

## **Uplift Education is the First to Open Doors to Over 22,000 Students for the 2022-23 School Year**

Uplift is the first school in Dallas to open its doors to over 22,000 students for the 2022-23 school year on Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> and will be rolling out updated health and safety guidelines for its 22,000+ students and 2,000+ staff. The world that our schools operate in has become increasingly complex over the past few years with rising levels of divisiveness, increasing gun violence, and a continuing global pandemic. Despite all these factors, Uplift schools remain a place of consistency, care, support, and high expectations for students. Uplift is one community and each of the teachers, counsellors, parents, and donors contribute to a culture of healing centered schools.

Masks will be optional as the network starts the new school year and updated health guidelines will continue to prioritize health and safety by encouraging good hygiene practices, vaccines, and testing. The network will continue to offer free vaccine clinics to its community and will offer COVID-19 testing at each of its 21 campuses. Additionally, Uplift will continue to provide transparency of its number of positive COVID cases through its live COVID dashboard.

Uplift understands that there is no more important endeavor than safeguarding the welfare of its students. Over the summer the network conducted in depth reviews of its safety procedures. Uplift campuses were already set up with extensive safety plans and designs that exceeded the guidelines from TEA and the Texas School Safety Center. All campuses are fenced and gated with locking vestibules, electronic access, and visitor screening. This school year will see the network improve its procedures around security, including locked classroom and outer doors, and increased active shooter training.

The network stresses that safety procedures are only part of the equation that provides an environment in which students and staff feel secure and ready to learn. Uplift incorporates robust well-being programming that provides for the emotional health of its student body. Students participate in daily lessons that help them explore and understand their emotions and learn to respect both adults and peers. The network also employs dedicated Licensed Social Counselors at each school whose primary focus is the mental health and social-emotional well-being of every student and strives to build a small community feel where there is a sense of belonging and discourages exclusionary behavior. Uplift will implement regular assessment meetings with counselors and administrators to help identify and help students in crisis.

“Uplift Education is known for our strong culture, great partnership with our families, and an environment that is safe, inclusive, and focused on every child’s well-being. We serve the ‘whole student’ by providing quality, college-prep education. Our results are nationally recognized, and our success is proven.” says Yasmin Bhatia, CEO of Uplift Education.

Uplift’s idea of “school” as a building has grown into an understanding of “school” as a community. The network goal is for every student to have access to schools with the resources, opportunities, and supports that make academic success possible and create strong ties among families, students, staff, and communities at large. In doing this, Uplift provides more equitable opportunities and prepares students for long-term success, both as students and as citizens.