

News Release

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Colorado Turnaround Schools—Rays of Hope: An Evaluation of the Early Progress Witnessed from Colorado's Turnaround Efforts and Recommendations for Improved Outcomes

In an unprecedented case in Denver's history, school and community leaders managed to identify and improve a large group of severely underperforming schools during the last two years. A+ Denver is proud to announce the release of our latest report, *Colorado Turnaround Schools—Rays of Hope*, which tracks the disbursement of \$51.5 million in School Improvement Grants (SIG) amongst Colorado's lowest-performing schools that made these Turnaround efforts possible. This report—produced in partnership with Together Colorado, Colorado Succeeds, Colorado Children's Campaign and DFER-Colorado—enumerates the districts' reform strategies and evaluates their success through newly released Transitional Colorado Assessment Scores. By comparing districts' efforts and performance data, we identify successful practices and areas for improvement.

Our report identifies the Denver Summit Schools Network in the Far Northeast as well as Westminster 50 as rare examples of success in the tenuous reform efforts. 7 of the 11 turnaround schools in the Summit Schools Network demonstrated growth over 2011. Green Valley Elementary, McGlone, Noel Community Arts School, High Tech Early College, and Collegiate Preparatory Academy attained observed growth over 50 percent in all three subjects. The total sum of observed growth at High Tech Early College amounted to 225.5—one of the highest in the district—with observed growth scores over 70 in all three subjects. Using Summit and Westminster as models, this report offers specific recommendations for the state and other districts. Successful turnaround requires best practices and commitment from many levels and sectors including the state, district, individual school, and surrounding community. Specifically, these best practices include:

- Careful monitoring from the beginning stages and decisive intervention when schools demonstrate insufficient change; the state should withdraw federal funds from schools that show no signs of progress after two years in order to reinvest that money at schools with greater, potential impacts.
- Serious consideration from districts for the “turnaround” or “restart” models as chosen by DPS. These models involve more comprehensive changes and thus represent more of a challenge; however, they also provide an improved school culture that increases the likelihood of lasting achievement
- Transparent, extensive, and data-driven engagement with schools' surrounding communities including parents and existing institutions.

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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.

