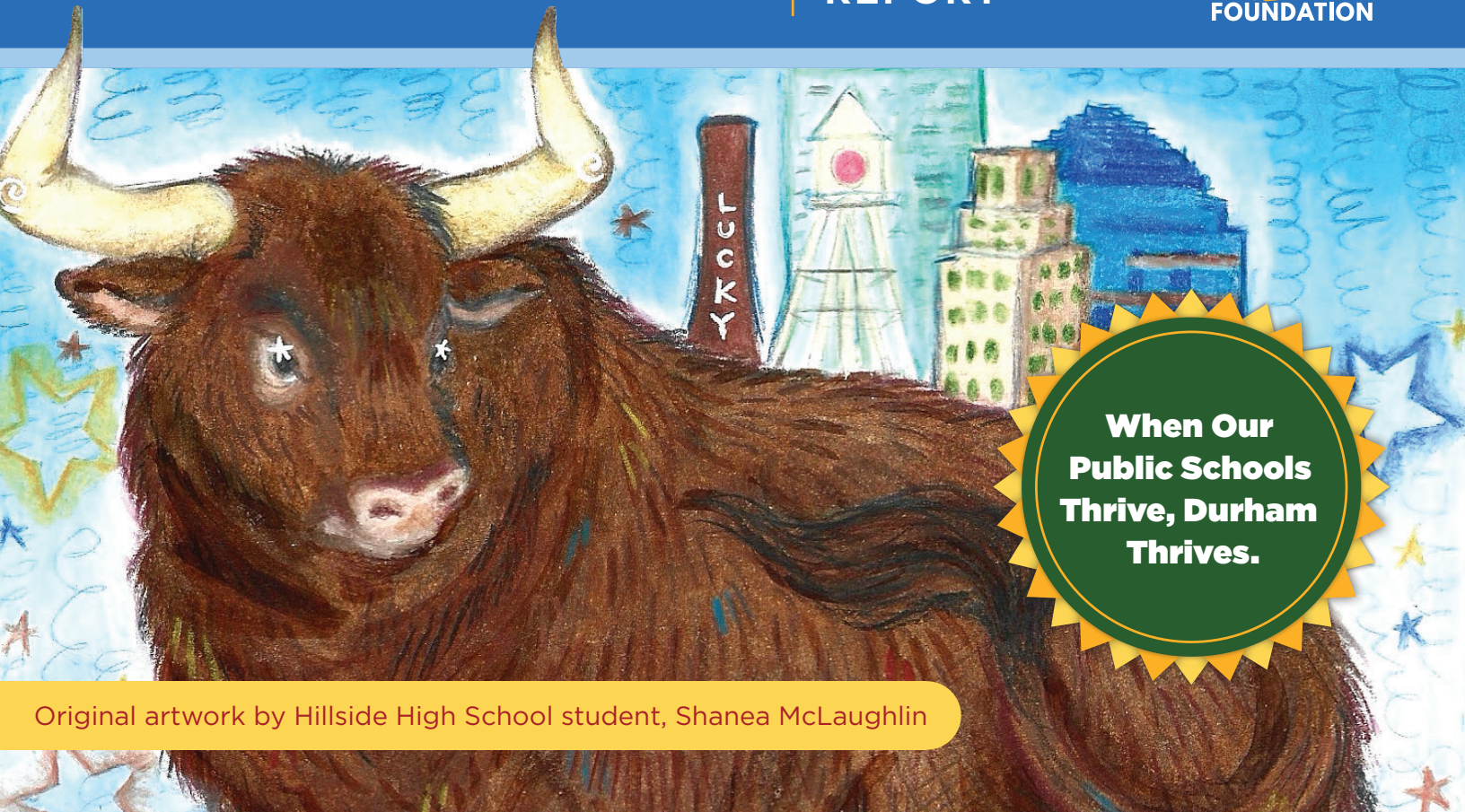


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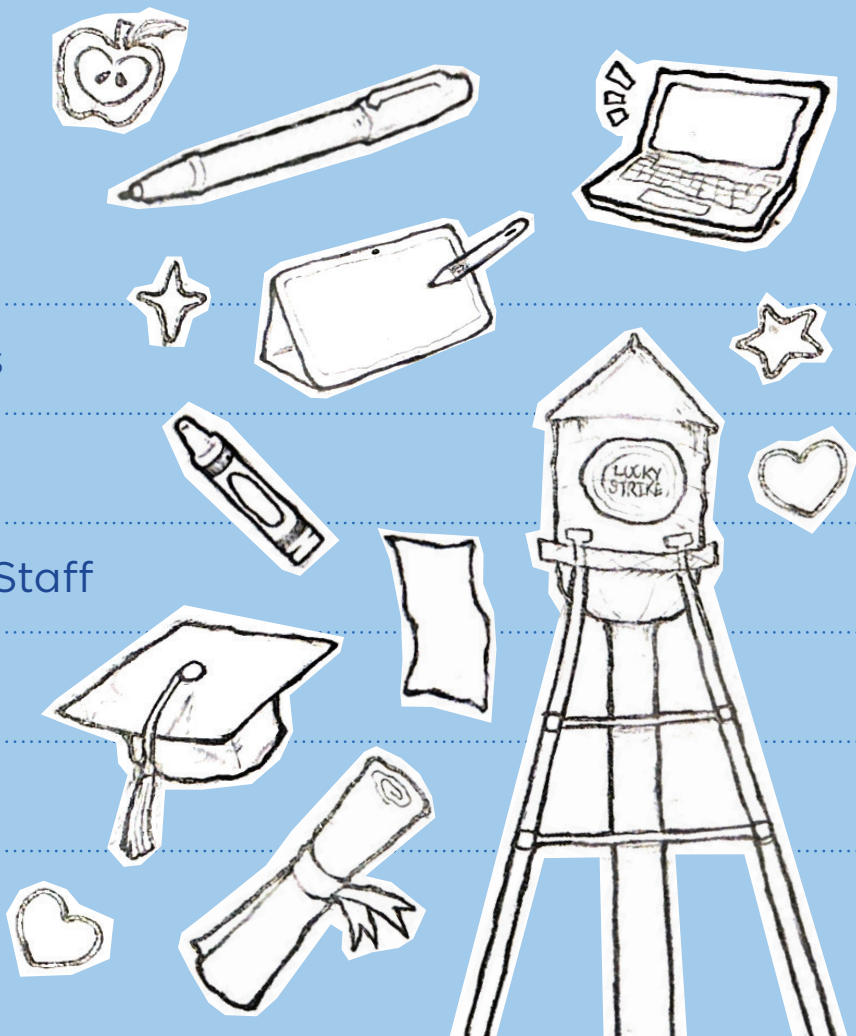


**When Our  
Public Schools  
Thrive, Durham  
Thrives.**

Original artwork by Hillside High School student, Shanea McLaughlin

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# Message from Brianna



## Do it like Durham!

As a former Durham Public Schools (DPS) educator and current DPS parent, I've lived this refrain. This year was no different.

As Durham grows, our community and schools continue to be threatened by persistent and new struggles that directly impact our families and educators, with our students bearing the brunt in ways seen and unseen. What I know about Durham is that when we show up, we move mountains together.

This year has required us to move boldly with the community against constant attacks. How we show up looks different, depending on our time, talents, and treasures. What remains the same is who we

are in this work for: the 31,000 DPS students who deserve a welcoming school environment.

We are ready for what awaits. That's in huge part because of the dedicated leadership of our previous executive director, Erika Wilkins. Let's continue her work of standing up for public schools together.

After all, showing up together is how Durham does it.



In community,

**Brianna Kennedy**

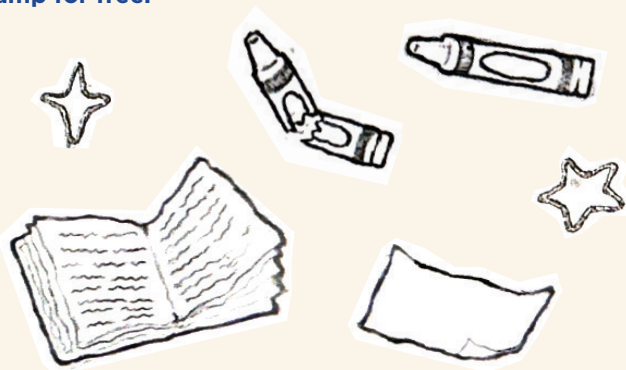
*Interim Executive Director*

## Success-Ready Students

We work to prepare every student for short-term and long-term success.

With your support, we partnered with DPS to fill and **distribute 2,000 backpacks to incoming kindergarten students**. The backpacks were filled with books, crayons, coloring sheets, and enrollment information for families.

We provided \$13,000 from the Summer Joy Fund to **help more than 200 DPS students attend summer camp for free**.



Former Executive Director Erika Wilkins places a backpack on a Pre-K student. *(Credit DPS)*

“Families that receive the backpacks are always so excited to see what is inside. They enjoy having the information about kindergarten registration, on how to register, and what they need to register.”

**Dr. LaToya McCrimmon**  
*Whitted School Principal*





Students explored different career paths at the 2024 Acceler8 event.

This year marked the second Acceler8 event—a career exploration day for all 8th grade DPS students hosted by DPS, DPS Foundation (DPSF), and local employers. **Over 2,000 8th-grade students learned about different career opportunities in Durham** by interacting with more than 70 local businesses.



We then eased the financial burden of college for 23 students by **awarding \$62,500 in scholarship funds.**

“Being a former recipient of (the Kayla P. Radack Scholarship), I’m especially honored to now be involved in the review process for new applicants. It’s a full-circle moment that allows me to give back to the program that supported me.”

**Esme Hernández**

*2021 Scholarship Recipient and  
DPSF Scholarship Reviewer*

# Empowered Families

Our Family Engagement work focuses on building authentic relationships and meeting families where they are.

More than 30 working-class families attend weekly Sembrando Raíces gatherings. Community partners supported 24 gatherings of Homework con Amigos. **Year-round, Latiné parents engage in advocacy efforts to support our public schools.**



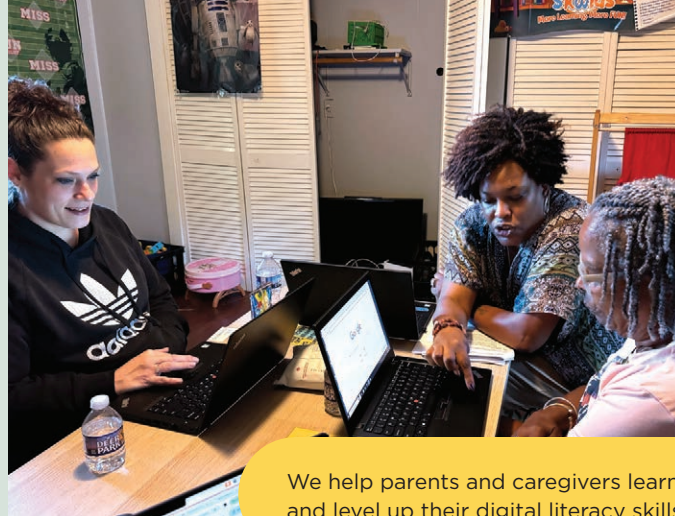
“Within the (Sembrando Raíces) space, our kids learn to love our culture and learn to appreciate others...It’s a space where we feel safe, where what we talk about is safe, and where we respect each other’s opinions as well.”

**Parent Lead**



Sembrando Raíces’ families and children gathered to celebrate a young member’s birthday.

**We created and disseminated 30 know-your-rights informational packets to school PTAs**, with resources to welcome and stand alongside immigrant families. We also supported the “Standing Strong/Estamos de Pie” community art campaign featuring the work of Roan Boucher and other local artists.



We help parents and caregivers learn and level up their digital literacy skills.

**We bolstered 25 families experiencing hardship by distributing more than \$10,500 from the Community Support Fund.**

Finally, we, in collaboration with community partners, helped more than **71 parents and caregivers learn foundational and advanced digital skills and software needed to support their students.** 70% of participants take the digital literacy class in Spanish, while 30% take it in English.



## Supported Educators & Staff

DPS educators and staff are the heart and backbone of our public schools.

In January, we welcomed Durham nonprofit Crayons2Calculators (C2C) as a new DPSF program. Together, we now provide educators a one-stop shop for needed school supplies and resources.

C2C volunteer Nancy Spencer (right) helps DPSF board member Ketty Thelemaque fill an order for a teacher at the C2C Open House.



Art Teacher Marisol Perez, of Eno Valley Elementary School, looked through the 20+ pallets of free art supplies Brame donated to Crayons2Calculators.

"I am very appreciative of Crayons2Calculators!...As soon as I am running low (on much-needed supplies), here comes an email from C2C. It's like they can sense when I am in need of supplies."

**Shepard Middle School Teacher**





Merck employees volunteered to sort and count supplies given during Fill that Bus! in August.

Out of the 2,362 DPS classroom teachers, not including specialty teachers, **at least 2,206 teachers from all disciplines received more than \$105,000 worth of school supplies this year.** C2C collects donated supplies from community members and partners.

In March, we launched the DPS Bus Driver Certification Fund to address the bus driver shortage. The fund aims to cover the financial barrier of \$380 in certification costs for 50 interested drivers. **As of April, we have raised over \$13,000 to support at least 35 new drivers.**

Our school grants support the bold dreams and innovative ideas of educators and staff (as well as students and families) in our school communities. Our cohort model centers on providing our grantees with support, resources, funding, and community.

**This year, our awards included:**

**\$85,900**

**For 14 Innovation Grants across 18 schools**

**\$82,500**

**From the WHOLE Schools Fund for 22 mental health projects across 25 schools**

**\$10,000**

**For additional support to our DPS schools**

“(The Innovation Grant) wasn’t just financial support. It was validation and the exact lifeline we needed at that critical moment. What seemed impossible suddenly became achievable.”

**Chef Sicily Sierra**

*Kind Kitchen Group Co-Founder and CEO and Innovation Grant Recipient*

Glenn Elementary School received an Innovation Grant to gather families to listen to culturally-themed stories and cook traditional foods.



We continued to foster teachers' skills in the Teacher Leadership Academy (TLA). TLA teachers learn about the historical and current systems that create inequities for students and how to address them.

**We celebrated Alec Virgil, of Middle College High School at Durham Tech, as Teacher of the Year.**

We're proud to champion DPS educators and staff as the lead sponsor of this event.

2025 Teacher of the Year Alec Virgil is an avid WHOLE Schools supporter. (Credit DPS)



"The (TLA) offered me...a space for reflection and authentic relationships with like-minded educators focused on equity and excellence. This community empowered me to refine my voice, embrace vulnerability, and lead with purpose."

**Tomika Freeman**

*Murray-Massenburg Elementary  
School Teacher and Cohort Facilitator*





## Thriving Schools

In partnership with DPS and Duke Health, WHOLE Schools uplifts feelings of safety, support, and belonging as the essential foundations for learning.

**This year, we reached 25 schools and funded 22 projects.** At our Model Schools (Neal Middle School and Southern School of Energy and Sustainability), we've supported over 2,200 students and their families and 250 staff members.

**16 DPS educators across 10 schools trained to be Mental Health Ambassadors.** They learned valuable skills such as how to build healthy relationships and respond to emotional and mental health crises.

DPSF has also increased community members' access to mental health resources by developing a Thrive Guide in English and Spanish that promotes mental health literacy, wellness practices and strategies, and a shared understanding of support pathways.



Supported by a WHOLE Schools fund, Merrick Moore students built resilience and teamwork as they learned rock climbing.





This year, **hundreds of families across Durham's three Community Schools** received support for food and clothing insecurity, individualized tutoring before and after school, and activities focused on physical, mental, and social health and well-being. DPS Community Schools currently include Fayetteville Street Elementary, Lakewood Elementary, and Club Boulevard Elementary.



“(At Lakewood), the staff is good, responsive, and likes to help its people... Our family cannot always afford the recreational sports opportunities, so playing sports after school in the Lakewood gym gives (my son) the chance to mingle with other kids.”

**O. Blount**

*Mother of a 4th Grader*



Club Boulevard Elementary students learn how to grow vegetables.

**In March, Student U took the helm to manage Durham's Community Schools.** This will allow the model to expand within Central North Carolina. Their management will begin this summer.

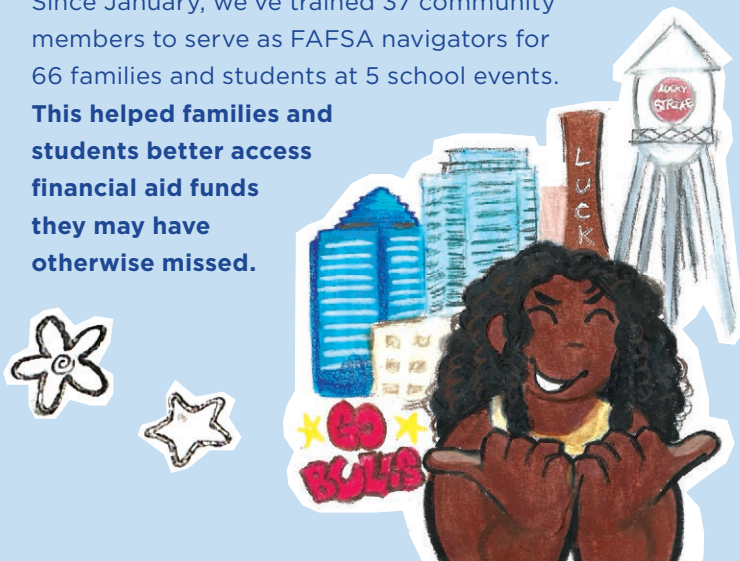
## Connected Community

Through our partnerships with DPS and local organizations and businesses, we seek to build bridges between Durham and our public schools.

**In September, we launched our Alumni of the Month (AOM) program** to lift up stories of how DPS sets graduates up for enduring success.

Since January, we've trained 37 community members to serve as FAFSA navigators for 66 families and students at 5 school events.

**This helped families and students better access financial aid funds they may have otherwise missed.**



Audrey Hawkins (January AOM) poses with Katie Spencer Wright of DPSF after a DPS school board meeting.

“Durham Public Schools is home... Because of the strong bonds and relationships that I formed, I was inspired to become a DPS (counselor).”

**Rachel Griffin**

*October Alumni of the Month  
and DPS School Counselor*



Students lit up the stage during  
“An Evening to Shine.” (Credit DPS)

“We had such a fun time—I’m really glad I went, even though my kids were not performing. My daughter and I were so happy to see her schoolmates on stage singing their hearts out and remembering their choreo. So cool that they got to perform at DPAC!”

**Nadeen Bir**

*DPS Parent and DPSF “Evening to Shine”  
Ticket Giveaway Winner*

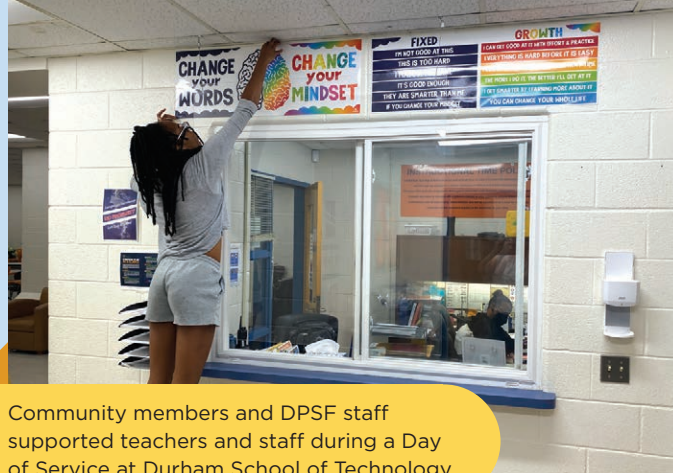
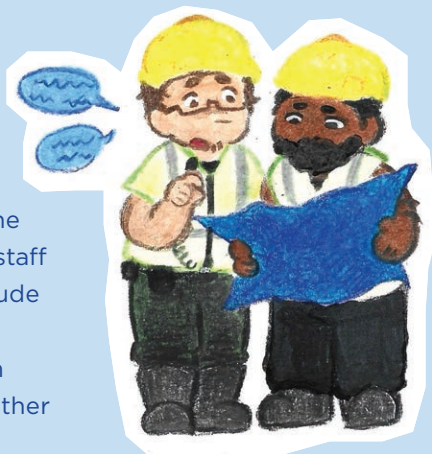
**Over 350 elementary, middle, and high school students performed in front of a packed DPAC auditorium for the 44th annual “An Evening to Shine.”**

This celebration of DPS Arts is a key fundraiser for the Durham Promise Scholarship Fund.

**Some attendees were able to enjoy the evening at no expense to them,** thanks to 21 donors who contributed \$1,218 to our pay-it-forward fund. We had 16 volunteers sign up to support event setup, offering 54 hours of their collective time.



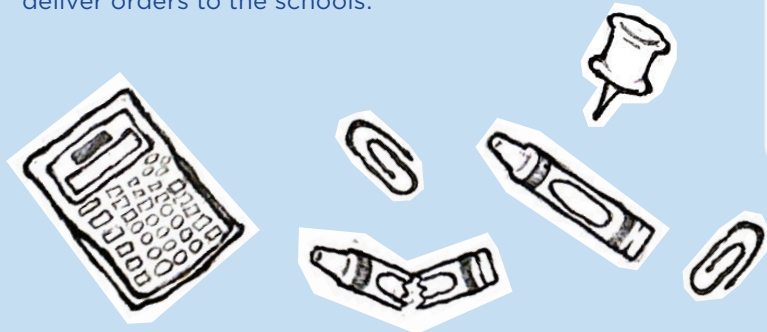
**We also hosted 77 volunteers across 6 Days of Service events.** Volunteers offered any support the educators and school staff needed. Activities include cleaning, sorting files, completing classroom projects, putting together furniture, and more.



Community members and DPSF staff supported teachers and staff during a Day of Service at Durham School of Technology.

**More than 200 volunteers, including 19 staff-level volunteers, logged at least 2,783 volunteer hours supporting the Crayons2Calculators team.**

Volunteers sort donations, fill orders, and deliver orders to the schools.



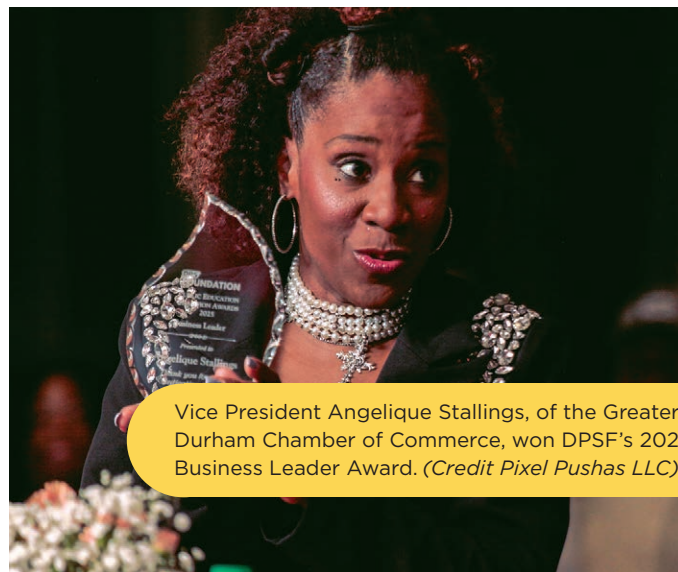
“The (Days of Service) volunteer group helped tremendously with classroom setup. As a small school, we have limited staff on campus in the summer, so their support allowed us to focus more on preparation for the new school year.”

**Renita Griffin Jordan**

*City of Medicine Academy Principal*



We also formed new connections with local businesses while strengthening existing partnerships, allowing us to connect resources from the greater community to our public school students, educators, staff, and families. Whether through sponsorships, donations, in-kind support, or volunteering, business partnerships make a tangible difference in the lives of our students and educators. A special thanks to some of our year-over-year supporters!



Vice President Angelique Stallings, of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, won DPSF's 2025 Business Leader Award. (Credit Pixel Pushas LLC)



This year, we helped connect our business partners with the DPS Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, allowing local businesses to inform our CTE leaders and educators about local workforce needs and the skills students need to fill them.

## By the Numbers

**\$168,400**

**Awarded in Innovation  
Grants and from the  
WHOLE Schools Fund**

**\$62,500**

**Scholarship Funds  
to DPS Seniors**

**21,000+**

**Members of DPS  
Community Directly  
Impacted by Our Grants**

**\$13,000+**

**Raised to Get Bus  
Drivers Certified**

**6,498+**

**Students and Families  
Directly Impacted by Our  
Programs and Partnerships**

**3,117**

**Volunteer Hours (Including  
Crayons2Calculators  
Volunteer Hours)**

**2,206**

**Teachers Received Free  
School Supplies through  
C2C Program**

**667**

**Individuals or Companies  
That Donated to DPSF**

*\*These numbers are estimates based on  
available numbers at time of publication.*



“The DPS Foundation isn’t a large, faceless organization. The nonprofit’s staff has deep relationships with DPS leaders, teachers, and families as well as decades of experience in public education. And we, as community supporters, get to be partners working alongside them to strengthen Durham Public Schools.”

**Kerry and Stan Kuhlman**

Make a gift at  
**[bullcityschools.org/donate](https://bullcityschools.org/donate)**





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Ending—But Our  
Fight for Durham's  
Public Schools  
Carries On.

**We Hope You'll**  
**Join Us.**

