



The Mile High City Adopts a Whole-Child Focus

How Denver Public Schools uses Review360, the BASC-3 BESS, and home-grown professional development to support their entire student body

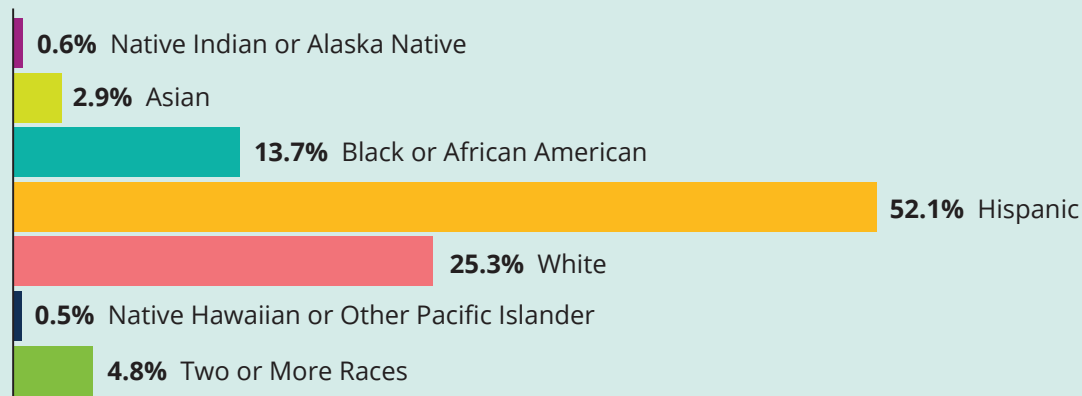
In a swiftly growing school district of over 90,000 students spread across 207 buildings, Denver Public Schools (DPS) has made an unwavering commitment to keep their finger on the pulse of their students' mental health. Prompted by the 2014 rollout of "Denver Plan 2020", a five-year initiative that focuses on school, college, and career readiness; community outreach; quality of schools; closing achievement gaps; educational fairness; and supporting the whole child, the student mental health team began their search for a tool that could help them identify at-risk students.

59% of the students enrolled in DPS are eligible for free or reduced lunch and a vast majority reside in underserved communities where mental health resources are typically scarce. DPS leaders knew they needed a tool that could screen their students for mental health concerns, monitor their progress, and fit seamlessly into their MTSS implementation — all while being easy for any professional in the district to use. Their search landed on the BASC™-3 BESS, and the results have been remarkable for the students and educators in the district.

Total Student Enrollment: 90,250 *(October 2021)*

- Free/Reduced-Priced Lunch Eligible Students: 59.15%
- Gifted and Talented Students: 7.68%
- Students with Disabilities: 12.1%

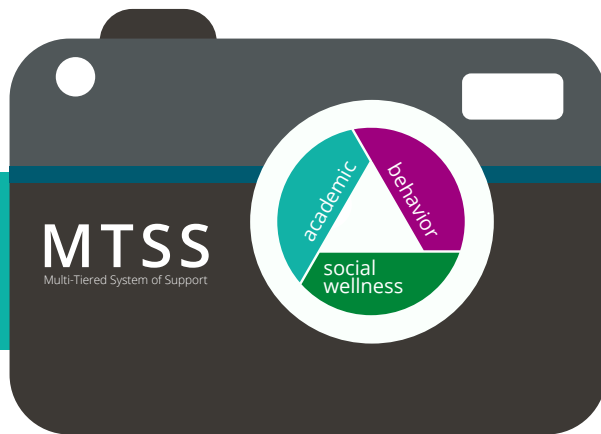
Student Demographic %



The initial rollout

Debbie Wright, LCSW, the former Program Coordinator for DPS, spearheaded the district's spring 2017 BESS rollout with school psychologists and social workers at 11 schools performing the initial screenings. Encouraged by not only the data they were able to gather about their students' mental health, but the myriad of ways Debbie and her team were able to disseminate that data and connect it to each student's academic and health information, 41 schools were on board for screening the following year.

As data began rolling in from the BESS screenings and 18-20% of the students screened were reported as "at-risk" for mental health concerns, administrators had some initial reservations, most of which shared a common theme: "How will we support the students who are identified as at-risk?" Debbie and her team were able to assuage their colleagues' fears by implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which automatically assigns students to one of three tiers based on their BESS screening results. From there, the school psychologists, social workers, and interns identify any gaps in student support, determine which systems need to be in place, then work with the students in groups and individually, based on the interventions chosen for their assigned tier.



The BESS program grows

As word got around about the success of the initial pilot and schools began sharing the impact of the data they were receiving, more schools within the district came on board. After a gradual increase over the last 6 years, the students at 186 schools are now being screened with the BASC-3 BESS. While, initially, school psychologists and social workers were screening the students, teachers were eventually trained to administer the BESS screener in order to ensure the sustainability of their universal screening schedule.

The move to Review360

To increase accessibility and continuity of data while reducing costs, DPS chose to administer the BESS as an add-on to Review360®, a web-based platform that supports their systemic MTSS process for problem-solving, data-based decision-making, and fair practice. This change allowed them to administer the BESS digitally, and — when the need arose in recent years — remotely. With Review360, each student's BESS data is recorded, tracked, and shareable.

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Drilling down into the data

Recognizing that the BESS data they were collecting had even greater value than originally perceived, Debbie and her team created intricate, detailed spreadsheets to help visualize and disseminate each student's, classroom's, grade level's, and school's results. From these spreadsheets, she was able to look at the overall data, determine the "buckets" of need, and identify trends. One such trend that was discovered early on was the dramatic increase in internalizing behaviors (anxiety) in third grade when standardized testing begins, and again in sixth grade with the transition to middle school.

After working with the students' BESS data for some time, Debbie found ways to connect it to the health and academic data they already had on hand. For instance, a student who had failed their vision screening might not necessarily be flagged as at-risk, but a student who had failed their vision screening, reported as at-risk for internalizing behaviors, and is demonstrating slow academic progress can be automatically flagged. The district can now reach out to the caregivers with this information and help guide them to resources for obtaining corrective lenses for their student.

Additionally, Debbie noticed that quite often students with extremely elevated scores in internalizing and personal adjustment with normal scores in self-regulation had experienced or were currently experiencing a trauma in their lives. Having access to this valuable information helps those students' educators, school psychologists, and social workers ensure that the right systems are in place to support them.

Having the ability to visualize the BESS results at such a granular level and connect it to the data they already have on hand helps DPS provide the right support to the students who need it... when they need it. On the flip side, screening their students multiple times throughout the year has helped them to clearly see which supports are working and which need some fine-tuning.

Review360 makes sharing BESS data a breeze.

You can have all the data in the world but having the ability to share that data is what makes it useful. By using the BESS as an add-on to Review360, Debbie and her team can easily share BESS data dashboards with each school's staff members and district administrators via email.

Screening remotely with Review360

"Back-to-school" in fall 2020 looked a lot different across the globe, and Denver Public Schools was no exception. Teachers and administrators found themselves knee-deep in new technology and a shifting curriculum, with parents and students struggling to stay afloat. DPS knew that, more than ever, they needed to keep a close eye on the mental health of their students.

Two screening windows were opened in fall and spring, and Review360 made it easy for the district staff to email a secure link for the BESS screener to each of their teachers and students. Review360 automatically generated each report and fed the data back to the district office where Debbie and her team were able to identify at-risk students, and the school psychologists and social workers developed and carried out their plans for supporting them remotely based on their MTSS tier and individual needs.

"When you connect data to students, it takes on meaning."

— Debbie Wright, LCSW,
former DPS Program
Coordinator

While reviewing the data from their initial fall 2020 screenings, Debbie noticed some interesting trends. Historically, many of their multi-language learners (MLLs) and students of color had elevated BESS scores, however, during remote learning, those students had better outcomes.

The DPS team surmised that the improved mental health in these two groups could be directly correlated to:

- Increased focus on individual students
- Decreased educator bias
- Intentional relationship building
- Frequent “check-ins” from school staff

At a time when many students were feeling isolated and alone, the students at Denver Public Schools were feeling seen and heard, and the mental health professionals were able to gain a greater understanding of their students’ well-being.

Expanded understanding of BESS data through Professional Development

Recognizing that the BESS data they were collecting was even more powerful in the hands of the teachers, Debbie has developed and runs “Teacher Workshops” throughout the school year. These collegiate-level sessions award teachers with 3 CE hours and arms them with valuable knowledge on using their students’ BESS data to support their social wellness through the district’s MTSS implementation.

During each of the 4 sessions, teachers are required to look at their school’s data as a team, then complete 20 hours of “homework” in between sessions. At the end of the workshop, each team gives a presentation on what they’ve learned about the students in their school by using a “Six Thinking Hats” strategy. These workshops have been invaluable in opening dialogues about their students’ mental health needs and discovering ways that transformative social wellness and academic learning can help support them.

At the conclusion of the session, the teachers return to their classrooms equipped with a greater understanding of their students, their individual strengths and needs, and how best to support them through the district’s MTSS framework.

Better data = better teacher retention

It’s no secret that teacher burnout is at an all-time high. There is a mass exodus of educators from their profession, often citing a lack of support from administration and parents. BESS can help retain your valuable educators — and their invaluable experience — by *empowering them* to make decisions for their students based on *actionable data*!

“...the teachers return to their classrooms equipped with a greater understanding of their students, their individual strengths and needs, and how best to support them...”

Ready to empower the professionals and students in your district?

Make Review360 and BASC-3 BESS a part of your district’s “Whole Child” team!

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