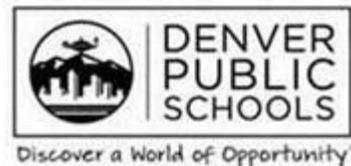


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Denver Public Schools Helps Aspiring Teachers Become Actual Teachers

Paraprofessional-to-Teacher training program provides scholarships to prospective teachers

Denver – Many paraprofessionals who work in the classroom dream of becoming a teacher. Denver Public Schools (DPS) has a new program that is helping to turn many of those dreams into realities. DPS' Paraprofessional-to-Teacher training programs allows would-be teachers to attain their teaching degrees at little to no cost.

"DPS currently employs over 2,000 paraprofessionals, the majority of whom are DPS graduates, DPS parents and DPS community members," Board of Education Member Lisa Flores said. "DPS has created a pathway for current paraprofessionals to continue working full-time while completing undergraduate course work and working toward their goal of leading a DPS classroom."

One of those "paras" is Chavonne Henry, who had to drop out of college to care for her child with a critical health condition. For the last four years, she has been a paraprofessional (teacher's aide) at DPS' Bruce Randolph School.

"My dream has always been to become a teacher, specifically a special needs teacher after caring for my own children's special needs," Chavonne Henry said. "I am a mother of four, I work full-time and although I have always wanted to earn my degree, my time and resources have been limited. When I heard about the Para-to-Teacher training program, I was ecstatic. I have a full-ride scholarship and I look forward to achieving my dream."

In addition to helping passionate individuals pursue their teaching goals, the program is a way to increase the diversity of DPS' teacher workforce.

"Our current pool of paraprofessionals is made up of 65% educators of color, compared to approximately 25% of the current teacher workforce," Deputy Superintendent Susana Cordova said. "Our paras bring a depth of knowledge to our classrooms. Not only do they work 'on the front lines' with our teachers, most of our paras also mirror our student population."

Funding for the program came through both the [2016 voter-approved mill levy](#) and generous community donors. DPS partners with Guild Education, Western Governor's University, University of Colorado Denver and the University of Northern Colorado to create pathways for paras to continue working full-time while completing their undergraduate course work.

"In 2016-17, [Gary Community Investments](#) provided \$91,550 to the [DPS Foundation](#) as seed money for the Paraprofessional-to-Teacher training program," DPS Foundation CEO Veronica Figoli said. "Without

them, the program wouldn't have been possible. Gary Community Investments continues to believe deeply in the program."

The deadline for paraprofessionals to be considered for the second Paraprofessional-to-Teacher cohort is Friday, March 10. To grow their careers and become classroom teachers, DPS paraprofessionals can apply online at www.quilddeducation.com/DPS.

Watch the press conference on the [DPS Facebook page here](#).

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About Denver Public Schools:

Denver Public Schools (DPS) is committed to meeting the educational needs of every student with great schools in every neighborhood. Its goal is to provide every child in Denver with rigorous, enriching educational opportunities from preschool through high school graduation. DPS is comprised of approximately 200 schools, including traditional, charter and pathways schools, with a current total enrollment of over 92,000 students—77.5 percent of whom are minorities. DPS is one of the fastest-growing urban school districts in the country in terms of enrollment, and is the fastest-growing large school district in Colorado in terms of academic growth. Learn more at www.dpsk12.org.

About the Denver Public Schools Foundation:

Denver Public Schools Foundation is Denver Public Schools' fundraising partner, generating resources, building relationships and championing public education to impact system-wide achievement in order to realize the vision of *Every Child Succeeds*. The DPS Foundation engages the entire community in support of DPS' more than 90,000 students and nearly 200 schools. Learn more at www.dpsfoundation.org.

About Gary Community Investments:

Gary Community Investments, which includes The Piton Foundation, invests in for-profit and philanthropic solutions for Colorado's low-income children and their families. It was founded by Denver oilman Sam Gary with the belief that business and philanthropy can—and should—work together to create opportunities for those who need it most. Gary Community Investments is committed to investing in quality early childhood and youth development systems, expanding sustainable economic opportunities, and developing and supporting programs that create healthy family and community environments. By aligning all of our assets with our mission, we make creative investments that not only yield a financial return, but can also improve the lives of Colorado's children.

About Guild Education:

Guild Education is bridging the gap between education and employment to help working adults navigate the two worlds of work and college. Their platform enables employers to offer education-as-a-benefit, with tuition benefit policies that align business goals, like talent development and retention, with affordable education programs that employees love. Guild's network of nonprofit universities and learning providers offer a consortium of classes, programs, and college degrees.