” While having fun and surprise treats are common elements during a typical school day, the Congress Heights team was determined to step up their game to boost attendance on Fridays.

Around 2 p.m. Friday, while students finish up a long week of learning, Principal White hides somewhere in the building. Excitement and anticipation for “Where’s Mrs. White,” Congress Heights’ class-versus-class game challenge begins across all grades.



Clues are called out over the intercom, and each class must determine where Ms. White is hiding based on the clue given. Each class sends one student out of the room to search at a time, in what staff tell us resembles “controlled chaos, but the kids have so much fun with it!” The class that finds Principal White in her hiding spot first wins the points. Staff announce the winning class and hiding location, and students return to their classrooms to call out the next clue and give Mrs. White time to hide again.

On Fridays at Langdon Elementary School, a DCPS elementary school in Ward 5, the BOOM Room opens for kids who have earned 30 minutes to spend in this special place. Principal Kemi Baltimore-Husbands provided a description of the BOOM room: “Students earn positive points for the BOOM room, which is an acronym for Behaving and Operating in an Outstanding Manner. Kids can earn 30 minutes on Fridays to the game room with a Wii, the latest movies, books, and ping pong. The BOOM room is important because it signals to our students that this building is designed, built, and constructed with them in mind.” Iche Buchanan, an educator at Langdon, also wholeheartedly confirmed that the BOOM room is one of several things that makes Langdon a special place: “We really focus on our children and the whole child, making it fun to come to school. So they want to come to school. We have lots of fun at school. It's great!”

Those are just two examples of the creative fun that Bold Performance Schools utilize to boost attendance and ensure students think of school as a fun place to be every day. However, the fun is not limited to students. Bold Performance leaders and teachers frequently talked about the fun they have as adults as a reason their school is special.

Leaders and teachers from multiple schools mentioned that their school had a great “Sunshine Committee.” The voluntary Sunshine Committee, also referred to as a Hospitality Committee by one Bold School, is a group of educators who meet to generate ideas that spread happiness and joy for staff and students, such as a Compliment Challenge, where staff were asked to send compliments to 10 other members and surprise treats like a massage therapist.



## ADDITIONAL FUN AND JOYFUL IDEAS FROM BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS



**Morning meetings.** Morning meetings can be a valuable time for relationship-building, student sharing, and also having fun. Stephanie Byrd, Principal at Payne Elementary School in Ward 6: “At morning meetings, we acknowledge every student who comes to school, give students a space to share, and learn about each other. It’s a place where we make sure that we’re having fun.”



**Mindfulness opportunities for educators at school.** Principal Dr. Chunita Pilgrim at Burrville Elementary School in Ward 7 gave her mental health team full autonomy to schedule wellness events which included sip (hot cocoa) and paint, mindful planting, yoga sessions, and more. Principal Pilgrim said, “These sessions set a positive tone for our teachers and staff.”

## Intentional relationship-building among students, educators, and families to create an effective team that meets high expectations.

Teachers and school leaders emphasized again and again the importance of creating strong relationships between and among school leaders, teachers, students, and families. Often, they called their school a “tight-knit family.” Principals described setting the tone by facilitating fun staff activities and taking a therapeutic approach with their staff to ensure their support needs were met. From what teachers said, that approach filtered down to classrooms with teachers building strong, familial relationships with students and families.

The staff at KIPP DC Legacy College Prep, a high school in Ward 8, told us how they “leverage the idea of forming learning partnerships as part of the culturally responsive framework of Dr. Zaretta Hammond. Through these partnerships, families were contacted weekly by their child’s advisor to receive updates on their academic progress, social-emotional check-ins, as well as general check-ins to ensure the family’s basic needs were being met.”

Even with all of the technically challenging work of executing the virtual pandemic school year, Principal Pilgrim at Burrville Elementary School in Ward 7 spent time revitalizing her school’s parent-teacher organization because she knew for school to be effective, they needed families’ daily support. “During this historic moment, I knew revitalizing our PTO would be a great way to reconnect relationships with families. We needed their support to articulate and elevate concerns, so our school teams could intentionally support them as needed. We hold Saturday morning Principal Chat-n-Chews, which is a great opportunity for families new to Burrville and families who return to know we are still here for them and that they do matter,” said Principal Pilgrim.

Some Bold Performance School leaders try to visit every classroom each morning to ask, “How are you feeling? What do you need to be successful today?” Educators at Bold Schools tended toward over-communication with families on COVID-19 protocols, the importance of attendance, student goals and progress data, and sharing the fun, joyful activities happening at school.

One finding from our 2022 data analysis is that students who attended education campuses (schools that serve PK3-8th grade or 6th-12th grade) were disproportionately positively represented as Bold Schools. More than 44% of the students enrolled in this year's Bold Performance Schools attend an education campus.. Across the District, only 25% of students enrolled in PK3-12 attend such a school.

Several Bold School educators described to us the value of having “generations of families” at their school, which made it easier to build trusting relationships with a family because they taught an older sibling or even their parents years ago. This could be part of the reason why PK3-8 and 6-12 schools have a relationship advantage. More rigorous scientific research could help tease out whether these school's grade configuration model has an inherent advantage when it comes to relationships and student outcomes.

We also heard helpful tips like providing catered hot dinners for families, along with to-go care packages; using online tools for managing classroom communities and family engagement (several schools named Class Dojo as a strong tool); and offering counseling support for families experiencing hardships. One Bold School offers contracted counseling services primarily used for student cases for families who identified it as a helpful resource during home visits and virtual check-ins.

## ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IDEAS FROM BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS



**Actively listen and coach to emotions.** The last couple of years have challenged everyone, physically and emotionally. Several Bold School leaders recommend finding leadership and social-emotional learning (SEL) coaches who provide staff with therapeutic skills to support others as they try to remain resilient. One suggestion when working through a challenging conversation with a teacher, student, or parent is to ask, “How do you feel about it?” If the response is an emotion you weren't expecting, follow-up with, “How did I miss that?”



**Teacher looping.** Several Bold Schools keep teachers with the same students for multiple years. Instructional leaders utilize academic, social-emotional, and family engagement data when deciding whether a teacher and their students should be considered for looping. As one Bold School leader told us, “whoever has strong relationships with students and colleagues...that's who loops. It's not more scientific than that.”



**Smaller “schools within schools.”** Digital Pioneers Academy, a 6-12 middle and high school in Ward6, utilizes a semi-self-contained model for the core academic subjects at the middle school level to ensure students and parents have just one to two points of contact. For example, 6th graders have the same teacher for math and science and a different teacher for English language arts and history. Another model utilized by a couple Bold Performance Schools that helps schools feel smaller is an advisory group model where students from multiple grade levels have the same advisor and receive multiple touch points as a group during the day. They believe advisory group meetings in the morning and afternoon bolster strong connections and that meeting circles with students from across grade levels foster helpful big brother/sister relationships.

## Extended learning time opportunities for students.

Most of the Bold Performance Schools mentioned one key strategy was extending the amount of quality instructional time received by students as a key to their 2022 success, which included bringing students back for in-person learning opportunities during the virtual year, offering more instructional days and hours during 2021-22, and squeezing more effective one-on-one and small-group instruction time into the master schedule.

During the pandemic virtual year, every school brought high-priority students back to school with some starting as early as August 2020. Center City Congress Heights offered in-person learning opportunities to students daysdays per week from the start of 2020-21, based on whether they had virtual attendance or internet access issues. Familieswho had no means of keeping the student online because their work was required to be in-person could send their child to the school. KIPP Legacy College Prep, a high school in Ward 8, opened their building to all students three days per week in October 2020, engaging their students with disabilities first. Other Bold Performance Schools offered in-person seats, based on need and at-risk designation during the second semester of the virtual year.

For 2021-22, schools made a variety of accommodations to provide students with more quality instruction time that they lost during the first year and a half of the pandemic. Center City Congress Heights started the school year nearly a month earlier than usual, and Roots PCS, an elementary school in Ward 8, added an hour to the instructional day, a strategy they have continued this year. Most of the DCPS Bold Performance Schools mentioned Saturday Academy, offering enrichment activities, and more opportunities for educators to have another touchpoint with students, as important strategies to extending learning time. Several elementary schools indicated that they offered an intense summer learning program in 2021 for students starting in 2nd grade.

Several schools changed their master schedule to offer small-group, individual interventions and high-impact tutoring blocks. At Washington Global, a middle school in Ward 6, students participate in dedicated math and ELA intervention blocks for an hour at least three times a week. Using federal recovery funds, Washington Global hired an additional interventionist to provide this extra support. Global also utilizes a blended learning model in math where students rotate from whole-group instruction to research-based intervention program stations.



Several Bold Performance Schools described changes to the master schedule to “double block” math and reading. Morning learning blocks focus on fresh, new content and lessons. Then, using data from morning exit tickets, the shorter afternoon blocks shift between whole-class, small group, and individual instruction to correct misconceptions immediately.

In the Bold School survey, we asked teachers and leaders how interested they would be if a permanent 45 minutes or more was added to the school day to allow for small-group intervention blocks where full-time teachers can plan and collaborate together or get paid extra to provide interventions. Eleven of the 14 responses indicated that they were at least somewhat interested in considering that shift.

Targeted small group and individual student interventions that allow students to access rigorous grade-level content, even when they have unfinished learning gaps.



Many educators across the District and nation are struggling with the push for rapid academic acceleration amid substantial unfinished learning gaps created by the pandemic. The feeling of impending, widespread burnout is real. We asked Bold Performance School staff how their school addresses these dueling concerns, and they frequently responded with affirmation of that concern, how they maintain a positive spirit that their students do not have unfinished learning, and that interventions and small groups are key strategies to helping students access grade-level content.

While data suggest most students returned in fall 2021 with significant knowledge gaps for their assigned grade, many Bold Performance teachers and leaders conveyed a sense of confidence that with the right support and interventions, all students could access grade level content and achieve. They described how other co-academic skills (such as resilience, problem solving, and self-advocacy) that students gained during the virtual year were utilized during 2021-22 to propel student academic skills forward. Brigham Kiplinger, Principal at Garrison Elementary in Ward 2: “Our students designated as at-risk often bring the most reserves and resources in terms of resilience. We try to tap into that and hold them to high standards. We also ensure they receive the support to address any other non-school or social-emotional needs that affect them, so they can shine their brightest.”

Leaders felt that their teachers were approaching burnout even before the 2021-22 school year. The level of support students needed, academically and socially-emotionally, was substantial, and they knew their pre-pandemic staffing levels could not provide all of the interventions needed. At least six Bold Performance Schools, using federal recovery funds, hired additional staff as grade-level interventionists. We did not explicitly ask this question on the survey, but six schools mentioned these hires when answering other open-ended questions. The interventionists sometimes push into the classroom to provide on-demand support for students during whole class instruction, and at other times, they pull students into small groups or one-on-one learning opportunities.

Federal recovery dollars are set to expire in 2024 (or in 2025, if extensions are granted). We asked Bold School leaders how interested they would be in a permanent increase in staffing levels to include more interventionists, small-group instruction specialists, and full-time tutors. Every one of the 14 responses indicated that they were at least somewhat interested and 79% said they would be very interested in such a plan.

High-impact tutoring was another intervention strategy that 86% of Bold Performance School survey respondents indicated that they utilized during 2021-22. About one-third of the schools offered tutoring during the school day by paying staff extra to tutor during their breaks and planning periods. Another third offered tutoring during the school through external organizations or with college students. The rest held tutoring before or after school or on Saturdays.

## ADDITIONAL INTERVENTION AND SMALL GROUP IDEAS

### FROM BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS



**Student-led small groups.** Burroughs Elementary’s Principal Levar Jenkins on the value of seeing students leading small-group instructional activities: “It’s really refreshing to see students taking ownership of not only what they’re learning, but how they’re going to apply that learning to something greater.”



**Partnership for Inclusive Classrooms.** Three Bold School educators mentioned the Relay Graduate School for Education program as a helpful tool last year. The program partners with schools, school leaders, and teachers to build the capacity to create and sustain the inclusive practices necessary to provide all students – particularly exceptional learners – with the academic and strength of character skills in the general education setting.

Teacher observation, collaboration, coaching feedback cycles, and professional development that provide educators with support to improve.

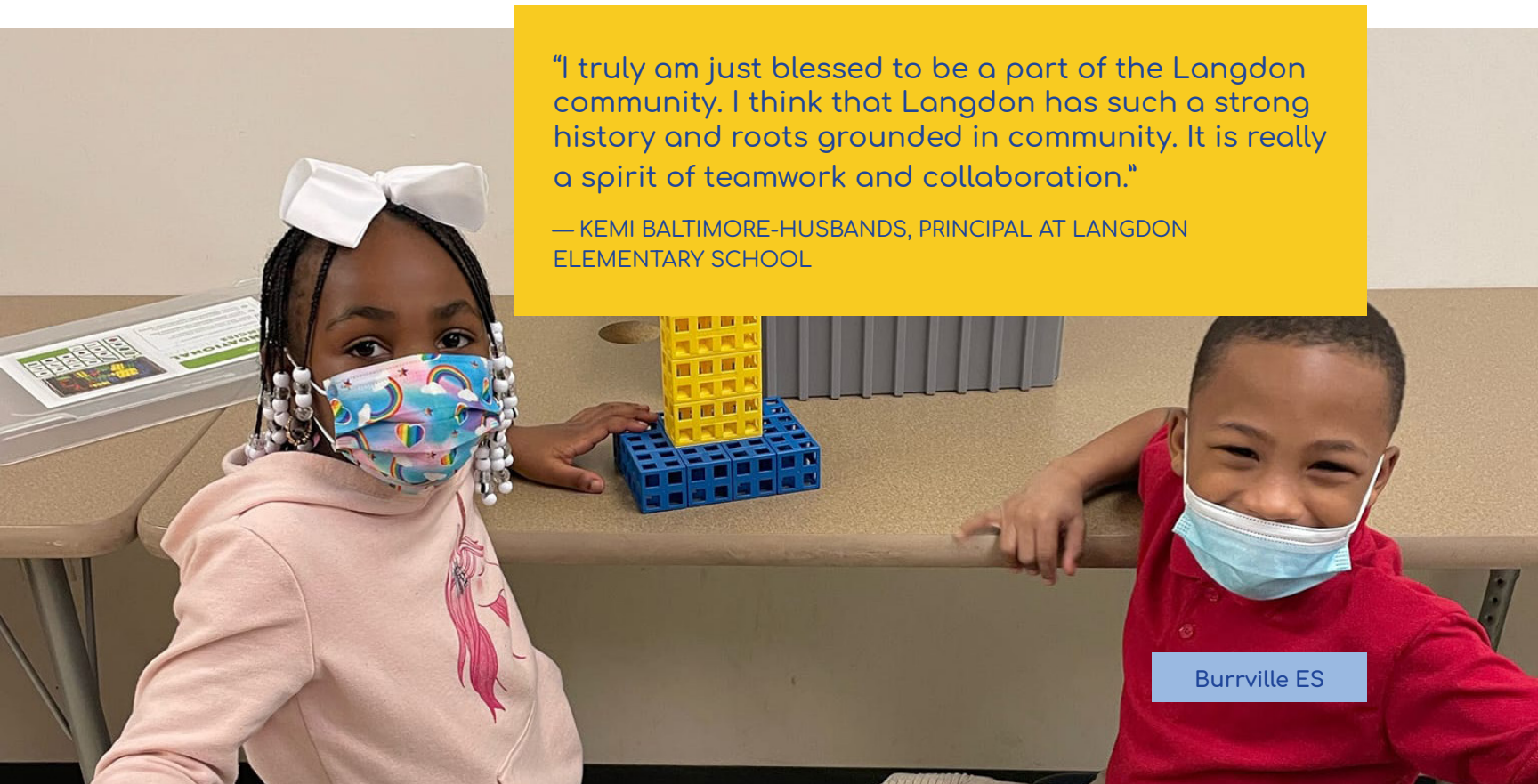
Principal Niya White at Center City Congress Heights talked with us about how she will delegate principal duties for the day to cover a classroom: “You should always be equally ready to get down and dirty when coverage is needed or somebody is on [family] leave. It’s okay for you to teach. It’s probably the best opportunity for professional development and growth you can give your teachers. They can walk into your room while you’re teaching to see what you’re doing, how you’re doing it, what resources you made, how you crafted and shifted, and the questions you were asking.” On these days, teachers use the same observation forms that Principal White utilizes when she observes teachers, and teachers provide feedback to Principal White.

At Burroughs Elementary, staff find collaborative planning time to talk about strengths and needs, not deficits, of their multi-tier systems of support (MTSS) for students. Hope Harrod, 5th grade teacher at Burroughs Elementary School on why planning and collaboration is really important at her school: “Collaboration allows teachers to align their philosophies and make sure that we are all aiming towards the same goal. When you get together as a community or as a learning unit, it’s important for us to be very honest about what we’re doing in the classroom, sharing our goals and objectives with each other.”

Educators at Burrville Elementary School have open door policies and peer observations are the norm because they know “it’s going to take a village,” as Principal Chunita Pilgrim described the school. She said, “We’ve adopted the motto that ‘feedback is love’ because we care about the students here. Our team knows we can’t do this work in isolation. It’s important to us to keep open doors, literally, so that fellow teachers know they can come in, observe, and provide feedback. When we miss the mark in a lesson, the feedback helps close the gaps. We’re all working toward the same goal.”

“I truly am just blessed to be a part of the Langdon community. I think that Langdon has such a strong history and roots grounded in community. It is really a spirit of teamwork and collaboration.”

— KEMI BALTIMORE-HUSBANDS, PRINCIPAL AT LANGDON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Burrville ES

## ADDITIONAL TEACHER SUPPORT IDEAS FROM BOLD PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS



**Vertical planning.** Several Bold Schools intentionally facilitate vertical planning sessions across grade levels. Conversations at sessions typically fall into one of these categories: standards and curriculum review by educators to see how skills build across grade levels; identifying proper individualized supports for students entering school multiple grade levels behind; crafting schoolwide thematic projects and activities that all students can access in developmentally appropriate ways.



**Teacher-led professional development on data analysis and wellbeing.** In addition to peer observations, at many Bold Schools, teachers lead professional development. Examples of topics were diverse and included analyzing iReady data (Burroughs), adult mindfulness and wellness (Digital Pioneers), responsive classrooms (Payne), and effective small group-instruction (multiple Bold Performance Schools).

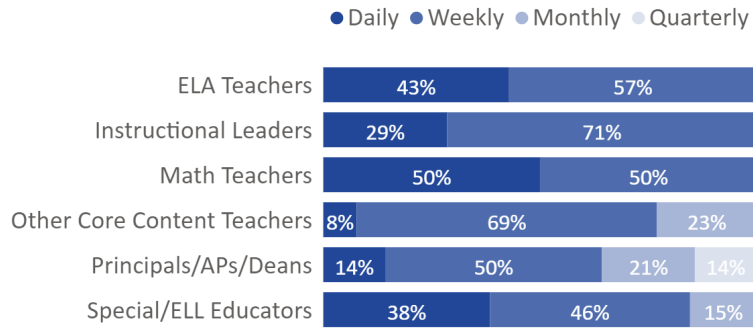
## Weekly data and student work analysis, progress monitoring, and goal setting conversations with educators and students.

Educators at Bold Performance Schools started with specific goals they wanted to see from students by the end of the year. Then, they backwards mapped what progress was required, and by when, and identified what data would help them know whether students are on track. Throughout the year, teachers utilized daily exit tickets and weekly data deep-dive meetings to keep pace with changes happening in classrooms and monitor student progress. Weekly data meetings included looking at student work, attendance data, and wellbeing data alongside teachers, instructional coaches, counselors and social workers. A couple of leaders mentioned that they had “heard about that data thing” for years before the pandemic, agreed to try it with fidelity, and found success in the long-term results for students.

Our survey of Bold Performance educators finds that core content teachers and instructional coaches deep dive into student data daily or weekly.

At Bold Performance Schools, not all data and goals conversations are about outcomes with hard numbers like attendance, assessment scores, and grades. Often, the goals and data reviewed are co-academic and social-emotional skills that Bold School educators and students know are important. At Paul Middle School in Ward 4, students start the day in “crew time,” where they chat with an advisor about how they are doing, what is happening in their classes, and then create a goal for the day. At the end of the day, students reflect on whether they met their goal, what support they may need, and how they will improve tomorrow. Paul Principal Shedrina Walker, on why it’s important that students are the ones who lead daily goals conversations: “It’s important that students lead the work because they need to know their areas of growth and what they’re doing well. They can reflect on what they need to do to build self-efficacy and other skills they need to be successful. We’re a school focusing on helping students understand who they are and their data, so they can do what’s needed within the school building and out to really grow as a learner.”

**Figure 11. Frequency of Data Review by Different Educator Types at Bold Performance Schools**



Schools mentioned other strategies outside of the top six as being helpful for students and educators but did not assess them to be the most important keys to their success. For example, in response to our questions, every Bold School that responded mentioned that bringing students back for some in-person learning time during the 2020-21 virtual year was important work. However, just one school identified it as a key strategy that made them a 2022 Bold Performance school one year later.



**Poul ES**



# BOLD RECOMMENDATIONS



Set citywide bold goals for a full academic recovery within three years where achievement rates meet or exceed pre-pandemic 2019 rates; and close academic gaps for priority students by 2030.



Adopt and implement strategic plans aligned with bold goals and commit to funding the solutions working at Bold Performance Schools



Invest in the research to implement what's working and how to course-correct when not.

Our students need bold goals, bold approaches, and bold stakeholder collaboration to move beyond simple recovery to an era where all District students, regardless of socioeconomic or disability status, can thrive in an increasingly global labor market.

We urge city leaders to set the goal for a full academic recovery within three years where achievement rates meet or exceed pre-pandemic 2019 rates by 2025, a full two years ahead of the predicted amount of time based on spring 2021 academic growth rates. More boldly, we encourage education leaders to target priority students, such as those designated as at-risk, with a bold goal of closing the national achievement gap by 2030.

When our students from low-income families demonstrate performance on par with their more affluent national peers, we will have taken a massive step towards breaking the cycle of poverty and afforded all students with the opportunity to compete for the careers of their choice in what is an increasingly national and global job market. DC can meet this goal by achieving an average NAEP score for students designated as at-risk that is not statistically different from the national average score for non-economically disadvantaged students by the 2030 administration.

With bold goals in place, schools can revamp their strategic plans with student, educator, and family input, and our accountability systems' can align with those targets. Bold Performance School leaders are hoping to continue affording the full-time interventionists and substitute teachers they find incredibly helpful. Mitigating a potential fiscal cliff related to expiring federal COVID-19 recovery funding requires comprehensive planning from the Mayor, sector leaders, and Councilmembers that should begin this school year.

After strategic plans are formulated and intervention investments decided, we must commit to gathering and sharing frequent data by adopting the "Rule of 3's" – a cross-industry best practice for improving the effectiveness of strategies at scale. There are three steps to following the Rule of 3's:

- **3Di – "3% for Data on Interventions"**

The first step of intervention rollout is to add at least 3% to the intervention's budget to cover data collection, analysis, and improvement activities. Three percent is an industry baseline standard for effective research and development of new initiatives.

- **3tV – "Tend to the Variation"**

The second step in the Rule of 3's for interventions is recognizing that almost every good strategy can work and scale, but not everywhere, every time. Leaders and implementers should regularly tend to the variation in performance to quickly learn what's working, where, and why.

- **3Y's – "3 Why's"**

When probing for qualitative information about why an intervention is working or not, remember to ask "why" at least three times successively to ensure the group has considered all possible root causes for the success or lack thereof.

The 2020's will be defined by the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of the decade. But the last two-thirds of the decade will be defined in how we choose to respond. DC's Bold Performance Schools taught us that remarkable achievement for students designated as at-risk are possible when we balance the art and science of education to learn quicker, better, together. With inspiring, talented educators utilizing a collaborative science of improvement approach, we can boldly close opportunity gaps for students furthest from the opportunities they deserve.



Center City Congress Heights ES/MS

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