




EDUCATE
Denver

**EDUCATE DENVER
PLATFORM**

A Civic Coalition for DPS Students



EDUCATE Denver will ask all 2023 Denver Board of Education candidates and those who are elected to pledge their support for this platform.

INTRODUCTION

EDUCATE Denver is a coalition of over 35 diverse and committed civic leaders who believe that high-quality education and healthy cities go hand-in-hand. Unfortunately in Denver, our ECE-12 public education system is broken. The most recent CMAS data suggests that among Black and Latino students, only 24.7% and 15.3% perform at grade level in reading and math, respectively. For the second year in a row, DPS posted the largest test score gaps by race in the state of Colorado. Most citizens would expect an urgent triage in response to such results. In contrast, the current DPS Board of Education spent the better part of the past two years insulting each other, grabbing for power, and reacting to district challenges for which members were unprepared. Attempts to analyze data, develop new policy, or set in place new strategies for student success were utterly and entirely absent.

As we embark upon a new school year, EDUCATE Denver is highly concerned about DPS leadership's current lack of focus on student outcomes and the data that has come as a result. Our confidence that Denver children will learn in safe schools is diminished and we are concerned that enrollment declines will persist. These challenges adversely impact our students' well-being and their ability to master 21st-century skills that support post-secondary success in college and in living-wage jobs. The long-term implications for the Denver community and Denver economy are dire.

The DPS Board of Education must reverse these trends for the sake of our youth and for the sake of our city. To that end, EDUCATE Denver developed a platform that articulates four focus areas and calls for associated Board actions that should be undertaken in order to set the school district on a positive trajectory. All four focus areas are mutually reinforcing and equal in priority. Embraced in earnest, they will give rise to the aspirational student outcomes identified in this document. Indisputably, it is a daunting challenge that will require persistent, hard work. EDUCATE Denver sees no alternative. The outcomes identified in our platform will solidify Denver Public Schools as the best district in America, make Denver a most desirable city in which to live, and give our youth their only real shot at success.

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FOCUS AREA #1:

Deliver High-Quality Education (HQE) to All Students

A high-quality education exposes students to a broad curriculum and activities focused on the development of 21st-century skills. Increasingly, success beyond high school on either a college or career path will require proficiency in:

- Key subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and civics
- Interdisciplinary topics such as health, financial literacy, economics, business, and entrepreneurship
- Creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration
- Digital literacy
- Social and cross-cultural competence
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative and self-direction

Within this context, it is imperative that DPS students demonstrate proficiency or above in language arts and math; if not, they must demonstrate more than one year's growth each school year. Schools must have plans in place to accelerate learning among students who are behind due to COVID or other circumstances in order to close achievement gaps for students of color, those experiencing poverty, English Language Learners (ELL), and those with special needs. All students should be assessed for English language fluency and any social or emotional challenges that may hinder their academic progress. As needed, students should be set up with language acquisition support or mental health services.



Board members pledge to:

1. Increase the percentage of students who receive a HQE annually, as described above, with particular emphasis on proficiency and student growth.
2. Close gaps for students of color, those experiencing poverty, ELL, and those with special needs.
3. Evaluate the Superintendent based on ability to increase the percentage of students who receive a HQE; use proficiency, student growth, and achievement gap data in the evaluation.
4. Require schools with less than 60% of students who are proficient to be evaluated annually and supported with a tailored, tiered intervention plan.
5. Examine the School-Based Budgeting formula to ensure that weights support adequate differentiation of instruction and services required to close achievement gaps.
6. Support the ELL population with diverse, highly qualified teachers and targeted programming.
7. Support whole-child development for ALL students by working to incorporate social-emotional programming and a curriculum designed to develop 21st-century skills (including life and career skills) into everyday learning.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- 90% of students will be proficient or above in language arts and mathematics.
- 90% of students who are not yet proficient in language arts or mathematics will exceed one year of growth year over year in these subjects.
- Achievement gaps for students of color, those experiencing poverty, ELL, and those with special needs will decrease by 10% year over year .
- All students will be screened annually for social or emotional support services.
- All students will be exposed to age-appropriate life skills curriculum.
- The percentage of students participating in work-based learning while at DPS will increase 10% year over year.
- 90% of students will successfully matriculate to college, CTE, military, or career pathways.

FOCUS AREA #2:

Maximize School Safety

Students in Denver feel increasingly unsafe. Parents worry about sending their children to school. The recent shootings, in and around East High School, made it clear that the Board of Education must be both strategic and transparent about their approach to student safety. EDUCATE Denver believes that the district should initiate plans to screen all students for social and emotional challenges and partner with the City and non-profit community to provide students in need with wrap-around supports and mental health resources. However, given the current state of discourse in Denver about school safety, EDUCATE Denver believes that at present, the Board should prioritize policies and a budget allocation that establish equity in the development and management of student behavior; securing of facilities; training of staff; and elimination of gun violence in and around our schools.



Board members pledge to:

1. Report to the community quarterly on the percentage of schools that meet the highest level of compliance (as defined by the district) for safe, secure, and supportive facilities and faculty.
2. Empower school communities to develop and implement safety-related measures that are desired by a given community and extend beyond those required in the district.
3. Report quarterly to the public on the number of and location of weapons violations in Denver Public Schools.
4. Pursue promising policies around violence prevention.
5. Secure resources to screen all students for social-emotional challenges and work to pair those in need with appropriate services.
6. Evaluate adequacy and implementation of the district's diversity, equity, and inclusion training; hold the Superintendent accountable to rectify situations where data and/or honest dialogue reveal gaps or non-compliance that may perpetuate an unsafe environment.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- Students will experience safe learning environments, free of ANY weapons-related violence in or around Denver Public Schools.
- Aggregate student attendance rates will exceed 90%.
- Students and staff will demonstrate cultural sensitivity and engage in respectful relationships, evidenced by a majority of positive school climate surveys.

FOCUS AREA #3:

Enable Parents to Direct Their Child's Education

Parents know their students best. We understand that the Board of Education navigates the tension between some parents' demands for high-quality neighborhood schools and other's calls for high-quality options that exist outside of their immediate boundary. Regardless, the Board must support a diverse portfolio of high-quality public school choices that meet the unique needs and interests of Denver's students. Further, the Board must provide parents with the ability to easily access information regarding these options. If a neighborhood school is considered for closure due to low enrollment, the Board should engage families early in an effort to co-create solutions and assist them in a thoughtful exploration of alternatives.



Board members pledge to:

1. Identify and eliminate barriers to participation in school choice.
2. Support the design and management of a process for approval, evaluation, intervention, and renewal that treats all school models consistently and fairly.
3. Provide transparent, easy-to-access data regarding individual school performance, student proficiency, academic growth trends, social-emotional wellness, teacher experience levels, and school-specific course offerings/programming.
4. Codify a formal community engagement process surrounding any potential school closure.
5. Maximize parent involvement in schools.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- Students will have district-supported access to any school program of their choosing.
- Families will understand criteria for approval, evaluation, intervention, or renewal of any school.
- Families will make informed decisions based on a variety of school factors, including individual school performance, student proficiency, academic growth trends, social-emotional wellness, teacher experience levels, and school-specific course offerings/programming.
- Parents will increase their reported school engagement on district climate and satisfaction surveys by 10 percentage points year over year.

FOCUS AREA #4:

Demonstrate a Standard of Excellence in Leadership

Management of the school district is the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff; however, the Board of Education sets the direction and tone for the entire school district as its governing body. Denver residents care about how the Board operates, expect professional leadership, and desire that student outcomes dominate Board activity. Principally, EDUCATE Denver seeks thoughtful, strategic oversight that leads to high-quality education for all.



Board members pledge to:

1. Practice honesty, respect, professionalism, kindness, and collaboration as a member of the Board of Education.
2. Understand their role as part of a governing body that should not engage in efforts to manage the district, individual schools, or programs.
3. Direct the Superintendent to develop a new strategic plan that prioritizes development of 21st-century skills; school safety; recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers; a robust portfolio of high-quality school options; and measurement/clear presentation of district, school, and student performance data (including student growth and proficiency).
4. Approve, monitor, and regularly report on progress against the new strategic plan.
5. Evaluate the Superintendent on a timeline that aligns with the release of district performance data, at the beginning of each school year.
6. Work cooperatively with the Denver community, including non-profits, civic leaders, and businesses to maximize support from private resources for the district.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- The DPS School Board will spend 75% or more of their meeting time focused on student outcomes and related strategies.
- Superintendent bonuses and contract extensions will be tied to positive student outcomes and thereby perpetuate effective leadership.
- DPS will successfully obtain private funding for student programming that increases by 10% year over year.

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THANK YOU
TO OUR SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

