Welcome to Aurora Science and Tech!

Dear Future Families and Students,

Welcome! We are so happy to have you join our amazing community at AST and hope that our school and community allows you opportunities to learn and grow during your middle school years. We are committed at AST to ensuring that each and every student in our building is deeply known for the unique gifts and talents that they bring with them to our school. We are excited to see how much your students grow in their learning in the upcoming year(s) and also how they grow and evolve as young adults navigating a complex world.

We hope that the information shared in this booklet is helpful as you and your student transition to AST. That said, there will surely be questions that arise as booklets are limited in scope and nuance. Please never hesitate to reach out to the school or to me directly with any questions - we are here to answer them.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year together!

With Owl Pride,

Ms. Bloch
School Director

Aurora Science and Tech Leadership Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rebecca Bloch, School Director</th>
<th>Kristin Hull, Assistant Director</th>
<th>Krysztelda Mendoza, Assistant Director</th>
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<tr>
<th>Jimmy Cooley, Dean of Students</th>
<th>Kiersten Ellefsen, Director of Curriculum and Instruction</th>
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<tr>
<th>Karina Rodriguez, Front Office Manager</th>
<th>Alma Garcia, Front Office Assistant &amp; Family/Community Coordinator</th>
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Website: [https://www.dsstpublicschools.org/aurora-science-and-tech](https://www.dsstpublicschools.org/aurora-science-and-tech)
New Building Address: 2540 N Scranton St, Aurora, CO 80045
Phone Number: 303-524-6397
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Welcome to DSST!

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

**What Makes DSST Special?**
DSST has a proven track record of success in Denver. We are excited to join APS with Aurora Science and Tech!

- 100% of DSST’s graduates have been accepted to college for 12 years in a row - since the start of the DSST network.
- DSST runs 6 of the top 8 high schools in Denver.
- DSST runs 4 of the top 8 middle schools in Denver.
- DSST high schools made up 5 of the top 6 schools for P/SAT math growth of all high schools in Denver for 2019.
- 63% of the 2019 graduating class from DSST’s high schools will be the first in their family to attend college.
- The class of 2019 achieved an average SAT score of 1092 and outpaced their peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

Check out this video on what makes DSST special!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utxEX5doy2Y&feature=emb_logo

**Core Components of DSST:**

**Academic Preparation:** Our goal is to prepare ALL students for success in college and the 21st century. We provide a rigorous, college prep curriculum with high expectations and high support so that all students can have choice in their postsecondary and career options.

**Values Development:** Our core values are at the heart of everything we do at DSST. To us, it’s not enough to prepare students academically. We aim to develop strong values in our students to guide their decisions throughout their lives.

**Integrated Schools:** DSST schools welcome and celebrate the diversity of our community. Our schools are diverse in many ways - we believe in building connections and community across lines of difference, whether it be socio-economically, racially, languages spoken, or other factors.

**College Success:** 100% of DSST’s graduates have been accepted to college for 12 years in a row - since the start of the DSST network.
Commitment to College:

This graph does a good job showing our commitment to college for EVERY student. We know scoring well on the SAT is necessary for our students to attend college and receive scholarships. This graph compares SAT averages with the percentage of students in a school receiving free or reduced lunch. The pattern is unfortunate: the lower the income of students at a school, the lower their SAT scores. This is unacceptable and at DSST, every one of our high schools is breaking this pattern. In every community we serve, we have some of the top SAT results. We are working tirelessly to ensure that every kid has an equal opportunity for college, regardless of their families’ income or circumstance.

Every year, DSST hosts a “Senior Signing Day” where students across DSST can share their chosen college and be celebrated by the entire network. It is an incredibly inspiring and exciting network-wide celebration! Check out this video for the 2019 DSST Senior Signing Day!
DSST Core Values

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. These values are truly embedded in everything we do.

- **Respect** - We appreciate each person and their story through our words, actions, and attitudes. We value their unique perspective and treat others with dignity.
- **Responsibility** - We acknowledge that our actions and choices impact ourselves and our community. We take ownership for what we do and how we choose to do it.
- **Integrity** - We act and speak with honesty, fairness, and thoughtfulness. We consistently align our words and actions.
- **Courage** - We possess the confidence and resolve to take risks, push ourselves, and persevere in the face of pressure, adversity or unfamiliar circumstances.
- **Curiosity** - We are eager to learn, question, and explore. We have a thirst for knowledge, a love of investigation, and a desire to learn about ourselves, our community, and our world.
- **Doing Your Best** - We put our best effort into everything we do. We know that individual and collective effort are required for our community to thrive.

For more about what makes DSST special, visit our website at [https://www.dsstpublicschools.org/](https://www.dsstpublicschools.org/).
What Makes AST Special?

Aurora Science and Tech, DSST’s First School in Aurora

Aurora Science and Tech is DSST’s 15th school and its first in Aurora. AST is an open-enrollment non-profit charter school and part of the Aurora Public Schools district.

Check out this video of what makes AST special!
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkCma4q_cic&feature=emb_logo

Our Mascot - The Great Horned Owl

AST’s mascot, the Great Horned Owl, can be seen in the areas surrounding our Aurora campus. The Owl symbolizes wisdom and strength. Did you know - a groups of Owls is called a PARLIAMENT? We can’t wait for your student to join our parliament next year!

Aurora Science and Tech Location and Buildout Plan

We opened in the 2019-20 school year with just 6th grade and will expand one grade a year until we eventually are a 6-12 campus. Last year, we co-located with Rocky Mountain Prep at its Fletcher campus.

We are moving into our own building on the Anschutz Medical Campus starting in the 2020-21 school year! The new school is currently under construction and on track for completion in July 2020.

Our new address:
2540 N Scranton St.
Aurora, CO 80045
Anschutz Medical Campus Partnership

Our unique proximity to the Anschutz Medical Campus will open up a world of possibilities for our Owls. As one of the only open-enrollment public schools on a medical campus in the nation, we are so excited to give all of our students unprecedented opportunities and access, including:

- Access to professionals from a variety of fields
- Site visits and speakers
- Science fair on campus judged by real scientists
- 11th - 12th grade internships

See below for a few pictures from our 2019-20 science fair at Anschutz!
AST Academics

AST Daily Hours:

- Doors open at 7:45 AM
  - Breakfast (optional) from 7:45 - 8:00 daily
  - Supervision for students starts at 7:45 AM
- Regular Day 8:00 - 4:00
- After School Clubs/Tutoring 4:00 - 5:00
  - We have a variety of clubs and tutoring on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. The culture section of this booklet explains these more in detail.
- Wednesday Day 8:00 - 2:00
  - On Wednesdays, our teachers engage in professional development and planning. For this reason, we dismiss students from school at 2:00 every Wednesday.

Transportation:

Transportation is not provided through APS. It is up to the family to ensure their student is at school on time to and from school every day. A few recommendations for families:

- Many 2019-20 families found success using the “Way to Go” carpool app to find other students traveling to the school for carpool.
  - [https://waytogo.org/getting-around/carpool](https://waytogo.org/getting-around/carpool)
- There is an RTD station directly across the street from the school (Fitzsimons station).

Typical Academic Day:

Students start their day in advisory every morning. The culture section of this booklet explains advisory more in detail. After advisory, students go to academic classes:

- Math: 80 minutes/day
- Science: 60 minutes/day
- English: 80 minutes/day
- Book Club/English Language Development: 40 minutes/day
- Social Studies: 60 minutes/day
- Electives - all students alternate between PE and STEM: 60 minutes/day
**Technology**

We want to ensure every student has access and opportunity with technology daily. We provided 1:1 laptops for each student at AST. We train students on how to use these as a learning and school collaboration tool. At the beginning of the year, students and families will be required to sign a technology contract. Due to certain programs and apps loaded onto DSST computers, students are required to use school laptops rather than devices from home.

**Interim Assessments**

DSST is on a trimester schedule. At the end of each trimester, we administer network-wide Interim assessments. These assessments are standards-aligned and rigorous. Our goal is to see how our students are performing on grade level standards and topics in comparison to other students across the DSST network so that we can learn from best practices across campuses. We view these interim assessments as a celebration of student learning and a culmination of learning in each class each trimester (final exams).

**Mandatory Tutoring - Academic Intervention**

As part of our high expectations and high support model, we have a Mandatory Tutoring intervention to support our students get what they need academically. It is a MANDATORY targeted academic intervention to help students:
- Close gaps in learning
- Receive enrichment opportunities
- Or makeup missing work or assessments

Mandatory Tutoring (or MT) is held after school on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 4:05 - 4:55. It is assigned by teachers based on daily/weekly data. Parents are informed by robocall if their child has Mandatory Tutoring by 11:00 AM the day of the intervention.

**Homework**

Students have daily homework at AST. Our goal is to assign homework that is meaningful and an extension or review of daily learning. Not only does this support students in practicing academic skills, it builds responsibility and work habits to aid them in middle school and beyond. Students record their homework for each subject during each class period. Please check their planner daily - even if they don’t have homework, it should say “none!”
College Prep - Homework Intervention

If students do not turn in homework on time, they will be assigned College Prep. College Prep is an intervention during lunch where students will make up missing homework. Our goal is to help students complete their missing work and reinforce the importance of responsibility in completing their homework each night.

Attendance

We have a strict attendance policy at AST because we know that kids need to be in school and engaged in learning every day. Students are at risk of retention at AST if they miss more than 10 days (2 weeks) of school (excused or unexcused). We take attendance very seriously and will follow up regularly with students and families upon absences to ensure students are at school and learning as much as possible.
AST Community and Culture

Advisory

Advisory is the heart of our community connections. Our goal is for every student to be fully known by adults and peers at AST and it starts in advisory! We have a daily advisory block to prepare for the day and connect with one another. During this time, students will prepare for the day in Morning Check, engage in team building and activities together, and reflect on grades and core values.

Each student is assigned an advisor at the beginning of the year - a teacher who knows the 12-20 students in their advisory very well, advocates for the student and helps support the students’ overall growth. Your student’s advisor will be your primary contact in navigating their many teachers and AST but you may communicate with any staff member as needed.

Morning Meetings

Morning Meetings are a DSST tradition and a core part of our community building at AST. Morning Meetings occur 1-3 times per week as whole school or grade levels. Morning Meetings are a time to come together as a community to do things such as:

- Build community
- Focus on Core Values
- Learn about what’s happening in our community (AST, Aurora, and beyond)
- Have fun together!

We often bring in speakers, play games, share lessons and announcements, engage in competitions, celebrate each other through awards, and more!

Morning Check

Every day, students start their day with Morning Check in advisory to prepare for the day. Advisors check to ensure students have their materials so that they’re prepared to have a successful day of school. Please work with your student to ensure they have the following for Morning Check each day:

- Charged laptop
- Pencils
- Signed Planner
- In Dress Code
- Independent Reading Book
Student Planners

Student Planners are the student’s connection from school to home. In the planners each night, you should see their homework written for each class. If they don’t have homework, they write “none!” It is the student’s responsibility to get their planner signed by their parent/guardian every night to show their advisor during Morning Check each morning. Please check their planner daily to help them stay on track with their organization and academics.

Student Paychecks and Progress Reports

Every Wednesday, students will bring home weekly Paychecks and Progress Reports to share their academic and core value progress with you. Students reflect on their paychecks and progress reports in Advisory each week. These weekly reports are a glimpse at how they are doing each week and an opportunity to discuss their progress, celebrate successes, and develop next steps together.

Paychecks:
Students can earn “core value points” for demonstrating the core values. They earn core value points (or CV points) for things like asking questions in class (curiosity), helping staff or students keep our student clean (responsibility), or demonstrating kindness in advisory to another student (respect). Students lose points for missed opportunities such as missing homework or supplies. Their weekly paycheck shows their total earned and lost for the week.

Progress Reports:
Their weekly progress reports show their current grades in each class. Parents can check grades in Parent Portal at any time, but progress reports are sent once a week on Wednesdays.
Common Systems and Routines

Studies show that the adolescent brain needs consistency. At AST, we aim to provide students consistency and routine even as they transition into a new school with new expectations, switching classes, and multiple teachers. Our goal is a gradual release of responsibility over time as students mature from 6th grade through 8th grade. A few ways we provide consistency and clear expectations across our school:

**Common structures across classrooms:** No matter the teacher or subject, we have some behavioral expectations that remain consistent. These include “first 3” and “last 3,” a silent first and last three minutes of class where students prepare their materials for learning or transition and get ready for class time. We also have school wide expectations for classrooms that we will explain more in-depth later this summer so that students are very clear on the expectations and consequences at all times.

**Norms for shared spaces:** Just as we have clear expectations for classrooms, we also teach students our common norms for shared spaces such as hallways, lunch, and recess. We will teach students these expectations and practice together so that students know what we expect.

**Cell Phone and Locker Policy**

We pride ourselves on our commitment to safety and a strong focus on learning. For that reason, we have clear guidelines around locker and cell phone use.

**Lockers:** All students will have access to their own locker and secure combination. Backpacks and bags stay in student lockers at all times. They will be able to visit their lockers between classes to get materials for different subjects as needed during passing periods.

**Cell Phones:** We have a strict no cell phone use policy. Cell phones are to stay in student lockers at all times. We do not allow students to use their cellphones during the school day. As soon as students enter the building, they should turn off their phone and put it in their lockers.
AST Dress Code

Why do we have a dress code? We believe having a professional, clear dress code policy keeps the focus on learning, reduces bullying, and is a fun way to engage in school pride! Please see below for specifics on our dress code policy.

Dress Code is Mandatory: If your student arrives out of dress code, they will change into a loaner uniform and earn a refocus intervention. In addition, we will contact home to inform you that your student was out of dress code. If it is a habitual problem, you will need to provide extra clothing for at school. This is a non-negotiable part of being an AST Owl. We will require parent meetings if it becomes an issue.

Dress Code Policy:

● TOPS:
  ○ DSST Polo (students choose color between gray, green, or black polo)
  ○ If it is cold, students may wear a DSST half-zip sweatshirt over their polo OR a long-sleeved shirt under their polo
  ○ On Fridays, students are permitted to wear their AST gym shirt or a college shirt

● BOTTOMS:
  ○ Any bottoms that are not blue jeans are acceptable (skirts, khakis, dress pants, black jeans, etc.)
  ○ Students are NOT permitted to wear the following: blue jeans, leggings, athletic joggers/sweats, ripped pants, or shorts

● SHOES:
  ○ Students may wear any shoes they want as long as they are closed-toed/ not sandals
  ○ We do not recommend that students wear high heels larger than 1 inch

● GYM CLASS:
  ○ During their twice-weekly gym class, students must wear an AST PE shirt, athletic shoes, and athletic shorts/pants in order to participate that day.

Ordering Uniforms:

All AST students are required to be in uniform upon arriving at our school building. Please order your uniforms over the summer. Our uniform vendor, Impact, has some great starter packages with polos, PE shirt, and the half-zip sweatshirt. If you need financial assistance or discounts in ordering uniforms, please contact Alma Garcia at alma.garcia@scienceandtech.org.

- Order uniforms at: www.OwlUniforms.com
Refocus

Refocus is a behavior intervention during lunch assigned for behaviors that are not aligned to our core values or expectations. It is an opportunity to reflect on their behavior and create a plan to amend it so it does not occur again in the future.

Refocuses are assigned for specific behaviors such as:

- Out of dress code
- Cell phone/inappropriate computer use
- Chewing gum/candy
- Inappropriate language

If your student earns refocus, you will need to sign their reflection so they can return it to the dean the following day. An unsigned refocus is viewed as incomplete so please make sure to review it with them and sign it if they bring one home.

Clubs and Sports

We believe in developing students’ interests academically and beyond! For that reason, our clubs and sports are an essential part of the AST experience.

**Clubs:** We host after school and lunch clubs based on student interest and available teachers/parents/community organizations to run them. A few clubs we offered last year were art, Science Explorers, strings, LGTBQ, and Girls Who Code.

**Sports:** We offer 1-2 sports per season for boys and girls. Our students participate in the DSST league of sports, competing against other DSST and charter schools around Denver and Aurora. Some sports we offer are basketball, volleyball, soccer, and cheer.

Opportunities for FUN and CELEBRATION

We are so excited to offer our Owls many opportunities to have fun, celebrate, and connect together as a community. These include dances, awards ceremonies each Trimester, Spirit Weeks, fun field trips, and more!
Supporting Your Student as an AST Parent/Guardian

We see our families as a CRITICAL part to our students’ success! Our goal is to partner with you through ample communication and problem solving together to ensure all of our students are successful. The following sections lay out our home/school partnership expectations. Parents are vital to our community and we strive to respond to answer all emails and phone calls within 48 hours.

A Week in the Life of an AST Parent:

- Every Day: Student shows your their planner and completed homework, you sign it and ensure they completed their homework.
- Every Day: Make sure you student attends on time and in dress code daily.
- By 11:00 AM on M, T, Th, F: you will get a call if your student has MT after school.
- Wednesday: Students bring home paychecks and progress reports - review with your student at home.
- Wednesday: Early dismissal at 2:00 PM (no clubs or tutoring due to teacher professional development).
- Anytime: Check grades on Parent Portal, contact advisor for updates.

Family Communication

- **Student Planner**: Please check their planner daily for homework and/or notes from their advisor.
- **Weekly progress reports and paychecks**: We send home progress reports (grades) and paychecks (core value points) weekly on Wednesdays.
- **Robocalls for after school interventions**: If you student has Mandatory Tutoring, you will receive a robocall by 11 am.
- **Advisor/Teacher phone calls and emails**: Your students’ advisors and teachers may contact you by phone, email, or Flyer to share updates about classes, celebrate successes, or problem solve challenges together. Our administrators may also call/email for similar reasons so please be sure to answer their communications, we are here to partner in your student’s success!
- **School newsletter**: We will send home regular communications about important events and happenings at AST through a monthly school newsletter.
- **Flyer Phone app**: We strongly suggest all families download the Flyer app now as it is one of our primary forms of communication! Directions for downloading are in the next section.
- **Social Media**: Follow us on social media! Search “Aurora Science and Tech” on Facebook or follow us on Instagram at @aurora_science_tech.
- **Over the Summer**: Throughout the summer, we will be in contact via phone and email to ensure you and your student have what you need to start strong in 2020-21. Please let us know immediately if any of your contact information changes.
Parent Involvement Opportunities

In addition to LOTS of one-off opportunities such as chaperoning dances or field trips, we have various teams and events that parents can join!

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<th>OPPORTUNITY</th>
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<th>HOW TO GET INVOLVED</th>
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<td>Parent Advocacy Group</td>
<td>Education is a key topic in local, state, and national elections. Our parent advocacy group will meet about once a month to support AST in garnering support and advocating for resources for our success. Parent advocacy group actions may include attending school board meetings, contacting influential people and politicians, and spreading the word about AST.</td>
<td>To get involved, email AST’s Family and Community Coordinator, Alma Garcia, at <a href="mailto:alma.garcia@scienceandtech.org">alma.garcia@scienceandtech.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Science and Tech Parents</td>
<td>Our Science and Tech Parents organization will plan school events, organize chaperones, and create other volunteer opportunities to support AST. Actions may include planning and chaperoning school dances or volunteering/planning family and community functions.</td>
<td>Watch the monthly Owl Parent Newsletter and Flyer App notifications for upcoming meeting dates</td>
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<td>Coffee with the Principal</td>
<td>About once a month, the school director will host a Coffee with the Principal update meeting. In this meeting, the school director will share updates about AST and be available for questions and feedback.</td>
<td>Watch the monthly Owl Parent Newsletter and Flyer App notifications for upcoming meeting dates</td>
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<td>School Accountability Committee</td>
<td>A small team of parents and teachers will commit to attending accountability updates from the school director. This committee will commit to attending all four meeting dates for updates on data, hiring, and other accountability measures for AST.</td>
<td>To get involved, email AST’s School Director, Rebecca Bloch at <a href="mailto:Rebecca.bloch@scienceandtech.org">Rebecca.bloch@scienceandtech.org</a></td>
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Preparing for the 2020-21 School Year

**Student Fees**

AST has student fees in order to support the learning, technology, and activities for students every year. Please see below and let us know how we can support - payment plans are available. We ALWAYS work with families and never want fees to be a barrier in being a part of our school!

- **Fees for FRL Students:** Technology + software + activities = $100
  - Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL): Families need to apply for this
- **Fees for Students Who Are NOT FRL:** Technology + software + activities = $250

**New Student Academy**

Typically, DSST schools host a New Student Academy for incoming 6th graders to acclimate them to our culture, core values, and expectations and start to build connections in our Owl community. Due to COVID-19, we will no longer host these in the summer. Instead, we will have our New Student Academy on August 17-18. On these two days, only 6th grade will attend and we will host our New Student Academy then before all students start on August 19.

**Flyer App**

All AST families are expected to join Flyer, our messaging app, for whole school and teacher updates and messages. To join, follow the steps below:

- Download the app (Flyer Connect, available on the App Store and Google Play)
- Search for Aurora Science and Tech
We have aligned our calendar as much as we can with Aurora Public Schools and DSST. Please see the details in the calendar as there are various days with early-release or no school for students. 

Click HERE for the 2020-21 DSST Calendar!
COVID-19 Plans for the 2020-21 School Year

More details on our 2020 COVID-19 plan are forthcoming. As a network, we are working hard to plan for all circumstances right now, including in-person, e-school, or a hybrid model. Regardless of next year’s model, our top priority is student safety, engagement, and academics.

Please make sure we have up to date contact information for you at all times, including phone number and email on file, and that you are following Aurora Science and Tech on Flyer. We will provide frequent communications throughout the summer on our plans to educate your students amidst this pandemic.

Enrollment Steps - Are You On-Track?

If you have received information about orientation, you have accepted your spot!
- Please make sure you’ve sent in your student’s Release of Records Form to Alma Garcia at alma.garcia@scienceandtech.org.
- If your student has an IEP for specialized services, please send an electronic copy to Brett Barnes at brett.barnes@scienceandtech.org (from our DSST Home Office special education team). This is due for registration if you are coming from outside Aurora Public Schools but can be helpful to send to us ahead of time!
- If you have any questions about the enrollment process, please email Ms. Alma!

Student Registration

More information is coming soon for registration! Registration typically happens as we approach the start of the year. This will be something you can do 100% ONLINE. Some things you will need for registration:
- Copies of an IEP (if your student receives specialized services)
- Doctor’s order for medications
- Immunization Record for your student

We can’t wait for you to join our Owl family for the 2020-21 school year and beyond!