

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I    [X] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Jenna Kalin

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name DSST Green Valley Ranch High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4800 Telluride Street Building 2

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Denver                      State CO                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 80249-6803

County Denver County

Telephone (303) 524-6300                      Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Web site/URL

<http://www.dsstpublicschools.org/green-valley-ranch-high-school>

E-mail Jenna.kalin@scienceandtech.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Tom Boasberg                      E-mail tom.boasberg@dpsk12.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Denver Public Schools                      Tel. (303) 423-3200

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms. Anne Rowe

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 96 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 46 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 53 High schools
  - 4 K-12 schools
- 199 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	62	94	156
10	73	72	145
11	60	62	122
12 or higher	48	43	91
<b>Total Students</b>	243	271	514

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 10 % Asian
  - 21 % Black or African American
  - 58 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 6 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 4%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	8
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	505
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.044
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 14 %  
74 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish, Vietnamese, Khmer, Nepali, French, Amharic, Farsi, Creole, Yoruba, Arabic

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 69 %  
Total number students who qualify: 354

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %  
21 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness              | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness        | <u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment         |
| <u>2</u> Hearing Impairment    | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation    | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed               |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 3
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	6
Classroom teachers	35
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	4
Paraprofessionals	1
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	95%	95%	0%
High school graduation rate	85%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	82
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	80%
Enrolled in a community college	7%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	10%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

DSST Public Schools transforms urban public education by eliminating education inequity and preparing all students for success in college and the 21st century.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

DSST Public Schools participates in the Denver Public Schools SchoolChoice enrollment process and all admissions to DSST Public Schools are coordinated through the lottery process. To be eligible to attend a DSST Public School families must submit a SchoolChoice form with Denver Public Schools.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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DSST: Green Valley Ranch High School, a DSST Public Schools charter school, is located in northeast Denver and currently serves 520 students. DSST Public Schools is a values-driven organization and a deliberately integrated community, serving students from all walks of life. Our six Core Values are central to our program and to our results. The values – Respect, Responsibility, Courage, Curiosity, Integrity, and Doing Your Best – are truly embedded in everything we do.

The DSST: Green Valley Ranch (GVR) campus opened in 2009 with 6th grade only. While originally the high school was set to open once the middle-schoolers began 9th grade, DSST: GVR High School opened early in 2011 with a 9th grade class due to demand and community support. DSST graduated its first class of students in 2015. The majority of DSST: GVR students reside in the Green Valley Ranch and Montbello neighborhoods of northeast Denver. Students are enrolled in DSST: GVR through the Denver Public Schools School Choice lottery. Approximately 70% of DSST: GVR students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch and the racial composition of DSST: GVR is 58% Hispanic, 21% Black, 10% Asian, 6% White, and 5% multiple races or other.

Ever since opening, DSST: GVR HS has performed as the #1 high school on the Denver Public Schools School Performance Framework (SPF) that contains measures including academic performance on standardized exams, academic growth on standardized exams, student satisfaction, parent satisfaction, and student attendance. In DSST: GVR's first two classes, 100% of graduates have earned acceptance into 4-year colleges and universities. DSST: GVR's founding class of students was the #1 growth high school on the TCAP (Colorado State Standardized Test) during their 9th and 10th grade year, and had the 3rd highest composite average ACT score in Denver Public Schools. The Class of 2015's 23.2 ACT average is the highest composite average score of any Colorado school with similar income level historically.

Key features of the DSST program include:

**Enrollment:** Any Denver metro area student may apply for the lottery admissions process.

**Technology:** One-to-one laptop computer program supports instruction in a wireless environment.

**Academic Rigor:** Graduation requirements exceed those of Denver Public Schools and Pre-Collegiate Curriculum Requirements set by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Students have the option to take Honors, Advanced Placement, and Concurrent Enrollment courses. Signature courses at DSST: GVR include Biochemistry & Biotechnology, Anatomy & Physiology, Advanced Physics & Engineering, and Entrepreneurship.

**Community:** A commitment to six core values creates a school culture that fosters academic and personal success. Four days a week, all students and staff come together for a twenty-minute Morning Meeting to start the day. Morning Meetings are led by a staff member or student and most often center on a core value, celebrate our college-going culture, highlight student activities and events, or build culture and community through stories or games.

**Advisory:** Each student is known, cared for, and held accountable for community participation and contributions, academic effort, and achievement through the advisory program. Faculty and staff are responsible for an advisory group of 15 to 16 students, and advisors meet with their advisees twice per week. The advisor also serves as the primary locus for the parent-school relationship.

**Internship:** The Academic Internship Program provides students with a unique opportunity to gain exposure to a career while acquiring experience in a professional work setting. Students spend class time shadowing individuals working in fields they are interested in pursuing which will ultimately help them to make decisions regarding their college major and career focus.

**Senior Project:** Students engage in a project-based learning experience tailored to their unique interests. Students choose a project, find a mentor in the field, and continuously build and refine their idea over 16-weeks. After these four months, each student will have a product of their own design and a research paper to support their learning. Students will also give a 20 minute project presentation to a community panel.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

All DSST: GVR students complete a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum that prepares them for four year college without remediation. Our graduation requirements exceed Colorado's higher education entrance requirements. Our core curriculum includes four years of high school math through Pre-Calculus, five and two-thirds years of laboratory science, four years of English, three and one-third years of history/humanities, and three years of Spanish. Because there is no remedial track at DSST, every student completes at least the core curriculum, and many students complete advanced or AP courses in a variety of subject areas.

Social Studies and English classes are paired thematically from 9th through 11th grade. English classes are aligned to the CCSS. This includes incorporating close reading of both fiction and non-fiction into each course; having students develop narrative, informative, and argumentative writing; including both literary analysis and research into their writing; and various classroom practices such as Socratic seminars. Students' four years of English begin with a pair of 9th grade courses, Humanities (Social Studies) and Composition, that develop foundational skills by focusing on reading and writing respectively. While these two courses are distinct, teachers from these courses plan with each other and the content of one is reinforced by the other. For example, units focusing on persuasive speech include reading Shakespeare's Julius Caesar in Humanities and preparing and delivering speeches using rhetorical devices found within the play. For students who need extra practice in either area, they may be given a separate Journalism class to get more work in both reading and composition. In 10th Grade, students take a world literature course that incorporates both reading and writing. In their junior year, students study American Literature from throughout the history of our nation but with an emphasis on 20th Century works. In their final year, students take Senior English, a course reading and analyzing some of the most significant works of literature while also increasing a focus on research skills as students work towards completing their senior project.

Students take three and one-third years of Social Studies/History. Standards for these classes are combined CCSS Literacy standards in History/Social Studies. The 9th Grade Humanities course introduced above investigates diverse perspectives of the human experience through both fiction and non-fiction writing. In their sophomore year, students take World History, a survey of various cultures and civilizations with an emphasis on historical reasoning and causality. This course combines extended content based upon standards derived from AP tests with a great deal of work with primary sources and writing. The US History course of their junior year continues to have the students work a great deal with primary sources, analyzing historical evidence and perspectives, while focusing on American History from the time of European arrival. Qualified students can choose to take this as AP US History. In their Senior Year, students take a trimester of Civics, focusing on developing an understanding of American Government at a theoretical level by investigating social contract theory and the US Constitution as well as a practical understanding of local and national government.

Students' classes in Mathematics are also aligned to the CCSS. By focusing on conceptual understanding along with procedural fluency, students achieve a deeper understanding and stronger ability in Math. In 9th and 10th Grade, students take classes that integrate Algebra and Geometry. These classes focus on giving all students a strong ability to make sense of the problems that confront them and the technical skills to solve those problems. Advanced 10th grade students may take an Honors Pre-Calculus course. In 11th grade, students will be taking either Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus (also offered as an Honors course), or AP Calculus AB. Similarly, in their senior year, students will be enrolled in Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus AB, or AP Calculus BC. For students that need extra support to meet these requirements, support classes are offered - for example, a Foundations of Problem Solving class for 9th grade students.

In Science, course standards were created by DSST staff with a heavy emphasis on helping students succeed on AP tests. As a STEM liberal arts school, our science classes are a point of emphasis and, therefore, students take far more science as part of our core than they would need to meet state requirements, ending up with 5 2/3 years of science. Freshmen begin with Physics and take Chemistry in their sophomore year.



Alongside the subject specific content in these classes, an emphasis is placed on giving students foundational skills in scientific experimentation, scientific literacy, and scientific numeracy. In their junior year, a full year of Biology is paired with two trimesters of Anatomy and Physiology. (For advanced students, they can opt to take AP Biology.) This pairing is designed to give students a combined theoretical and applied knowledge. This same pairing continues into their Senior year classes. 12th Grade students either take both Advanced Physics (or an AP Physics) and an Engineering class or they take BioChemistry along with Bio-Technology.

College readiness is at the heart of DSST's mission and is therefore integrated in course design and planning from the start. In developing curriculum vision for every course, the college-ready bar is the first step in guiding the choice of content or standards. This can include college placement tests, AP tests, or entrance exams. From there, standards are determined and then end of year assessments are created. In this way, everything is backwards-planned from the determining factor of college readiness. As a result, one hundred percent of our graduates have been accepted into four-year colleges.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Foreign Languages are the largest of our other curriculum programs. All students take three years of Spanish. Their initial placement is based upon whether the students are native or non-native Spanish speakers. Native Speakers take a three year sequence: Spanish for Native Speakers 1 and 2 and AP Spanish. Non-Native Speakers take Spanish 1, 2, and 3. In both sequences, classes are taught primarily by immersion. The standards are based on ACTFL's World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. Classes include a large variety of hands-on, interactive elements conducted in Spanish, significant exploration of the cultures of Spanish speaking countries, and extensive comparisons between the target language and their prior knowledge.

To supplement the extensive Core Curriculum, we offer extensive electives for students in all trimesters of their study. Students can take a variety of arts electives - choir, studio art, theatre, graphic design, film, and instrumental music. These courses will run the range from beginning classes to more advanced ones and students frequently continue within a specific discipline for multiple trimesters and even across years. Similarly, Physical Education credits are met either through participation in our Athletic programs and through the offerings in these electives. Physical Education electives include individual and team sports such as baseball, soccer, and ultimate frisbee as well as strength and conditioning classes. Students are expected to take at least one trimester of PE elective every year.

Technology instruction is thoroughly embedded in all of our courses. All students have a school issued laptop that they use for the vast majority of every class period. Direct instruction for various software or skills is integrated into these classes. In addition, technology electives are also offered, for example 3D computer animation or networking.

All students complete an internship during their junior year or the summer between junior and senior year. These internships allow students to experience a real-life professional environment as well as the demands of a professional job. Students are also exposed to career options that will help guide them as they select colleges and majors. While students can choose an internship in any area, many focus on science and technology opportunities in order to forge relationships with employers who need to grow their own well-trained and competent employees.

All seniors must complete their Senior Project in order to graduate. Students are guided through a research project in two trimesters of a required course called Senior Project. (Some additional support is also offered in Senior English.) This project is designed to be the culmination of each student's academic experience at DSST, expanding upon the skills they have developed to pursue original research and work. Seniors explore an idea, problem, or theory in depth and conduct research. This culminates in presenting their senior project as the capstone of their DSST experience.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Rather than adhering to a single teaching philosophy or instructional model, DSST has tapped deeply into cutting-edge brain research to ensure that teachers are using the most effective strategies possible to attain maximum student growth and achievement. With brain research as a foundation, DSST also draws on the best practices from the field, visiting high-performing schools across the country, and then piloting practices in our own classrooms to define a set of DSST Core Instructional Practices. This balanced pedagogical approach, both incredibly progressive and surprisingly traditional, maximizes growth and achievement for all students. DSST Core Instructional Practices include:

- Short time segments, Hooks, and real-world connections to maximize student engagement.
- Differentiation to reach diverse learning styles and abilities in non-tracked, heterogeneous classrooms.
- Spiraling and fluency activities that provide the repetition necessary to move new learning into long-term memory and to maintain previously learned concepts and skills.
- Multi-sensory classroom approaches to improve access and retention.

DSST: GVR's instructional methods are grounded in five core beliefs. The first is incremental intelligence, rather than entity intelligence. Intelligence is built incrementally by focused, intentional effort. By focusing on specific daily objectives that are built upon and spiraled, all students can be guided towards mastery of skills and content. Second, holding high expectations for all students and doing whatever it takes to enable students to meet these high standards. We have no remedial track and every student must complete the Core Curriculum. Third, we are committed to using data and up-to-date research to inform, reflect upon, and adapt instruction to meet student needs. Fourth, we employ a gradual release of responsibility for students, providing much more structure, support, and extrinsic accountability for younger students, while building greater intrinsic accountability and motivation for older students. Finally, we believe that every student learns differently and that our classroom instruction must accommodate diverse abilities and learning styles. Incorporating tasks that are appropriate for different abilities into lessons and assessments helps keep all students working at the top of their potential. We also strive to work horizontally across different learning styles to enable all students to access the content.

The more deeply a student is known and cared for, the more effectively a student can be challenged to learn and grow. Through our advisory program, we can ensure that all students are known deeply enough that teachers and staff in the building can personally care for them and hold them accountable so that they can realize their full learning and developmental potential. Clear expectations are communicated, and strong systems of accountability are in place to help students meet our high expectations. Advisors hold weekly academic conferences with their advisees and support accountability systems.

Two instructional interventions are most central to our success developing all students to be capable of entering and succeeding in college. The first is Mandatory Tutoring. This is tutoring led by a teacher that is assigned to every student who fails a quiz or a test. The second is College Prep, an after school time that students get assigned for failure to complete a homework assignment. During this time, students can complete the missed assignment in order to keep them from falling behind in the subject. We also mandate summer school for students who have not mastered grade level skills. During the school year, we offer Mathematics and English support classes that students must take, in addition to their regular classes, until they master basic fluency skills.

### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

DSST: GVR is committed to using assessment and data to inform, reflect upon, and adapt instruction in order to meet student needs. We believe that standards and objectives are insufficient without assessments that set the right bar. Because of this, assessments are the starting point for instruction, not the end. Students in the DSST network take common trimester final exams in each core course. For example, all 10th grade students in the DSST network take the same Chemistry final exam. This helps set a high bar for all students and allows for meaningful data analysis across DSST schools.

The DSST data cycle includes four stages: Assess, Analyze, Act, and Re-Assess. This is an ongoing process for students, teachers, and administrators that happens on the daily, weekly, unit, and trimester level. For example, every day teachers end the lesson with a brief “Mastery Check” that includes 3-5 questions that assess the day’s objective. This provides the teacher with quick informative data that allows the teacher to immediately act and adjust instruction for the next day. Students take formative assessments weekly that measure skills and content knowledge leading up to the summative exam. Summative exams are administered approximately every three weeks and measure student mastery of content knowledge and skills at the end of a unit. Summative assessments include essays, labs, projects, tests, and presentations.

DSST employs technology to enhance the data analysis cycle, harnessing powerful data tools to measure student progress towards standards on consistent basis and to adapt instruction accordingly. Daily, weekly, unit, and trimester assessments are entered into an online assessment platform that allows teachers to instantaneously gather and analyze student data, standard by standard. Teachers can quickly cut the data by specified subgroups in order to identify trends and where gaps may exist. Teachers then engage in immediate and thorough analysis of this data to target future instructional needs for the next day, week, or trimester. Teachers have a toolbox of strategies to spiral and re-teach standards on which students, both individually and collectively, have not achieved mastery. Following each round of trimester final exams, staff engage in two Professional Learning Days that are devoted to data analysis. Teachers complete a deep analysis of both standard performance and student performance and ultimately design an action plan for the following trimester.

Students are brought into the data cycle in several ways. The online assessment platform allows students to view and analyze their own performance to identify which standards they have mastered and where they need support. Teachers provide time in class for students to track performance, reflect on mastery, and determine how to act (attend extra tutoring, complete extra practice on certain standards, form study groups, etc.). Each week during advisory conferencing, students meet with their advisory to check-in on performance and create action plans.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

At DSST: GVR, we have created our school culture with great intentionality. We seek to create a culture that reflects both high support and high accountability. For both students and staff, the culture is built to recognize and affirm every person's uniqueness. This is based upon our belief that all people want to grow and develop into their best selves. To help give this general idea traction, we focus on six core values that are not only the expectations for our students, these values are also deeply ingrained in our staff culture through every member's commitment at the start of the year. The Core Values expected and honored throughout the year are Respect, Responsibility, Courage, Integrity, Curiosity, and Doing Your Best. Students are recognized with Core Value awards every other week during Morning Meetings and, on a larger scale, for whole trimesters of excellence. Staff also receive recognition at a yearly ceremony for exemplifying one of the core values.

We believe that the best way to motivate and engage students is to make sure that each and every student is deeply known by an adult on campus. To help ensure this, we use an advisory system where students are assigned to an advisor in groups of about 15. They meet with these advisors every morning before school as part of morning check, a time that is generally social but also serve as a touchpoint for the day. They also meet as an advisory twice per week for about forty-five minutes. One of these meetings will generally be some sort of whole advisory activity while the second consists of individual conferences between the students and their advisor. The advisor will also lead the parent-teacher conferences and be the student's advocate in a variety of settings.

A variety of practices that stretch from the classroom through the advisories are in place to try and support our students' growth from their freshman year until graduation. With both advisors and teachers, students are brought into this process through self-reflection. For example, students are asked to reflect upon their strengths from amongst the core values as well as set goals every trimester for which they want to focus on. They also reflect, with their parents and their advisor, on their academic effort, successes, and areas for growth. Juniors and Seniors take an increasingly central role in this process. In classrooms and advisories, data of all types is brought to the students to reflect on as a group and individually. Students and families are also given the opportunity to provide a great deal of feedback and direction to all aspects of the school through numerous surveys every year regarding advisories, classes, and administration. All of these elements are woven together to create a shared community, where everyone is encouraged and supported in reflecting on their own work and growing as students and people.

In addition to several strategies to create high-support environment, there are several school-wide strategies that set a high level of accountability for students. For example, students who do not complete homework are assigned a College Prep which requires them to stay after school for 60 minutes to complete the assignment. Students who are struggling with a standard in class may be assigned Mandatory Tutoring which similarly requires the student to stay after school for extra support. Students may also earn a Refocus for exhibiting specific pre-determined behaviors that detract from the learning environment (late to class, unprepared for class). These interventions are in place to set a high bar of accountability and ensure students are building the academic habits that will be important in college.

Staff experience this culture of well-directed feedback in several areas. Beyond the formal recognition of Core Value awards, staff meetings always begin with one staff member thanking and honoring another, who will then have that responsibility the following week. Smaller acknowledgements fill a page of our weekly newsletter with "Shout-Outs" directed from one staff to another acknowledging great work or thanking someone. But perhaps the deepest way to value another person is through one-on-one interaction. To help achieve this, every single member of the staff has a one-on-one coach that they meet with regularly. For most teachers and administrators, this is a weekly meeting for between 30 and 60 minutes where the agenda is always focused on developing the staff member being coached, supporting in a difficult area, or problem-solving together. At other times throughout the year, the process is extended to include a 360 review using student and parent surveys, peer surveys, academic data, and formal observation

feedback. In this way, we have created a culture where staff welcome and even crave feedback instead of feeling judged.

For both staff and students, all of this returns to DSST's essential belief about the human condition that people want to be understood and supported to become their very best selves.

## 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Over the past five years, DSST: GVR High School has created an incredible community in the Far Northeast region of Denver. We aim to unite teachers, administrators, and parents to form a strong foundation for all of our students.

One way that we partner with parents is through advisory, and more specifically, the student's advisor. By pairing each advisor with 15-18 students they are responsible for communicating with a limited number of parents. Not only does this small number allow advisors to effectively advocate for advisees, but it also allows the advisor to develop strong relationships with this small number of families.

We also encourage and invite parents to our campus throughout the year. While DSST: GVR has traditional events like "Back to School Night," we structure our trimester conferences so that parents have an extended one-on-one conference with their student's advisor. Students and families still receive feedback from the student's other teachers through the form of academic and core value comments. This format allows advisors to give families feedback about both academic standing and how the student embodies our core values. This style of meeting allows for all parties to be on the same page to best guide next steps for our students.

Another role of the advisor is to send out bi-weekly "Raptor Rundowns." These bi-weekly newsletters are written by our school's administrators to keep our families informed of schedule changes and other important school related news.

As a school, we partner with parents in a variety of ways; not only do parents have direct contact with their student's advisor, but we also have monthly Science and Tech Parent Group meetings in which parents, teachers, and administrators work together on various projects for the school community. This is also a space where they are able to ask questions and express concerns about school culture and structures. Some of the other events include: donating funds/needed items to support various student clubs/groups, serving as chaperones, and hosting seasonal Mix and Mingle Parent/Teacher events.

Parent and community concerns and questions are addressed by deans and/or other culture leaders in the school community. Deans serve as the primary connection between parents and families often to support students. They help parents to understand the expectations of DSST and support their student's behavioral and academic success.

Overall, families are an integral part of the DSST: GVR community. As a school, we partner with them because we know that without them, we have no hope of creating a successful environment for the people we value the most; our students.

## 3. Professional Development:

DSST Green Valley Ranch has extensive professional development for both teachers and administrators. This professional development occurs at the network, school and individual level. For more formalized professional development, the school year begins with ten professional development days for returning staff members and an additional three days for new to DSST staff members. These professional development days focus on network and school goals for the year and ensure a high level of consistency for the school year. Throughout the year, our school holds nine Professional Learning Days. The topics on these days range from data analysis to school wide culture trainings. In addition, every Wednesday is an early dismissal day for students so that the entire staff can meet regularly. Across the network, teachers will meet in cross campus collaboration teams, where everyone who teaches the same course meets to receive

development specific to their content area. At a school level, this comes in the form of monthly department meeting times.

One of our biggest levers in developing teachers and staff members is a regular observation and meeting cadence. Teachers and administrators meet with their instructional coaches and supervisors weekly, and teachers regularly receive both formal and informal feedback from their instructional coaches. We believe targeted practice and feedback is essential for growth and that professional growth leads to greater fulfillment and capacity. This individualized coaching allows teachers to grow at every level of the professional pathway.

One foundational belief that comes through in our approach to professional development is the importance of giving time to practice and apply new knowledge learned in a professional development or coaching session. Our professional development sessions and coaching meetings include an element of practice in order to ensure staff members apply what they learned. In instructional sessions, this could look like practicing a certain teaching skill in a mock classroom. This could also look like practicing language to use during parent teacher conferences. Professional development sessions are also designed to mimic best practices in instruction, so that our core instructional practices are both implicitly and explicitly

Ultimately, professional development increases the capacity of teachers and administrators. It is our belief that practice in becoming automatic in certain skills allows for greater capacity as educators. We also emphasize the power of consistency in our professional development. When all teachers and staff members are consistent in how they interact with students, this builds a greater capacity for the entire team.

#### 4. School Leadership:

The core leadership team at DSST: GVR HS includes the School Director, Associate School Director, Prep Academy (9th and 10th) Dean of Students, Senior Academy (11th and 12th) Dean of Students, and Director of Curriculum & Instruction (DCI). The core responsibilities of the School Director including creating a strong and consistent school and staff culture based on our core values, developing and managing the performance of staff, and prioritizing resources toward accomplishing our mission. The Associate School Director partners with the School Director to identify key areas of need in the school and works closely with the deans and DCI to implement and execute plans. The Deans of Students are tasked with creating a positive school culture in each academy that reflects core values, high support, and high accountability. This includes a strong and consistent intervention system, supportive advisory program, facilitating parent communication, and implementing interventions that support students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally. The DCI is responsible for developing teachers to ensure excellent, rigorous instruction is delivered every day in classrooms that will prepare all students for success in college academically. The DCI also ensures we use academic data to make decisions at the school, department, cohort, and individual student level. Additional members of the Administrative team include a Director of College Placement, Assistant Director of College Placement, Social Worker, Athletics Director, Office Manager, and Office Assistant. The Office Manager is responsible for leading school operations and managing organizational systems that support students, staff, and families.

The leadership team works collaboratively to lead school culture and instruction and provide strong support to both staff and students. Weekly meetings are spent problem-solving around school-wide culture and instructional priorities; planning for school-wide events and initiatives; and developing ourselves, our direct reports, and our team. Our Deans of Students work extremely close with grade-level chairs, who facilitate weekly meetings with each grade level team. Grade level meetings serve several purposes; they are designed to both recognize and celebrate student academic and behavior success as well as identify students who need additional support and design and implement interventions accordingly. The DCI works with Department Chairs to provide content-specific professional development and facilitate the sharing of department best practices.

Most importantly, we believe the role of the School Director and leadership team is to create a values-driven culture among staff and students and a shared commitment to accomplishing our mission.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Our six Core Values are central to our program and to our results. These six core values permeate the school culture and require students to do their best, respect others, and take accountability for their actions. Recognizing that every group of people implicitly operates based on a set of values, whether defined or not, DSST defines the values of our community with 100% clarity and purpose, leaving little to be defined unintentionally. The Core Values – Respect, Responsibility, Doing your Best, Curiosity, Courage, and Integrity – form the heart of the DSST community.

The values are deeply engrained in our culture not only for students but for staff and families alike. The core values are woven into our community in both formal and informal ways. Here are some specific examples:

-We begin each school year with three weeks of staff development before the school year. Part of this training is in a three-day retreat, in which our staff team reflects on how we seek to live the core values over the school year, and we end the retreat with a staff core value commitment, pledging to live the values to the best of our ability.

-There are multiple points throughout the year when both students and staff reflect on how we are living the core values. We know that it is impossible to live each core value perfectly on a daily basis, and use the core values to reflect on our actions and how we can continually improve as individuals and as a community. At the end of each trimester, students reflect on how they displayed each of the core values throughout the trimester, and advisors provide feedback to each advisee based on what they have observed. These reflections guide parent-teacher conferences. Similarly, core value feedback is central to our staff midyear performance review reflection and process.

-We conduct a home visit for all new-to-DSST families prior to the student beginning school. During this home visit, we discuss all components of DSST in the context of our student core value pledge. For example, when discussing the academic expectations, we reflect on the Responsibility students will be asked to demonstrate with homework, assessments, etc.

-Each week, teachers nominate students for Core Value Awards, which are publically given at Morning Meeting. The entire community celebrates students that are living the values in exemplary ways. At the end of each trimester, 3 students are recognized in each grade levels for living the values at an exceptional level.

-At DSST's network holiday party, six individuals – one for each core value – are recognized and celebrated. This is considered one of the highest awards that DSST recognizes.

While there are countless ways in which the core values are formally integrated into our program, most importantly the core values guide our actions, interactions, and decisions on a daily basis. Core value language is integrated into our daily communication as staff and with students and families. We firmly believe that living core values to the best of our ability matters more than anything else that we do.