

From the Office of the Principal

April 20, 2018

Dear Denver School of the Arts Family,

We want to say thank you for your incredible support of your students and our school. DSA is a unique place where we seek to combine an academically rigorous college preparatory education with specialized study in the arts, with the goal of supporting our students' success in the often demanding and competitive fields they hope to enter.

We are proud that DSA has become a sought-after school for families throughout the Rocky Mountain region and that our graduates include successful actors, authors, directors, musicians and poets. At the same time, we must ensure our highly talented students receive academically, developmentally and emotionally appropriate instruction and training in every classroom and on every stage.

We are asking for your help to ensure our students are protected.

Recently, DPS and DSA completed investigations into the treatment of students in two programs after receiving numerous complaints. We reached out to, and received, support from Denver Police as part of these reviews. Ultimately, two educators resigned from their positions at our school and two educators received appropriate action.

As you know, DSA has many amazing educators who put our students' education and well-being at the forefront of everything they do. When we receive an allegation that an educator is acting contrary to our core values as a school district, we take such concerns very seriously. We worked diligently with the district's human resources team to look into every allegation raised and interviewed dozens of current and former students, staff and parents.

During this process, we repeatedly heard that some families were not comfortable sharing their concerns. In fact, some waited until after their students had graduated to voice their complaints, fearing retaliation. Other families were uncertain about whether their students had been treated appropriately, particularly in areas where they themselves had never received instruction or training.

We want to state in no uncertain terms our commitment to the safety of our students. We absolutely prohibit any practices that place our students' emotional, mental or physical health in jeopardy. If you have any reason to believe this may be occurring, we ask that you immediately contact the educator involved, the administration at DSA or the district's family helpline at 720-423-3054. We will not tolerate retaliation against students or families who report such concerns.

From the Office of the Principal

It's important to share that we have taken steps to support our DSA educators:

- Retrained all DSA staff on the mandatory reporting of child abuse.
- Conducted professional development sessions on techniques such as de-escalation of conflict.
- Updated the DSA faculty handbook to ensure there is clarity around appropriate practices.

In addition, we are taking the following actions:

- Working with community partners, such as Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, to ensure our educators know how to unleash our students' extraordinary talent in appropriate ways.
- Studying the practices of other arts schools around the country.
- Preparing training for new DSA parents about arts education and acceptable teaching practices.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me, any DSA leader or the family helpline if you have questions or if you need support in talking to your student about this issue. Counselors are available to assist. And thank you, again, for being part of this incredible DSA family.

Sincerely,



William M. Kohut,
Principal, Denver School of the Arts