



Date: 12/29/2020

Subject: Update and Funding request for HOPE Learning Centers

From: HOPE Network Partners

To: Durham County Commissioners

HOPE (Harnessing our Partnerships for Education) Learning Centers were designed by community partners to serve as safe, welcoming and supportive communities for young people K-12 to access while completing their online learning.

Our goals are to provide students:

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 (Art, coding, restorative circles, STEM, leadership, etc),
4. Recreation/physical activity

With a sustaining investment from the County Commission and City Council, HOPE Learning Centers were able to open in September. Through the partnership we were able to offer enrollment free of cost to students who meet any of the following criteria until January 15th:

1. Are experiencing houselessness or transitional housing
2. Qualify for free or reduced 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
5. Are part of the foster care system
6. Live in Durham Housing Authority Housing

Highlights from the first Semester

Financial: The largest cost, by far, for the partners is personnel (ranging from 60-70% of total budget.) The additional costs largely fall into three other categories with slight variability in percentages from one partner to the next; facility costs (rent/utilities), operational supplies, and administrative (risk/legal/etc.)

Employment: To date, the partners have served 306 students across our sites. Collectively we directly employ 41 community members.

Schools Served: The YMCA serves students from 17 schools, Student U from 24 and Kate's Korner 23.

Demographics: Because of the way enrollment has been processed, it is challenging to give specificity to the exact numbers of students that meet each of the six enrollment criteria previously listed in this document. As of the date of this memo, our students are out of school and we are not able to provide exact information regarding this item. However, we can say with complete certainty that 100% of the students meet at least one of the criteria, with Free and Reduced Lunch being the leader amongst those. Additionally, many students meet multiple criteria, with children of essential workers, students living in DHA housing, and families impacted by COVID all having strong representation amongst our students. If requested, we would be happy to provide a more detailed analysis of this information once our students return to school.

IEPs: We estimate that a minimum of 20-25% of our students have an IEP. The actual number is likely higher as there are likely some students with an IEP that we are unaware of.

Outcomes: Unfortunately, due to the legal restraints that prohibit direct information sharing regarding a student's academic performance, we are unable to give a comparative analysis of the academic performance of students in our learning centers as compared to their peers at this time. We understand that this is information of interest, and we too share in the interest in seeing this data at some point. Please know that we continue to work with DPS to find ways that we may be able to assess the academic performance of our students, and the impact of the learning centers on their academics. DPS, which also has an interest in understanding how their students at both partner and DPS Learning Centers are being academically supported, has indicated that they will strive to make this data available as soon as possible. We all also recognize that DPS's data and accountability office has significant demands on it at this time and that the analysis required here to compare students at learning centers with a comparative set of peers is complicated. While we are currently not able to point to quantifiable data to measure this, we can point to qualitative observations at each of our sites that gives us great confidence that the students are certainly performing better in our environments than they would be otherwise.

We believe it's worth noting that our original request for funding last fall, as well as this request for additional funding, was built on the promise of providing some of Durham's most vulnerable young people with safe, welcoming and supportive communities for young people K-12 to access while completing their online learning. In doing so, our four key goals for our learning centers have been 1) to provide students safe and supportive space to complete DPS online learning, 2) provide two meals a day and snacks throughout the day to sustain learning, 3) provide activities and experiences which increase the social and emotional capacity of our young people during this challenging time (Art, coding, restorative circles, STEM, leadership, etc), and 4) provide recreation/physical activity. We can say with certainty that we have successfully delivered on these objectives, in addition to the academic support we have provided. We consistently hear testimonials from children, parents, families, social workers, teachers, and administrators as to the benefit that our learning centers provide, and we take great pride that we have successfully delivered on our original promise.

Second Semester Funding

As we look to the second semester, the partners desire to continue to work with our students but cannot do so without an investment from the County. The DPS Board of Education voted in November to remain in Plan C for the remainder of the year, but allow Pre-K-5th grade families who opt-in an opportunity to receive in person instruction twice a week if/when Durham’s positivity rate is below 4% for at least two weeks. In the same vote, the Board permitted high needs middle and high school students the opportunity to be on campus once a week. On December 10th, the School Board voted to extend their commitment to DPS Learning Centers to January 29th while they await a decision from the Board of Education about the extension of online learning. ***The Board of Education will meet on January 7th to revisit their reopening plans.***

Based on what we know today, the HOPE Network learning centers will continue to be needed, likely at the same enrollment, through the winter and into at least the early spring.

Below is a cost breakdown for the second semester.

			At Current Enrollment	
	Serves students in grades:	Total number of students currently enrolled	Third Quarter (Jan 19-March 26)	Fourth Quarter (April 5-June 4)
StudentU	6th-12th grade	110	\$220,000	\$198,000
YMCA	K-5th grade	116	\$232,000	\$208,000
Kate's Korner	K-5th grade	80	\$160,000	\$144,000
DPS Foundation fiscal agent admin fee			\$3,000	
Total cost per quarter			\$615,000	\$550,000
Total cost for Spring semester			\$1,165,000	

At the December 14th BOCC meeting we presented an initial request asking the County to consider funding the third quarter operations for the HOPE Learning Centers. Due to timing, the request was adjusted and you graciously approved an amended amount of \$124,000 to fund the HOPE Learning Centers during the last two weeks of January so that we could provide our families, staff, and community members some amount of certainty as we headed into the holiday break.

At this time, we are formally requesting a commitment of an additional \$491,000 from the County Commissioners to keep learning centers open through 3rd quarter. In addition to the request in front of the BOCC, we have also made a formal request of the DPS Foundation in the amount of \$550,000 to fund the entirety of the fourth quarter. We make both of these requests under the understanding that should DPS decide to return to in person school in a manner that decreases the amount of funding necessary, said amount would be returned to the county and/or DPSF.