



District of Columbia
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

LESSONS FROM THE DC ALL-STAR SCHOOL TOUR

March 2019

DC SCHOOL REPORT CARD

Get to know DC Schools. Start here.



**Marie Reed Elementary 4th graders
tell Superintendent Kang why they
love their school.**



Turner Elementary 5th graders celebrate.

Dear DC Community,

We are excited to share lessons from our first-ever DC All-STAR School Tour, an initiative to celebrate and learn from public schools in DC that are showing outstanding results for students as reported on the [DC School Report Card](#) and School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) Framework.

This winter, senior leadership from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and I visited ten schools across the District, including both DC Public Schools (DCPS) and DC public charter schools. During the visits, we observed classrooms and participated in roundtable discussions with teachers and school leaders to learn about promising practices.

We embarked on the tour following the launch of the [DC School Report Card](#) in December 2018. The new report card, which will be updated annually, provides students, families and educators with comprehensive information about the performance of public schools in the District, including each school's rating on the new STAR Framework. The report card provided us the opportunity to identify schools in which students with disabilities, at-risk students and English learners are demonstrating strong growth. We visited those schools to learn about their strategies and to scale and share those best practices across the District. We are so thankful to the students, families, teachers and principals at these schools for sharing their stories with us, and we congratulate them for their hard-earned success.

This report is a starting point for recognizing and learning from bright spots across our city. We encourage families, educators and community members to use the report card to connect with and learn from each other.

Sincerely,

Hanseul Kang
State Superintendent

ALL-STAR THEMES

The schools we visited are using a wide range of approaches and strategies. While there is no singular formula, we observed some common themes across the high-growth schools we visited.

- The schools had a **clear, compelling vision** that energized their community (staff, students and families) to work consistently and relentlessly toward goals.
- The schools were **intentional about resource choices**. A school with some of the highest growth for student with disabilities used funds to establish a robust co-teaching model with a general education and special education teacher in each classroom. Other schools invested in additional staff roles such as social workers and mental health counselors, with thoughtful rationale for why they made these choices.
- The schools fostered a **strong culture of team collaboration**. Teachers often held many leadership roles in the schools we visited and felt empowered to bring ideas to their school leaders. Staff engaged in courageous conversations to hold each other accountable to keeping high expectations for all students.
- The schools brought a **growth mindset** to work every day. Leaders and teachers we met expressed a deep belief in the capabilities of their students and were constantly looking for ways to improve their craft to help students reach their full potential. The schools also brought a focus on continuous improvement to their work.



Center City PCS – Brightwood students discuss their coding project with Superintendent Kang.

2018-19 DC ALL-STAR SCHOOLS

Legend:

- Woodrow Wilson High School
- Center City Public Charter Schools - Brightwood Middle School
- DC Bilingual Public Charter School
- Marie Reed Elementary School
- Perry Street Preparatory Public Charter School
- Langdon Elementary School
- Friendship Public Charter School - Blow Pierce Middle School
- Kingsman Academy Public Charter School
- Amidon-Bowen Elementary School
- Turner Elementary School



DC ALL-STAR TOUR BY THE NUMBERS

10
SCHOOLS VISITED

77
EDUCATORS PARTICIPATED IN
ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

43
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

★ ★ TO ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
RANGE OF STAR RATINGS FOR
SCHOOLS VISITED

ALL-STAR SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

Amidon-Bowen Elementary School



2019 DC Teacher of the Year Kelly Harper with her 3rd grade math class at Amidon-Bowen Elementary.

Students at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School love math - so much so that a math teacher has fielded multiple requests from students this year to join the math team and go to math competitions. But it wasn't always that way. Administrators shared that when they observed math classes in the past, many students would have their heads on their desks and were quick to get frustrated and disengage. Amidon-Bowen educators knew they needed a change, so they employed multiple methods to boost students' confidence in math. First, teachers engaged in weekly data meetings in which they analyzed student work, selected key topics for re-teach lessons, and practiced the re-teach lessons in front of each other. Staff acknowledged that the live practice was awkward at first but was highly effective in preparing teachers to address misconceptions in the moment with students. Second, teachers worked with a math coach and intervention teacher to adapt the curriculum to meet students' needs, particularly when working in small groups to close skill gaps. Teachers collaborated to identify the foundational skills that students need in order to fully access grade-level content for each math unit. They used small group time to focus instruction on the foundational skills and give students additional time to practice. Finally, teachers constantly messaged their belief in each student's ability and created an environment in which students felt good about being challenged. The payoff was clear in the 2017-18 school year when **Amidon-Bowen showed strong growth for all students in math, particularly for students with disabilities and at-risk students.**

Center City PCS - Brightwood



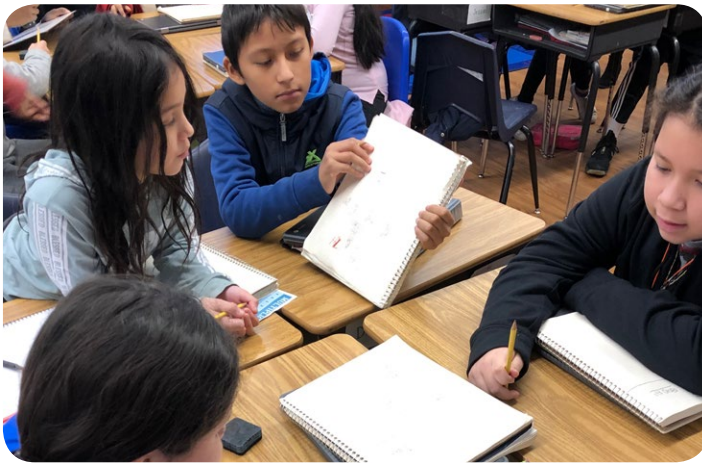
Students at Center City PCS - Brightwood create beats to mix with their song lyrics in music technology class. Brightwood cites its robust electives program as one reason for its strong growth.

Mistakes are treasured at Center City Public Charter Schools' Brightwood campus. Educators have built a "culture of error," in which students and teachers celebrate the power of mistakes in the learning process. Teachers encourage students not to embarrass classmates for incorrect responses or what they consider to be silly questions. We observed this environment of students feeling comfortable making mistakes in a 4th and 5th grade Dance Company elective class, one of five electives at the school, that all 4th-8th grade students participate in every Wednesday. The class was practicing pirouettes (a 360-degree turn to the right or left). Students were comfortable struggling through this difficult dance move and weren't afraid to ask questions in front of the class. One student asked, "Which way do I turn again?" The teacher responded by putting the question back to the class, "Does anybody have an answer for that?" After a quick clarifying discussion, all students then practiced their pirouettes again. The spirit of learning from mistakes made for a fun, safe and learning-filled dance class. This culture helped **Brightwood earn the highest middle school framework score in DC, including exceptional growth for its English learners.**

"Our teachers care about us, and they care about our future."

- Sixth grader, Center City Public Charter Schools-Brightwood

DC Bilingual PCS

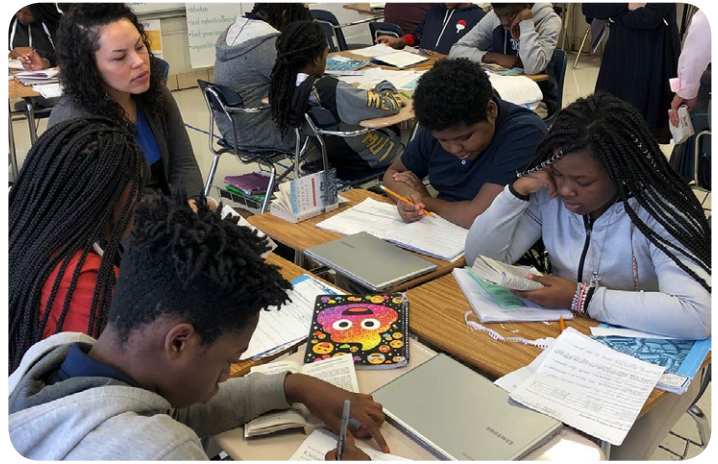


DC Bilingual 5th graders collaborate in math class.

Warm and loving classroom environments are the norm at DC Bilingual PCS. To build that environment, administrators and staff are committed to forging strong relationships with students and with their families. A parent of two students at DC Bilingual told us, “Every teacher has been extremely engaging. It’s so easy to get in touch with them if you have questions.” DC Bilingual makes home visits a central part of its parent engagement strategy, and the home visit experience is tailored to the age of the student. A parent shared that when teachers visited her 4th grader, they recognized his need to be more independent and self-directed. At the home visit, teachers asked questions such as, “What are your goals? What do you want to accomplish?” When pre-K teachers visited her 3-year-old, the experience was more play-based and about building a comfort level for the child’s first school experience. According to the parent, “When my 3-year-old went to her first day of pre-K, it was still a huge transition, but at least she already knew her teachers and had met them in a safe space [her home]. It didn’t feel like she was getting dropped off with strangers.”

DC Bilingual PCS is the top-performing school in the city on CLASS, a research-based tool for observing and assessing the effectiveness of classroom interactions in the pre-K classrooms.

Friendship PCS – Blow Pierce Middle School



Eighth graders at Friendship PCS – Blow Pierce discuss *All Quiet on the Western Front* in English language arts class.

When asked what he loves most about his school, an 8th grade student at Friendship PCS – Blow Pierce Middle School responded, “We are a family. We’re all in this together.” Indeed, the spirit of family and team was evident throughout classroom observations and in conversations with administrators and teachers at Blow Pierce. **Blow Pierce was the top performing middle school with a greater than 50% at-risk student enrollment.** Staff attributed the school’s growth to building strong relationships with students. Teachers told us that they think of all students in the school as their own students and feel responsible for making positive, affirming connections with all kids, not just the ones in their homerooms. Staff also build strong relationships with students over time - several middle school teachers loop with their students from 6th grade to 8th grade. This long-term commitment builds trust and helps teachers better understand and address students’ academic needs.

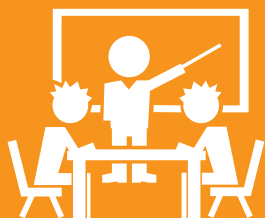
Friendship PCS - Blow Pierce was the top-performing middle school with a greater than 50% at-risk student enrollment.

Kingsman Academy PCS



Kingsman Academy teachers and leaders with OSSE's Assistant Superintendent for Postsecondary and Career Education Antoinette Mitchell.

Kingsman Academy PCS, an alternative school in which 45% of students have a disability, deeply engaged with students through home visits and social media to improve attendance. To better understand the root of the issue, Kingsman staff interviewed students and asked them about their barriers to attending school. Students shared that child care was a big barrier – they were responsible for caring for younger family members and sometimes for their own children. A lack of affordable and reliable child care kept high school students at home caring for young ones. In response, Kingsman staff collected information about affordable child care and connected students with child care resources in their communities. Many students also shared that they felt unsafe traveling to and from school. Kingsman was able to organize a school vehicle to transport some students safely to school. Additionally the school worked to better match students with their interests and academic needs. For example, students work on unique projects that are tailored to their interests.



Kingsman Academy PCS had the second highest attendance growth in the city in 2017-18.

Langdon Elementary School



Students are absorbed in their independent reading books in a Montessori class at Langdon Elementary.

Teachers and administrators at Langdon Elementary School exude a “can do” attitude. “We take an approach that nothing is off the table,” said a 3rd grade teacher. “We do whatever is needed for our kids to succeed.” **Langdon’s commitment to students resulted in the highest growth scores for at-risk students in the city.** Teachers say they are successful at serving students who need more intensive support because they are flexible and creative in thinking about how they can get each student what he or she needs. For example, following interim assessments, teachers adapt their small groups. Teachers often meet with students who are not in their homeroom, and even meet with students from other grade levels. Teachers and administrators have built trust over the years so that today, teachers feel empowered to try out groupings, strategies and initiatives to boost student learning.

“We are not complacent; we are always focused on getting better.”

– Teacher, Langdon Elementary

Marie Reed Elementary School



A 4th grader at Marie Reed tells OSSE's Assistant Superintendent for Health & Wellness Heidi Schumacher about the support her teacher gives her.

Marie Reed Elementary School earned a 5-star rating and is one of the highest performing schools in the District with a large population of English learners (about 55% of Marie Reed students are English learners). Marie Reed Principal Katie Lundgren fosters a strong culture of team collaboration, seeking input from teachers on how to best address challenges. Many teachers have also taken on leadership roles, such as serving on the academic leadership team, leading the race and equity team, or leading staff development on promoting language development. The result: Teachers feel empowered to come to the principal with ideas because she often follows through on them, and their whole team is engaged in trying to improve outcomes for students and families. Principal Lundgren has also prioritized in the school's budget mental health supports for students. Three social workers, a bilingual counselor, and a psychologist work in close partnership with classroom teachers to serve students' needs. The mental health partnerships further add to the collaborative environment at Marie Reed. As one teacher remarked, "I never feel like I'm on my own here."



"I never feel like I'm on my own here"

- Teacher, Marie Reed Elementary

Perry Street Prep PCS



Perry Street Prep 5th graders celebrate their growth.

A strong team and a willingness to grow and learn were key to helping students with disabilities shine at Perry Street Prep PCS. **The school earned maximum growth points in all four academic growth metrics for students with disabilities.** After some difficult years, school leaders realized they needed much more support for their students, particularly for students with disabilities. First, Perry Street Prep placed a general education and special education teacher in nearly all classrooms and purchased evidence-based intervention curricula to supplement core instruction. The school set clear expectations for working together and continually revisited what was working and what wasn't throughout the year to maximize the investment in co-teaching. Second, teachers meet with an instructional coach weekly to strategize increasing learning outcomes for each and every student. This intensive support was challenging at first, but through consistency and team spirit, teachers have come to embrace it. A 6th grade math teacher told us, "I've been teaching for 14 years and I thought I knew it all. But my mindset has changed by working here. My instructional coach has shown me so many different ways I can grow as a teacher." Third, Perry Street Prep built a behavior team, including mental health professionals and contracted behavior analysts, who work proactively with the students who need the most support. In addition to working directly with students, the behavior team supports teachers in understanding the root causes of student behaviors and in having restorative conversations to successfully return students to the learning environment. Perry Street implemented its plan thanks in part to grant funding from OSSE's Special Education Enhancement Fund. In addition to earning some of the highest growth in the city for students with disabilities, Perry Street has seen a drop in suspension rates to a 0% suspension rate so far in the 2018-19 school year.

Turner Elementary School



Hands up for hard work at Turner Elementary School.

Six years ago, Turner Elementary School was named one of DCPS' 40/40 schools, which meant it ranked among the 40 lowest-performing DCPS schools. This past year, **Turner earned a 3-star rating and showed particularly strong math growth for students with disabilities – the school earned 100 percent of possible points for both academic growth metrics on the STAR Framework.** Principal Eric Bethel, who is in his 5th year of leading the school, and his team at Turner Elementary School hold weekly data meetings to assess, track and monitor student progress and have set bold goals for the year in math and literacy in an effort to ensure more students can benefit from the progress the school is making. They have also implemented interventions to support all students who are struggling, regardless of whether they have a disability, and piloted a broader use of a math intervention curriculum, which they credit with much of the growth they have seen. Finally, they have built a school culture that is focused on effort—helping students reflect on the level of effort they put in and shifting the language that adults use to recognize effort and improvement.

“Everybody who works in this building sees this as mission-driven work. We are battling inequities, fighting poverty, and seeking social justice.”

– Principal Eric Bethel, Turner Elementary

Wilson High School



State Superintendent Hanseul Kang in a roundtable conversation with Wilson High School teachers.

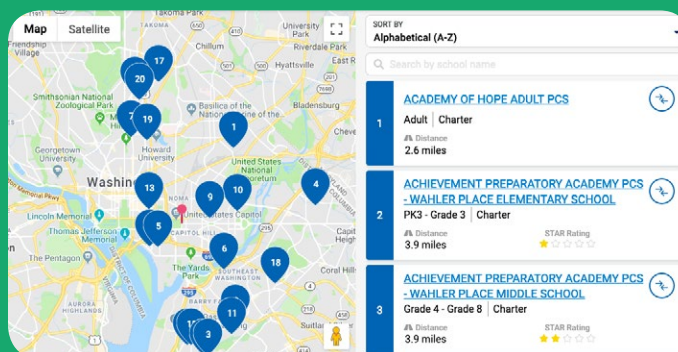
Wilson High School, the District's largest high school, **has taken a comprehensive approach to increasing rigor and equity among students with its “Honors for All” initiative.** The school had noticed a lack of racial/ethnic diversity in its honors classes when placements were determined solely by middle school counselor recommendations. This also led to a significant difference in access to AP courses later in high school based on student race/ethnicity. In 2017, Principal Kimberly Martin and her team set out to increase equity by providing all students with access to honors English and biology in 9th grade. Teachers rewrote curriculum to ensure rigor and accessibility. While results in the first year showed a drop in grade point averages (GPA), the drop was across the board and did not disproportionately impact one student group. Now, the school is seeing an increase in GPA, showing that students are adjusting to the rigor. Wilson educators hope to see a difference in AP course participation next year as the first class of the initiative reaches 11th grade.

In another initiative to promote rigor and equity for all students, Wilson encouraged all 11th graders to take physics. Wilson's principal shared that, “We were dedicated to enrolling many more students in physics because we know that taking physics in high school is a game changer in terms of college readiness.” Through this initiative, educators learned that students had shied away from physics because they were afraid of the math involved. However, once students enrolled in the class, they grew confident about their ability to succeed with the content. This led to a significant spike in interest in AP physics – the school went from offering only two AP physics courses to offering seven AP physics courses in one year.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR OWN ALL-STAR TOUR

We encourage educators, families and community members to identify the areas in which they'd like to see their school grow, and then seek out schools that are performing well in that area. Visit DCSchoolReportCard.org to identify schools that are showing strong growth for students with disabilities, schools with strong growth in mathematics or English language arts and more. The report card also includes information on teacher experience, types of health staff at the school, extracurriculars and more.

Use the map tool to sort schools alphabetically, by STAR rating and by distance from your home or workplace. Use the filter tool to list schools that meet preferences you selected.



Use the compare tool at the top of DCSchoolReportCard.org to compare schools to each other and identify strengths.



Visit schools' Academic Performance and STAR Framework pages for information on growth for all students, students with disabilities, at-risk students and English learners, as well as growth displayed in detail by race/ethnicity.



Office of the State Superintendent of Education
1050 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002