

Pandemic Response Update from DPS Foundation: Virtual Learning and Digital Access

December 4, 2020

Need being met, the number of people or businesses served and the target population

DPS Foundation is galvanizing financial and non-financial community resources to support and help strengthen virtual learning experiences and digital equity during and after remote learning. The funds DPS Foundation raises are dedicated to supporting the 33,000+ students in DPS and the educators and families who make up our DPS school communities.

Summary of efforts to respond to the need

Through DPS Foundation's Accelerating Digital Equity campaign the organization has raised more than \$1.395 million to date (toward the \$1.5 million goal) from over 756 businesses, foundations, faith communities, civic organizations, and individuals. These funds are dedicated to four priority areas: (1) device and wifi needs, (2) teacher professional development and support, (3) digital literacy and technical support, and (4) providing vulnerable students with free access to learning centers.

DPS Foundation has started putting these funds into action as we continue to raise more and identify emerging needs. Over \$800,000 in funds have been allocated to:

- An emergency **purchase of devices** to ensure all students were equipped at the start of the school year (needed as a result of DPS-ordered devices being held at customs, which was an issue faced by many districts across the state and country).
- **Teacher professional development** to create equitable pathways to advanced online coursework.
- Hundreds of students with **free access to HOPE Learning Centers**.
- A **Student IT Help Desk internship** for spring 2021 which will help increase capacity in the DPS IT department to quickly address questions and needs and will provide 5 DPS students and 2 Durham Tech students with professional experience and a living wage paid internship.
- An **Accelerating Digital Equity School Fund** which will provide grants of up to \$10,000 to schools for proposals submitted by teams of students, educators and families to address digital equity needs at their school.

In addition to the Accelerating Digital Equity campaign, DPS Foundation has also supported our school communities this fall through:

- **\$100,000 in a family relief fund** that provided DPS families with \$500 checks to support needs such as rental assistance, utilities and meals.
- **HOPE Network** which connects DPS schools with volunteers and other non-financial community resources (learn more at www.dpsfhopenetwork.org).

Costs and funding sources, funding end dates, and City/ County funding covering costs

Durham City and Durham County provided \$743,600 in funds (\$338,000 and \$405,600, respectively) to provide vulnerable students with free access to HOPE Learning Centers at Student U, YMCA and Kate's Korner during the first semester of the school year. Learning Centers provide students with support in successfully accessing their online learning, as well as social-emotional supports, recreation activities and two meals a day. These Learning Centers cost \$200 per student, per week.

The partners will have used all currently available funds before the end of the first semester in January. There is not currently funding allocated to extend HOPE Learning Centers at Student U, YMCA and Kate's Korner in the second semester of this school year. The partners are currently working on projecting funding needs and considering funding sources.

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DPS has also covered costs related to the DPS Learning Center sites. Additionally, the DPS Foundation provided \$300,000 to extend free access for students to attend DPS Learning Center sites. The funds provided by the DPS Foundation will also be expended before the end of the first semester in January.

Summary of the unmet needs that we will need to grapple with in the next six months and options or plans to meet these needs

It is likely that many DPS students, possibly all students, will continue to learn remotely for the remainder of this academic year. The significant needs we anticipate in the coming 6 months and beyond include:

- Continuing to **support and strengthen the online learning experience**.
- Providing deep **remediation, acceleration and social-emotional wellbeing support to students** this spring, summer and beyond to help them recover from the trauma and lost learning during the height of COVID. This includes opportunities to create innovative approaches to meet these needs (e.g., new models of outdoor learning).
- Ensuring our **educators have the support and resources they need** and that our schools don't suffer from teacher attrition.
- Having **broad and deep community engagement around re-opening plans** and what school looks like as it returns and ensuring family and community confidence in our public schools.
- Continuing to provide vulnerable students with **free access to Learning Centers** to support their online learning and social-emotional wellbeing (extent of need will vary based on if we are in Plan B or Plan C). DPS will create funding projections for Learning Centers as it is determined whether schools will operate in Plan B or C. The funding projections for providing Learning Centers in the third and fourth quarters at the community partners sites are:

	Serves students in grades:	Total number students currently enrolled	Third Quarter SY20-21	Fourth Quarter SY20-21
TOTAL		306	\$612,000	\$528,800
Student U	6th - 12th grade	110	\$220,000	\$176,000
YMCA	K - 5th grade	116	\$232,000	\$208,800
Kate's Korner	K - 5th grade	80	\$160,000	\$144,000

DPS Foundation believes that identifying strategies to meet these huge challenges needs to begin with deep reflection, conversation and listening across our school communities. Over the coming months DPS Foundation, along with community partners, will engage in community listening sessions and research that culminates in a white paper with recommendations for DPS, local policymakers and community partners. The objectives of this white paper are to:

- Understand the experiences of our school communities during this crisis and document lessons learned from this time;
- Lift up promising practices and approaches from Durham and beyond. Highlight ways our schools and broader community have found innovative solutions to navigate the challenges brought on by COVID-19; and
- Identify ways the disruptions caused by this crisis can spur new ways of continuing to strengthen the public school experience for Durham students and how promising innovations can be scaled in the short and long-term.