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Uplift Education Focuses on Teacher Well-Being As a Means to Support Student Well-Doing



by Kay Pirtle, editor



The incredible educators in the Uplift network guide and teach nearly 20,000 students in Pre-K-12th grades, with the majority being low-income and minority students who will be the first in their family to attend college. John Gasko, Ph.D., right, is Uplift's Chief Well-Being Officer.



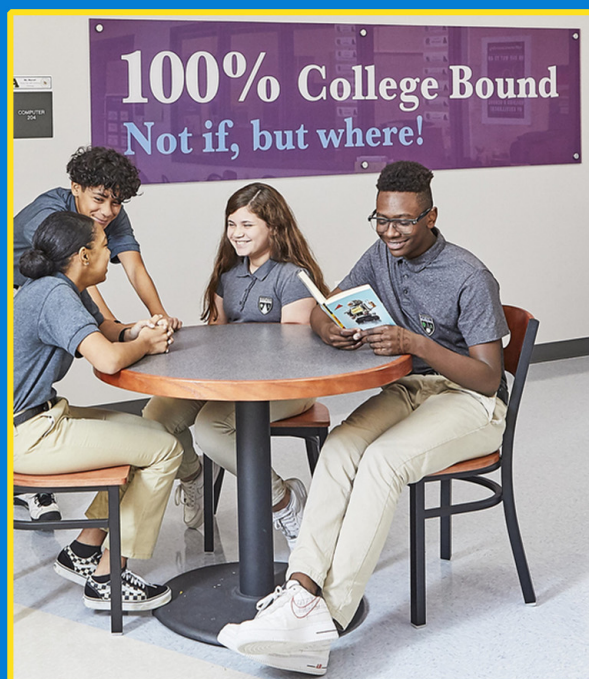
Even before the pandemic, John Gasko, Ph.D. of Uplift Education and his well-being team knew the value of investing in teachers so they didn't experience burn out due to stress, emotional conflict, physical and nutritional depletion and lack of sleep. "We knew needed support saved money and kept good teachers around for years," said Dr. Gasko.

In November 2019, the CEO and Board of Directors of Uplift Education charged Gasko in the newly named position of Chief Well-Being Officer, and his team to come up with a campaign and strategy to keep teachers and staff on the job longer. The question was "How do we make sense of the world in front of us and create resilient human beings who can deal with the adversities they face and flourish in the midst of it?" The answer, a campaign titled "Fuel Up & Rise Together."

Uplift Education wants to help make sense of a world that has become Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous-VUCA.

Our new role was to build up teachers and staff and provide support so they could thrive successfully within the school environment. We've always been concerned about the drop-out rate of students and rightfully so. However, who is concerned about the drop-out rate of teachers? Uplift Education, says Dr. Gasko. "The nation and D/FW Metroplex have a revolving door when it comes to teachers and one that has been ignored by most schools for years. If a teacher can't cut it, due to the emotional and physical pressures of the job, the message was 'move on.'"

That vacancy left some of the neediest kids in our community with-



Uplift Education

from page 1

out a positive much needed adult role model. And, with the excessive turnover, it was difficult for the student to establish any kind of a meaningful, secure relationship. The proposal Gasko's team developed was in fact a plan to get teachers healthier: physically, nutritionally, emotionally and how to turn it all off and get a good night's sleep. For years, schools have offered the benefit of a school nurse and counselor to the students. Why not offer the same benefits to our teachers and the entire staff?

"We have 45 licensed therapists and up to 40 Registered Nurses on staff at the 22 campuses in the Metroplex that teachers and staff can tap into as far as support being at their finger tips for such issues as a healthier diet (more salads, better snacks and fewer sugary drinks), and dealing with physical health and mental wellness," said Dr. Gasko. "If we make in-person support, monthly webinars and online resources available to them concerning exercise, mental and emotional health and how to attain a good night's sleep, the time, money and effort it would save the district would be overwhelming. The by-product, a happier, healthier teacher able to withstand the pressures of today's world within the work and home environment. That joy hopefully would spread to the scholars and improve their school experience."

As a non-profit tuition-free charter school, a portion of the students are from low-income families and have limited opportunities in traditional public schools in their neighborhoods. The majority of Uplift students are Black or Hispanic, and qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Yasmin Bhatia, CEO said, "We are the largest charter school network in North Texas, and continue to be proud of our 100 percent college acceptance for our graduates."

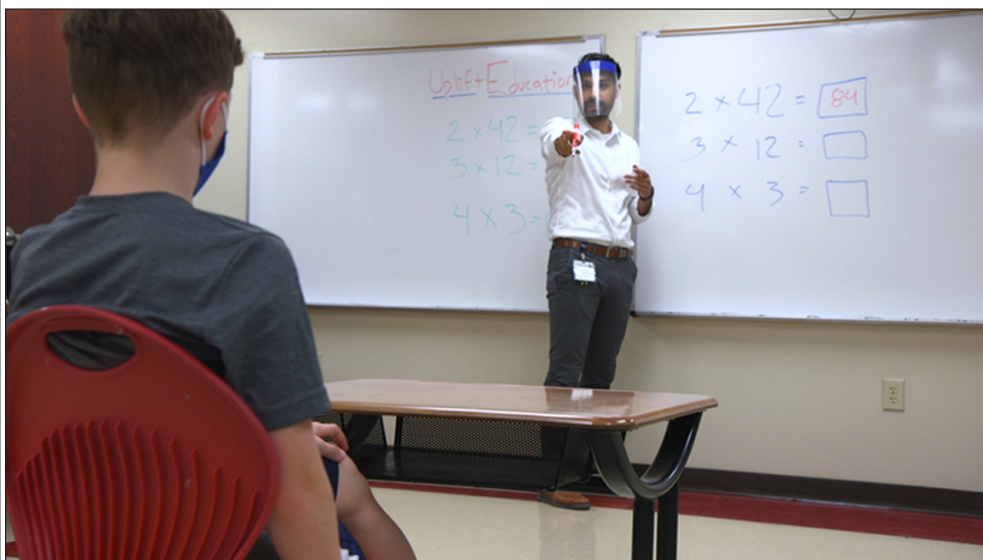
Established in 1996 with one school in Irving, Uplift has grown to 20,000 students in pre-k through 12th grade. Each school provides free, college-preparatory education in a community that has limited high quality public education options. It's goal is to completely close the achievement gap between students, regardless of their ethnic or socio-economic background, while ensuring that 100 percent of the students graduate and earn a college degree within six years of high school graduation.

Here's another incentive for high-performance teachers. Uplift Education will be among the first group of public charter schools to receive state-funded pay to give top-flight teachers

the opportunity to earn more for improving the academic fortunes of children from low-income families. Therefore, Uplift has demonstrated that good teachers provide solid foundations for generations of students and has raised the bar on classroom excellence.

The data suggests the teacher dropout rate fell from 40-50% to just 5%, and there were academic gains for students, too. Schools can help students and families win without losing sight of the importance of the health and well-being of its greatest resource. Teachers are the heartbeat of America and our communities. Let us throw them lifelines so they can truly show up, be present, and be more supportive to each other and to the kids they serve. Remember, "To care for the teacher is to love the learner," Lao Tzu.

Uplift Education opened this school year August 17 with 100 percent virtual format. For more information, contact Deekay Fox, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications at 1-661-378-2353 or email at dfox@uplifteducation.org.



One teacher remarked, "I think Dr. Gasko's sessions shifted the atmosphere of our school from being overwhelmed, overworked, and distant to empowered, intentional, and one team. The data suggests the teacher dropout rate fell from 40-50% to just 5%, and there were academic gains for students, too. With Dr. Gasko and his team's help, schools can help students and families win without losing sight of the importance of the health and well-being of its greatest resource. Teachers are the heartbeat of America and our communities. Administration needs to throw them lifelines so they can truly show up, be present, and be more supportive to each other and to the kids they serve. Remember, to care for the teacher is to love the learner."





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WE AREN'T WAITING TO LEARN!
We started Aug. 10, but you can still join us.


Uplift Education is setting the bar for virtual and in-person learning. We ensured that our scholars stayed on track during the spring and summer, and for the new school year we quickly and decisively implemented technology updates, safety procedures, and well-being check-ins so our families stay connected and engaged. Our mission has not faltered and our scholars will continue to be the difference-makers in their families and communities.

Uplift Education has spots available in all four of its Fort Worth schools, serving grades PreK through 12th. APPLY TODAY!

www.uplifteducation.org/apply

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