



DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2010 Denver Plan

Strategic Vision and Action Plan

2010 Denver Plan

[TABLE OF CONTENTS]

	Page Number
Letter from the Superintendent	3-4
Executive Summary	5-9
Call to Action	10-20
Focus on the Instructional Core	21-32
Great People to Drive Better Outcomes for Students	33-45
Deepen Engagement with Families and the Community	46-52
Strategic Management of Financial Resources	53-59
A Culture of High Expectations, Service, Empowerment, and Responsibility	60-67
Conclusion	68
Acknowledgements	69-70
Appendix A	71-72
Appendix B	73

“We must be willing to do more than talk. We all must be willing to change. Education reform isn’t a table around which we talk. It’s a moving train and we all need to get on board.”

- Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT |

Dear DPS Community:

This is an absolutely critical time for our schools and our city. The 2005 Denver Plan started to change the conversation in our community about our schools, and it has been the blueprint for the progress we’ve seen over the past four years.

Despite our progress, however, we must face the sobering fact that we are failing the civil rights challenge of our generation: to ensure that all of our students, regardless of ethnicity or income status, are graduating from our high schools prepared for college or career. Now is time to accelerate our reforms, to sharpen the focus on student achievement, and to get all of our children—in every neighborhood of Denver—on track to walk across the commencement stage armed with everything they need to forge a great future for themselves. The momentum is there, and we need to capitalize on it now.

This is a plan to do just that. It has an intense focus on the work in our classrooms. Teaching is our society’s noblest profession, requiring enormous skill, passion, creativity, and commitment. Nothing is more important to the future of our children than our teachers. Effective teaching is the one thing proven to truly move the achievement needle – to close our achievement gaps and give every one of our students a real chance to succeed. As President Obama has stressed:

“From the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it’s the person standing at the front of the classroom.”

This plan also recognizes the three critical strategies we must pursue to enable our teachers’ work in the classroom: retaining, rewarding and recruiting great people; strong family and community engagement; and strategic management of financial resources.

But those strategies—important as they are—will not fully succeed if we do not continue and deepen our conversations around fundamentally changing the culture and structure of public education. We need that dialogue to center on high expectations, excellent customer service, and systems of empowerment and responsibility.

We must acknowledge that our culture historically has not been one consistently defined by high expectations, service, empowerment, and responsibility. This is partly the result of the fact that our district, like school districts across the country, has operated for generations as a monopoly and has suffered from a monopoly's resistance to fundamental change, a lack of urgency, and an inflexibility that often puts the interests of the system and its adults over and above the needs of our students. This must change. It is long past time to reorganize our system on new principles. We need to create a system and a culture that places the interests of our students unequivocally first, that presumes the best of our professionals, that empowers them, and that focuses above all else on our student performance.

We must move away from the conflicts of the past that pitted adults within our schools against one another and turn our attention to focus solely on the needs of our children. We must embrace our shared mission of dramatically improving student achievement and serving our families. For the sake of our children's and our city's future, together, we're UP to the challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Boasberg
Superintendent



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY |

The vision of the Denver Public Schools is clear:

We will lead the nation's cities in student achievement, high school graduation, college preparation, and college matriculation. Our students will be well prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education.

We will *lead* the nation. It is the right thing to do for our children. It is the right thing to do for our city, which will achieve its highest potential only when our schools are a thriving, vibrant success story. This plan, the 2010 Denver Plan, explains what we will do to achieve this.

Since launching the 2005 Denver Plan five years ago, thousands more of our students have become proficient in reading, writing and math, and DPS has shown more academic growth on state assessments than the rest of the state and more than any other major school district in Colorado. We have doubled the number of high school students who take Advanced Placement (AP) courses or concurrently enroll in college programs, reduced our drop-out rate by one-third, and graduated 200 more seniors than four years ago.

Despite this progress, however, we must face the sobering reality that fewer than 50% of DPS students are proficient on the state's reading measures; fewer than 40% are proficient in math and writing; we are graduating only half of our students from high school; and we suffer, in a district where 80% of our students are of color, from a persistent 35-point achievement gap between our African-American and Latino students and their Anglo and Asian-American counterparts. The four-year growth confirms that we are on the right track, but we must significantly accelerate our rate of improvement and put far more of our students on the path to graduation and success in college and careers.

This is the civil rights challenge of our generation: providing all students an excellent education, regardless of race or economic status, thereby giving them a strong and equal chance to succeed in this democracy. Our school board recognizes that without continuing to reform our system of educating children in Denver, we will not succeed. Thus, the Board of Education developed and adopted a set of core beliefs and commitments to drive our work. We believe:

- **All students can achieve and graduate, and we can close the achievement gap.**
- **Teaching and learning is the top priority.**
- **Accountability for performance by all adults matters.**
- **Choice, collaboration, and innovation are key to 21st century success.**
- **Engagement of parents, families, and community are essential elements of a quality education system.**

The Board also adopted a theory of action—our view about *how* we will make this progress. Called “Performance Empowerment,” the theory of action calls for clearly establishing our instructional program (including defined standards, a baseline core curriculum, coordinated professional development, and interim formative assessments) and emphasizes the essential roles of autonomy, empowerment, and innovation to reach much higher levels of success. The Board also adopted five-year, measureable goals against which we can be held accountable, by ourselves and by you. The goals require us to ensure that:

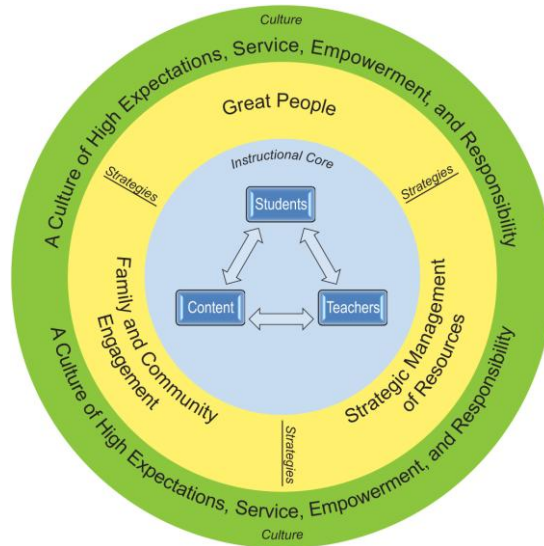
1. All students will graduate from the Denver Public Schools prepared for postsecondary success.
2. All students will demonstrate at least one year’s growth in the core content areas and meet or exceed state standards.
3. The number of high-performing schools as measured by the School Performance Framework will increase.
4. All students will have access to full day kindergarten.
5. Enrollment will continue to increase in the Denver Public Schools.

(The specific goals are available in Appendix A.)

This document, the **2010 Denver Plan: Strategic Vision and Action Plan**, lays out our vision and the course we are embarking on to achieve the goals. In large part, this plan is an extension of the 2005 Denver Plan, carefully building on and leveraging the vastly improved capacity we have built in this district, including the alignment of our curriculum to state standards; the introduction of benchmark assessments to track progress for every student and school; comprehensive professional development for principals; a more transparent and equitable student-based-budgeting formula for distributing resources to schools; and the implementation of ProComp, the nation’s most differentiated professional pay system for teachers.

In order to build upon the 2005 Denver Plan and accelerate our student gains, we must transform the conditions of teaching and learning on a district-wide scale so that thoughtful and empowered teachers will expertly deliver effective instruction using their knowledge of content as well as their knowledge of students’ strengths and needs in every classroom in the Denver Public Schools. DPS recognizes that the quality of our educators is the most significant factor in driving student outcomes. We are committed to having a highly effective teacher in every classroom and building strategies to support this commitment.

As depicted in the visual on page seven, everything in the 2010 Denver Plan centers on the classroom—the interaction among students, teachers, and content. This is the instructional core. We cannot change student performance without changing the instructional core. Research is clear that effective teaching is the most important factor in student academic success. Great people working for DPS, family and community engagement, and strategically managing our financial resources all support the work our teachers and principals do with students in classrooms every day. Surrounding all of this is a culture of high expectations, service, empowerment, and responsibility. These are the major elements of our plan; the visual that follows illustrates how they support the instructional core and interact with one another.



Focus on the Instructional Core |

As affirmed by our core beliefs, learning and achievement are not determined or limited by race, family income, native language, disability, gender, or area of residence. Instead, learning and achievement are outcomes of a healthy and highly functioning instructional core, which is defined by the interactions among engaged students, effective teachers, and rigorous content. Focusing on and improving our instructional core will mean that teaching, schools, and systems are well-organized to provide consistent, high-quality instruction that engages and challenges all students in acquiring the skills, strategies, understandings, and knowledge necessary for the 21st century. To improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps, we will:

- Create conditions to ensure the effectiveness of our teachers and our principals.
- Ensure all students, including English language learners, gifted students, and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous standards-based curricula and assessments.
- Provide coordinated and comprehensive systems of support for the whole child.
- Use data and best-practice information to evaluate and continuously improve our instructional programs.

Great People to Drive Better Outcomes for Students |

Talented and committed people are our most important resource in driving improved outcomes for students. To ensure we have highly effective teams of teachers and leaders in every school and department who successfully support the instructional core, we will:

- Recruit the best teachers and principals for our schools.
- Empower and retain effective educators.
- Create meaningful systems of recognition, opportunities for advancement, and rewards for driving student achievement.
- Recruit, retain, and reward outstanding staff to support the work of teachers and principals in schools.

- Replace low-performing employees who, despite support, fail to meet expectations.

Deepening Engagement with Families and the Community |

Families, as well as the larger Denver community, are essential partners in helping our students achieve at dramatically higher levels and graduate from high school ready for college or career. To ensure family and community engagement effectively supports the instructional core, we will:

- Deepen and strengthen parent and family engagement classroom by classroom, school by school.
- Engage and inform DPS students, families, and the community about DPS strategies and initiatives.
- Foster dialogue and input from stakeholders to promote civic engagement and ownership of public schools.
- Partner with non-profits, faith communities, philanthropic groups, and others to support Denver's students with streamlined services that are focused on improving student achievement.
- Leverage partnerships with the City and County of Denver and other governmental agencies.
- Forge formal partnerships and secure additional resources promoting college entry and success.

Strategic Management of Financial Resources |

Our district's single goal is to dramatically improve student achievement. Thus, it is essential that our financial resources wisely support the instructional core: students, teachers, and content. It is also critical that we manage our resources to ensure long-term stability and to attract a growing number of students and families to DPS. To do this we will:

- Ensure fiscal stability by growing our enrollment and keeping costs in line with revenues.
- Effectively utilize funds to maximize the resources available to schools and classrooms.
- Align resources with effective programs that allow us to meet our student achievement goals and establish financial incentives for achieving them.
- Increase transparency so that the public will more easily understand use of funds and alignment of resources with goals.
- Effectively utilize bond resources for facility upgrades and targeted expansion.

A Culture of High Expectations, Service, Empowerment, and Responsibility |

Building and maintaining a culture characterized by high expectations, excellent service, empowerment, and responsibility is critical to achieving our goals. Culture surrounds and permeates our work. A successful culture is in many ways intangible, but its presence is a powerful force for and a necessary element of change. Admittedly, this is a significant shift for a culture that remains too focused on compliance. In order to build and maintain a high-performance culture focused on student results, we will:

- Establish and maintain high expectations for all students and adults in Denver Public Schools.
- Ensure that our schools and departments provide excellent service to families and students, and that the central service organization provides high-quality service to our schools.

- Strengthen our systems and norms of providing significant empowerment to DPS employees that is coupled with responsibility for student results.

We fully believe that aggressive and thoughtful implementation of these strategies will yield significant and rapid improvements in student achievement. That said, this plan is a living document. We will continue to track our progress carefully and report out on that progress to the community. For the goal to rapidly increase achievement – and opportunities – for our students simply must be realized.

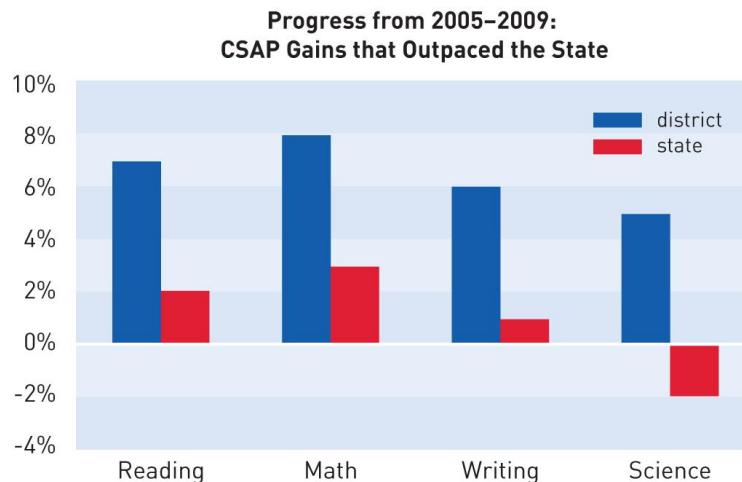


CALL TO ACTION |

“Operating an urban school district in the 21st century based on a century-old configuration will result in the failure for too many children. It is long past time to admit this. As a district and a community, we must gather strength and have the courage to make change, knowing that the changes we face are much, much less perilous than the status quo.”

- Denver Public Schools Board of Education, April 2007

In the fall of 2005, the Denver Public Schools began implementing the Denver Plan, an ambitious set of education reform initiatives anchored in three main areas: highly skilled and empowered teachers, great school leaders, and close community collaboration. The first four years of the Denver Plan have produced considerable progress. **In fact, in each of these four years, DPS has shown more academic growth on Colorado state assessments than the rest of the state and has demonstrated greater achievement progress than any other major school district in the state of Colorado.** Significantly, we also doubled the number of high school students who take Advanced Placement (AP) courses or concurrently enroll in college programs, reduced our drop-out rate by one-third, and graduated 200 more seniors than four years ago. These student outcomes confirm we are on the right track.



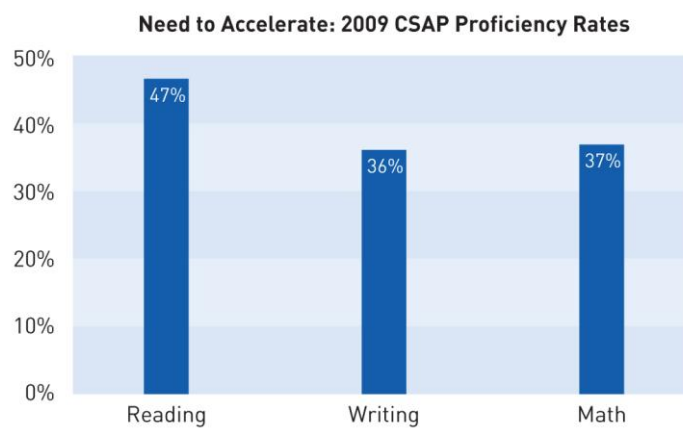
Denver’s families agree. Our enrollment in DPS is the highest it has been in over 30 years. Thanks to taxpayers’ approval of funding for the Denver Preschool Program, we increased enrollment in our pre-schools from 500 full-day students in 2007-08 to 2,600, in 2009-2010— a five-fold increase. We also increased participation in full-day kindergarten from 72% to over 90%. And, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Tim and Bernie Marquez, we have established the Denver Scholarship

Foundation to provide counseling and financial assistance to help our graduates apply to and pay for college.

The nation's experts agree that DPS has embarked on a strategic and comprehensive overhaul. The Council of the Great City Schools (a national organization of 67 of the nation's largest urban school districts) stressed in its 2009 evaluation of Denver Public Schools, that our district's vision for reform is "one of the most promising and comprehensive in the nation." The Council further noted that "The architecture of these reforms – instructional, financial, and human capital – is among the most seamlessly conceived in all of urban education in the United States."¹

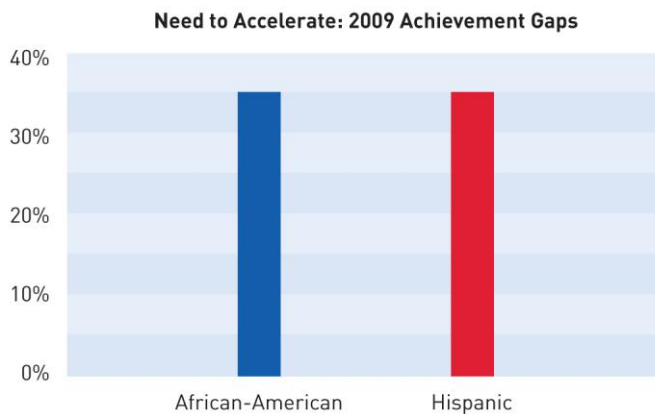
We are grateful for the tremendous dedication and hard work of our students, teachers, school leaders, staff, parents, and community members that has put our district on this path of improvement.

But we are still not close to meeting our goals. Fewer than 50% of DPS students are proficient on the state's reading measures, and fewer than 40% are proficient in math and writing.



In a society where failure to graduate from high school condemns young people to a life of second-class economic citizenship, our four-year graduation rate is only slightly above 50%. Most sobering is that, in a district where 80% of our students are of color, there is a persistent 35-point achievement gap between our African-American and Latino students and their Anglo and Asian-American counterparts.

¹ Council of the Great City Schools, *Accelerating Achievement in Denver Public Schools: Report of the Strategic Support Team*. Winter 2008-09.



At the current rate of improvement, students who are not yet born will have graduated from the Denver Public Schools before our achievement levels equal those of the state and before we close the achievement gap between our students of color and their Anglo classmates. This rate of improvement is profoundly unacceptable to a school system with high expectations for our students and to a community with high expectations of its school system.

We must accelerate our rate of progress to meaningfully address our achievement gaps, to reach our achievement goals, and to meet the civil rights challenge of our generation: to give all our students, regardless of race or economic status, a strong and equal chance to succeed. It is essential that we as a district – and as a city – face the reality that we are nowhere near where we need to be.

Building a Framework for Success |

Recognizing this, our Board of Education developed and adopted a set of core beliefs and commitments to drive our work based on our sole focus of driving better student outcomes.

We believe:

- **All students can achieve and graduate, and we can close the achievement gap.**
- **Teaching and learning is the top priority.**
- **Accountability for performance by all adults matters.**
- **Choice, collaboration, and innovation are key to 21st century success.**
- **Engagement of parents, families, and community are essential elements of a quality education system.²**

These core beliefs represent our fundamental values as an organization. Next, the Board developed and adopted our theory of action, which represents what we need to **do** in order to effect change and realize these core values. The theory of action is essentially our “if, then” statement: “if we do

² See Appendix B for a fully defined and annotated set of the district’s Core Beliefs and Commitments.

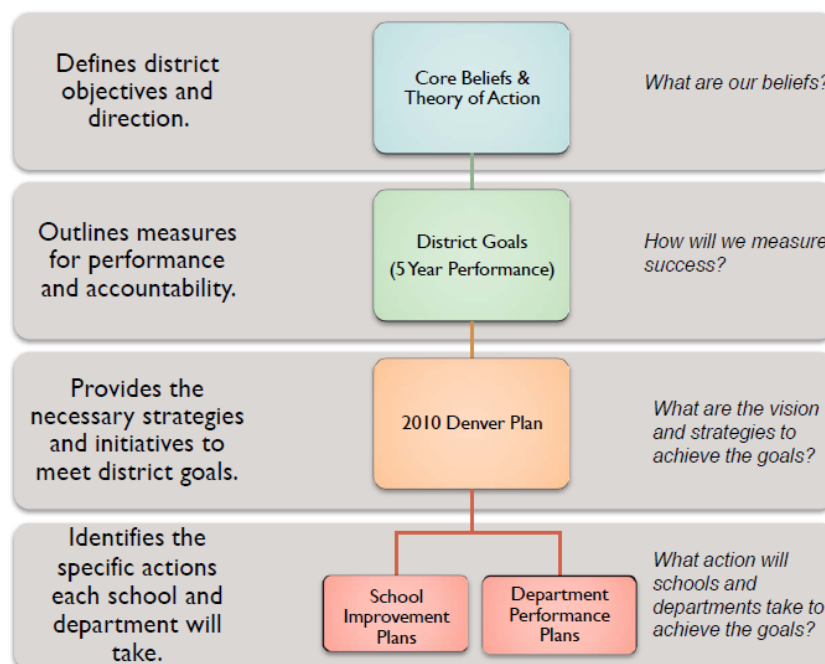
our work in this way, then we have the highest chances for success.” It guides us when setting priorities, making plans and budgets, and undertaking new initiatives.

Denver Public Schools’ theory of action calls for the district to establish and ensure quality control of core elements of the instructional model including clear standards, a baseline core curriculum, coordinated professional development, and interim formative assessments. Central direction around these elements 1) builds upon research-based methods; 2) establishes clear, non-negotiable standards for student success; 3) helps provide continuity to students who move from school to school; 4) enables the delivery of high-quality and tightly-focused professional development; 5) allows the district to administer common interim assessments that guide differentiated classroom instruction and give visibility to schools that are succeeding or struggling; and 6) ensures equity for and mastery of rigorous standards by all students across all schools in the district.

While we believe it is essential to establish these non-negotiables, we are just as intentionally investing significant decision-making authority at the school and department levels. Success hinges on empowering our talented teaching and leadership staff to make decisions about *how to teach* and *how to lead*. While the district will ensure all schools and all students have access to rigorous courses rooted in world-class standards, we want a system in which all teachers, principals, and staff tap their talent and creativity to design the best ways to teach and lead.

By putting this theory of action into practice the district will go beyond incremental change and accelerate gains in academic achievement for all students.

To measure our progress, the board adopted five-year, measurable goals. The goals require us to dramatically improve student achievement, close our existing achievement gaps, improve our high school graduation rates, and continue to increase enrollment in Denver Public Schools. (The specific goals and timelines are available in Appendix A.) As depicted below, School Improvement Plans and department performance plans will directly support the five-year goals.



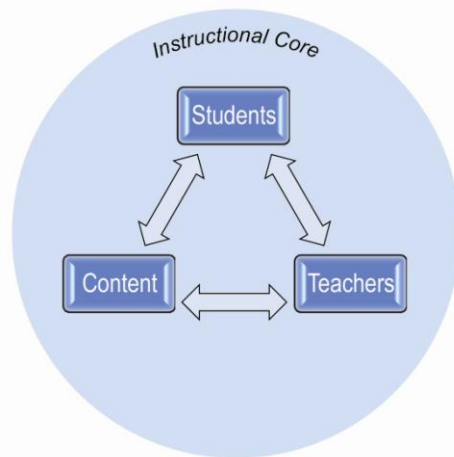
Fundamentally Changing Our Approach |

As the 2005 Denver Plan and the Board's 2007 response to the *Rocky Mountain News* series, "Leaving to Learn," makes clear, if we wish to achieve these goals and fundamentally change our student outcomes, we need to fundamentally change our approach. For decades, public school systems in this country have provided education to nearly 90% of the students in America, with options available only for those families with means to afford them. School systems have not demonstrated the imperative to change. DPS has suffered from this lack of urgency to change, most clearly evidenced by the nearly 27,000 Denver families who choose to enroll their children in non-DPS schools. We have begun and we must continue embracing competition and the challenges of this century. To do this, we must transform ourselves from a top-down, inflexible system that focuses too much on the debates and priorities of adults and too little on the achievement of our students.

Our sole focus must be on improving student achievement.

To do this, the center of our work and the center of our strategy must be the instructional core. As defined by education policy expert Richard Elmore, the instructional core is the interactions and relationships among students, teachers, and rigorous content. Further, Elmore describes how the elements interact:

You can't alter the skill and knowledge of the teacher when you stay in a low-level curriculum. If you alter the content without changing the skill and knowledge of teachers, you are asking teachers to teach to a level that they don't have the skill and knowledge to teach to. If you do either one of those things without changing the role of the student in the instructional process, the likelihood that students will ever take control of their own learning is pretty remote.³



³ Elizabeth City, Richard Elmore, Sarah Fiarman, and Lee Teitel, *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*. Harvard Education Press. 2009.

Students: Student learning is the goal, and actively engaged students are an essential part of the instructional core. Student learning is only possible when our students are challenged and actively engaged. We recognize that each one of our students has unique strengths and learning needs and we must differentiate our instruction to meet their needs. We will engage students through rigorous content and meaningful coursework that makes clear we have high expectations for them. As many comments on our draft last fall emphasized, students must take responsibility for their own education by setting and meeting rigorous academic, personal, and school community goals. **Teachers:** Study after study has made clear that the only thing proven to close the achievement gap is the quality of teaching.^{4,5} Effective teaching requires enormous skill, dedication, and hard work. DPS is fortunate to have an extremely talented teacher corps to whom we owe our thanks for our progress to date. This plan moves aggressively, with the support of a three-year, \$10 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to develop the skills of our teachers and to ensure that there are highly effective teachers in every classroom across the district. We will support teachers to be the most effective that they can be in pursuit of our goals

Content: Our aligned system of instruction will use the state standards to ensure that content is rigorous, coherent, and engaging. Our standards at every grade in every subject must be at a level to build upon each other and prepare our students to graduate from high school ready for college. We will emphasize higher-order thinking and problem-solving aligned to the revised state standards so that our students will be able to compete in the increasingly global workplace of their future.

We believe there are three critical supports necessary to ensure success for our work in the instructional core:

- First, and most important, is fundamentally changing our policies and practices to do a much better job recognizing, retaining, developing, rewarding, and recruiting **great people** to teach in and lead our schools and run our support services. We also must recognize that we have the responsibility to replace low-performing employees who, despite support, fail to meet expectations.
- Second, we must **deepen our engagement** and communication with our families and our community.
- Third, we must manage our **financial resources** strategically and transparently to support the instructional core.

We further recognize that all of this work occurs within and is impacted by our organization's culture. While perhaps more intangible, a high-performing culture is equally essential to our success in changing student outcomes. Thus, we must build and maintain a shared culture of high expectations, high-quality service, empowerment, and responsibility for results in all our schools and throughout all district departments.

Traditionally, public school systems have promoted neither empowerment of education professionals nor accountability for the academic success of students. We must promote both, as they are two sides

⁴ Darling-Hammond, Linda, *Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence*. Education Policy Analysis Archives. January 1, 2000.

⁵ Brian Rowan, Richard Correnti, and R. J. Miller, "What large-scale, survey research tells us about teacher effects on student achievement: Insights from the Prospects study of elementary schools." *Teachers College Record*. 2002.

of the same coin. As Albert Shanker, the founder of the American Federation of Teachers, emphasized:

The key is that unless there is accountability, we will never get the right system. As long as there are no consequences if kids or adults don't perform, as long as the discussion is not about education and student outcomes, then we are playing a game as to who has the power. Who's going to feel bad, the teachers or the principal? Unless you start with a very heavy emphasis on accountability, not end with it, you'll never get a system with all the other pieces falling into place.⁶

We believe Shanker is correct in his emphasis on accountability. Our long-term success depends upon empowering our professionals and ensuring a deep sense of individual and collective responsibility for student achievement. Presently, however, our system is not organized to create such a sense of empowerment or responsibility. Instead, we have created systems that value and enforce compliance over performance. Our incentives do not clearly line up behind the goals of improving student achievement. Additionally, we have developed state laws, district policies, and collective bargaining agreements that presume that our faculties must be protected from arbitrary and ineffective principals by one-size-fits-all work rules.

It is long past time to reorganize our system on new principles: to discard the one-size-fits-all and top-down model that has failed to serve our students and to collaborate with our teachers and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association to replace it with a model that empowers our faculty and principals to take up the challenge of fulfilling the high expectations they have of themselves and our community has for our students. Such a system must focus on results, especially improved student performance, and move away from controlling inputs, such as dictating how teachers must use their time or how schools must use their budgets.

We need to pursue a system and a culture that presumes the best of DPS employees. We must, in short, move away from the conflicts of the past that pitted individuals and groups of adults within the district against one another and embrace our common mission to improve student achievement.

⁶ "A Tribute to Al Shanker." Pew Forum on Education Reform, special insert in *Education Week*. May 14, 1997.

A Charge to DPS Students |

...we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, and the best schools in the world – and none of it will matter unless all of you fulfill your responsibilities. Unless you show up to those schools; pay attention to those teachers; listen to your parents, grandparents and other adults; and put in the hard work it takes to succeed.

Every single one of you has something you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide.

But at the end of the day, the circumstances of your life – what you look like, where you come from, how much money you have, what you've got going on at home – that's no excuse for neglecting your homework or having a bad attitude. That's no excuse for talking back to your teacher, or cutting class, or dropping out of school. That's no excuse for not trying.

President Barack Obama
Back to School Speech
Sept. 9, 2009

Working together as students, families, employees and community members we will ensure every DPS student graduates high school ready to excel in college or other post-secondary options. Students also have a very clear responsibility for their own learning and success. As one teacher commented on our draft, **“The district as a whole needs to have clear expectations for students. From the teacher's experience, students will rise to meet any expectations set for them – but the expectations must be clear.”**

We challenge all DPS students to:

- Try their very best on a daily basis and excel in their courses.
- Discover their unique abilities by taking challenging courses.
- Attend school regularly, ready to learn with homework completed.
- Serve as a role model to their peers by honoring community values and school discipline codes.

To support students in meeting this challenge we will:

- Treat students as our partner working together with them to plan a rigorous academic program.
- Motivate and set highest expectations for our students.
- Monitor progress and ensure that students understand where they are excelling and the areas where improvement is needed.
- Focus our individual goals to help achieve success in the classroom.
- Provide support to students based on their individual needs.
- Ensure that our schools are safe learning environments.
- Advise all students on potential college options and the courses they need to take in order to be prepared to access the post secondary opportunity of their choice.

A Charge to DPS Parents & Guardians |

Research proves that parent involvement has a positive effect on student success. When parents are involved in their children's education, they achieve more. Schools perform better. Teacher morale even improves. Ultimately, communities are stronger when parents get involved.

Parent Teacher Association (March 2010)

Parent and guardian involvement in education is about building a partnership between home and school to support every child. We must encourage and nurture relationships with our families and commit to providing them with the tools and support they need to participate in their child's education. The support of our parents and guardians is vital in shaping the future of all DPS children.

We challenge all parents and guardians to:

- Set high expectations for your children's achievement and emphasize the importance of college and career readiness.
- Ensure that your child attends school regularly, ready to learn with homework completed.
- Read to or with your child, limit and guide TV watching, and provide stimulating experiences outside of school that contribute to your child's education.
- Visit your child's school regularly, attend parent-teacher conferences, and access information about your child's performance.

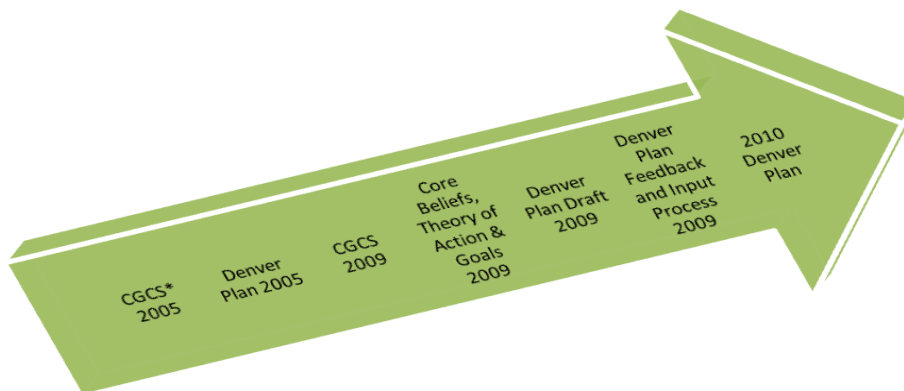
- Serve as a role model to your child by honoring community values and supporting school discipline codes.

To support parents in meeting this challenge we will:

- Engage you on how to work directly with your children on learning activities at home.
- Provide you access to real-time information on how your student is performing.
- Be your partner in resolving your child’s issues and challenges as well as your partner in celebrating your child’s successes.
- Ensure that our schools invite and welcome your involvement.
- Advise all parents on potential college options and the courses students need to take in order to be prepared to access the post secondary opportunity of their choice.

2010 Denver Plan: Strategic Vision and Action Plan |

In the **2010 Denver Plan: Strategic Vision and Action Plan** we detail our vision and proposed course of action for the next three years. As depicted in the timeline below, the 2010 Denver Plan is an evolution of four years of continuous improvement. In 2005, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) conducted a thorough review of our system. The Council’s recommendations formed the basis of the 2005 Denver Plan. We invited the Council to examine our system again in 2009. Its report laid the foundation for the Board to establish our theory of action and five-year measurable goals. Building on the Council’s 2009 recommendations and our progress to date, this plan explains how we will achieve the five-year goals.



*Council of Great City Schools

The 2010 Denver Plan will become the basis of individual school improvement plans and central office departmental performance plans which, in turn, drive budgets, timelines, and individual performance goals. These work plans will operationalize the strategies described in this plan. We will measure our progress by the five-year goals.

Launching the 2010 Denver Plan |

This plan is meant to provide a shared vision and commitment to the success of Denver's children. While the 2010 Denver Plan has its roots in the goals of the 2005 Denver Plan, its vision has been informed by many: from the voices of our teachers, principals, parents and community members heard in school faculty meetings, principal institutes, public comment sessions at board meetings, to the joint DCTA-district Professional Practices Workgroup that worked successfully to make the district one of six national recipients of major grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest competitive philanthropic grant in the history of DPS.

We look forward to an ongoing, powerful dialogue with our talented employees, dedicated parents, and devoted community members on specific strategies. It is your hard work and commitment to Denver's children that will shape our collective success.



FOCUS ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL CORE |

ALL STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE AND GRADUATE AND WE CAN CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

We believe that all students can learn at grade level or higher (no excuses), make dramatic gains in student achievement, reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, higher education, and competition in a global community. We believe this is true for all students and is not determined or limited by race, family income, native language, disability, gender, or area of residence.

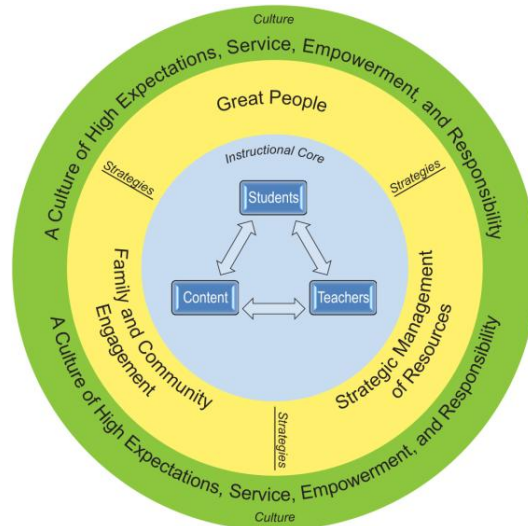
- Denver Public Schools, Core Beliefs and Commitments

Vision |

Our vision is that all students in the Denver Public Schools will learn at grade level or higher and graduate from high school ready for college or career. That means that all 78,000 students, 55,000 of whom live in poverty, 36,000 of whom speak a language other than English in their home, 9,131 of whom have an identified education disability, and 8,200 who are identified as gifted and talented, will graduate from high school ready for college or career.

As affirmed by our core beliefs, we believe that learning and achievement are not determined or limited by race, family income, native language, disability, gender, or area of residence. Instead, learning and achievement are outcomes of effective teaching, schools, and systems that are organized to provide consistent, high-quality instruction that engages and challenges all students in acquiring the skills, strategies, understandings, and knowledge necessary for the 21st century. It is clear that the jobs of the future will require post-secondary training and education and require that our students be thinkers and problem-solvers. The students of today will encounter careers and contexts that currently do not exist, and they will need to be able to solve complex problems and apply their learning to an ever-changing world.

To ensure success for all students, we must focus on the instructional core, comprised of the interactions and relationships among its three major elements: students, teachers, and content.



Students, at the heart of our mission, must be approached as they are: each one unique, with individual strengths and needs. Teachers must be knowledgeable about how to make the content both accessible and understandable to students. Finally, the content must be rigorous and aligned to high standards. It is the interplay of students, teachers, and content that allows learning to occur.

Research consistently shows that effective teaching is the single largest factor in student academic success.⁷ Effective teaching results from increasing the level of knowledge and skills that teachers bring to the instructional process, increasing the level and complexity of the content that students are asked to learn, and changing the role of the student from a passive recipient of information to an active, engaged learner.⁸ You will find that the district's teacher effectiveness initiatives are referenced in this section of the Denver Plan as well as in the Great People section of the plan. The teacher effectiveness strategies in each section reinforce and support one another in their efforts to better support teachers and drive improved student outcomes.

In DPS, we are fortunate to have a talented and dedicated teaching staff that both embraces the district's core beliefs and works hard to ensure student success. To accelerate gains in academic achievement, we will build on the momentum established to transform the conditions of teaching and learning on a district-wide scale so that thoughtful and empowered teachers will expertly plan for implementation of effective instructional strategies using their data-driven knowledge of content as well as their knowledge of students' strengths and needs. These accomplished teachers will use their expertise to make informed decisions that ensure all students have the instruction, opportunity, and support they need. Teachers and school leaders will also identify and meet the individual academic and social-emotional learning needs of each and every student so that all DPS students reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, higher education, and as competitors in a global community.

⁷ Rowan, Correnti, and Miller; Darling-Hammond.

⁸ Elizabeth City, Richard Elmore, Sarah Fiarman, and Lee Teitel, *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*. Harvard Education Press. 2009.

In order to foster the best interactions between engaged students, effective teachers, and rigorous content, we will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1 |

Create conditions to ensure educator effectiveness. This will require us to develop a shared definition of effective teaching; strengthen our support for teachers to develop their professional skills; and develop principals to be effective leaders. We will create a common definition and shared understanding of effective teaching. Our definition and understanding of effective teaching will include their impact on student learning as measured by achievement data. Effective teaching will be anchored in a meaningful system of observation, feedback and evaluation. Professional development will be aligned to the standards of effective teaching and will be accessed based on individual identified needs. We will focus on developing principals to lead their schools effectively and develop their teachers. (Note: *teacher effectiveness strategies in this section are reinforced in the Great People section*)

Strategy 2 |

Ensure all students, including English language learners, gifted students, and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous standards-based curricula and assessments. We will provide rigorous standards-based curricula and assessments that are aligned with the newly adopted Colorado state standards. We will differentiate materials to meet students' needs, and students will have access to appropriate interventions to ensure learning and achievement.

Strategy 3 |

Provide coordinated and comprehensive systems of support for the whole child. Each student comes to school with unique circumstances, strengths, and needs. We will create support systems for all aspects of our learners, including their health, physical and emotional needs, as well as academic needs in order to give them the best opportunities for success.⁹

Strategy 4 |

Implement a continuous improvement process informed by data and best practice. We will build curriculum and program-evaluation methods, utilizing formative and summative assessments linked to standards in order to ensure that we maximize the most effective practices for our student population and improve or eliminate the practices that are less effective. We will focus on turnaround strategies in our low-performing schools and welcome high-quality new programs and schools.

We are confident – through experience, research, and good common sense – that these strategies will ensure rapid increases in student achievement and dramatically decrease our achievement gaps.

Progress to Date |

In the first four years of implementing the 2005 Denver Plan, we made great strides in instructional reforms, focusing our efforts on increasing coherence, raising expectations, and supporting educators.

⁹ Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Wiley, John & Sons, Inc. 1999, third edition. (originally published in 1957).

To increase coherence, we:

- Developed planning and pacing guides with and for teachers and principals based on state standards.
- Developed classroom “Look Fors” and Best Practice documents to develop shared understandings and expectations.
- Selected and provided common core curricula for literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and affective education.
- Aligned textbooks and instructional materials to state standards.
- Provided professional development for all common curricula.
- Developed benchmark assessments in mathematics, science, and language arts, and end-of-course assessments in the courses required for graduation.
- Overhauled school improvement planning and accreditation processes so that both are aligned with state and federal accountability initiatives and are more tightly focused on driving improvement in student achievement.
- Selected and supported common interventions in literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional development.
- Revised the Student Intervention Teams process to focus more on individualized data and placements.
- Developed and supported a district-wide approach to Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI), including selecting and training site leaders at all schools.
- Selected, trained, and supported progress monitoring tools for literacy.
- Created and supported principal professional development in literacy and mathematics instruction and leadership.

To raise expectations, we:

- Expanded and strengthened our early childhood and full-day kindergarten programs.
- Established Denver School-Based Health Clinics to improve the service system delivering primary health care services to school-age children and youth, increasing affordable, accessible and appropriate primary health services available in targeted schools for the promotion of physical, psychological, educational, social and personal health.
- Instituted rigorous high school graduation requirements.
- Increased enrollment in Advanced Placement classes 66% over 6 years.
- Created and supported school-based data teams focused on student performance on formative and summative standards-based assessments.
- Developed and implemented standards-based progress reports and grading standards.
- Enhanced intervention services and additional supports for struggling students, including the Ninth Grade, Sixth Grade, and ELA Academies.
- Provided parents access to real-time data about their children’s academic achievement, attendance, course schedule, and behavior incidents through the online tool Infinite Campus.

- Provided the “Encore” software system to ensure timely and appropriate IEP development for students with disabilities.
- Improved the quality of special education programming as measured by State Performance Plan indicators.
- Hired a director to develop professional development plans for Gifted and Talented teachers, including support for Advanced Learning Plans.
- Passed new Board Policy for discipline focused on the principles of restorative justice and keeping students in school.

To provide stronger support to DPS educators, we:

- Provided principals and teachers a single source of access to student performance data and teacher tools through the Administrator Portal and Teacher Portal.
- Invested heavily in training and professional networking for principals.
- Transitioned from a district-focused professional development calendar to a school-focused professional development calendar that offers more job-embedded professional development.
- Targeted recruiting and outreach to aspiring principals.
- Focused selection process on instructional leadership.
- Reorganized area offices into instructional networks and developed teams of instructional leaders to oversee our schools.
- Hired instructional facilitators to support instructional reforms at schools.
- Transitioned English Language Acquisition coursework for teachers to the University of Colorado at Denver.
- Secured Counselor Corps grants through state legislation to expand counseling services to students.

These accomplishments were achieved in large part because of the high degree of professional and community engagement. The 2005 Denver Plan itself was created by a team of more than 50 DPS educators. Work required by the plan, such as developing benchmark assessments or standards-based report cards, was accomplished by groups that included educators and community members. Thus, a deeper professional and community understanding of these important tools now exists and is part of our stronger foundation for going forward. This core principle of professional and community involvement will continue to guide our work in strengthening instructional reforms.

Moving Forward: 2010-2013 |

To fulfill the vision that all students achieve at grade level or higher and graduate from high school ready for college or career, we will pursue the following strategies.

Strategy 1: Create conditions to ensure educator effectiveness. This will require us to develop a shared definition of effective teaching; strengthen our support for teachers to develop their professional skills; and develop principals to be effective leaders.

- **Develop a shared definition of effective teaching.** Anchored in a meaningful system of observation, feedback and evaluation, we will develop in collaboration with Denver Classroom Teacher Association (DCTA) a robust, measurable, and shared definition of effective teaching. Standards of effective teaching will include student achievement data and evaluated practice.
- **Select appropriate measures for assessing teacher effectiveness.** Working with DCTA, we will develop a Teacher Performance Assessment based on multiple measures, with student achievement at the center, to allow for meaningful differentiation of performance and to drive improvement and practice. Measurements will include principal observations and evaluations as well as peer observation and student-perception data designed to provide formative feedback.
- **Restructure and refocus our professional development to ensure alignment with the Teacher Performance Assessment and the ability to meet individual teacher needs.** We will use the definition of effective teaching, as measured by the Teacher Performance Assessment, to ensure that all professional development is based on student and teacher performance data and designed to support teachers in meeting expectations. We will provide targeted assistance to our highest-needs schools and in our areas of most significant achievement gaps. The targeted assistance coaching will provide assistance on specific indicators of effective teaching and will support teachers through co-planning, co-teaching, modeling, and providing observation feedback in regularly scheduled coaching cycles and through a coaching continuum designed to build capacity at schools.
- **Refocus professional development offerings on content knowledge and the best teaching approaches to support our diverse learning population, including a focus on English language learners, and students identified as gifted and students with disabilities.** The redesigned professional development will adhere to principles of adult learning; will support observable teacher behaviors and student outcomes; will prepare teachers to implement Colorado's new post-secondary and workforce readiness standards; and will be regularly adjusted to ensure alignment to district achievement goals.

- **Transform the current teacher induction program to one based on moving all new educators to effectiveness.** The definition of effective teaching and corresponding Teacher Performance Assessment will inform a developmental continuum for novice teachers. To ensure novice teachers can meet the high expectations, new teachers will receive intensive, differentiated support starting in the summer and carried throughout the year with multiple opportunities for coaching and feedback from peers and administrators.
- **Design Teacher Leadership Academies to leverage effectiveness.** Effective teachers will apply for this prestigious program of study which will be designed to provide opportunities for collaboration and for sharing and learning teacher leadership skills while informing district reform efforts. The Academies will enable teachers to take on important leadership work within their buildings without giving up all teaching responsibilities.
- **Focus principal professional development.** We must continue to develop our principals as instructional leaders and leaders of complex organizations. We will focus professional development in critical areas, such as evaluating teachers, conducting feedback loops, coaching on Student Growth Objectives (the annual goals teachers set for student achievement in their classrooms), and recommending professional development to teachers. This will include revisions to our principal evaluation system.

Note: teacher effectiveness strategies in this section are reinforced in the Great People section

Strategy 2: Ensure all students, including English language learners, gifted students, and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous standards-based curricula and assessments.

- **Review and revise our curricula, instructional practices, and assessments for alignment with the state's forthcoming content standards.**
 - We will use the new standards to backward-map the proficiencies a successful college-and-career-ready student must demonstrate, setting key performance targets at critical junctures based on district data.
 - We will review current and prospective standards-based materials to ensure that our resources are aligned and culturally reflective of our diverse population.
 - We will infuse 21st century learning into all content areas, including problem solving and technology so that schools may select materials appropriate for their students to increase engagement and learning.
 - We will ensure alignment with standards which focus on college readiness ensuring that our students gain the depth of knowledge necessary to demonstrate mastery of essential course content standards. Additionally, students will be supported through academic interventions and extension opportunities to increase success in our most challenging college-level classes.
 - We will seek valid assessment instruments that inform the English language development of our ELLs.

- **Strengthen district progress-monitoring assessments.** Update our formative assessments and administer them with enough frequency to provide diagnostic information to guide instruction aligned to state standards. We will encourage the use of technology to allow schools to better adjust their instruction and interventions at the individual student level to ensure that students have the supports they need to meet grade-level standards.
- **With the support of a third-party research organization experienced in diagnosing and identifying best practices to support our English Language Learner (ELL) population, we will restructure our educational program for a linguistically diverse population.** After reviewing the district approach to ELL instruction, including the curriculum, resource allocation, and teacher effectiveness, we will adopt a district-wide strategic plan to improve service for students presently in ELL-identified programs, as well as students who have transitioned out of ELL programs. ELL support will focus on the needs of all language minority students and students with language development needs, not only those identified as “in-program ELLs.”
 - We will research effective practices with ELLs and create district-wide support systems to implement these practices, with particular focus on the development of academic English along with the strategic use of native language. Support for leadership actions and teaching strategies will be built into the Pedagogical Content Knowledge Intensives for teachers and principals. We will engage parents in this effort through the use of school and district forums.
 - Teacher Effectiveness will be supported and measured with professional development and assessment tools sensitive to the learning needs of ELLs as well as other diverse students.
 - Teachers who work with exited ELLs and other non-identified students with language development needs will participate in professional development geared at developing academic language for college and career readiness.
- **Identify Gifted and Talented (GT) students using instruments developed for diverse populations and develop Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) for all students identified as Gifted and Talented.** We will revise the GT identification process to ensure equity for our diverse population. ALPs will be developed for all GT students and will contain student goals and teaching plans to support rigorous individualized instruction for advanced learners. Measures of creativity will be included in identification process and ALPs.
- **Increase the availability of Early Childhood Education to high school programming that supports access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Concurrent Enrollment programs.** We will offer more students advancement opportunities aligned to rigorous, internationally recognized standards. All high schools will create site plans to support increasing student involvement in these programs, with goals for enrollment to mirror the school population. We will allocate funds to support the purchase of textbooks for the expanded enrollment in these courses, and we will pursue funding to offset any costs for these programs, such as AP tests, Accuplacer exams, or concurrent enrollment fees.

- **Provide students with pathways for exposure to college course work in an academic domain, or Career and Technology Education domain.** High schools will be encouraged to offer college classes through programs such as CU Succeeds, and the Community College of Aurora and Community College of Denver. Students will also have access to a 5th year program, through the state’s ASCENT program.

Strategy 3: Provide coordinated and comprehensive system support for the whole child.

- **Implement the Response to Instruction and Intervention (Rtl) approach to ensure that our programs and services meet individual students’ learning needs.** Rtl emphasizes the need to have highly qualified teachers with deep content knowledge and the skills to individualize their instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. We will use Rtl as an aligning framework to ensure that all students have access to high-quality teaching; to monitor their progress and intervene when the rate of progress is too slow; to serve students in smaller and more intensive settings with additional support staff as their needs become more intensive and our responses more specialized; and to refer students to the Student Intervention Team. This team will consider the cultural, linguistic, academic, and behavioral needs of the referred student. Next, the team will decide what instructional interventions will meet the needs, monitor student progress, and readjust instruction based on data. Finally, for the few students who are unable to succeed without specialized instruction because of an educational disability, a referral for a special education eligibility determination may be made. The Teacher and Administrator portals will support educators as they monitor individual student progress.
- **Expand and strengthen our early childhood and full-day kindergarten programs.** Special attention will be given to providing a head-start to students so that we can provide an aligned educational program from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary success. Access to quality early childhood education (ECE) lays the foundation for future school success and helps to level the playing field for the 9,000 children who now benefit from full-day ECE and kindergarten. We will increase opportunity for students with disabilities to be included in preschool programs with their non-disabled peers. Additionally, we will increase inclusive opportunities during the course of the school day for students with disabilities in center-based kindergarten programs to participate with their non-disabled peers.
- **Implement the recently adopted discipline policy throughout the district to maximize student time in class.** We will utilize developmentally appropriate disciplinary techniques that emphasize a restorative rather than a punitive approach. We will also aim to keep students in class and learning, limiting the amount of time spent outside of class for disciplinary reasons.
- **Monitor early warning signs to ensure all students are on track to graduate.** We will strengthen our early warning system that monitors attendance, grades, and behavior. The

warning system will also give schools the information they need to intervene so that students stay in school and have access to credit recovery so that they are on track to graduate.^{10,11}

- **Support students identified as at-risk of dropping out of school.** We will replicate effective strategies across the district with particular emphasis on attendance and credit recovery. These strategies will include proactive support systems, such as the Attendance Tool Kit to monitor and intervene when absences are a concern and a district-wide software system with courses for credit recovery to streamline efforts and economize expenses. Furthermore, teachers and support personnel will provide credit recovery services to students who are not on track to graduate. We will also use Positive Behavior Support programs, which establish school-wide expectations for positive student behavior. We will provide resources for a uniform set of interventions available to all schools to address our students' diverse social-emotional challenges, including functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans as well as Restorative Justice and Truancy Mediation projects.¹²

- **Establish schools and programs focused on students who have not experienced success in traditional high school settings.** These programs will be modeled after local and national sites of excellence. Smaller alternative school settings as well as schools using competency-based courses, which award credit from standards-based performance rather than through traditional semester and year-long courses, will support alternative education students, providing multiple pathways to graduation. We will use reengagement centers, career academies, competency-based diplomas, online course work, and credit recovery in this plan, including:
 1. Creating 4-6 schools targeted at students ages 15-21 who are currently disengaged from traditional schools. Our first multiple pathways center – Summit Academy – will open for the 2010-11 school year. It will offer a new approach to non-traditional education, combining high academic expectations with a strong foundation of support. Its educational approach is customized to the student's needs and goals, with accelerated learning options such as Diploma Plus, Career and Technical Education, Credit Recovery and Advanced Placement courses. And at every step of the way, students will be supported with physical and mental wellness services, small learning communities and flexible scheduling options.
 2. Partnering with providers such as Aims Community College to offer a competency-based diploma for students who are over age and under credit; and
 3. Creating a GED Plus program that allows students who are focused on acquiring a GED to go beyond to college and career programs.

¹⁰ Pamela Buckley and Lana Muraskin, "Graduates of Denver Public Schools: College Access and Success," The Piton Foundation and Denver Scholarship Foundation. April 2009.

¹¹ Martha Abele Mac Iver, Robert Balfanz, and Vaughan Byrnes, "Advancing the 'Colorado Graduates' Agenda: Understanding the Dropout Problem and Mobilizing to Meet the Graduation Challenge," The Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University. June 2009.

¹² Sandomierski, T., Kincaid, D., & Algozzine, B., Is School-wide Positive Behavior Support An Evidenced-Based Practice? OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. March 2009.

- **Coordinate comprehensive support to the whole child.** We will work with community partners to provide support to students and families.
- **Complete and adopt the DPS Health Agenda 2015.** We will implement a cohesive and prioritized set of overall health objectives intended to improve student health and readiness to learn. The health agenda will address eight components of coordinated school health: nutrition, physical activity, direct health services, mental health services, health promotion to staff, safe and healthy school environment, family and community involvement in healthy activities, and health education.^{13,14}

Strategy 4: Implement a continuous improvement process.

- **Utilize a continuous improvement approach to create the conditions for large-scale improvement in student achievement across all schools.** The Instructional Rounds process is “an explicit practice that is designed to bring discussions of instruction directly into the process of school improvement.”¹⁵ Instructional Rounds teams will:
 - **Describe** what they observe in class.
 - **Analyze** patterns that emerge.
 - **Predict** the kind of learning they might expect from the teaching they observed.
 - **Recommend** the next level of work that could help the school better achieve their desired goal.
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of district education programs, including curricula, professional development, and school design structures.** The evaluation process will include an assessment of the planning, implementation and sustainability of the initiative and, most importantly, the effect of the initiative on driving student achievement. The results of the evaluations will inform future decision making.
- **Use student achievement data aligned to grade level, standards-based curriculum from the Teacher Portal and Administrator Portal to inform and adjust instructional practice.** Teachers will use the *Teacher Portal* and principals will use the *Administrator Portal*, one-stop software systems that provide access to all student data, including demographic and assessment data, as well as standards-aligned curriculum and resources for all core content classes. The Teacher Portal will eliminate the need to consult disparate systems for data and teaching tools, reducing the time needed to access data and reporting which will in turn, provide teachers the information they need and the time to plan for instruction based on these reports of student progress.

¹³ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Division of Adolescent & School Health, “Healthy Kids Learn Better: A Coordinated School Health Approach- Local Implementation Tool Kit.”

¹⁴ Association of State & Territorial Health Officials and the Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, “Making the Connection: Health and Student Achievement,” presentation. 2002.

¹⁵ City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel

- **Turnaround Schools.** Chronically low-performing schools require immediate and dramatic interventions to improve teaching and learning. We will identify low-performing schools and diagnose the gaps in the delivery of quality educational services. Ensuring this quality requires targeted and differentiated interventions converging in sustainable transformation. We will utilize the School Performance Framework to identify our lowest-performing schools in need of turnaround strategies. For each school we will apply a thorough qualitative diagnostic process to include the analysis of data, staff capacity, resource alignment, and community needs. Working with the school’s community, we will then target the necessary interventions for each school based on which approach will best meet the needs of that community’s students. Turnaround strategies may include enhancing a current program, replacing the school leaders and/or a significant portion of the staff, or replacing an existing school with a new school.

- **Create new schools to increase student options.** It is essential that we both improve our existing schools where the vast majority of our students are enrolled and welcome promising new schools. New schools, district-run or charter, must meet our criteria of having rigorous academic programs with successful track records, strong leaders, and demonstrated community support. We will continue to intensify our district leadership training program for aspiring new school leaders and strengthen the ability of our Office of School Reform and Innovation to facilitate the opening of new schools and the maintenance of high levels of academic quality and organizational stability at our charter schools.
 - We will ensure that all of our schools – whether district-run, charter, contract, or innovation -- have a level playing field of opportunity, of access and responsibility, and of accountability.
 - **Opportunity:** all our schools should have access to district facilities (including on a co-located basis in our larger buildings) and equitable per-student funding.
 - **Access and Responsibility:** all our schools must offer equitable access to all our students, regardless of socio-economic, disability, or language status; all our schools must contribute financially on the same basis for use of district facilities and for district obligations such as our pension obligations and district-wide special education funding needs.
 - **Accountability:** all new schools are subject to the same accountability framework (the School Performance Framework), including the potential for school closure in the event of a failure to demonstrate growth in student achievement.

Collectively, we believe these strategies will rapidly improve and strengthen DPS’ instructional core which, in turn, will yield significant and rapid improvements in student achievement.



We must retain and recruit the most effective teachers and principals, and we must develop and support them so they are able to implement research-based best practice in every classroom and school.

-- Denver Public Schools, Core Beliefs and Commitments

Talented and committed people are our most important resource in driving improved outcomes for students. As referenced in the Instructional Core section of this plan, we know that the quality of our educators is by far the single most important factor in driving student achievement and closing the achievement gap.¹⁶ We also recognize that changing the learning and life outcomes for children is challenging work that demands both tremendous skill and personal commitment. To significantly improve outcomes for students, we must attract teachers with the drive and potential to succeed; expand strategies for recruiting high-quality teacher and principal candidates who more closely reflect the diversity of DPS' student population; support teachers to develop and improve; and bolster them with effective teams of fellow teachers, school leaders, and staff who share a commitment to and accountability for student results.

Through the US Department of Education's *Race to the Top* and other stimulus funding, President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have challenged states and districts to better align laws, policies, and practices to support the essential role effective teaching. Over the past decade, we have worked collaboratively with the Denver Classroom Teachers' Association (DCTA) to develop innovative approaches to transforming teaching within DPS, including the implementation of one of the first compensation systems in the nation to recognize and reward teachers for their impact on students; the approval of requests from school faculties for more flexibility over the use of staff, budget, and time to drive improved student performance; and new staffing rules to allow for more open and competitive teacher staffing.

DPS is one of six districts nationally that has been recognized for its human resources reform by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and subsequently received a \$10 million deep-dive or accelerator funding to support effective teaching. DPS and DCTA representatives have met at length in a joint Professional Practices Work Group to identify the ways in which our systems, policies, and practices for retaining, developing, recognizing, advancing, and rewarding talented educators must be fundamentally realigned to support effective teaching.

Specifically, the DPS-DCTA Professional Practices Work Group highlighted the importance of the following work, which is supported by strategies in the Instructional Core section of this plan:

- **A multiple-measure teacher evaluation and feedback system that meaningfully differentiates the performance of teachers and provides targeted and specific feedback aligned to the shared definition of effective teaching.** Currently our teachers are evaluated

¹⁶ Kati Haycock, *Good Teaching Matters – How Well Qualified Teachers Can Close the Gap*, Education Trust. 1998.

under a binary satisfactory/unsatisfactory rating system. Over 98% of our teachers receive a “satisfactory” rating, with little to no recognition or reward for those teachers demonstrating the most significant outcomes with students.

- **A standard that makes the attainment of non-probationary status a meaningful indication of effectiveness that is tied to our goals for student achievement.** The conferral of non-probationary status marks a significant change in status in a teacher’s career. Under current state law, however, non-probationary status (i.e. tenure) is granted automatically if a teacher is renewed after three years of service, with no linkage to actual effectiveness. As a consequence, the district is required to make a binary decision when a teacher is often no more than 25 years old: to give her effectively a lifetime right of employment or forbid her from ever teaching in the district again. And few teachers perceive the conferral of tenure as a meaningful indication of effectiveness.
- **Frequent and meaningful feedback, coaching and differentiated development opportunities for all teachers.** Under the current satisfactory/unsatisfactory evaluation system, over 60% of our teachers report receiving no identified areas for growth or improvement on their formal evaluation, and professional development is rarely linked to performance standards or individual needs. To improve their practice, teachers must receive regular feedback aligned to expectations in the definition of effective teaching and development that targets identified, individual needs, that reflects research-based best practices and is tied to professional standards in order to grow and develop.
- **Intensive support and development for our new teachers.** Although it is widely recognized that new teachers face particular challenges in their first years in the classroom, new teachers currently do not receive enough support or development. As noted in the Instructional Core section, new-teacher induction must be transformed from an exercise in compliance with minimum state statutory requirements to a meaningful process that helps teachers continuously develop one of society’s most difficult and challenging set of professional skills.
- **Mechanisms for retaining, rewarding and leveraging experienced educators to increase their impact on students.** Our most effective experienced teachers are among our most valuable resources. However, our current compensation system lacks adequate differentiation to reward these teachers for their contributions and provide them with the incentives to remain in the classroom. Furthermore, we do not offer adequate incentives to attract these teachers to the most difficult assignments and our most demanding schools and to reward them for their positive impact on students. Our compensation systems must provide meaningful rewards for effective teachers throughout their careers and increase incentives for teachers who take on the most challenging assignments.

Systems of mutual consent hiring, particularly in our highest-needs schools. At a time when we have over 500 openings for new teachers a year, we continue to forcibly place over 100 non-probationary teachers a year into schools without the consent of the schools’ leadership teams or the

affected teachers. This process has disproportionately affected our highest-needs, highest-poverty schools, which have received the highest numbers of forced placements each year. We will work with the DCTA and state lawmakers to replace forced placement with mutual consent hiring that allows principals and their personnel committees to hire those teachers they believe to be most likely to drive improved outcomes for students, particularly in our highest-poverty and lowest-performing schools. Starting in the 2010-11 school year we will no longer allow this practice to continue to disproportionately impact our highest-poverty schools.

We must be willing to work collaboratively with DCTA to resolve these fundamental issues in order to increase teacher effectiveness and student success. Some of these issues will require changes to our collective bargaining agreement and/or state statutes. To accomplish these changes, we must all (district, union and political leaders) be committed to re-aligning our systems of recruitment, evaluation, development, advancement, and rewards around a common set of standards for effective teaching and leadership and building collaborative school cultures in which teachers, principals, and staff share responsibility and accountability for student success.

Vision |

Our vision is to assemble highly effective teams of teachers, principals, and staff in every school and to build a culture in which every DPS employee feels responsible for and is accountable for improved student results. To achieve this vision, we will:

Strategy 1 |

Recruit the best teachers and principals for our schools. To build a highly effective teaching faculty and principal corps, DPS must recruit a diverse and talented group of individuals to become teachers and principals by ensuring that our sources for aspiring teachers and principals are producing individuals who more closely reflect the diversity of DPS' student population and who have the skills and mindset necessary to be successful at DPS and that DPS is a destination that the most promising teachers and principals seek as a place to perfect their craft.

Strategy 2 |

Retain and empower effective educators. To retain effective teachers, DPS will transform teaching and school leadership from an isolated experience to a collaborative profession with meaningful opportunities for professional growth and advancement. We will better identify our most highly effective educators to target them for additional responsibilities in the classroom and to lead other teachers in order to expand their impact on students. Tenure and satisfactory evaluation will represent meaningful indications of performance that are aligned with our goals for student college readiness.

Strategy 3 |

Create meaningful systems of recognition and rewards for driving student achievement. DPS will continue to work with the DCTA to create competitive compensation and incentive structures to support our ability to retain and reward teachers for their outstanding performance in driving student achievement and recruit new teachers with the confidence to succeed. DPS will also continue to advance performance-based pay systems for principals, department leaders and others to reward outstanding contributions to district goals.

Strategy 4 |

Recruit, retain, and reward outstanding support staff committed to supporting the work of teachers and principals in schools. Teachers and principals in schools will be supported by a network of highly skilled staff at the school and support departments who share responsibility and accountability for achieving the district's goals for student achievement. We will grow a culture of outstanding customer service and establish a clear line-of-sight between the work of each employee and the district's student achievement goals.

Strategy 5 |

Replace low-performing employees who, despite support, fail to meet expectations. Supervisors and management will use performance management systems, including the teacher assessment, the principal evaluation process, and the Employee Performance Management Program, to clearly communicate performance expectations and reinforce these expectations through regular evaluation and consistent coaching and feedback. Principals, teachers, and staff who fail to meet expectations for performance will be given the opportunity and support to succeed. However, there must also be fair and efficient processes for replacing employees, who despite this support, fail to meet expectations.

Progress to Date |

Over the past four years, we have made significant progress in laying the foundation for this work.

To increase our ability to recruit the best teachers and principals, we:

- Worked with DCTA to implement changes to our budget and staffing cycles beginning in 2009 that allow DPS to begin hiring external teacher candidates over two months earlier than in prior years.
- Developed partnerships with alternative providers, such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, to provide additional sources of new teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff subject areas.
- Created our own programs to prepare teachers and principals:
 - Established the Denver Teacher Residency (DTR), with the assistance of a \$3 million gift from the Janus Capital Foundation, to support up to 100 aspiring teachers a year through a medical-residency model.
 - Established the Ritchie Program for Aspiring Principals in 2003 and a Training Program for Aspiring Principals of New Schools in 2009 to increase the number of high-quality principal candidates.
 - Secured a waiver from state statute to allow DPS to approve its own programs to prepare individuals to teach in DPS and license teachers from these alternative teacher preparation routes based on student outcomes.
- Raised average starting teacher salaries over 30% from \$33,301 in 2004-05 to \$43,200 in 2008-09, the highest in the metro Denver area.
- Successfully drafted and negotiated legislation merging the DPS Retirement System into the state Public Employees Retirement Association (Colorado PERA), providing for the full portability of pension benefits between Denver and the rest of Colorado.

- Created a dedicated Department of Human Resource recruiting function to support the recruitment of high-quality teachers and principals.
- Hired a Director of Diversity Initiatives to lead the development and implementation of strategies for the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers and administrators.
- Partnered with The New Teacher Project in a Model Staffing Initiative to build the knowledge and skills of principals, school personnel committees, and HR partners to lead effective site-based teacher recruitment, staffing and induction. (Launched with the 2009-2010 hiring cycle).
- Implemented new recruitment and retention strategies to reduce substitute vacancies by more than half in just two years.

To expand our ability to empower and retain the most highly effective educators, we:

- Created the Janus Educational Alliance to improve the induction, mentoring, and professional development of teachers.
- Initiated daily meetings throughout the school year between the Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer and the faculty of each school in the district, fostering closer communication between district leaders and teachers.
- Developed a student growth model and based longitudinal measures of performance on state assessments to identify teachers having the most significant impact on students.
- Approved collective requests by school principals and teachers for waivers from district policies, the DPS/DCTA collective bargaining agreement, and state statutes to provide more flexibility over decisions regarding how to use their staff, allocate their budget, and schedule the school day/year to better drive student achievement.
- Initiated teacher evaluations of principals, to inform principal decision-making and principal evaluation and target principal professional development and growth opportunities.
- Established a team of School Partners in Human Resources to serve as a primary point of contact for principals and provide guidance and support to increase the management effectiveness of principals.

To recognize and reward those educators most successful in driving improved student outcomes, we:

- In partnership with the DCTA, initiated ProComp, a pioneering and nationally recognized performance compensation system for teachers designed to link compensation to improved academic outcomes for students and provide incentives for serving in our highest poverty schools.
- Worked with DCTA to make changes to ProComp in 2008 to increase performance-based pay in ProComp by more than ten times and more than double incentives for teaching in high-poverty schools and difficult to staff positions, such as special education or high school math.
- Worked with DCTA to provide an average increase in teacher salaries of ProComp teachers of over 15% in 2008-09, the largest one-year raise in the history of the state.
- Over the course of four years, increased average teacher salaries by 35.8% compared to an 8% increase in the consumer price index during the same period.
- Secured a \$25 million federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant to fund performance-based pay for principals based on leading high poverty schools and driving student growth.

- Aligned ProComp and the principal incentive pay program with the School Performance Framework to ensure that all teachers and administrators within a school building are working toward a common set of goals for student growth.

To recruit, reward, and retain outstanding support staff, we:

- Worked with classified unions to provide retirement benefits to hourly staff through the PERA merger.
- Established a set of monthly performance metrics to measure the effectiveness of each of our central office departments.
- Instituted yearly surveys to allow principals to assess the performance of central office support functions.
- Implemented systems to ensure accountability of principals for effectively evaluating teacher performance. Working with DCTA, we limited the amount of annual, one-year, teacher assignments, eliminated administrative transfers at the principal level and more actively managed the Reduction in Building (RIB) process.
- Established a dedicated labor relations and operational support team within Human Resources to lead relationships with our classified unions and provide targeted support to operational managers.
- Begun implementation of an Employee Performance Management goal setting and performance appraisal process for all salaried central office staff.
- Initiated training for employees and managers on customer service and employee performance management.

To expand our ability to replace low-performing employees, who, despite support, fail to meet expectations, we:

- Replaced principals who failed to drive sufficient improvement in student growth in their schools.
- Worked with DCTA to eliminate loopholes in the collective bargaining agreement that allowed teachers to avoid the remediation process and potential dismissal by declaring an “intent to vacate” their current assignment and requesting placement at another school.
- Participated with DCTA in a national study by The New Teacher Project analyzing obstacles to effective evaluation remediation and dismissal of low-performing teachers. The findings have and will inform our systems for evaluating teachers and for holding principals accountable for evaluating teachers. The report is available at <http://widgeteffect.org/>.
- Educated principals on the importance of the decision of granting teachers non-probationary status and began to create shared responsibility among principals for addressing performance issues by eliminating loopholes by which principals could pass poorly performing teachers to other schools.
- Provided training and expanded support to principals on the remediation and dismissal processes.
- Implemented the Employee Performance Management Program (EPMP) to ensure consistent, performance-based evaluation practice for all employees and targeted support and performance improvement planning for under-performing employees.

Moving Forward: 2010-2013 |

To build on this foundation and transform the district's practices for recruiting, hiring, retaining, supporting, and rewarding DPS' great people, we will pursue the following strategies.

Strategy 1: Recruit the best new teachers and principals.

- **Improve communications and marketing materials to reposition DPS internally and externally as an employer-of-choice.** We will launch more proactive recruiting campaigns, targeting talented student teachers and professionals.
 - Launch “Teach in Denver,” a rebranding of the DPS teaching career, to generate interest in teaching in DPS.
 - Create and communicate a compelling value proposition for new employees, including the competitive compensation potential for high-performing teachers through ProComp.
 - Implement a new recruiting application to support proactive recruitment and cultivation of high quality diverse teacher and principal candidates.
- **Evaluate impact of teacher recruitment channels on student achievement outcomes to ensure that DPS is hiring teachers from those teacher-preparation routes shown to produce the most effective teachers.** We will analyze where we find our most effective teachers, and work to understand the elements of those programs that yield success. Knowing these “key success factors” will help us improve our in-house professional development, novice teacher training, and Denver Teacher Residency training and allow us to communicate our expectations clearly to other recruitment channels.
 - Complete analysis (conducted in partnership with local universities, Teach For America, the New Teacher Project, and the Denver Teacher Residency) of student performance and teacher evaluation data to assess the effectiveness of our sources of aspiring teachers and use that to communicate with major providers of teacher candidates as to how they can better prepare teachers to meet the needs of DPS students.
 - Based on this data, work collaboratively with our university and alternate route teacher preparation programs to improve their programs.
 - Develop a strategy to identify and actively recruit high-potential student teacher candidates.
- **Improve capacity of principals to identify and select high-potential new teacher candidates.** Over the last two years, we have made significant effort to shift decisions regarding staffing to the school level, where those decisions are best made. Over the next three years, we will ensure our principals and their personnel teams have the skills necessary to recruit and select those teachers most likely to drive improved outcomes with students.
 - Expand training and support provided to principals on strategic teacher recruitment, selection, and induction.

- Work with the DCTA, state policymakers and others to increase teacher and principal satisfaction and improve student achievement outcomes by replacing forced teacher placement with a system of mutual consent hiring.
 - The principle of mutual consent in hiring is fundamental in schools because successful schools are so mission-driven. Having all professionals in a school fully committed to the school's shared culture, mission and values is critical to the school's cohesion, growth and success. To forcibly place teachers who by definition do not want to be at a particular school or are not being asked to teach there undermines the formation and development of these successful shared cultures.
- **Expand strategies for recruiting and retaining high-quality teacher and principal candidates who more closely reflect the diversity of DPS' student population.** We recognize the importance of diversity in our teacher population and principals in building dynamic and inclusive school cultures to serve our students. Accordingly, we will:
 - Aggressively recruit talented teachers and principals who reflect our student population;
 - Expand outreach to high-potential teacher and administrator candidates of color;
 - Increase the number of high-potential teachers of color prepared for teaching in DPS through the Denver Teacher Residency (DTR) and other teacher-preparation channels; and
 - Implement targeted strategies, including leadership development and mentoring, to increase the retention of high-performing teachers and principals of color.
- **Provide increased incentives for effective teachers to serve in the highest-needs schools.** To close the achievement gap, we must have our most effective teachers working with our highest-needs students. We will work with the DCTA to provide increased incentives under ProComp for the most effective teachers to serve in highest-poverty schools; create options for teams of effective teachers to serve in high-poverty schools without losing their right to return to their previous positions; and transform our highest-needs schools into models of effective teaching, by providing expanded opportunities for coaching, development, and growth.
- **Implement an improved principal selection process to incorporate research-based indicators of leadership potential to drive improved student outcomes.** To ensure that we are selecting the highest quality new principals for our schools, we will develop a new principal selection model. This model will result in the identification of those candidates that have the leadership qualities shown to be most effective in leading schools to improved student outcomes.

Strategy 2: Retain and empower our most highly effective educators.

- **Collaborate with the DCTA to create a new Teacher Performance Assessment system that supports the district's definition of effective teaching with student achievement at the center. This system will meaningfully differentiate the performance of teachers including recognizing**

excellence and identifying areas for improvement and growth. This is in direct support of the Instructional Core strategies around teacher effectiveness.

- Implement a talent management software solution to effectively track and retrieve data regarding effectiveness of individual teachers, including teacher performance assessment data, classroom level achievement data, and history of professional development.
 - Create meaningful peer-review opportunities, whereby expert, experienced teachers, are informing the teacher performance assessment and providing feedback to teachers on performance.
 - Collaborate with DCTA to improve Student Growth Objectives and Professional Development Units to align with the Teacher Performance Assessment system.
 - Revise principal evaluation process to set expectations and create accountability for providing effective feedback through the teacher evaluation process.
 - Align principal evaluation system to a principal's ability to effectively drive student achievement and identify highly effective teachers and target them for development and advancement.
- **Establish non-probationary status as a meaningful indication of effectiveness by setting a performance-based bar for non-probationary status, aligned with goals for student college readiness.**
 - Seek changes to state law that provide for the granting of tenure based on demonstrated effectiveness, not just time in position.
 - Develop clearly defined benchmarks, standards, and methodology for granting tenure based on student achievement outcomes and research-based indicators of teacher effectiveness.
 - Provide for more flexibility on the time provided to teachers to meet these requirements, by seeking changes to state statute to eliminate the provision that the decision concerning non-probationary status be made automatically after three years.
 - Work with DCTA to provide increased compensation and opportunities for advancement for those who meet the bar for non-probationary status.
- **Provide expanded opportunities for highly effective teachers to capture and disseminate effective teaching practices, assume expanded leadership roles, and increase their impact on students.**
 - Create an opportunity for teachers to share best practices in instruction through participation in prestigious Teacher Leadership Academies that will provide opportunities for collaboration and for sharing and learning teacher-leadership skills, while informing district reform efforts.
 - Map career opportunities and explore alternative school designs to allow highly effective educators to assume expanded roles leading other teachers or expanding their impact in the classroom by increasing the number of students they serve, with additional support.
- **Improve the capacity of principals and leadership teams to establish school cultures of respect and shared responsibility and accountability for student outcomes.**

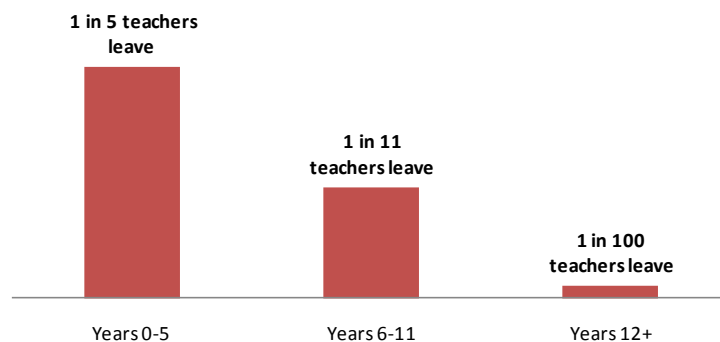
- Continue to develop the capacity of principals as instructional leaders of their schools through differentiated training, development and support.
- Continue to expand the autonomy of principals and teachers to make decisions as to how to staff their school, use their budget, and structure the school day/year to improve student achievement outcomes.
- Provide a robust system of management training and support for school leaders, including effective staffing, strategic resource planning, team-building and performance management to increase their effectiveness in establishing high-performing teams of educators.
- Revise principal evaluation to incorporate measures of effectiveness in establishing school cultures of shared responsibility and accountability and ensure alignment with district and school goals for student achievement and research-based indicators for effective school leadership.
- Implement training and support strategies to promote the development of inclusive and culturally responsive school communities that embrace the diversity of our students and employees.

Strategy 3: Recognize and reward teachers and principals for driving student achievement.

- **Work with DCTA to continue to build upon and improve ProComp to substantially increase the earning potential for those teachers that drive the most significant growth in student achievement.**
- **Negotiate changes to ProComp to significantly increase the incentives for highly effective teachers to serve in high-poverty schools.**
- **Increase the retention of highly effective early and mid-career teachers.** Currently, an early or mid-career teacher is over ten times as likely to leave the district as a late career teacher.

Chart 1 |

Odds that a teacher will leave the district

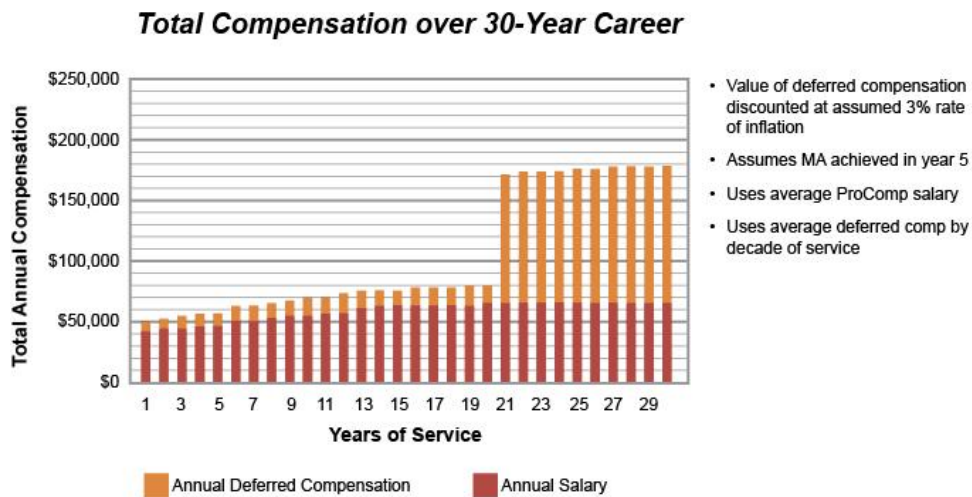


*Data is from the 2005-07 contract years and excludes retirements and dismissals for performance

Our current compensation structure is not well aligned to address this high turnover of early and mid-career teachers. Under our present compensation structure, a teacher receives over 55% of her total career compensation in real dollars in the last decade of her career, and a teacher in her 25th year will earn over three times the total annual compensation (salary plus pension benefits) of a teacher in her 5th year.

Chart 2 below captures a typical teacher’s total annual compensation in real, inflation-adjusted dollars over a thirty-year career.

Chart 2 |



Hence, while the pension system provides extraordinarily powerful retention incentives to teachers later in their career, we must improve the earning potential for effective teachers earlier in their career and provide for a more equitable distribution of compensation throughout a teacher’s career to increase our retention of effective early and mid-career teachers.

- Collaborate with DCTA to develop means of measuring and rewarding effective performance of teams within schools in driving improved student outcomes.
- Create annual “Total Rewards” statements to clearly communicate the value of total compensation and benefits earned, including the significant value of retirement benefits, for all employees.

- Revise communications to clearly convey the total value of incentive pay to current and potential teacher and principal candidates, as well as the outcomes for which employees will be rewarded.
- Use advantages created by PERA merger to negotiate more attractive and affordable health care and other benefit options for all employees.

Strategy 4: Recruit, retain, and reward outstanding central office and support staff.

- **Expand ability to recruit high-potential support staff in areas of high turnover**, including hourly custodians, bus drivers, and food service staff, by expanding outreach, eliminating delays in posting positions to external applicants, and allowing employees to increase their earning potential by serving in multiple roles within the organization.
- **Use the Employee Performance Management Program (EPMP) to align the work of central office employees with district student achievement goals** and build a culture of service to schools built around a set of common core expectations for all central office staff our five common expectations are: *Putting Students First, Achieving Results, Collaborating, Delivering Excellent Service, and Making Change Happen.*
- Expand Employee Performance Management Program goal setting and performance evaluation process to include all non-exempt central office staff.
- **Work with unions to eliminate “bumping”** and other practices that base decisions regarding employee displacements and layoffs on factors other than demonstrated effectiveness.
- **Establish a system of competitive and differentiated pay to reward central office staff who contribute most significantly to the achievement of district goals.**
- **Expand central office leadership development opportunities and training to increase the effectiveness of managers and establish a strong customer service culture.**

Strategy 5: Replace low-performing employees who, despite support, fail to meet expectations.

- **Establish alignment of evaluation, support, and dismissal around common set of research-based standards** of effective teaching articulated in the Teacher Performance Assessment.
- **Collaborate with DCTA to implement changes to create fair and efficient processes for replacing low performing teachers who, despite support, fail to meet expectations.** Use performance data to drive decisions as to which administrators and central office staff should be retained or replaced.

The work outlined in this section embraces our district's core belief about the importance of teaching. It also acknowledges that we must make significant changes in order to generate dramatically improved student results. Taken together, we believe these strategies will change the learning and life outcomes for children.



DEEPENING ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY |

We believe that parents and the community are essential partners in the effort to improve student achievement and that it is our responsibility to engage them in that process.

We must develop new and more effective ways to engage our families, members of the broader Denver community, and partners in improving the conditions for learning so that all students may achieve.

- Denver Public Schools, Core Beliefs and Commitments

The previous sections of this plan look within the district for areas of change and next steps. This section looks outside the district, to our families, community, and network of partners. Denver Public Schools' leadership affirms the critical importance of family and community involvement in the district's core beliefs and commitments. Families, as well as the larger Denver community, play a critical role in helping our students achieve at dramatically higher levels and graduate from high school ready for college or career.

Vision |

We envision a community in which every Denver parent, resident, taxpayer, and organization feels ownership of Denver Public Schools. "Ownership" means that families, non-profits, faith communities, foundations, businesses, and governments are all motivated to take action to support DPS' student achievement goals. In turn, DPS is responsible for ensuring there are clear and substantive ways for all of these partners to support our students.

We believe that strengthening the skills of parents to help children and schools in specific ways will directly contribute to student learning. We know how important a role parents play in their children's success in our schools. We are also committed to strengthening our city-wide, collective understanding of DPS, thus contributing to a stronger sense of ownership. Helping parents help their children and deepening community-wide ownership will help all of us to hold our students to higher standards. The complementary efforts of connecting families to schools and connecting the community at-large with our reform strategy will provide essential support to DPS' core mission: ensuring our students succeed in school and graduate from DPS ready for college or career.

With this in mind, our three-year strategy for deepening families' connections to schools and broadening community engagement is to:

Strategy 1 |

Strengthen parent and family engagement classroom by classroom, school by school.

Strategy 2 |

Engage and inform DPS students, families and the community about DPS strategies and initiatives.

Strategy 3 |

Foster dialogue and input from stakeholders to promote civic engagement and ownership of public schools.

Strategy 4 |

Partner with non-profits, faith communities, philanthropic groups, and others to support Denver's students with streamlined services that are focused on improving student achievement and ensuring that they graduate from high school ready for college or career.

Strategy 5 |

Leverage Federal, State and Local resources for the benefit of student achievement.

Progress to Date |

When DPS launched the 2005 Denver Plan, we began redefining how we engage families and the broader Denver community.

To strengthen parent and family engagement in schools and classrooms, we:

- Established an Office of Parent Engagement and an Office of Community Engagement to ensure, for the first time, there was specific responsibility for outreach to families and the community.
- Developed more focused and strategic parent education and outreach, including workshops to recruit and train parents to participate on CSCs, increase parent awareness and use of Infinite Campus, DPS' online resource for parents to track their children's grades, attendance, behavior, and course schedules. We also expanded outreach to parents about school choice, and parent information sessions for how to interpret standards-based progress report cards.

In partnership with non-profits, faith communities, philanthropic groups, businesses, and others, we:

- Called on civic leaders to assist with the district's efforts. Known as "A+ Denver," this 100-member citizens' group helps DPS work toward solutions on a range of challenging issues, including financial stability, school closures, pension reform, and overall district accountability. A+ Denver also provided feedback to the district on the implementation of the 2005 Denver Plan. Many of their recommendations are addressed throughout this plan.
- Developed the 2008 bond program package through a community process. At \$454 million, it was the largest school bond in Colorado's history and was approved by Denver voters by a 2-1 margin.
- Worked closely with the DPS Foundation (DPSF), whose mission is to drive community investment in our schools. DPSF was instrumental in raising funds to support teachers and classrooms, principal leadership and after-school and summer programs.
- Maintained and fostered deep communication with parent-based, community advocacy groups.

- Established Future Centers in every high school in conjunction with the Denver Scholarship Foundation to provide postsecondary counseling to Denver’s high school students and assist all seniors in applying to college, and for federal and state financial aid programs, and scholarships.
- Coordinated a network of community partners to provide before- and after-school programs, summer camps, and academic supports for at-risk youth.
- Established several dozen school-business partnerships through the School Partners program with funding from Qwest Communication and the DPS Foundation.

To leverage partnerships with the City and County of Denver – reducing duplication and improving the quality of services we:

- Established the City – DPS Collaborative to provide Resource Advocates (RAs) in eight schools. RAs coordinate and link students and their families to services such as after-school programs, health services, mental health services, career exploration, and basic needs.
- Helped establish the Youth Mentoring Collaborative, including over 20 groups. The Collaborative is focused on delivering high-quality services to students in a coordinated and strategic way by successfully matching services and supports to students.
- Supported Family-to-Family Centers, which are funded by the Department of Human Services. DPS Parent Liaisons and City Collaborative Resource Advocates work closely with Family-to-Family Centers to provide services to families and students.
- Mobilized AmeriCorps members to identify and work with students with habitual attendance problems, increase the number of parents who volunteer in the classroom and participate in school activities, launch a comprehensive outreach and school enrollment informational campaign; and reach out to young people who have dropped out.

To engage and inform students, families, and the community about DPS strategies and initiatives we:

- Launched the district’s first “State of the Schools” address to parents in September and hosted a series of regional meetings in the fall and school-based meetings in the winter to discuss the district’s improvement strategies.
- Hosted a DPS middle and high school Expo and two Early Education information sessions to give parents the opportunity to learn about our enrollment and School of Choice processes and understand their elementary, middle and high school options including traditional, magnet and charter schools. Additionally, the district organized a Higher Education Expo for all 9th and 10th grade students and their parents / guardians to tour a college campus, meet representatives from colleges around the metro area and learn about what college is really like.
- Published an Enrollment Guide, distributing 17,000 copies, that features every traditional, magnet and charter school to help students and parents learn about enrollment, special programs and support services.
- Created MyDPS, an email on key district initiatives from Superintendent Tom Boasberg to more than 6,000 parents and community members on key district initiatives.

- Launched a new DPS Facebook fan page and Twitter page to provide avenues to reach a broader network of individuals. Social networking via daily updates offers us a broader reach to people who we may not have reached via other means.
- The DPS homepage has been revamped to provide a more user-friendly space for our community to visit and to share the exciting and important initiatives and events happening within the district and in our schools. It now has tools that allow for featured video and events, as well as a “Spotlight” section to highlight our teachers and students. Each week a different student or staff member is featured.
- Executed linguistically and culturally effective outreach strategies to build stronger links with non-English speaking parents and families including: the launch of a Spanish talk show (EDUCA) on commercial radio in 2009; a presence at community events like Cinco de Mayo, and Fiestas Patrias; and the hosting of an education fair in Spanish.

Moving Forward: 2010-2013 |

We have built a stronger network of families, non-profits, philanthropists, and others who are now actively rooting for Denver Public Schools. The sense of possibility among our city’s leaders is palpable. But it is also true that we must commit to connecting with families, neighborhoods, students, and the people who are in and out of DPS schools every day. It is us working together that will raise expectations for our students and change outcomes for our students. To fulfill our goals, we will pursue the following strategies.

Strategy 1: Strengthen parent and family engagement classroom by classroom, school by school.

- **Expand training and volunteer opportunities in schools and classrooms.** DPS will hold Parent Tutor Training Institutes to train parents and other care-givers on how to be tutors. We will also leverage opportunities with the AmeriCorps program to engage parents, students, and community members as volunteers.
- **Design effective outreach to non-English speaking parents and families.** Assist schools in creating classroom and school environments that are welcoming and comfortable for non-English speaking parents and families.
- **Increase parents' access, knowledge and use of online resources to track their children's progress.** Staff and volunteers will provide opportunities for parents to learn about Infinite Campus, DPS' online resource for parents to track their children's grades, attendance, behavior, and course schedules.
- **Strengthen the parent and student role on Collaborative School Committees (CSC).** The Office of Parent Engagement will recruit and train parents to participate on CSCs. We will also support student involvement on high school CSCs.

- **Provide training and support to teachers and school leaders on the importance of parent engagement.** Review best practices for parent engagement and set school-specific expectations for parent engagement.
- **Create structures for consistent dialogue between parent representatives of all schools and the Superintendent to help improve communication between parents and guardians and our district’s leadership team.** The Offices of Community Engagement and Parent Engagement are launching the Superintendent’s Parent Forum, in coordination with school principals, to create a new opportunity for parents (guardians) in all areas of the district to meet and dialogue directly with the Superintendent on a regular basis.
- **Measure parent engagement levels.** Track how well school committees are functioning, participation rates in parent conferences, results on a parent survey, and the numbers of volunteers in schools to determine where parent and family involvement is robust and where outreach, support, and training is needed. Identify a series of improved parent engagement measurements to be included on the School Performance Framework.

Strategy 2: Engage and inform students, families, and the community about DPS strategies and initiatives.

- **Increase the quantity and quality of school choice information and outreach to parents to help them become better informed in making educational choices.** As we pursue our strategy of offering diverse instructional programs to students, we will launch a series of efforts to ensure parents and families have the best information possible to choose schools for their children. We will advise parents on how the School Performance Framework can be used in school choice decisions; revise School Improvement Plan documents so that they can be used as a resource for selecting schools; and if funding permits, establish enrollment centers and/or employ choice liaisons who can provide parents and families with access to information and expertise about the kinds and types of schools to consider.
- **Strengthen media communications with print, broadcast, and online networks to ensure expanded outreach to the community and greater consistency, depth, and accuracy in coverage.** Continue and expand external communication strategy, such as weekly radio broadcasts, that engage culturally and linguistically diverse community members.
- **Increase use of technology to connect stakeholders and improve access to information and resources.** In 2008, DPS fully redesigned our Internet presence, significantly growing and organizing the information available. We will continue to refine and expand our online presence, exploring interactive features and using technology to coordinate and connect staff, teachers, students, parents, and neighbors to the DPS mission.
- **Engage Spanish-dominant parents and families through effective awareness and educational campaigns using radio, television and print publications.**
- **Encourage greater community ownership of schools and the district through school visits and facility tours for area businesses, media, realtors, and community members.** School and facility visits will give people a chance to see first-hand what is happening in DPS schools and encourage and support the development of pipeline programs between businesses and the district.

Strategy 3: Foster dialogue and input from stakeholders to promote civic engagement and ownership of public schools.

- **Foster dialogue and regularly seek input and recommendations from key stakeholder groups.** Through community forums, focus groups, advisory committees, surveys and other methods, we will maintain a robust and open dialogue with Denver’s many parent, community and advocacy groups. We will continue to support their role in monitoring our reform efforts and interpreting them for the community. We will continue to seek their advice, counsel and criticism so we can improve.
- **Engage advocacy groups in shaping and supporting the district vision and developing strategies and policies to advance district goals.** DPS will work with Denver’s advocacy organizations to pursue our shared goal of improving outcomes for DPS students.
- **Continue to utilize volunteer resources to review and monitor progress of district-wide initiatives.** The citizen committee that reviewed DPS’ Alternative Education programs produced enormously successful work, changing the way DPS views alternative education. We will launch similar citizen groups around other district initiatives such as narrowing the achievement gap, increasing attendance, and implementing the bond program.
- **Coordinate and manage community processes and engagement strategies on district initiatives.** Strengthen and improve our systems for and approaches to community relationship building. Providing the public with timely information and being responsive to inquiries requires a coordinated, multi-faceted approach. Efforts to be more timely with information to the public – via web site and public postings – on the public input process is a key priority. Reaching out and engaging stakeholders for feedback on community needs and school processes on a regular basis is also a key priority.

Strategy 4: Partner with non-profits, faith communities, philanthropic groups, and others to support Denver’s students with streamlined services that are focused on improving student achievement and ensuring that they graduate from high school ready for college or career.

- **Increase the number and effectiveness of school-business partnerships to support student achievement goals.** DPS will examine existing partnerships, determining key success factors and helping to replicate and grow partnerships that have high potential to significantly impact student achievement.
- **Align the work of community-based programs and service providers with district academic standards and goals.** Working with community partners, DPS will strengthen before- and after-school programs that support and are aligned with a school’s improvement plan. We will also

strategically increase and improve the quality of after-school programs and services as well as summer offerings, particularly for the highest-need students and families.

- **Coordinate and expand programs that help parents and students with college and workforce readiness.** The Office of Postsecondary Readiness and the Office of Community Engagement will work with community partners, like the Denver Scholarship Foundation, to: Survey students to determine postsecondary goals; facilitate postsecondary exploration; provide support and training to parents and students on the college application process; survey graduating seniors to determine postsecondary plans; and track the performance of DPS graduates who enter college to determine the efficacy of DPS college readiness efforts.
- **Forge formal partnerships with Colorado postsecondary institutions, college access organizations, relevant City of Denver offices (e.g., summer employment programs), and state entities (e.g., the Colorado Department of Higher Education) in support of its postsecondary enrollment and completion goals.**
- **Streamline process for partners to contribute resources and expertise.** Leverage DPS Foundation to facilitate alignment of school and district priorities, and donor interest. Build capacity to sustain existing partnerships and launch new ones through the School Partners Program.

Strategy 5: Leverage federal, state and local resources for the benefit of student achievement.

- **Increase effective models.** As funding permits, expand Resource Advocate model, in part through AmeriCorps, to more schools and more neighborhoods to engage with parents and families at the school community level.
- **Secure additional resources promoting college entry and success.** Forge formal partnerships with pre-collegiate agencies and local college and universities in support of its postsecondary enrollment and completion goals as outlined in strategy four.
- **Continue work with local partners.** Maintain program coordination role with local government partners that support key programs: Youth Mentoring Collaborative, the City-DPS Partnerships, Social Worker Partnership, Creative Options; at State level, Governor’s Commission on Community Service, and Department of Education; and at federal level, AmeriCorps, Federal stimulus funding and Race to the Top -- all of which contribute to providing expanded high-quality services to DPS students.
- **Actively engage in the processes to support legislation that best serve the District’s student population.** Monitor and contribute to the legislative process to inform and educate on the needs of the district; and advocate for financial equity, services and programs for the benefit of students in every school.

Together, we believe these five strategies will dramatically increase family engagement in our schools and strengthen civic ownership and responsibility for DPS students’ success.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES |

We must ensure that all resources and the operational infrastructure of the district are strategically aligned and optimally managed to support the differentiated needs of all schools to build the capacity to accelerate and sustain achievement results.

- Denver Public Schools, Core Beliefs and Commitments

As emphasized throughout the plan, our district's single goal is to dramatically improve student achievement. Thus, it is essential that our financial resources wisely support the instructional core: students, teachers, and content. It is also critical that we manage our resources to ensure long-term stability and to attract a growing number of students and families to DPS.

We are in the middle of a significant financial crisis in this country with far-reaching impact on our funding from the state. The economic downturn threatens our financial stability and requires careful management of the resources we have today, along with those we expect to have in the next several years. We are, and likely will continue to be, constrained with our financial resources, so our goals are to maximize the resources available to classrooms and schools and to push as much decision-making authority as possible over school budgets to individual schools. We also must further improve the transparency of our budgets so that the public can clearly understand where each of our dollars is being spent.

Vision |

Our vision is to maximize our resources in our classrooms and to invest every dollar strategically in order to achieve the goals in this plan. DPS is committed to providing the financial stability to invest in this plan for the long term. To achieve this vision, we will pursue the following strategies:

Strategy 1 |

Ensure fiscal stability. Long an established goal for the district, we have made significant progress in ensuring fiscal stability for DPS. We adopted structurally balanced budgets in the last two fiscal years and will maintain this focus in the future by ensuring our cost structure does not grow beyond our available revenues. Within the balanced budget, we will prudently and carefully align spending and investment with the goals set forth in this plan.

Strategy 2 |

Maximize available financial resources. DPS already spends over 94% of its operating budget directly in schools. We will continue to pursue administrative and operational efficiencies to maximize the funds available for schools and classrooms. We also will aggressively pursue competitive outside funding opportunities that can increase available funding. We will also seek to push as much decision-making authority as possible over school budgets to individual schools and provide adequate support to school leadership teams who are in the best place to make budgetary decisions to serve their student and community needs.

Strategy 3 |

Align resources with goals. We will continue to align resources explicitly with our student achievement goals and to establish financial incentives for achieving them. For example, principals, teachers, and schools will earn financial rewards for improving student performance. DPS will focus on funding effective programs as identified by the evaluation processes referenced in strategy four of the Instructional Core.

Strategy 4 |

Increase transparency. The public will more easily understand DPS' use of funds, how our resources are aligned with our goals and how they can impact budget decisions that are made at the school and district level. We will improve and streamline the budget process to provide better efficiency and reporting, both internally and externally.

Strategy 5 |

Effectively utilize bond resources. DPS will rigorously monitor, deploy and manage the \$454 million in General Obligation Bonds that Denver's citizens approved in November 2008 for facility renovations, repairs, upgrades and targeted expansion.

Progress to Date |

As with the previous sections of this plan, we will quickly highlight key accomplishments over the last three years in strategically managing our financial resources. This track record not only indicates our ability to achieve our goals, it lays a critical foundation for our next steps.

To ensure fiscal stability, we:

- Increased DPS enrollment by over 4,400 students to over 78,000 students over two years (08-09 and 09-10). In the 2009-2010 school year, DPS experienced the largest one-year increase in enrollment in recorded history.
- Secured a successful legislative change that resulted in the merger of the DPS Retirement System with the state-supported Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA). The merger took effect on January 1, 2010. Key outcomes of the merger include portable retirement benefits for our employees. This will enhance our recruiting efforts for great people, another key element of the 2010 Denver Plan.
- Secured and re-affirmed a AA credit rating, allowing Denver's taxpayers to pay lower interest costs on district debt.
- Refinanced the pension liability at a lower interest rate. Over 90% of the savings have been invested directly in or in direct support of schools.
- At the end of the 2007-2008 school year DPS closed eight school buildings due to poor performance and declining enrollment, generating \$3.5 million a year in recurring savings that were invested in schools. On average, our elementary schools are now operating at 95% capacity.
- Established more equitable financial arrangements with charter schools, including cost-recovery formulas that more appropriately support special education and facility costs.

As a result of this work, DPS balanced the budget without significant cuts to school or departmental budgets for two consecutive years (after five straight years of budget cuts).

To aggressively maximize resources for schools, we:

- Increased budget amounts that go either directly to schools or in direct support of schools. Currently, over 94% of the General Fund budget is spent in schools.
- Secured more than \$75 million in competitive grants, including a \$25 million Federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant to fund performance-based pay for principals, \$10 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a Teacher Effectiveness Grant, and \$7.5 million from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to fund our Performance Management initiative.
- Accessed more than \$7 million newly available Denver Preschool Program funds and additional state Colorado Preschool Program funds in 2008-09 and 2009-10 to increase preschool offerings by more than 50%. DPS full-day preschool grew from 500 students in 2007-08 to over 2,100 students in 2008-09 and 2,600 in 2009-10.
- Partnered with the developer, the city of Denver and the Denver Urban Renewal Authority to secure funding to build the third Stapleton school in order to meet the need for more capacity in that area and increase enrollment.

To better align our resources to support improved student achievement, we:

- Established student-based budget formulas that increase dollars for middle and high school students, special education, English language learners, gifted and talented programs, and students living in poverty. The distribution of resources is now more closely aligned with the costs of serving these students.
- Created financial incentives that reward schools for increasing enrollment and provided principals with greater authority to determine the best use of their budgets to meet the academic needs of their school communities.
- Established a set of school-based financial incentives and interventions based on School Performance Framework ratings that are limited to student achievement and academic growth.
- Prioritized state and federal funding to support a 30% expansion in full-day kindergarten over two years (2008-09 and 2009-10). Over 95% of DPS students in kindergarten attend a full-day class, greatly increasing the number of DPS first graders starting school ready to learn.

To increase the transparency of the DPS budget and understanding of the use of funds, we:

- Designed the student-based budget system to distribute dollars to schools based on enrollment and types of students. The system provides high transparency, creates incentives for school leaders to increase their enrollment, and provides principals with additional funding to support higher-need students.
- Redesigned internal financial reporting processes to produce functional reports for departments (in addition to regulatory reports), and aggregated financial statements that better communicate the financial health of the district.
- Maintained rigorous financial reporting requirements, and continued producing the highest-quality audited financial statements.

November 2008 K-12 School Bond |

In November 2008, DPS passed the largest K-12 school bond in the history of Colorado by a 2:1 voter margin, signifying high voter confidence in the needs and progress of the school district. The bond request amount and specific projects included in the bond ballot initiative were determined by a committee of business and civic leaders.

To ensure effective use of bond funds, we:

- Sold \$424 million in bonds in 2009 at an attractive interest rate, providing funds needed for construction projects and saving taxpayers \$153 million in interest costs below the ballot measure ceiling.
- Established a citizens' Bond Oversight Committee to oversee progress and represent the public interest throughout the term of the program. This committee will also oversee the use of the 2003 Mill Levy Override annual revenue fund.

Collectively, these actions have created a stable financial foundation for Denver Public Schools, something our students, parents, and workforce can count on to sustain the progress and support the reforms in the coming years. We also built better monitoring and tracking systems that give us the capacity for the work described below.

Moving Forward: 2010-2013 |

We will sustain our focus and ensure DPS can navigate the current financial crisis without losing momentum. Going forward, we maintain the same overarching goals, pushing further and farther with an expanded set of initiatives.

Strategy 1: Ensure fiscal stability.

- **Grow enrollment.** Enrollment is the fundamental revenue driver for the district. When enrollment increases, our budget increases. We estimate that approximately 72% of school-age children in Denver attend DPS schools (traditional and charter); thus we have a terrific opportunity to grow our enrollment. (Other Denver-resident students attend private schools, home schools or go out of district.) Additionally, we expect an increase in school-age population in Denver over the next five years and will strive to be *the* choice for these families. Objectives in other sections of this plan – high-quality schools, community outreach initiatives, expansion of preschool programs, drop-out prevention programs, and collaborations with social service agencies and non-profits – are designed to support our goal of increasing enrollment by attracting new students and retaining a higher number of current students. Our student-based budget approach provides incentive for schools to grow enrollment.
- **Monitor and meet the district's capacity challenges.** There are areas of Denver where the capacity of our schools today or in the future will not be sufficient to meet growing demand. New schools are being built in Stapleton and Green Valley Ranch in order to meet that demand, and the district is committed to proactively targeting solutions to meet capacity needs throughout the city. The district is engaged in long-term planning and solutions that take into account what the capacity needs are today and what they will be in the future.

- **Pursue state financial support that protects our most underserved students.** DPS has a higher number of low-income students, special education and English language learners than any other district in the state. Existing state funding formulas do not adequately recognize the increased costs of meeting the needs of this student population. Through increased information sharing and advocacy, DPS hopes to impact changes to funding formulas that will provide more resources to serve our higher needs student population.
- **Ensure highest and best-use of all real estate assets.** DPS will make changes in use of real estate assets based on surveys and input from students, parents, community members, staff, and local experts where school facilities are determined for alternative use or sale. This includes strategically co-locating instructional programs in existing campuses and disposition and/or use of our vacant properties. In some areas of the district, we will use vacant facilities to serve new students and attract those not currently attending DPS.
- **Maintain strong credit ratings.** DPS will continue to maintain a level of contingency reserves and appropriate fund balances. This will ensure DPS, and therefore Denver’s taxpayers, will achieve the most competitive interest rates on its debt obligations.

By pursuing both the revenue-enhancing and cost-savings objectives listed here, we commit to maintaining a structurally balanced budget each year in order to build a highly stable foundation for our instructional core.

Strategy 2: Maximize available financial resources.

- **Optimize funds that flow through student-based budget formulas.** Evaluate opportunities to reduce centrally-managed funds in order to increase the amount of funds that directly follow students to schools through the student-based budgeting formulas.
- **Apply rigorous process improvement methods and technology to increase efficiency in our operational organizations, improving services to schools and generating cost savings that can flow to instructional programs.** Establish goals to use cost-reduction initiatives to offset any growth in non-personnel-related operational costs. For example, we will seek to offset increases in costs such as software maintenance, utilities and fuels with cost-savings generated through actions such as contract renegotiations and energy conservation.
- **Aggressively pursue competitive federal, state and philanthropic funding that supports district goals.** Continue to communicate the innovative work we are doing and deliver results with the outside funding raised to maintain a high philanthropic interest in DPS. Collaborate with local and national organizations to obtain financial support for key initiatives, including performance management, teacher development and support, human resource process and technology improvement, and new schools and school innovation. We will specifically pursue American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funding, Race to the Top, turnaround funds where appropriate.

Strategy 3: Align resources with goals and priorities.

- **Refine Student-Based Budgeting formulas to ensure they are best meeting the needs of all of the district's students.** Continue to evaluate SBB funding formulas in terms of 1) meeting student needs, 2) making progress on closing achievement gap, and 3) growing the number of high school graduates and college-ready students. Adjust the formulas during the budgeting process to ensure they are best meeting these goals.
- **Utilize and refine ProComp merit-pay system to incent performance improvement while maintaining long-term sustainability in the fund.** Use compensation for teachers and principals to provide appropriate incentives to work in high-poverty schools and hard-to-staff positions and drive student growth and achievement. Further align the compensation system to the board-adopted student achievement goals.
- **Increase principals' control over school budgets, and provide them with training and support to improve their capability in using their funds to support their school priorities.** Also provide greater budget control and accountability for central instructional and operational department heads.
- **Align financial resources to district priority initiatives, and to appropriately support financial needs.** In particular, seek federal stimulus dollars and other state and philanthropic funds that support district priority initiatives. The two-year stimulus funds and other non-recurring funds do not increase the level of ongoing operational funding in our budget, so we must use them to develop increased capacity and sustainability. For example, we will develop systems and organizational capacity (through professional development, process and technology development, and educator support) to improve the use of data to guide instructional practices in our schools. We will develop rigorous processes to track, manage and report on the use of these funds, and will use metrics to determine the effectiveness of changes introduced.
- **Introduce performance-based compensation elements to a greater number of district instructional and operational personnel.** Use financial incentives that are aligned to the district's student-achievement goals to reward exceptional performance, including improvements in service and efficiency. Transition, over time, from compensation programs tied to longevity to those tied to performance.

Strategy 4: Increase transparency.

- **Effectively communicate about the district's budget with DPS internal and external stakeholders.** Provide timely and accessible information on school and department budgets and the district's financial state through multiple means of communication. In addition, enhance information available online that brings stakeholders a better understanding of the budget and how resources are allocated.
- **Present school and central department budgets that are clear and easy to understand.** Ensure the general public has clear visibility to how tax dollars are spent in the district and a solid

understanding of how the DPS budget is allocated. Create communication tools to share information more broadly and proactively with teachers and the community.

- **Give individual schools the tools to help discuss their budgets with parents and teachers.** Empower principals to engage parents and staff in the decision-making process around how to spend their school budget, which directly impacts class size, teacher-to-student ratio, and individual program funding.
- **Capture full costs in budgets.** Ensure budgets fully capture costs, including pension and benefit costs of employees. And, ensure individual employees understand their total compensation, including the value of pension retirement benefits.
- **Streamline the budgeting process.** Redesign and automate the budgeting process to increase efficiency, visibility and effectiveness. Provide ongoing support and training for school and departmental leaders to increase understanding in creation of budgets and tracking of budget performance.

Strategy 5: Effectively utilize bond resources.

- **Deliver bond projects on time, within budget, and at excellent quality.** Deploy bond funds to ensure DPS facilities are safe, inviting to students and families, and built with classroom design and technology that create a high-quality learning environment. Key outcomes include:
 - Repairs and renovations that touch every school building in the district - ranging from replacing aging boilers, leaking roofs, and worn-out flooring to upgrading security and safety systems, including fire alarms and closed-circuit cameras.
 - Significantly improved technology across the district.
 - Newer and safer playground equipment.
 - Expanded early education classroom capacity.
 - A new campus, accommodating two schools, serving the growing ECE-12 population in northeast Denver.
- **Aggressively bid and manage bond projects to achieve cost savings that can be deployed to other priority areas.** Work with the Citizens Oversight Committee to determine priorities for the use of unallocated funds to critical projects.
- **Effectively manage bond debt to limit taxpayer obligations.** Maintain good credit rating, utilize federal stimulus programs and appropriately issue debt to limit interest costs.

We believe the strategies detailed in this section will wisely support the instructional core and ensure long-term stability for the Denver Public Schools.



A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS, SERVICE, EMPOWERMENT, AND RESPONSIBILITY |

ALL STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE AND GRADUATE; WE CAN CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP.

We believe that all students can learn at grade level or higher (no excuses), make dramatic gains in student achievement, reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, higher education, and competition in a global community.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE BY ALL ADULTS MATTERS.

We believe that creating a district-wide culture of “performance empowerment” will best ensure the ability to build and maintain optimal conditions for student learning in every school.

--Denver Public Schools, Core Beliefs and Commitments

Building and maintaining a culture characterized by high expectations, excellent service, empowerment, and responsibility is critical to achieving our goals. Our culture surrounds and permeates the instructional core and our primary strategies supporting the instructional core. A successful culture is in many ways intangible, but its presence is a very powerful force for change, just as its absence is a large roadblock against change. Culture is both a cause and an effect – it is not just a result of our organization’s beliefs, behaviors, and systems, but it helps create them.

A shared culture of high expectations, service, empowerment, and responsibility is not the norm in large school systems, including our own. Thus, we must pursue significant shifts in our own historical culture.

A successful culture is one in which our students thrive, in which parents believe their children will excel, and where talented educators want to work. Hence, in this section when we use the word “culture,” we mean not simply an abstract concept but a collection of practices, systems, beliefs, and behaviors that help shape DPS and our strategies to drive improved student outcomes.

Because culture surrounds and permeates all of our work, you will find references in this section to all other parts of our plan. Equally, in each of the previous sections, you will find that our chosen strategies embrace the high expectations, service, empowerment, and responsibility elements of our culture that are explicitly addressed here. In this section, we discuss the need for both specific changes to certain practices or rules as well as more general cultural shifts that we need to undertake.

Vision |

Our vision is that DPS embrace, build, and maintain a culture that is defined by high expectations, excellent service, empowerment, and responsibility. Such a culture retains and attracts the best talent, supports and serves students and families in an active and respectful way, and helps all of us become more genuinely responsible for the primary goal of improving student achievement. To achieve this vision, there are four core elements to the culture we intend to build, including:

Element 1 | High Expectations

The foundation of our culture must be high expectations – high expectations of our students, high expectations of all the adults who work in the district, and high expectations of our parents and community.

Our conviction that every child is capable of and will graduate from high school prepared for college or career and that there will be no difference in student outcomes in DPS based on race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status is at the center of our work. We know that students will live up to (or down to) the expectations adults hold of them, and it is critical that we convey to students from their first day in DPS schools that we expect all of them to graduate from high school prepared for college or career. College success is an essential part of preparing DPS graduates to compete in the 21st century global economy. During the current recession a high school dropout is more than three times as likely to be out of work compared to someone with a college degree.¹⁷

We are extremely grateful to the generosity of Tim and Bernie Marquez for establishing the Denver Scholarship Foundation to back up those expectations with millions of dollars in scholarships to help our graduates pay for college and to provide them with the tools and assistance they need to reach for and succeed in college.

We also must expect every member of the DPS team to perform at a high professional level, with clear focus on our student achievement goals. We are extraordinarily fortunate to have teachers and school leaders whose passion and commitment led them to work in DPS, and we must nurture and sustain that passion and commitment to making our students' lives better.

We have high expectations of our students, parents and community, as well. As referenced in the Call to Action, we recognize that students have a very clear responsibility for their own learning and success. In addition, we need parents and community to value education, to help young people succeed, and to hold us accountable for delivering an excellent product to our children. We are grateful for the consistent support of Denver's voters, including support for establishing the Denver Preschool Program and passage of bond and mill levy measures.

Element 2 | Excellent Service

The Denver Public Schools must become a service-minded organization that views its students and parents as customers as well as partners. The role of the central office and the central service departments is to support teachers, principals, students and parents in our efforts to increase

¹⁷ Mention in President Obama's remarks during his March 1, 2010 speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC.

student achievement. The centrality of customer service in this role requires our service departments to take responsibility for understanding and effectively addressing student, parent, principal, and teacher needs.

Elements 3 & 4 | Empowerment and Responsibility

The final two elements of our culture are inextricably linked: empowerment and responsibility. We must empower our professional educators and all our staff to lead and best meet the needs of their individual students and to closely couple that empowerment with responsibility for student outcomes.

Further, we believe that the school is the central unit of change in improving student outcomes. As discussed in the Call to Action section, we have certain critical non-negotiables for all our schools, including the state standards that must be taught, core elements of the instructional program, and district-wide benchmark assessments. Within this framework, all schools should have autonomy on the critical matters of people, time, and money. Such autonomy is vital to a school's success.

Progress to Date |

For the last several years, DPS has been raising expectations for both students and adults. The efforts to raise and establish higher expectations for students are discussed throughout this document, but a brief summary of key accomplishments includes:

- Established and made public measureable goals to dramatically increase student achievement and the percentage of students who graduate ready for college and to close the achievement gap.
- Instituted the most rigorous high school graduation requirements in the state.
- Worked with Tim and Bernie Marquez to establish the Denver Scholarship Foundation. With DSF, we established Future Centers in all high schools to provide additional college counseling and assistance in applying for college and accessing scholarships.
- Expanded access to Early Childhood Education and full-day kindergarten, ensuring that nearly 11,000 children have access to early education, a proven strategy for narrowing achievement gaps.
- Provided parents access to real-time data about their children's academic achievement, attendance, course schedule, and behavior incidents through an online resource called Infinite Campus.

To significantly improve customer service we:

- Developed an HRConnect function to provide better customer service to employees to. HRConnect elevates the level of customer service to employees by offering them contact with a customer representative who can assist them with same-day resolution on a variety of issues or referral to the subject-matter expert within the HR Department.
- Surveyed principals about their satisfaction with service from central departments. These bi-annual satisfaction surveys provide central office staff feedback on the quality and timeliness of services to schools and form the basis of action planning.
 - We improved average customer satisfaction of principals with operational departments from 71% in April 2008 to 85% a year later.

- Conducted student and family satisfaction surveys to gather feedback on service.
- Conducted regular meetings with school faculties to provide an opportunity for feedback on district initiatives (2005 and ongoing).
- Were awarded over \$8.3 million from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the Broad Foundation to enhance data-based decision making for teachers, principals, and operational staff through performance management systems that measure financial, operational, and service measures.
- Provided professional training about customer service to salaried central office employees responsible for delivering service to schools, families, and the community. Over 450 people have been trained to date. Hourly training rolls out throughout the 2009-10 school year, and will be delivered to nearly 1500 employees.
- Established “delivering excellent service” as one of the five key success factors that form the basis of the Employee Performance Management Process, a new performance-based evaluation system for central office employees.

In building system-wide empowerment and accountability, we:

- Established the School Performance Framework, a sophisticated tool that collects and reports multiple achievement indicators for every school. Performance and academic growth levels on the SPF trigger school-based rewards, ensuring that not only high-performing schools are recognized but so are schools that achieve significant academic *growth*. The SPF ratings also trigger interventions and support to struggling schools. The State of Colorado adopted a growth model for all schools in the state that is quite similar to the SPF.
- Increased autonomy and flexibility of principals and teachers to structure their schools in ways best designed to improve student achievement. We:
 - Implemented student-based budgeting to provide schools with greater autonomy over how they use their money and staff to best drive student achievement.
 - Developed a process by which new schools can request waivers of district policies, the DPS/DCTA collective bargaining agreement and state statute to eliminate obstacles to improved student achievement.
- Developed the Employee Performance Management Process, a recurring, yearly process of goal setting and performance appraisal for central office employees to ensure that 1) the district's goals are effectively translated into achievable goals and performance expectations at the district, department, team and individual levels, 2) employees at all levels are held accountable for their achievement, recognized for their contributions and supported in their career development, 3) the district maintains a process for continuous improvement and a focus on service, and 4) DPS remains a compelling place for employees to work, learn and grow.
- Developed and implemented the School Innovation Grant Initiative to provide selected promising schools start-up funds to begin new efforts to improve performance and enrollment.
- Developed and implemented a request for proposal (RFP) process to solicit high-performing schools, especially in areas of high academic need such as alternative education; the RFP process creates a single pathway for all school proposals, including district-run and charter proposals.
- DPS led the state in becoming the first school district to be granted innovation status under the 2008 Innovation Schools Act. Leading to the creation of this act, Bruce Randolph sought and received waivers from both district policy and the collective bargaining agreement to afford them more autonomy in the management of their people, time and, money in December 2007.

Following passage of the Innovation Act, Manual, Montclair and Cole became the state's first schools granted Innovation Status and are operating with waivers from the collective bargaining agreement, district policy, and state law. The Math Science and Leadership Academy is also operating with waivers from the collective bargaining agreement, state law and district policy under another statutory provision which provides for waivers of state statute.

Moving Forward: 2010-2013 |

We will take specific actions to build, nurture, and maintain a culture that is characterized internally and externally as a high-performance culture. You have read about many of these actions throughout the plan, but, because culture is so essential, we are highlighting key next steps in building a culture that simply demands better results.

Element 1: High expectations.

High expectations for our students is the lifeblood of success in our district. As you have read in other portions of this plan, and summarized here, we will:

- **Emphasize college to students every day in all our schools and promote a college-going culture.** We will vigorously promote access to honors courses, gifted and talented programs, and AP and post-secondary offerings to all our students, working to eliminate racial and ethnic gaps among students taking these offerings. We will ensure all 9th graders take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test or other comparable test to identify more students who are ready for advanced courses, a proven strategy employed by other urban districts.
- **Identify students who need support.** As discussed in the Instructional Core section, we will aggressively seek to identify students who need additional support to stay on a college-ready path and ensure they have access to credit recovery, dual enrollment, and other alternative pathways to high school graduation.
- **Increase post-secondary educational opportunities for DPS students.** In particular, we will work with state elected leaders on legislation allowing in-state college tuition for all public school graduates regardless of immigration status. We will also continue to collaborate with DSF to expand the number of students applying to college and take advantage of additional public and private financial aid opportunities for students going to college.

All this (and more) cannot take the place of students, parents and a community that holds high expectations for themselves and for us. As discussed in community engagement, we will work to engage parents and other care-givers around maintaining high expectations for their children and work to engage students around the great importance of graduating from high school prepared for college or career.

Element 2: Provide Excellent Service

To accelerate and energize our commitment to high-quality service – central office to schools, schools to families, and central office to families – we will:

- Empower and, ultimately, reward, central office employees to identify and implement changes that improve the services they offer to schools.
- Establish feedback loops to capture the voice of the customer. Survey students, families, and staff at the school level to inform our school improvement plans and department performance plans and provide feedback about current satisfaction levels.
- Survey principals and central office staff about the quality and timeliness of central office services. Use this data in goal-setting and performance evaluations for the Employee Performance Management Program. Have customer service be core element in department and individual evaluations.
- Provide more streamlined and on-line opportunities to register students.
- Work with charter schools on a single streamlined choice process.
- Proactively communicate with customers to manage service delivery expectations.
- Expand goal setting and metrics tracking to hourly staff.
- Deepen service-related metrics development work with Chief Operating Officer's departments and expand metrics work to Chief Academic Officer's departments.
- Develop and manage service level agreements between and among schools, central office departments, vendors, and partners to ensure quality service delivery.

Element 3: Empowerment and responsibility.

Given that empowerment and responsibility are at the heart of our theory of action of performance empowerment, we will discuss this element in more depth. Empowerment allows individuals and schools the ability to innovate and best meet the needs of their students. Responsibility ensures that all of us have the proper focus on and are accountable for student outcomes.

In terms of empowering schools on personnel matters, school leadership teams should have full capability on decisions to hire or retain teachers and staff. As discussed in the Great People section, practices such as forcibly placing teachers into schools against the wishes of the school leadership team and the teacher hamper a school's ability to develop a cohesive culture of shared ownership and disempowers the professionals in a school.

Likewise, schools should have full flexibility about how to use time during the school day and days during the school year. One-size-fits-all limitations on how schools must structure their school day and

school year that apply equally to 200-student elementary schools and 2,000-student high schools severely hinder the ability of schools to best meet the needs of their students.

Third, schools should have maximum flexibility on how to utilize their budgets. We have made significant progress on this front through the abolition of formula-driven budgets that allocated schools specific numbers of various positions. In their place, we have introduced student-based budgets in which dollars follow students and the per-student dollars are differentiated based on key factors such as poverty, special education or language status of the student. We have already given schools full flexibility on how to utilize those dollars on personnel and resources to best meet the needs of their students, and we need to further increase the dollars that go to schools in these student-based budgets rather than being budgeted centrally.

It is important to emphasize that empowerment is not just at the school level or department level. Most profoundly, empowerment must be at the level of the individual professional, who has taken on the enormously challenging job of teaching our students or leading our schools. Empowerment represents the core belief that we respect our professionals – whether teachers, principals, or leaders of central service departments – and their ability to operate effectively. They are closest to the student and must have the opportunity to tailor their approach to best meet the needs of their students.

To be effective, empowerment must be coupled with responsibility and accountability for results. Earlier experiments in efforts like site-based management did not pair autonomy with accountability and were therefore doomed to failure. As Albert Shanker emphasizes in the quote in the Call to Action section: “Unless you start with a very heavy emphasis on accountability, not end with it, you’ll never get a system with all the other pieces falling into place.”

We now have a tool that is among the most robust in the nation, the School Performance Framework, for evaluating the performance of individual schools. The SPF focuses on how much academic growth a school is driving in its students, regardless of whether those students start the year at high levels of achievement or low levels. In our Incentive and Interventions Policy, we have aligned our set of incentives and interventions for schools, principals, and teachers around the results of the School Performance Framework. Those schools that are driving academic growth in their students benefit from a set of incentives including additional compensation for principals and teachers. Those schools that are not driving satisfactory growth receive a set of interventions, including additional supports, professional development, and professional guidance. If those supports do not produce the necessary change, we will consider new instructional programs or new schools for those communities.

Finally, in order to have an effective system of empowerment and responsibility, we need robust data systems that can capture relevant performance data which can inform a teacher’s instructional practice in the classroom. Teachers will use the Teacher Portal and principals will use the Administrator Portal, one-stop software systems that provide access to all student data, including demographic and assessment data, as well as standards-aligned curriculum and resources for all core content classes. The Teacher Portal will eliminate the need to consult disparate systems for data and teaching tools, reducing the time needed to access data and reporting, which will in turn provide teachers the information they need and the time to plan for instruction based on these reports of student progress. These portals will also support educators in the implementation of the Response to Intervention approach.

Through our Performance Management Initiative, we are establishing key performance indicators for departments, just as we have established the School Performance Framework for schools, capturing data on that performance (whether, for example, the percentage of school buses arriving on time, the number of critical maintenance items fixed within the requisite time, or the percentage of substitute teacher vacancies filled), and evaluating employees on their performance against these standards.

To further progress on moving Denver Public Schools fully to a system that embraces and supports empowerment and responsibility, we will:

- Develop capacity in our school leaders and teachers to exercise additional responsibility through professional development and peer learning with successful schools.
- Work with school leaders and faculties to develop cultures of individual and shared accountability for student outcomes in all our schools.
- Seek revisions where necessary in state law, collective bargaining agreement and district policies to allow each school authority over personnel decisions, including the replacement of forced placement with mutual consent hiring, and decisions how to best use the school day and school year in order to best meet the needs of that school's students.
- As discussed in Great People section, further align compensation with performance for teachers and principals and launch Employee Performance Management Program for central office staff. Develop processes for departments and employees to establish performance goals, and provide training in setting goals and measuring performance.
- Introduce pay for performance for central office/service department staff.
- Continue to push further dollars into school-based budgets to allow maximum budgetary flexibility at each school.
- Utilize school improvement funding to fund innovative and effective approaches to driving improved student achievement.
- Welcome schools seeking Innovation status under Colorado law so that they can exercise autonomy in personnel and the use of the school day/school year.
- Welcome high-quality new schools and programs.
- Track and make available to the public data on key performance indicators at school, district, and department level.
- Invest in improved tools, processes, and support infrastructure that support the district-wide performance management project.

We believe that building and maintaining a culture defined by high expectations, excellent service, empowerment, and responsibility will ensure that we attract the best talent, support and serve our families and engage everyone in the critical work of improving student achievement.

CONCLUSION |

We began sharing this plan as a draft with our students, employees, parents and community members in September 2009. During an intensive six month engagement process we gathered feedback from our many stakeholders. Hundreds of people gave us feedback electronically through our online survey tool and via email. We met in person with community groups like A+ Denver, Padres Unidos, MOP, Denver City Council and more as mentioned in the Acknowledgements on page 69. Also listed in the acknowledgements you will see the names of many internal stakeholders who through email, faculty meetings, teacher, principal and Central Office Sounding Boards, provided valuable input on the plan.

It is our collective wisdom that will shape our success. This plan is meant to provide a shared vision and commitment to the success of Denver's children. The vision and strategies in the 2010 Denver Plan were informed and will continue to be informed by many: from the voices of our students, teachers, principals, parents and community members to the joint DCTA-district Professional Practices Workgroup that worked successfully to make the district the recipient of the largest competitive philanthropic grant in the history of DPS from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

We look forward to an ongoing, powerful dialogue with our students, employees, parents, and community members on putting this plan into action.

Now is time to accelerate our reforms, to sharpen the focus on student achievement, and to get all of our children—in every neighborhood of Denver—prepared for college or career. We're UP to the challenge. We aim to change the very essence of public education in America, for we will not stop until, as our vision proclaims:

We lead the nation's cities in student achievement, high school graduation, college preparation, and college matriculation; and our students are well prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education.



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DPS would like to thank the hundreds of people who submitted feedback to the 2010 Denver Plan. Last October, we presented the updated Denver Plan as a draft. Through a series of teacher, principal, staff and community meetings, comment cards, online surveys and emails we've gathered valuable information that has helped direct and focus our vision in this revised and final version of the 2010 Denver Plan. We want to assure you that your voices have been heard.

We'd like to thank the following people, as well as the many individuals not listed below who submitted anonymous feedback and participated in large-group meetings, for your help in shaping the 2010 Denver Plan:

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Organizations

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APPENDIX A |

2010 Denver Plan Goals

1. All students will graduate from the Denver Public Schools prepared for postsecondary success.

- The number of DPS students taking AP classes each year will grow by 3.5%, the number taking the AP test will grow each year by 3.5% and the number of students who take the test and who receive 3, 4 or 5 will increase by 3.5% per year.
- The number of students scoring 20 or better on the ACT will grow by 3.5% students per year by 2013.
- The graduation rate for DPS students will increase by 5% per year to reach 82% in 2012 (base of 52% for 06-07).
- The dropout rate for DPS students will decrease by 1.0% per year to be 4.4% by 2012.
- College enrollment rates will grow by 3.5% each year to 63% in 2013.

2. All students will demonstrate at least one year's growth in the core content areas and meet or exceed state standards.

- An additional 3.5% of 3rd Grade students will become proficient on CSAP in reading or Lectura each year for the next five years. The five-year target is an overall district proficiency rate of 68.4% in 2013.
- The percentage of students scoring above the state median percentile on CSAP, thereby demonstrating above-average performance, will grow by 2.0% each year.
- The performance gap between Asian / Caucasian students and African-American and Hispanic students scoring Proficient & above on CSAP will decrease by 3.5% annually, closing the achievement gap.
- On average, the proficiency rate for grade level cohorts will increase 3.5% in reading, writing, and math over each year
- On average, the percentage of students scoring unsatisfactory will decrease by 3.5% in reading, writing, and math each year.
- 3.5% of grade level English language learners will become proficient or better on the CELA Overall rating each year.

3. The number of high-performing schools as measured by the School Performance Framework will increase.

- The number of schools scoring above 50% of possible points on SPF will grow by 3.5% annually.

4. All students will have access to full day kindergarten.

- By 2013, full-day Kindergarten will be available to 100% of parents who choose to enroll their student in a full-day program.

5. Enrollment will continue to increase in the Denver Public Schools.

- DPS total enrollment will grow 500 students a year to a total exceeding 77,000 in 2012, from ECE-12, including charter school students.
- By 2013, 84% of children in DPS will re-enroll in district schools the following year, excluding students graduating out of the district.

APPENDIX B |

Reform Framework – Board of Education Core Beliefs

The Board of Education holds six fundamental beliefs about its students, staff, schools and community. These beliefs animate the work of the school board as policy makers and inform the staff, schools and community about aspirations for Denver Public Schools.

ALL STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE AND GRADUATE. We believe that all students can learn at grade level or higher (no excuses), make dramatic gains in student achievement, reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education. We believe this is true for all students and is not determined or limited by race, family income, native language, gender or area of residence

- **Learning.** We must build a strong standards-based culture of learning across the district by promoting, supporting and expanding the most effective academic opportunities for each student every day, every year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IS THE TOP PRIORITY. We believe that ensuring that the most effective teaching takes place in our schools is our number one responsibility and priority as a school district.

- **Teaching & Leading.** We must retain and recruit the most effective teachers and principals, and we must develop and support them so they are able to implement research-based best practice in every classroom and school.

LEARNING, LEADERSHIP, AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE BY ALL ADULTS MATTERS. We believe that creating a district-wide culture of learning, leadership, and performance will best ensure the ability to build and maintain optimal conditions for student learning in every school, thereby bringing achievement to scale-greater achievement gains in more schools-for all students across the district.

- **Performing.** We must use data to inform decision-making at all levels and empower teachers, leaders, and others to perform at high levels while holding all throughout the system responsible for improving the academic results for all students.

CHOICE, COLLABORATION, AND INNOVATION ARE KEY TO 21ST CENTURY SUCCESS. We believe that developing new, innovative approaches to teaching and learning in current and future schools will lead to a rich and compelling array of educational options, promote the acceleration of student achievement gains, and give Denver children and families high quality choices for learning and success in the 21st century global economy and community.