



2nd Annual Bold Improvement Awards Recognize 13 DC Schools Where At-Risk Student Performance Is Improving 10 Times Faster than at Other Schools

To help educators support at-risk students better, EmpowerK12's new report draws on lessons from fast-improving charter and district-run schools

MEDIA CONTACT: Massie Ritsch
massie@engage5e.com
202-365-8225

WASHINGTON (August 1, 2019) —Thirteen public schools that enroll a large share of the District of Columbia's at-risk students are closing the achievement gap at a rate 10 times faster than other schools in the city and nationally. For their growth in academic performance, and for the instructional, analytical and cultural practices these schools employ to achieve such progress, the education nonprofit EmpowerK12 has named these campuses its 2019 Bold Improvement Schools.

The seven DC Public Schools campuses and six charter schools are on track to meet or exceed the test scores of the nation's more affluent students within the next five years. EmpowerK12 is showcasing the schools—its second cohort of Bold Improvement winners—in a [new report](#) drawing on data analysis, school visits and interviews to identify what practices and mindsets contribute to extraordinary school-wide improvement.

Being recognized today at the National Press Club are these 2019 Bold Improvement Schools, in alphabetical order:

- 🔗 Barnard Elementary (DCPS / Ward 4)
- 🔗 Center City - Congress Heights (Charter / Ward 8)
- 🔗 Columbia Heights Education Campus (DCPS / Ward 1)
- 🔗 H.D. Cooke Elementary (DCPS / Ward 1)
- 🔗 J.O. Wilson Elementary (DCPS / Ward 6)
- 🔗 KIPP DC - Heights Academy (Charter / Ward 8)
- 🔗 KIPP DC - Promise Academy (Charter / Ward 7) KIPP
- 🔗 DC - Valor Academy (Charter / Ward 7)
- 🔗 Langdon Elementary School (DCPS / Ward 5)
- 🔗 Perry Street Prep (Charter / Ward 5)
- 🔗 Tubman Elementary (DCPS / Ward 1)
- 🔗 Walker-Jones Education Campus (DCPS / Ward 6)
- 🔗 Washington Leadership Academy (Charter / Ward 5)

Together, the 13 Bold Improvement Schools educate 6,400 students, of whom 17 percent receive special education services and 58 percent are considered at risk of academic failure. An at-risk student is a child whose family qualifies for SNAP or TANF benefits, is placed in foster care, or is homeless. In high school only, students who are at least one year older than the expected age for their grade are also considered at-risk. In 2018, when the test data identifying Bold Improvement Schools was collected, almost 46 percent of DC students tested were

considered at-risk. Typically, the more at-risk students a school serves, the lower a school's median student growth percentile, according to EmpowerK12's analysis. This is the crux of the socioeconomic achievement gap.

By contrast, Bold Improvement Schools serve a high at-risk student population and have combined math and English language arts growth rates dramatically higher than similar schools—an average of 10 growth percentile points more. To identify the honorees, EmpowerK12 analyzed the most recently available PARCC data, from the 2018 testing season, along with school report cards from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

EmpowerK12 then visited the winning schools to learn from educators what has fueled their students' rapid improvement. Several commonalities emerged among the schools:

- They use data and information in frequent and intentional ways;
- They collaborate across classrooms as well as across schools;
- They ensure students are ready to learn by creating a warm social-emotional environment;
- They hold the highest of expectations for all students.

At the same time, to close achievement gaps in DC even faster and at more schools, these educators have several requests of officials who oversee schools and determine priorities and budgets:

- 1) More funding to hire additional staff, including social workers, interventionists, and instructional coaches;
- 2) A three-year plan to meet the adequate funding rate and organize a task force to generate a comprehensive plan to recruit, train, and support the additional staff schools need;
- 3) More collaboration time for teachers and leaders, and more cross-school collaboration focused on continuous improvement and challenges such as middle school readiness, growth for students with disabilities, and pre-kindergarten instructional support;
- 4) A citywide student, family, and teacher survey to attain better data around key indicators of excellent trauma-informed brain science practices in schools. Train schools and teachers on brain science and these effective practices.

EmpowerK12 Executive Director Josh Boots praised the combined efforts of students, educators, and families at the Bold Improvement schools: "How to support at-risk students is not a mystery. These schools show students make big gains when educators expect big things from all students, when school is a welcoming place, and when everyone collaborates using data to guide their priorities. There is no reason that every school serving high numbers of at-risk students in DC and the nation cannot achieve similar gains."

This is the second year EmpowerK12 has handed out Bold Improvement honors for student growth. The organization also recognizes absolute performance by at-risk students. The next cohort of Bold Performance awards will be recognized this fall, once 2019 PARCC scores have been released. Of the 2019 Bold Improvement winners for growth, H.D. Cooke, KIPP Heights and Washington Leadership Academy were also Bold Performers in October 2018. Barnard and Walker-Jones received honorable mentions.

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Find the 2019 Bold Improvement report and learn more about the winning schools at <https://empowerk12.org/bold-improvement-schools>

About EmpowerK12

EmpowerK12 is a DC-based nonprofit organization that supports the city's traditional public and public charter schools to implement data-driven instructional practices.