

# DSST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Start of School Update 2021-22

Board Meeting - September 23, 2021



The 21-22 School Year has been a start like no other

- We are in the middle of the pandemic
- Running a 100 mile race
- False summits
- Unique challenges

And yet we are resilient....

- We are stronger at our core (mission, values, human condition, educational equity)
- We have amazing people
- And it will be a 100 mile race

# **It has been a Strong Start to the 21-22 School Year!**

**However**, our schools are acutely feeling the effects of the pandemic:

- **Staffing Challenge**

- Still 15 unfilled positions in our schools

- **National Sub Shortage is a Pain Point**

- Network is not filling any sub requests less than 3 days in duration - even still, 1 in 5 requests go unfilled. This has led to a high increase in “internal coverage” which is wearing on teachers and leaders

- **Increase in Student Culture Incidents**

- Unusually high number of physical fights (often off campus) and other mental health related incidents (such as safety protocols, suicide risk assessments) across our schools

- **Health & Safety Work is Taking a Toll**

- Some of our most critical health and safety measures (sample testing, contact tracing, quarantining and isolation communication) take significant time from school leaders

# Where Our Managing Director Team Sees Bright Spots

## Bright Spots Across our Network

- **Managing Director Team Structure:** School Leadership are supportive and invested
- **Home Office Matrix Teams:** New structure to lead stronger more aligned school support
- **Individual Leadership Plans (ILP):** All Managing Directors, School Directors, School Directors in Training and Associate School Directors have already collected 360 feedback and are completing an ILP as a tool to intentionally tackle their areas of growth

## Spotlight Schools

- **Cole:** Unified campus is experiencing a strong start culturally and academically
- **Elevate HS:** Kicking off their founding year strong in an incredible new space
- **AST MS:** Leadership, culture, and instruction are off to a very strong start
- **CG HS:** Very strong start with strong leadership team despite staffing challenges
- **GVR MS:** A very joyful school culture!

# Where Managing Director Team Is Leaning In

## Areas of Focus Across the Network

- **Attendance:** 90% (typical standard is 95%)
- **Middle School Enrollment:** 15 open seats across 3 schools
- **Supporting New Leaders:** 7 of 14 of our School Directors are in their first or second year of being the School Director
- **Cascading Leadership Development:** The Managing Director Team is observing the work actually happening in schools and giving real time feedback to School Directors who are coaching other leaders and teachers

## Programmatic Shift: STEM & Creative Core

**Goal:** Improve opportunities for students in STEM and Creative Core

**Current State:** Offerings have improved, but quality of instruction varies

### Wins:

- **More Offerings.** Increased number of STEM courses and electives at all grade levels
- **Virtual cross-campus courses.** Offering expanded opportunities for students (AP Environmental Science, AP Music Theory, Calculus BC, AP Statistics, AP Studio Art), including AdvanceEdu.
- **STEM Certificates.** Setting ambitious goals for the number of students on track to graduate with a STEM Certificate.

### Challenges:

- **Instruction.** Overall quality of STEM instruction is low (rated 1.8/4.0 on rubric) based on observations, lesson and unit plan reviews and interviews of teachers.
- **Investment.** Vision for STEM programming (rated 2.1) is low, reflecting an overall lack of excitement from our leaders

# Programmatic Shift: Community Engagement

**Goal:** Create authentic, two-way connections between our schools and communities

**Current State:** Community Engagement Team off to a strong start, recruitment season about to begin

## **Wins:**

- **Strong vision:** Our staff seems bought in to this programmatic shift that has ambitious goals in the following areas: student recruitment and enrollment, family communication and satisfaction, community connection, advocacy
- **Dedicated FTEs:** We hired a fantastic new Community Engagement Team in a challenging hiring climate. Every campus has at least 1 new FTE Community Engagement Manager (9 total)
- **Supportive start:** This new Community Engagement Team is receiving intensive support from the MAC Team, School Directors, and Managing Directors
- **Community partnerships:** At least 18 community organizations were present at Back to School Nights, organized by Community Engagement Managers

## **Challenges:**

- **New structure:** We are still working out pieces of the new structure (CEM Team) and ensuring that the multiple support mechanisms fit together
- **Big work to come:** Recruitment season is just beginning, and School Board Election engagement is critical in October

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## Network Priority: Back to Basics

**Goal:** Ensure all teachers have a high quality lesson plan for every class with content that is grade level aligned.

### Current State/Wins:

- **Better Lesson Plans.** All schools have lesson planning systems and support structures in place
- **Improved Curriculum and Assessments.** In our Middle Schools, we are utilizing strong, standards-aligned curriculum (Reading Reconsidered and Achievement First Math), assessments (Achievement Network) and intervention resources (iReady).

### Challenges:

- **Bigger gaps in prerequisite skills.** Teachers are struggling to balance the demands of teaching grade level standards with the reality that more students than ever have significant academic gaps.
- **Quality of feedback** on lesson plans is inconsistent.

## Network Priority: Student Culture

**Goal:** Improve student experience

**Current State:** Schools are working very hard to support students who are really struggling socially, emotionally and behaviorally with the return to school

### Wins:

- **New Student Experience Survey Data.** 70% of students report a positive experience at school
- **Improved Training.** We have regular structures in place to support and develop school culture leaders and mental health providers, including: Culture Leader Development for new Deans (2x/month), Culture Leadership Team Lead Development (1x/month), Mental Health Provider Development (2x/month)

### Challenges:

- **Escalated Behaviors.** Larger number of fights.
- **Our mental health providers are overwhelmed.** 45 safety protocols/suicide risk assessments completed in the first 30 days of school

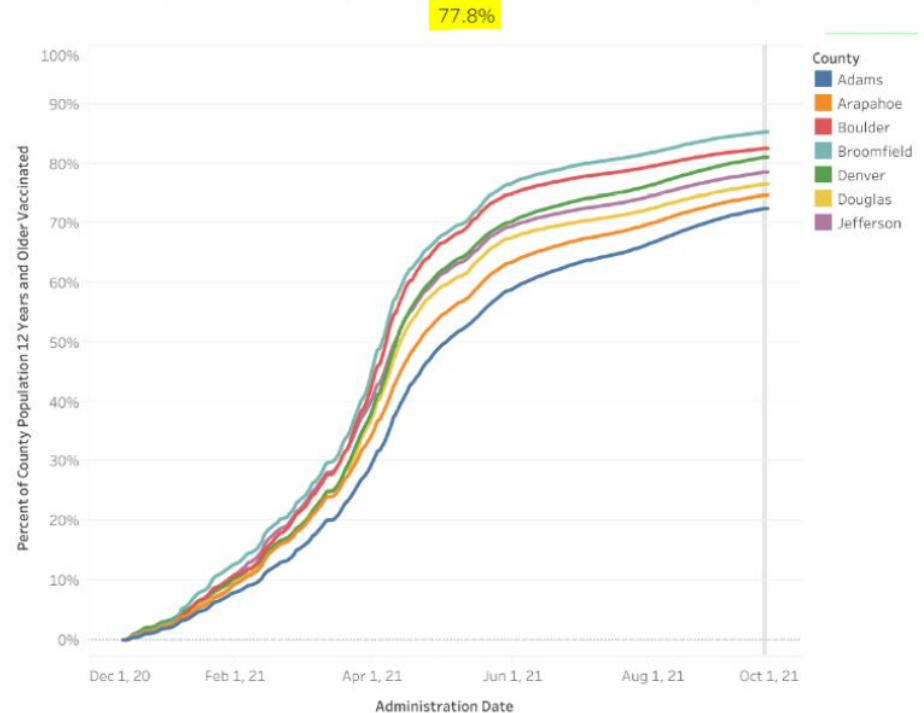
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## COVID-19 Updates

- Priority: in-person learning
  - Remote accommodations are rare
  - State and local guideline limit quarantine
    - Home: + cases, unvaccinated and/or unmasked indoor close contacts
  - Restrictions eased vs last year
    - No daily screener, temp checks, reduced class sizes, desk partitions, etc.

Denver Metro COVID-19 Vaccinations, Ages 12 and Older  
Percent of County Residents with One or More Doses of Vaccine

Percent of Residents 12 and Over Vaccinated in the Denver Metro



## COVID-19: Core Health & Safety Measures in Place

- **Measures:**
  - Universal masking
  - Distancing
  - Campus vaccination clinics - Cole, CV, MTV, CGHS, AST, Elevate
  - On-site sample testing of students and staff starting 9/13
  - Incident management (symptoms, positive cases, close contacts)
- **Resources:**
  - Policies, protocol, guidance, communications
  - “Operational Closure” draft plan (in event of staffing shortage)
- **Support Structure:**
  - Cross-departmental steering committee
  - Health & Safety Lead at each school
  - Home Office operational support

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## COVID-19: Positive Case Summary

### Headlines:

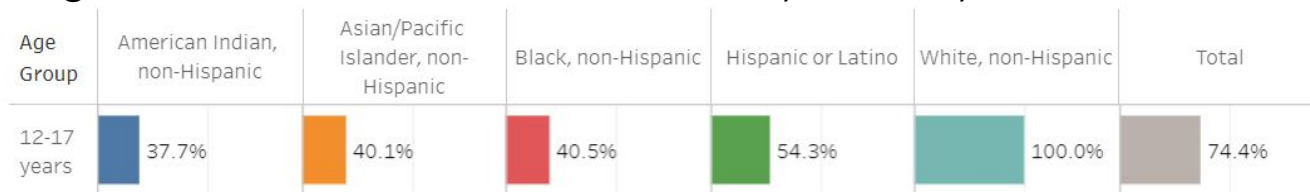
- DSST & DPS have same “Active Case Rate” of .19% (positive in last 10 days)
- 95% of DSST staff members are fully vaccinated
- 74% of 12-17 year olds have 1+ doses Denver wide
  - Of our cases so far, 34/37 students who tested positive were unvaccinated
- No indication yet of school spread (3+ cases in a rolling 10-day period)
- No indication health departments will close schools due to # of COVID cases

<b>Positive Cases</b>	<b>Week Of</b>							
<b>Student or Staff</b>	<b>8/8/2021</b>	<b>8/15/2021</b>	<b>8/22/2021</b>	<b>8/29/2021</b>	<b>9/5/2021</b>	<b>9/12/2021</b>	<b>9/20/2021</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Staff		1	3	1	1		1	7
Student	1	5	6	4	8	5	8	37
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>44</b>

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## COVID-19: Biggest Areas of Focus

- Driving vaccinations - Denver 12-17 rates by ethnicity below



- Driving in-school sample testing
- Keeping sick students, positive cases their close contacts home
- Fidelity of universal masking

# Enrollment Forecast

**We are forecasted to be +43 over budgeted enrollment for the network.**

- Network-wide forecast is projecting enrollment of 6787 (compared to a budgeted total enrollment of 6744)
- 4 schools currently tracking below budget target and have exhausted waitlists
  - CGMS -9
  - Cole MS -4
  - Noel MS -3
  - AST MS -2
- Small additions to enrollment are still possible at these schools as New-to-Denver students are still seeking placements.

**Final funding numbers based on October count will be available in early December. Impacted schools will then adjust budgets accordingly. (Roughly \$11k per vacant seat)**

# Enrollment Trends

**We are seeing increases in attrition compared to last school year for grades 6-10, which has resulted in significant utilization of the waitlists.**

- We have exceeded last year's total attrition (March-October) by **120 students** and still have two weeks until October Count.
- August 2021 was the largest month of network historical attrition ever. 572 students across the network withdrew prior to or just after the first day of school, compared to 378 students in 2020.

**DPS district-wide has a smaller 6th grade student universe than projected; all DPS schools in Near Northeast and Greater Park Hill/Central Park middle school enrollment zones currently under-enrolled to ideal targets.**

**We will work with DPS and internal data teams to further analyze district trends following October count. School Culture and Community Engagement focus work is critical to increasing external demand and re-enrolling current students.**



## Year Over Year Retention

**83+%** of DSST Staff was retained from the 2020-2021 school year into the 2021-2022 school year. This is over our target of 82% and the best retention we have seen in recent years.

### **Summary of our analysis around the key reasons for our increased retention:**

- ❖ Incredible leadership by DSST managers around DSST's commitment to the human condition by demonstrating incredible care for their people. Supporting data for this that the question "my manager cares about me as a person" was the highest scored question on average on our bi-weekly Network Pulse Survey.
- ❖ Coordinated leadership effort to execute and follow-up on a bi-weekly Network Pulse Survey in order to engage with team members experiencing challenges or concerns related to their work at DSST.

# Staffing Shortage: Late Leavers

Our early “Intent to Return” data in spring 2021 showed a very high projected retention rate of above 90% going into the end of the school year. As we suspected at the time, this number was a false positive with many team members preparing to leave without notifying school or network leaders. Between May 1st - Sept 1st we have lost 45 returning teachers & leaders.

## Next Steps:

- As hiring season winds down, we will be reviewing the reasons, early warning signs, and resignation letters for these team members.
- Determining ways we can mitigate for late leavers

# Staffing Shortage: Confirmed Declines

In addition to a lot of late leavers we have had our largest number of “confirmed declines” in recent years. We had **8 new hires leave** prior to (1 person) or within 60 days after their start date.

## **Next steps:**

- Work with school team to understand more about why these individuals may not have felt set-up for success or why they might not have been a good fit for their roles.
- Make adjustments, where needed, to the hiring & onboarding processes to ensure candidate profile is clear.

## Staffing Status

As of the week of 9/21, we have 12 school-based vacancies. Additionally, we continue to have challenges filling long-term & short-term vacancies due to severe staffing shortages at both of our substitute teacher vendors. We we experience some recent success getting 20 internal substitute teacher referrals to our substitute vendor).

### **Biggest Pain Points:**

- ❖ Ongoing churn of people leaving the organization last minute.
- ❖ Overall lack of candidates in the market for all roles and specifically in our historically hardest to hire roles i.e. special education (17 lost with 3 still open) and math (19 lost with 2 still open).

## Next Steps

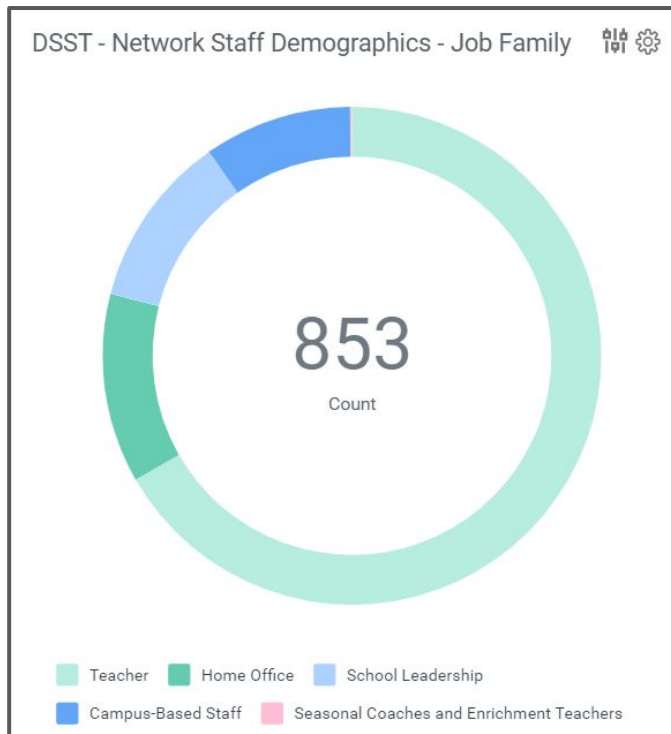
- ❖ We are taking a pause to assess new context and formulate strategic adjustments
- ❖ Considering additional investment opportunities to support current challenges and anticipate future ones.
- ❖ Will bring back recommendations to the board at the board retreat.

## Next Steps

### **Planning for Next Year (new ideas in addition to ongoing work):**

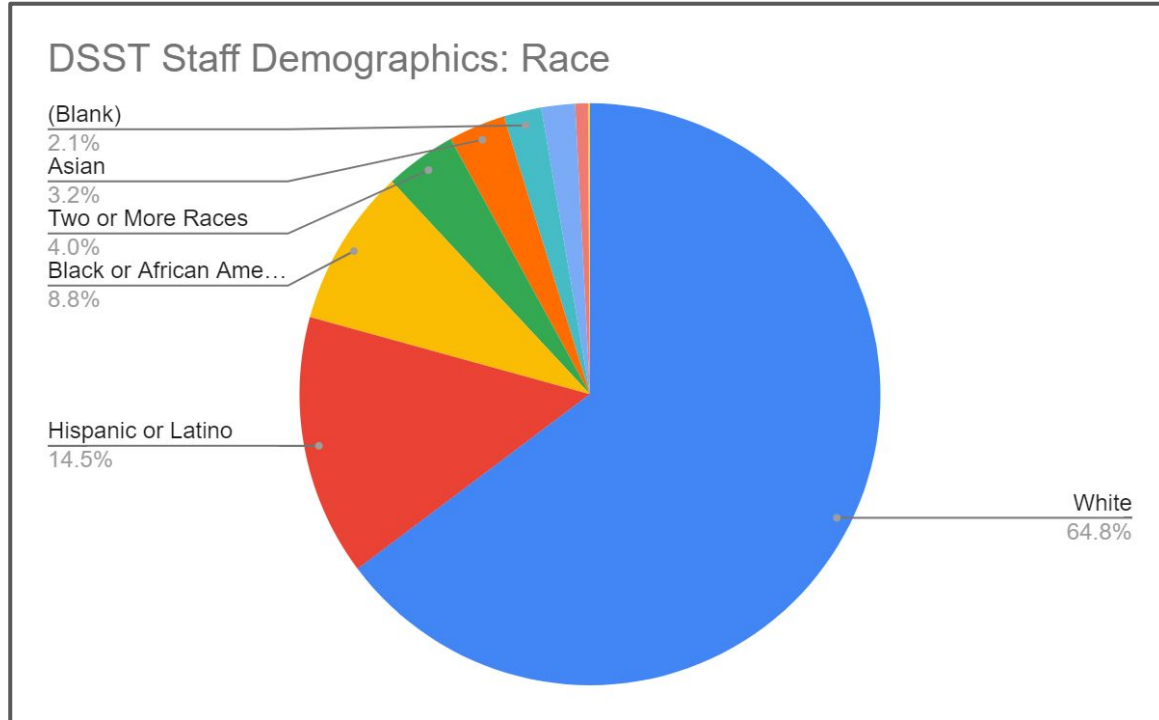
- ❖ Increased collaboration with community engagement team to increase visibility within the community
- ❖ Increased individual partnership with universities, affinity & community group leaders to drive referrals
- ❖ Adjusting/creating pipelines for SPED roles, career changers, etc
- ❖ Creating tool to compare compensation & benefits across DSST & other organizations
- ❖ Increasing compensation range to include additional years of experience & reviewing SPED teacher salary to see if separating it from general education salary is needed

# 2021-2022 Staff Demographics: General



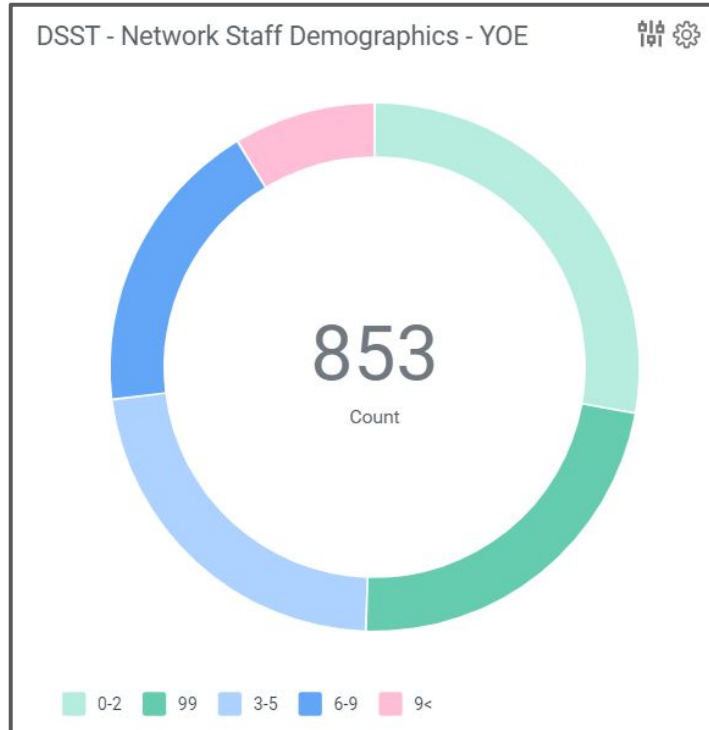
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# 2021-2022 Staff Demographics: Race





# 2021-2022 Staff Demographics: YOE



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