

**Proposal for Durham City and Durham County partnership with Durham HOPE Centers**  
*Ensuring all students have safe, welcoming and supportive space to access their online learning*

August 14, 2020

***The need***

DPS will begin school year 2020-21 implementing Plan C with remote instruction for all 33,000 students for at least the first quarter. While this plan is necessary during this pandemic to keep our students and staff safe, we also recognize that this presents an enormous childcare burden on many of Durham's working families and our families facing increased economic hardship during this crisis. Many children will still need physical spaces outside of their homes to successfully access their online learning.

Supporting our school district to quickly pivot to deliver remote digital instruction to all 33,000 DPS students is an enormous undertaking. There are several critical pieces that must be in place to ensure digital equity for all students:

- devices and internet access
- tech support
- well trained and supported teachers
- a physical environment conducive to learning

If students are missing any one of these components, they won't be able to access learning this fall and the consequences on their lives and our broader community will be felt for decades.

DPS, Durham County and the Durham community are making huge investments in making DPS a 1:1 district (one device for every student) and putting in place the infrastructure to support strong digital instruction and remote learning. We have a sense of urgency right now to deliver digital remote instruction because of this crisis but this is a long-overdue response to digital inequity that has exacerbated disparities in learning opportunities for DPS students for years. Investments we make now in ensuring our schools and community are prepared to support the full ecosystem required for digital remote learning will serve our students and strengthen our public schools through this crisis and long after.

***What's at risk***

Researchers predict that students who have low-quality or no access to remote instruction will fall nearly a year behind if school schedules remain disrupted through January 2021. Additionally, COVID closures will likely contribute to increased drop-out rates. Historically, after school closures due to natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Maria in 2017, 14 to 20 percent of high school students never return to school. Drop-out rates and learning loss will follow students across their entire lifetime. Because of systemic racism and structural barriers exacerbated by the pandemic, these impacts will be felt most by Black and Latinx students. Over a 40-year working life the estimated lost earnings incurred by Black and Latinx students will be nearly twice those incurred by white students.

These impacts will also harm the economic well-being of Durham as a whole. With lower levels of learning and higher drop-out rates, students will be less prepared for the workforce. Communities that do not address these issues now will be less able to compete in the future and their local economies will suffer.

We can write a different story for Durham. Our whole community must rally to ensure the full ecosystem necessary for remote learning is in place for all DPS students.

### ***A model for safe learning space***

Durham HOPE Centers - *Harnessing Our Partnerships for Education* - is a community response to ensuring all K-12 students have safe, welcoming and supportive space to access their online learning.

The Durham HOPE Centers model has been developed through a partnership of Durham Public Schools, Student U, YMCA, Durham Children's Initiative, Made in Durham, Emily K, and Boys and Girls Club. The DPS Foundation will play a leading role in rallying our community to support HOPE Centers as part of the Accelerating Digital Equity campaign and will fund partners on the ground doing the work with students and families.

These partners' roles are to develop the templates and training modules for all centers, recruit space, and support fundraising. Some partners will directly implement the centers. Our goal is to build consistency across the community and provide resources to partners interested in supporting children in this manner whether as a HOPE Center or in small communities.

Durham HOPE Centers will provide:

1. Safe and supportive space to complete DPS online learning.
2. Two meals a day and snacks throughout the day to sustain learning.
3. Activities and experiences which increase the social and emotional capacity of our young people during this challenging time.

With safety as a priority, students will be:

1. Assigned into fixed learning pods with no more than 12 children.
2. Screened daily upon entering the building.
3. All learning centers will require universal masking and keep children 6 feet apart.

HOPE Centers will be located at 6 DPS schools as well as in community sites across Durham County. We are currently seeking additional community spaces that meet our space requirements for ensuring safety.

### ***Access***

Our goal is to reach at least **3,000** students this fall and to provide free access to as many families as need this option. We estimate about 3,000 DPS students need to have free access to HOPE Centers. This is based on a few pieces of data:

- Approximately 63% of DPS students qualify for free or reduced price lunch

- About 5,000 families regularly accessed meal sites during school closures
- DHA serves approximately 1,200 children – while efforts are underway to provide internet at DHA sites the project will not be complete by the start of school, further increasing the need for these students
- From January to May 2020 there was a 37.6% decrease in employment among low-income workers in Durham and over the same time period low-income workers' earnings decreased by 33.8%
- Many DPS families are essential workers and cannot be at home with their children during remote learning

Spaces will be available on a sliding fee scale. A paid option will be available to families who can afford a fee-based program. We are prioritizing free seats for our most vulnerable children who will suffer devastating consequences from loss of learning and lack of social-emotional support if they do not have a safe, nurturing space to access their online learning.

Durham HOPE Centers will prioritize providing free access to children who:

1. Are experiencing houselessness or transitional housing
2. Qualify for free or reduced price lunch
3. Have parents who work in essential jobs and aren't able to have childcare at home during the day (food industry, custodial staff, healthcare)
4. Have parents who have become unemployed due to COVID

The current goal is to begin some HOPE Centers on September 8th and add more sites as space and funding permits.

### ***Funding***

Significant community investment will be needed to provide a learning center model that has the robust support our students need and deserve and to ensure there is sufficient free access for our students who most need this resource.

As of today, DPS is in Plan C for the first 9 weeks of schools. Given the unpredictability of this crisis, we believe that HOPE Centers might be necessary in some capacity all year.

Durham Public Schools will provide significant support to Learning Centers by providing the following:

- Professional learning to staff and volunteers to support academic learning (Canvas, Zoom)
- Screening all volunteers through the DPS Human Resources Department
- Providing all HOPE Centers with school schedules and school and district activities; such as Wellness Wednesdays to support social and emotional needs for students
- On-going collaboration with HOPE convenors throughout the remote learning time

DPS Foundation will lead private fundraising efforts through the Accelerating Digital Equity Campaign. This fundraising will help close funding gaps and bring in additional funding from corporate, foundation

and individual donors who share our commitment to providing free access to HOPE Centers for any child who needs it.

**The HOPE Centers partners request Durham City and Durham County join as partners in this effort and provide funding support.**

Providing learning centers costs \$200 per student per week. This cost is consistent with the cost identified by many providers who run youth programs like this year-round in Durham and in other communities. This cost includes trained and reliable adult supervisors, volunteer coordination, social-emotional supports, materials and supplies, cleaning and site operations and two meals a day.

Here we present two cost scenarios for providing free access to HOPE Centers. We know DPS will be 100 percent remote for at least the first 9 weeks of school and expect there will be some ongoing need for HOPE Centers all year, with the need varying based on DPS's plans for in-person school.

**Funding scenarios for providing free access to HOPE Centers for students with need:**

	Full cost for 9 weeks	Full cost for semester (14 weeks)
3,000 students	\$5,400,000	\$8,400,000
1,500 students	\$2,700,000	\$4,200,000

**DPS has committed to financially support the 6 centers approved by the Board of Education on August 13.** These 6 centers will provide 900 seats on a sliding fee scale, including a free option for students who need it. DPS has stated a priority of providing free students to those who need it but has not yet set a policy regarding how many free seats will be provided.

**Our request is that Durham City covers 35% and Durham County covers 35% of the costs.** We have a goal to cover at least 6% of the costs with private fundraising raised through DPS Foundation's Accelerating Digital Equity campaign. Contributions in the form of staffing and space for HOPE Centers would also be helpful in meeting this need.

HOPE Centers partners are committed to providing free access to as many students as possible based on the funding provided. The goal is to begin operating HOPE Centers in the community on September 8th but community partners cannot prepare to run these centers and open enrollment with free access for our students with need until funding is secured.

We appreciate your consideration of this proposal amidst the incredible array of needs you all are addressing for the Durham community through this crisis.

**Magan Gonzales-Smith**, Executive Director, Durham Public Schools Foundation

**Forrest Perry**, Regional Vice President at YMCA of the Triangle

**Alexandra Zagbayou**, Executive Director, Student U