

News

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Manual High School

Three vie for job as principal

By Melanie Asmar
Chalkbeat Colorado

Three candidates are in the running to become principal of Denver's Manual High, a storied school that has struggled academically and had high turnover at the top.

The last principal resigned in March, and district officials recently concluded he violated the district's policy against harassment, discrimination and retaliation, according to a document obtained by Chalkbeat.

The three candidates include two who work for Denver Public Schools and one who works in Adams 14 School District.

Jason Maclin is an assistant principal at Denver's East High School. He served as interim principal for a few months last year.

Maclin previously was an assistant principal at Noel Community Arts School. He started his career as a teacher in Chicago.

Julio Contreras is the principal resident at John Amesse Elementary School. He came to Denver in 2017 from Louisiana, where he was an award-winning secondary school principal. He is bilingual in English and Spanish. Half of Manual students are Hispanic and a third are English language learners.

Cynthia Trinidad Sheahan is the director of educator effectiveness for Adams 14. She is also bilingual in English and Spanish, and previously worked for the Boulder Valley School District overseeing district programs for English language learners. She was an assistant principal at Aurora Central High and started her career as a teacher in Brighton.

Manual students, parents and community members met the principal candidates and asked questions at a forum May 1. District officials said they will consider public comments when recommending finalists. Denver Superintendent Tom Boasberg will make the final hiring decision.

Chalkbeat Colorado is a nonprofit news organization covering education issues. For more, visit chalkbeat.org/co.



Seniors at Denver's South High School pose for photos after an assembly highlighting increased college enrollment at the school and throughout the district. Photo by Melanie Asmar

Higher education

College entry up across DPS

By Melanie Asmar
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More than half of Denver students who graduated high school last year — 51 percent — immediately enrolled in a two- or four-year college, according to school district officials. That was a 5 percentage-point increase from the year before and the biggest bump on record.

Denver Public Schools celebrated that achievement May 3 at South High School. The rate for the South High class of 2017 was even higher: 95 percent of graduates pursued some sort of postsecondary education or joined the military, principal Jen Hanson said, with 67 percent of graduates enrolling in four-year colleges.

"Students' passion, dedication, and tenacity is inspiring," Hanson said.

Districtwide, officials are particularly proud that the college enrollment rate for black

students increased by 9 percentage points after years of decline. However, officials acknowledged there are still gaps between white students and students of color.

School board president Anne Rowe partly credited the increases to the work of the Denver Scholarship Foundation, a nonprofit that operates 12 college counseling centers in the district and whose advisers work with students from 25 schools, including South High.

College enrollment rates are different than college acceptance rates, which are more often touted.

Homegrown charter network DSST has a 100 percent acceptance rate. The network's enrollment rate in two- and four-year colleges last year was 88 percent, with 82 percent of graduates enrolling in four-year colleges, according to DSST.

South High senior Sara Ge-

bretsadik plans to attend the University of Colorado Boulder, on a scholarship. Gebretsadik, who immigrated with her family from Ethiopia eight years ago, plans to study business. She said she aspires to one day become the CEO of the Denver-based fast-casual burrito restaurant Chipotle.

If she were CEO, Gebretsadik said she would establish a "very big" charity division within the company. She also dreams of founding a nonprofit that would teach ethical business practices to young business owners in her Ethiopia.

"My family has bestowed this idea of, 'If you're educated, you're able to help a lot more people,'" Gebretsadik said. "I've always wanted to help more people."

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