

News Release

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A+ Denver reveals disappointing school turnaround results under \$58 million School Improvement Grant Effort **Advocacy group pushes for more new schools and stronger accountability measures**

Over the past five years, the U.S. Department of Education has invested \$4.7 billion in turning schools around, including \$58 million dollars into Colorado's lowest performing schools. This is more than the federal government invested in the entire Race to the Top effort.

A+ Denver and DFER-Colorado dig deep into the performance of the program in the latest report: *Colorado's Turnaround Schools 2010-2013: Make a Wish*. Results nationally have been lackluster, and while Colorado is outperforming the nation as a whole, the return on investment has been low. For every student that moved into proficiency from the first three cohorts, \$132,800 SIG dollars were spent.

Key Findings:

- A third (33%) of SIG schools for Cohorts I-III performed worse than before funding based on proficiency rates (change between pre-funding year and most current year).
- All Cohort II schools performed better in reading and math after funding.
- Fifty-five percent of schools in Cohorts I-III showed greater academic growth than the state average while 45% (17 schools) underscoring the median growth percentile.
- Just a handful of schools—almost all new schools—saw high enough growth to make a significant impact on college readiness.
- The SIG cost per student that moved into proficiency over the grant period was \$132,800 for Cohorts I, II, and III.
- There have been few consequences for poor results; two schools had their funding pulled for two years of low performance.

Despite some of the disappointing results, there have been some success stories. Most notably, Denver Public Schools' efforts to phase out and replace chronically failing schools seems to be a bright spot in the SIG efforts. Of the six schools beating the median growth percentile by at least 10 points across subjects, four are new schools in DPS. Also, Cohort II seems to be showing better results than Cohort I.

Recommendations to the state include:

- Consolidating all federal funding dollars under one state office to streamline reporting and oversight;

- Forming a turnaround district or “achievement zone” as several advocacy groups have recommended;
- Increasing public transparency through monitoring and evaluation tools, including basic information on how much money is being put into each school, where is it going, and how schools are progressing according to predetermined benchmarks.

[Click here](#) to access the full report.

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.

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