

# DC Public Education Fund

Accelerating Innovation in DC Public Schools



## The Best Urban School Library Program in the Country



All students in DC Public Schools deserve an educational experience that inspires them to read, discover, create, and explore. Greater investments in school libraries will promote student learning and motivate students to increase their reading ability, a key predictor of future academic success through high school graduation and beyond. In order to create environments where students can achieve at the highest levels, DCPS is transforming its school libraries to give every child equal access to the same level of learning resources and the same rich experiences. DCPS believes school libraries are the critical lever to dramatically improve student literacy, shifting the trajectory of low student achievement and creating a foundation for success for every student.

To create a culture of learning that starts with reading, DCPS is undergoing a modernization effort to design, equip, and staff its libraries. Over the next three years, DC Ed Fund will partner with DCPS to transform school libraries into state-of-the-art hubs of activity that inspire and accelerate student learning.

Since the reform efforts began in 2007, DCPS has made deep and sustained investments to improve its teaching force and restore its schools. In that time, 80 school libraries have been redesigned. However, uneven funding has led to gaps in library collection development that require a substantial effort to correct. While improvements made since 2007 brought vital change, all of DCPS' school libraries require collection development and technology to fully engage their students, to support scholarship, and to drive student achievement. DC Ed Fund recognizes the promise of innovative libraries and seeks philanthropic support to transform DCPS' libraries across all 111 schools over the next three years.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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DC Public Schools believes greater investments in school libraries will inspire students to read, discover, learn, create, and explore. Transforming all DCPS libraries will create the best urban school library program in the country.

### Impact

DC Public Schools is on a mission to greatly improve student achievement. Years of research suggest that access to a well-resourced school library improves student reading skills and writing ability. Furthermore, studies demonstrate that student achievement improves when schools have a strong library media program. This effect is true regardless of other school conditions such as student-teacher ratio, overall per-pupil spending, student demographics, and community socio-economic conditions.<sup>1</sup>

DCPS recognizes the impact of libraries on student achievement, and is committed to doing more to meet the needs of its students today and in the future.

### Commitment

DCPS set the stage for library improvements in 2012 when the DC Public Schools' School Library Task Force produced the *Recommendations for School Library Media Programs* report to guide the growth and development of its school library programs. Over the last two years, DCPS has begun to answer the task force's call to create world-class library programs.

First, to begin laying the groundwork for great schools and great libraries, many DCPS schools have undergone significant modernizations. Since 2007, 80 of DCPS' school libraries have been renovated either in tandem with the school's modernization or with the support of outside partners such as Heart of America Foundation and Capitol Hill Community Foundation, and 13 school libraries are currently undergoing or are slated for renovation as part of the schools' planned modernization.

Second, DCPS staffed every school building with a librarian at the start of school year 2014-2015. To support

libraries across every school, DCPS also increased its Central Office staff, working closely with the Education Technology office to ensure aligned instructional supports and programs.

Third, for the first time, librarians participated in professional development alongside teachers to increase opportunities to develop each school's library programs. The foundation is set for the best urban school library program in the country.

### One Million Books

DC Public Schools seeks to provide every student access to a world-class library that reflects each school's unique needs, and where students have a wide array of books and digital resources to make learning rigorous and fun.

To transform DCPS libraries, every school will receive a collection infusion to meet the industry-recommended Exemplary Collection standard. DCPS will invest in one million books ensuring each school's collection contains 20+ current books per student that are up-to-date, curriculum-related, and appealing.

To accommodate different student learning styles, every school library will be equipped with new and innovative technology. Classes will congregate in the library to utilize new tablets and laptops, equipped with e-book collections and best-in-class digital content, interactive white boards, and desktop computers to improve every student's reading ability.

To create the best school-based resources and programs, school leaders will work with staff to select proven programs with a track record of success in urban schools, reaching as many students as possible to make dramatic academic gains.

<sup>1</sup> School Library Impact Studies: A Review of Findings and Guide to Sources. Frances Gretes. Gretes Research Services. August, 2013.

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DC Public Schools will create the best urban school library program in the country to empower learners to evaluate, create, and communicate as active participants in a global society.

### \$15M will Transform DCPS Libraries

- One Million Books

**\$6M**

An Exemplary Library Collection is critical to ensure every student has the resources needed to improve literacy skills—driving outcomes that lead to high school graduation. To provide an Exemplary Collection at every school, DCPS will purchase one million books, both physical and digital, over the next year, putting critical resources in the hands of DCPS students and teachers.

- Engaging Technology

**\$3.5M**

DCPS is a leader in education innovation, dedicated to improving outcomes for students by providing new and proven learning technologies. As a vital part of DCPS' strategy, every school library will include 30 laptops with a secure storage cart, a minimum of five desktop computers, a classroom set of tablets or e-readers, and an interactive whiteboard. School libraries will be the center of DCPS' digital transformation.

- Special Collections

**\$500,000**

To create a unique library program in Washington, DC, several DCPS schools are ideally suited for the development of special collections based on the school's academic focus. While this is an uncommon approach to collections at the K-12 level, creation of special collections will not only provide DCPS students access to unique material relevant to their individual interests and community, but will also help prepare students for the type of library experience they will encounter at the post-secondary level. Several special collections will include an arts library at Duke Ellington School of the Arts; an Engineering & Architecture collection at Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering High School; and an African American History collection at Cardozo High School.

- School Librarian Scholarships

**\$100,000 annually**

To ensure libraries are led by well-qualified librarians and to develop current DCPS talent, these funds will be used to train a cohort of up to five School Library Media Specialists annually at the ALA accredited University of Maryland iSchool, which prepares librarians to implement K-12 school library programs and meet the information needs of the future. This replicates the successful 2004 partnership, from which five of the eight original cohort members are still serving as librarians in DCPS.

- The Proving What's Possible Fund for Library Innovation

**\$4M**

DCPS encourages its school teachers and leaders to push boundaries and consider new, innovative practices to deliver a world-class education. The Proving What's Possible Fund for Library Innovation puts these beliefs into practice through grants made directly to schools. DC Ed Fund will allocate funds to those schools with the most compelling plans to dramatically improve outcomes for students through the school's library. For example, to leverage the best teachers across the District, some high schools may decide to create virtual learning opportunities to offer Advanced Placement courses taught by another school's top subject-area instructors; some elementary schools may decide to improve outcomes for the entire school community by creating intergenerational learning labs for students whose families struggle with their own literacy skills; and some middle schools may offer creation stations, where students will use cutting-edge computers, advanced design software, and 3-D printers to create, test, and revise designs of their own.

Through this funding model, schools will develop their own opportunities for students to create, innovate, and explore in an effort to make the dramatic gains schools seek and DCPS students deserve.



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