

## News Release

Monday, January 13, 2014

## Media Contact

Van Schoales, CEO, A+ Denver  
(303) 725-1151  
van@aplusdenver.org



---

### **Year Three Innovation Schools Study shows small differences in school culture, student achievement and workforce capacity between Innovation schools and comparison group**

A+ Denver, Colorado Education Association, Denver Classroom Teachers Association, and Denver Public Schools released part three of an evaluation on Innovation Schools in Denver. The Evaluation Center, University of Colorado - Denver, completed the comparison of Innovation schools and non-Innovation schools.

The evaluation looked at school climate of empowerment, workforce capacity, and student outcomes in 19 Innovation Schools and 12 Comparison schools in Denver Public Schools (DPS). The findings from the year three analysis were consistent with findings from year two. The report shows evidence of positive indicators in strong student growth at Innovation schools and higher levels of teacher empowerment. However, concerns remain over proficiency rates and teacher turnover.

“Innovation schools are not necessarily innovative,” said A+ Denver CEO Van Schoales. “This research raises questions about what schools need in order to be successful. Schools need more than just flexibility. Innovation status isn’t a substitute for good principals, a solid school design, and a committed staff. The bottom line is that the authorizing and planning pieces are critical to improving results of Innovation schools – just as they are the critical pieces for ensuring strong charter schools.”

Key findings include:

- Innovation Schools are likely to show median growth scores that exceed state averages, but proficiency levels below state averages, though it is inconclusive whether or not this is due to having innovation status.
- Teachers in schools that have had innovation status longer (cohort 1) have a greater sense of empowerment than Comparison School teachers.
- Teachers in Innovation Schools as a group were less experienced than their counterparts. Average total teaching experience was 3.77 years in Innovation Schools and 9.05 years in Comparison Schools.
- Fifty-four percent of principals at Innovation Schools had fewer than three years of experience while 38% of principals at Comparison Schools had fewer than three years of experience.
- Teacher turnover at Innovation Schools was 11% greater than in comparison schools.
- Correlations were found between student achievement and two factors in the theory of change: teacher empowerment and teacher turnover.

*The mission of A+ Denver is to harness the power of Denver's civic leadership to build public will and advocate for the changes necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in public education in Denver. We are an independent, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization working to bring the power of Denver's citizens to the effort of school reform. For more information, please visit [www.aplusdenver.org](http://www.aplusdenver.org).*

###