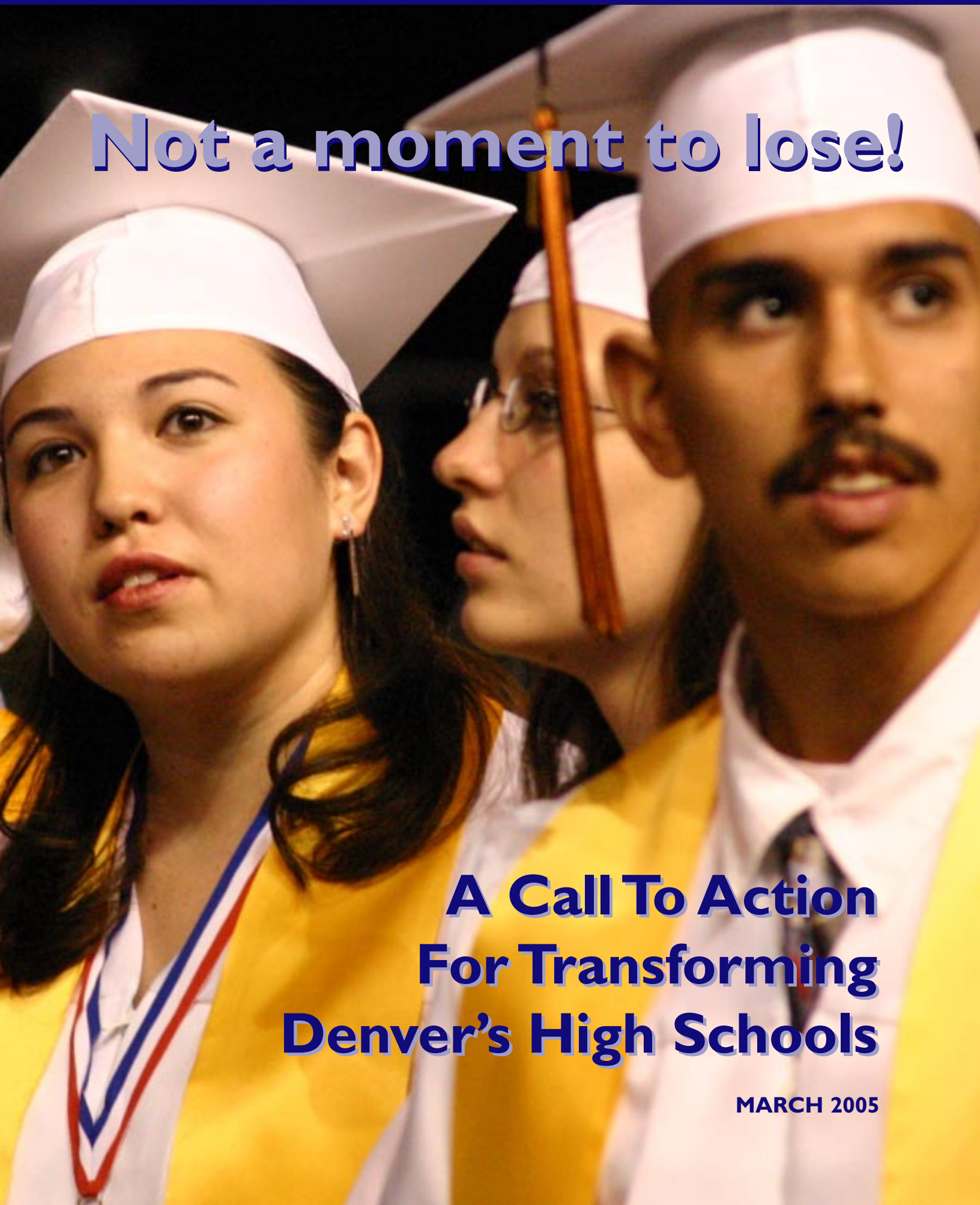
DENVER COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM



Not a moment to lose!

A Call To Action For Transforming Denver's High Schools

MARCH 2005

NOT A MOMENT TO LOSE!

A Call to Action For Transforming Denver's High Schools

March 2005

Report of the Denver Commission on Secondary School Reform

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Letter of Transmittal

March 2, 2005

To the Board of Education:

In April 2004 you created the Denver Commission on Secondary School Reform and asked us to provide you with ideas and recommendations on how to increase student achievement, close the achievement gap, lower the dropout rate and increase graduation rates. You also asked us to recommend how to use the funds targeted for secondary school reform that were included in the mill levy passed by voters in November 2003.

We commend the Board and the Superintendent for their courage in inviting an outside group to examine our high schools and their shortcomings. Denver is not unique in facing challenges in its schools. All urban districts are struggling with how to improve student achievement in the face of changing student needs. Today's high school students are more diverse than were yesterday's students, and many come to school facing obstacles and pressures reflective of today's society. Never before have schools been expected to educate <u>all</u> students to high standards.

Across the nation, schools are failing too many of our students. In Denver, the achievement gap separating white students and students of color is widening; graduation rates are lagging; and test scores remain well below state averages. Our findings call for immediate action to address these critical issues.

Our Work

For nine months we investigated high school reform initiatives; evaluated research, best practices and data; shadowed students at each of our comprehensive high schools; held a Student/Teacher Forum; commissioned three papers on reform; convened a colloquium of national high school reformers; and spoke extensively with principals, parents, students, teachers and community members.

Several early decisions guided our work. We focused on high schools because the most serious problems exist there. The District already has begun to address middle school opportunities, and many of our recommendations – particularly those on the importance of rigor, relevance and relationships and honoring individual student needs – are equally applicable to middle schools.

We also agreed to consider solutions that are directly within the control of the Denver Public Schools (DPS). While poverty, family, neighborhood and other factors affect student success, school systems must never use these conditions as excuses, but rather recognize them and help students succeed in spite of them. We agreed to focus on the future and not be constrained in our thinking by current budget or administrative realities. Finally, we kept students at the center of our deliberations and conversations.

At our Forum, one student's comments reflected what so many people told us during the course of our study, "If they actually listen to our voices, I think we'll be better off." Our students, families, teachers, school administrators and community members hunger to be heard, to be taken seriously, and to have good intentions turned into action.

Our Current Reality

Good things are happening in all of our high schools. Pockets of excellence do exist and DPS has undertaken important initiatives. But overall, the situation in Denver's high schools is urgent and demands your immediate attention.

Today's high school structure does not consistently support student learning. In fact, it hampers students and staff from achieving their goals. Class schedules move students from one subject to another with little connection between them or time for rigorous, meaningful learning. Teachers have limited opportuni-

ties to work and plan together or give students individual attention. While the demographics of Denver's students and the options available to them outside of school have changed, the structure of the system and our high schools has not. Moreover, our work uncovered discontent and distrust that seemed pervasive in the system – even in places where students are being well served.

Our Vision

We envision that Denver's public high schools will offer the best educational choices for students and their families. Every student who enters a Denver high school can and will graduate having mastered rigorous and relevant learning in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. All high schools will be of high quality.

For this to happen, our high schools and the District must become "learning organizations" where adults and students collaborate to achieve academic excellence and continuously improve their performance.

Achieving Our Vision

Our report sets forth three intertwined principles that will guide reform:

- *Rigor – High universal expectations and a rich, challenging learning experience for every student.*
- *Relevance – Learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives, interests and future plans and are aligned with real-world experiences and expectations.*
- *Relationships – A safe, respectful and caring environment in the District and at every school.*

Our report describes strategies and recommendations to achieve the vision:

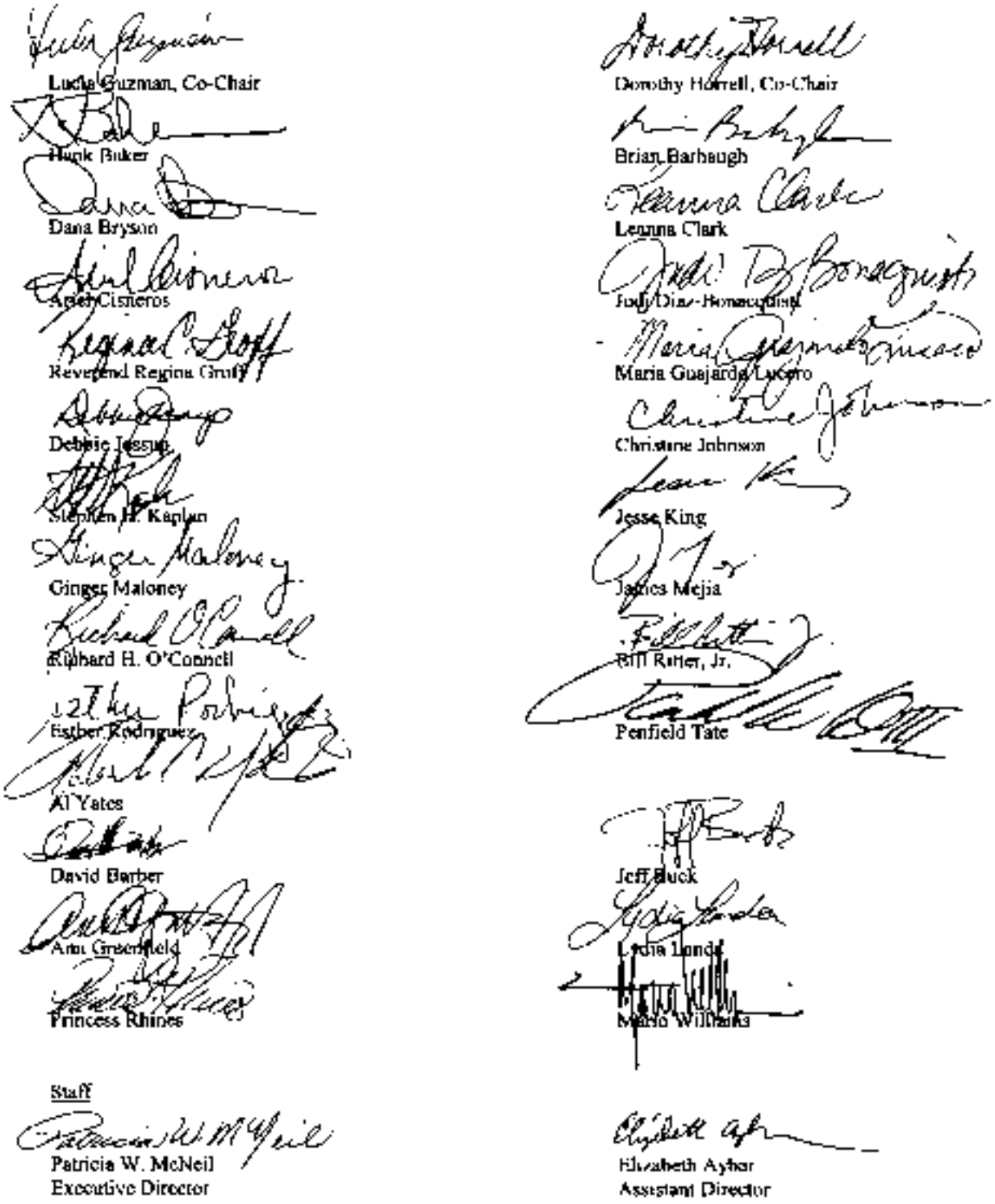
- *Treat students as individual learners.*
- *Make every high school a high quality school.*
- *Empower principals with authority, responsibility and accountability for student success.*
- *Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence and hold them accountable for student achievement.*
- *Offer families and students a choice among high quality high schools that reflect students' learning styles and interests.*
- *Create a new role for the District and reshape its relationship with schools and the community.*

We suggest steps that can be taken to implement our ideas, and we believe our recommendations must be considered and implemented as a package to be successful. There must be a systematic revitalization and redesign of the high school experience and learning opportunities we provide to young people. To ensure that high school revitalization becomes a sustainable reality, the District must undergo dramatic and thoughtful change. It is imperative that District guidelines and policies and the District-Denver Classroom Teachers Association Agreement support this reform. Parents, students, teachers and the community also must be actively involved. We need their hopes, ideas and concerns to be an integral part of this process. We also encourage examination of current programs and reform efforts within the District to build on and potentially expand those that demonstrate success.

We are confident that all of our high schools can become places of high achievement for all students. Successful schools in DPS and elsewhere have similar characteristics. They have a laser-like focus on student achievement and make learning relevant to students' lives and interests. They keep students at the center of their work. They organize and focus resources on student achievement. They provide students with the support and guidance they need to be successful. They take responsibility for the success of their students. They do not blame students or families or life circumstances for failure. They set high, clear standards. They break expectations into specific goals. They build the systems to support their goals and hold everyone accountable for results. They organize their schools so that strong, positive relationships exist among adults, between students and adults and among students. They have effective school leaders who set the tone and have the tools to foster success.

We want nothing less for all of Denver's young people. We hope that through us you will hear the voices of students, teachers, administrators and community members. We hope you will be compelled to take the steps necessary to turn those voices into action.

We intend for this report to provide the foundation for change, but there is much work to be done. We urge you to be bold, imaginative, courageous and resolute as you begin to create a new era of student achievement and success in our high schools. We stand ready to continue to support you as you take the next steps to transform our high schools. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. There is not a task more important or demanding of the community's collective will, creativity and energy than assuring that our public schools work – for our children, our society and our future.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Denver's public high schools are failing. The achievement gap separating white students from students of color is wide; graduation rates, particularly for Latino and African American students, are low; and test scores lag well behind statewide averages. In November 2003, voters called for action when they approved a mill levy that included $2 million to be directed each year to improve secondary education.

Facing an urgent need to reverse the decline and set priorities for mill levy revenues, the Denver Public Schools Board of Education and Superintendent Jerry Wartgow established the Denver Commission on Secondary School Reform in April 2004.

After careful analysis, the Commission presents *Not a Moment to Lose! A Call to Action for Transforming Denver's High Schools,* in hopes of transforming every high school into a high quality school. The plan proposes a new vision statement for Denver's high schools; establishes three guiding principles for reform that emphasize academic rigor, educational relevance and positive relationships; offers six strategies to help achieve the vision; and proposes 25 recommendations to be initiated in 2005.

These recommendations are ambitious yet achievable. Enacted together, they will lead to the creation of new Denver high schools that will increase student achievement, close the achievement gap and raise graduation rates for all students.

DENVER'S HIGH SCHOOLS TODAY

Thirty-four DPS schools currently serve 17,913 high school students. These include 12 neighborhood schools, nine charter schools, nine alternative schools, two contract schools, one magnet school and Denver On-Line High School. The Commission focused on the 12 neighborhood schools, the Denver School of the Arts magnet school and Middle College High School at the Career Education Center. These 14 schools serve more than 85 percent of the student body.

Denver's high school students are 49 percent Latino, 22 percent African American, 24 percent white, 3.6 percent Asian and 1.4 percent American Indian. Fifty-one percent of high school students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 11.6 percent are designated as students with special needs. About 10.6 percent of students are English Language Learners enrolled in English Language Acquisition (ELA) programs; many more do not possess the English language skills to succeed academically. Of ninth and 10th graders who have exited programs for ELA, 75 percent are below proficiency in reading, and many students with limited English proficiency drop out of school.

The numbers paint a disturbing and unacceptable picture of academic achievement:

- Only 38 percent of ninth graders were proficient in reading on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) test for 2003-04, including just 25 percent of Latino and 40 percent of African American students, compared with 71 percent of white students.

- Only 11 percent of ninth graders were proficient in math, including just 4 percent of Latino and 5 percent of African American students, compared with 37 percent of white students.

- Only 30 percent of 11th graders were college-ready based on their Colorado ACT scores, including just 12 percent of Latino and 17 percent of African American students, compared with 60 percent of white students.

- 18 percent of ninth graders were held back at the end of the 2003-04 school year; 62 percent were Latino, 20 percent African American and 14 percent white.

- 71 percent of eligible students graduated, including 62 percent of Latino students, 73 percent of African American students and 80 percent of white students.

- Only one high school (Denver School of the Arts) received an "excellent" school ranking by the state, and only four (Middle College, East, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson) were rated as "average."

The cost of not educating our young people is sizeable. Students who do not graduate from high school cost taxpayers money through social programs such as unemployment, welfare, health care, and through costs associated with our criminal justice system. The Colorado Foundation for Children and Families, using data provided by a 1999 RAND Corporation study, estimates that one high school dropout can be expected to cost the public in excess of $200,000 over the course of his or her life.[1] According to the Employment Policy Foundation, the lifetime earnings payoff for graduating from high school rather than dropping out is more than

$300,000.[2] In the 14 DPS schools we studied, 2,126 students who started ninth grade in 1999 did not graduate in June 2003. Estimating conservatively that one-third of these students dropped out rather than continuing their education elsewhere, the dropouts from the DPS class of 2003 in these schools alone will cost the public more than $140 million during their lifetimes, and will forego in excess of $210 million in earnings.

ACTION PLAN

Every decision made and every action taken to reform Denver's high schools must be tested against this ideal: Does it advance student learning? The Commission proposes a new vision statement to help guide the way:

Denver's public high schools will be the best educational choice for students and families. Every student who enters high school can and will graduate having mastered rigorous and relevant learning in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. All high schools will be of high quality.

This vision is rooted in three core principles that form the foundation for each strategy and recommendation aimed at reforming Denver's secondary schools:

- Rigor – High universal expectations and a rich, challenging learning experience for every student.
- Relevance – Learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives, interests and future plans and are aligned with real-world experiences and expectations.
- Relationships – A safe, respectful and caring environment in the District and at every school.[3]

Six specific strategies expound upon the vision statement and the core principles. They provide the framework for a new era for Denver's high schools where student achievement and success are the expected outcomes. The six strategies are:

1. Treat students as individual learners.
2. Make every high school a high quality school based on the principles of rigor, relevance, relationships and honoring individual students' needs.
3. Empower principals at each high school with authority, responsibility and accountability for school operations and student success.
4. Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence and hold them accountable for student achievement.
5. Offer families and students a choice among high quality high schools that reflect students' learning styles and interests.
6. Create a new role for the District and reshape its relationship with schools and the community.

The challenge, then, becomes converting concepts into real solutions. Thus, the Commission's recommendations are intended as specific measures aimed at initiating reform. The Commission proposes 25 recommendations that are outlined in the full report. Taken as a whole, these recommendations provide a roadmap for moving forward.

To ensure success, the Superintendent must be the face and champion of reform, accountable to the Board and the community for its success. At the same time, the process must engage all stakeholders within the schools and the community. To initiate the reform process, the Commission recommends that the Board and Superintendent:

- Create a template outlining standards and benchmarks for assessing student success and school quality based on the principles of rigor, relevance and relationships. Standards should include quantitative indicators, such as performance on state and local assessments and the Colorado ACT and graduation rates, and qualitative indicators, outlined in the full report, defining the attributes of a high quality high school.

- Design a process to assess how well each existing high school meets the standards and benchmarks, and consider starting new schools based on successful models.

- Require and support each high school in developing a plan for its future in concert with students, parents and community members – encouraging schools to innovate and enabling them to seek outside assistance to support their efforts.

- Empower principals. High-quality schools must be led by high-quality leaders who have the capacity to lead change, create a clear focused vision and assume responsibility for improving student achievement. Over time and with training and support, principals should assume responsibility for the budget, hiring, firing, scheduling, professional development and educational design for their schools.

- Assess the capacity of each high school principal to lead change and assume increasing responsibility for his/her school's performance. Identify, recruit, develop and compensate principals for their new roles. Create performance contracts between the district and principals to ensure accountability.

- Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence, creating strong and talented teacher leaders. Ensure that District policies and the District/Denver Classroom Teachers Association Agreement support these recommendations and focus on improving student achievement.

- Join with key public and private stakeholders to create a "Denver Compact for High Performing High Schools." This would stimulate community involvement in the reform process, establish ongoing forums for community dialogue and provide valuable assistance to the District and principals.

Additional recommendations in the full report include:

- Ensure that all schools begin to design experiences for students in all grades that stress individual attention, rigor, relevance and relationships. Efforts could include providing students with advisors or mentors, clarifying and communicating clear goals and expectations for students, and grouping students and teachers into smaller learning communities. Provide students with opportunities to develop individualized learning plans in concert with their families and teachers or advisor.

- Ensure that all schools are of high quality. Offer students a choice of schools and vibrant opportunities that reflect different learning styles and interests. Create an effective system to universally disseminate information about school choice to parents through a variety of vehicles. Require students to demonstrate an interest in attending their school of choice.

- Develop a timely and user-friendly information system to integrate data on student performance, student characteristics and educational programs. Use a unique student identifier, in concert with the state system, to follow individual student progress and provide accurate information on dropout, transfer and graduation rates as well as other indicators of student success.

- Reshape the District's central office into a service organization with the primary functions of achieving student success and supporting schools. The District administration must give high priority to creating open and frequent communication with principals, teachers, parents and students. Relationships between the central office and its schools must be based on trust. The focus of the central administration must be on setting clear goals and expectations, establishing standards and accountability measures, developing leadership for change at all levels, monitoring progress and disseminating data.

- Study changes in the methods of allocating funds to schools based on student characteristics. Commission studies on how resources can best be reallocated to support reform efforts, reflecting a clear focus on student achievement.

None of these recommendations is intended as one-size-fits-all reform. They will, however, begin a transformation that will:

- Ensure that all high schools are of high quality with high expectations for all students.
- Provide the best educational choices for students and families.
- Close the achievement gap.
- Increase graduation rates.

Undertaking such fundamental reform will not be easy. It will challenge administrators, principals and teachers, and it will require the participation of students, parents and community stakeholders. It will necessitate a change of culture, a change of will and a piercing focus on student achievement. The investment will reap untold dividends for all of Denver – especially for its children. Denver simply cannot afford to *not* transform its educational system.

The District and the community can and must do better. Denver *can* be the place where the odds are defied – where all students are held to and achieve high standards and where the public schools fulfill their promise as gateways to opportunity for all students. Their time is now. There is not a moment to lose!

INTRODUCTION

"The future is literally in our hands to mold as we like. But we cannot wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow is now."—Eleanor Roosevelt

Imagine a District where the public high schools are the best educational choice for students and parents. Imagine a District where every student who enters high school graduates having mastered a rigorous and relevant curriculum in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. Imagine how this would empower our students, enrich our community and energize our economy. If we can imagine it, we can make it happen.

The Denver Commission on Secondary School Reform spent nine months examining Denver's high schools, exploring best practices in Colorado and around the country, evaluating research findings, and listening to students, families, teachers and principals to learn what it would take to achieve this vision. Our report proposes changes from the District to the school to the classroom. We recommend bold system-wide action to create learning organizations that will educate all students to high levels and make a real difference in their lives.

By adopting this action agenda and engaging stakeholders, we believe that the Board of Education and the Superintendent can transform the District and its high schools – and ultimately its middle schools – into effective learning organizations that increase student achievement, close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates.

Every day thousands of young adults arrive at the doors of Denver's high schools. Waiting for them are hundreds of teachers and administrators. What happens within the walls of these high schools directly affects the lives and futures of these students and has a lasting impact on the entire community. Rethinking and revitalizing our high schools will be complex and challenging. National and state policies have a significant influence, but it is within our district, schools and classrooms where the challenge will be won or lost.

The urgency and importance of this mission cannot be underestimated. Every day we allow the status quo to continue:

One more student gives up.
One more teacher decides to leave the profession in frustration.
One more principal puts in long hours addressing what seems like a losing battle.
One more family feels the despair of an unfulfilled promise, and
Our community is deprived of a strong educational system so essential to its future well-being.

It is important to be deliberate in our actions, invest in building the foundation for change and involve stakeholders in decision-making, but we must get started now. It is time to act! There's not a moment to lose!

DENVER HIGH SCHOOLS TODAY

Within Denver Public Schools (DPS), there are examples of thriving high schools and excellent programs. There also are students who excel, graduate, flourish at prestigious colleges and universities and become successful in adult life. But many students drop out and fail to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. This is especially true for Latino, African American and American Indian students.

Although the official graduation rate was 70.6 percent in 2002-03, other analyses suggest the rate may be as low as 50 percent.[4] There are significant achievement gaps between students of color and those from low-income families and students who are white and from middle-income families, and there are disparities in performance across high schools. In 2002-03, 42 percent of students who went to college in Colorado required some form of remediation.[5]

The Commission intends that its recommendations improve the experience for all students – those who are currently succeeding and those who have been left behind.

Denver has 34 schools that serve high school age students. These include 12 neighborhood schools, nine charter schools, nine alternative schools, two contract schools, one magnet school and Denver On-line High School. Some of these schools serve students in the lower grades as well as students in grades nine through 12. (See Appendix B for the list of schools and enrollment.)

The number of high school students has been increasing over the past few years, as has the number of schools that serve them. As of October 1, 2004, there were 17,913 high school students in DPS, an increase of 384 students from 2003 and 720 students from 2002.[6] Latino and African American students account for most of this increase.

In 2003-04, 17,529 students attended high school in DPS. These students were 49 percent Latino, 22 percent African American, 24 percent white, 3.6 percent Asian, and 1.4 percent American Indian. Fifty-one percent of high school students qualified for free and reduced lunch and 11.6 percent were designated as students with special needs. In May 2004, 1,154 ninth graders were retained in ninth grade for the following school year; of these 62

percent were Latino, 20 percent were African American and 14 percent were white. In all, 20 percent of all Latino ninth graders were retained; 17 percent of all African American freshmen and 14 percent of all white freshmen.

Only 10.6 percent of high school students were identified as English Language Learners (of which 90 percent were Spanish speakers), but many other students do not possess the English language skills to fully succeed in academic coursework. By law, students may only stay in English Language Acquisition (ELA) programs for up to three years. While it is relatively easy to learn conversational language in a short period of time, it can take five years or longer to gain proficiency in a new language to perform academically at grade level. The amount of time varies based on the skills students possess in their native language. Of the ninth and 10th graders who have been out of ELA for a year or more, 25 percent performed at the proficient level in reading on Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests and 55 percent were partially proficient. Although data are not readily available, many students with limited English proficiency drop out of school.[7]

The state is changing the way school districts must calculate graduation rates, and statistics are not yet available for 2003-04. The state is requiring districts to report rates using individual student identifiers. Eventually, this system will allow DPS to know whether students who move from school to school or to another district graduate from a high school in Colorado.

The Commission focused on the 12 traditional high schools, the Denver School of the Arts (DSA) and Middle College High School at the Career Education Center. While Commissioners visited many of the other schools and while their leaders and students participated in our activities, we concentrated on these 14 schools because they serve more than 85 percent of the student body.

Of the 14 high schools we studied, only one, DSA, has received a School Accountability Rating (SAR) of "excellent" from the state. Only four (Middle College High School, East, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson) have received a rating of "average." The other nine schools are rated as "low performing." The SAR is based solely on CSAP scores. CSAP scores, however, represent an incomplete picture of performance.

In addition to CSAP data, the Commission examined data on grades[8], Colorado American College Testing (ACT) scores[9], graduation, students who repeat ninth grade, attendance,[10] suspensions, expulsions, performance of English Language Learners (ELL), students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, student transfer rates, as well as the experience of teachers and student-teacher ratios. We examined the differences between schools and outcomes for different racial and ethnic groups, with particular emphasis on Latino and African American students

Figure 1: The Performance of DPS High SchoolStudents – 2003-04

38 Percent of ninth graders who were proficient or above in reading
- 25 percent of Latino students
- 40 percent of African American students
- 71 percent of white students

11 Percent of ninth graders who were proficient or above in math
- 4 percent of Latino students
- 5 percent of African American students
- 37 percent of white students

39 Percent of 10th graders who were proficient or above in reading
- 25 percent of Latino students
- 33 percent of African American students
- 70 percent of white students

10 Percent of 10th graders who were proficient or above in math
- 2 percent of Latino students
- 2 percent of African American students
- 30 percent of white students

61 Percent of courses passed by ninth graders with a C or better
- 53 percent by Latino students
- 62 percent by African American students
- 78 percent by white students

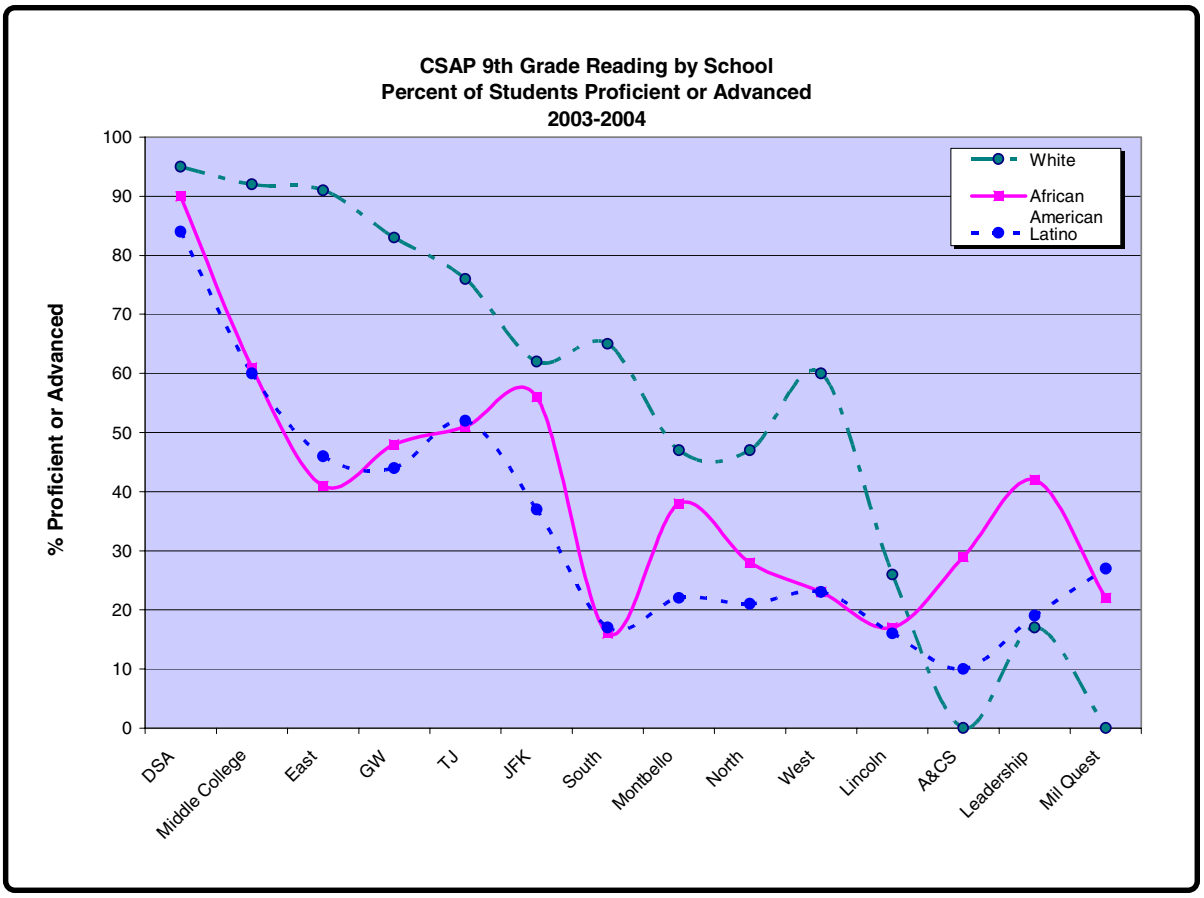
30 Percent of 11th graders who passed the Colorado ACT with a score above 20 - indicating they will have the necessary skills to succeed in a four year college without remediation
- 12 percent Latino students
- 17 percent African American students
- 60 percent white students

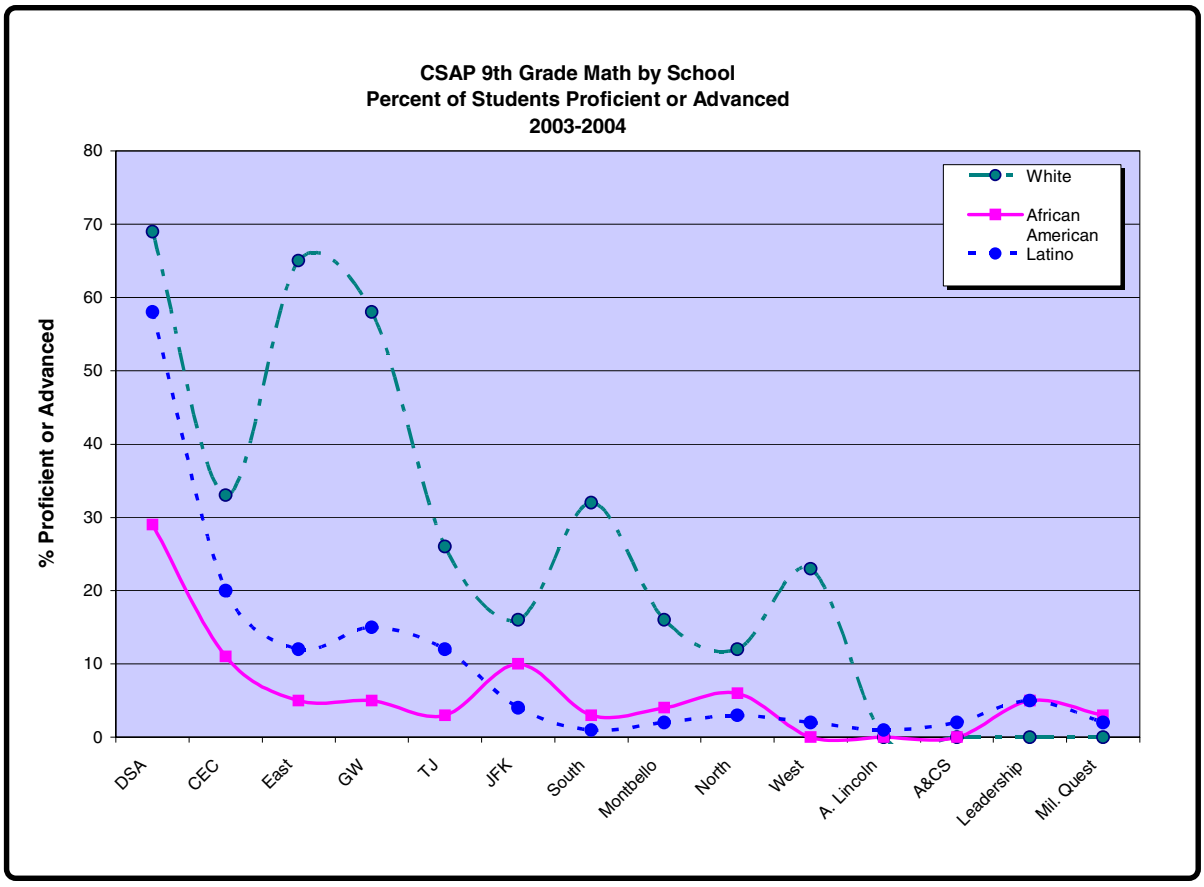
18 Percent of ninth grade students who were retained in 9th grade after May 2004
- 62 percent of students held back were Latino
- 20 percent were African American
- 14 percent were white

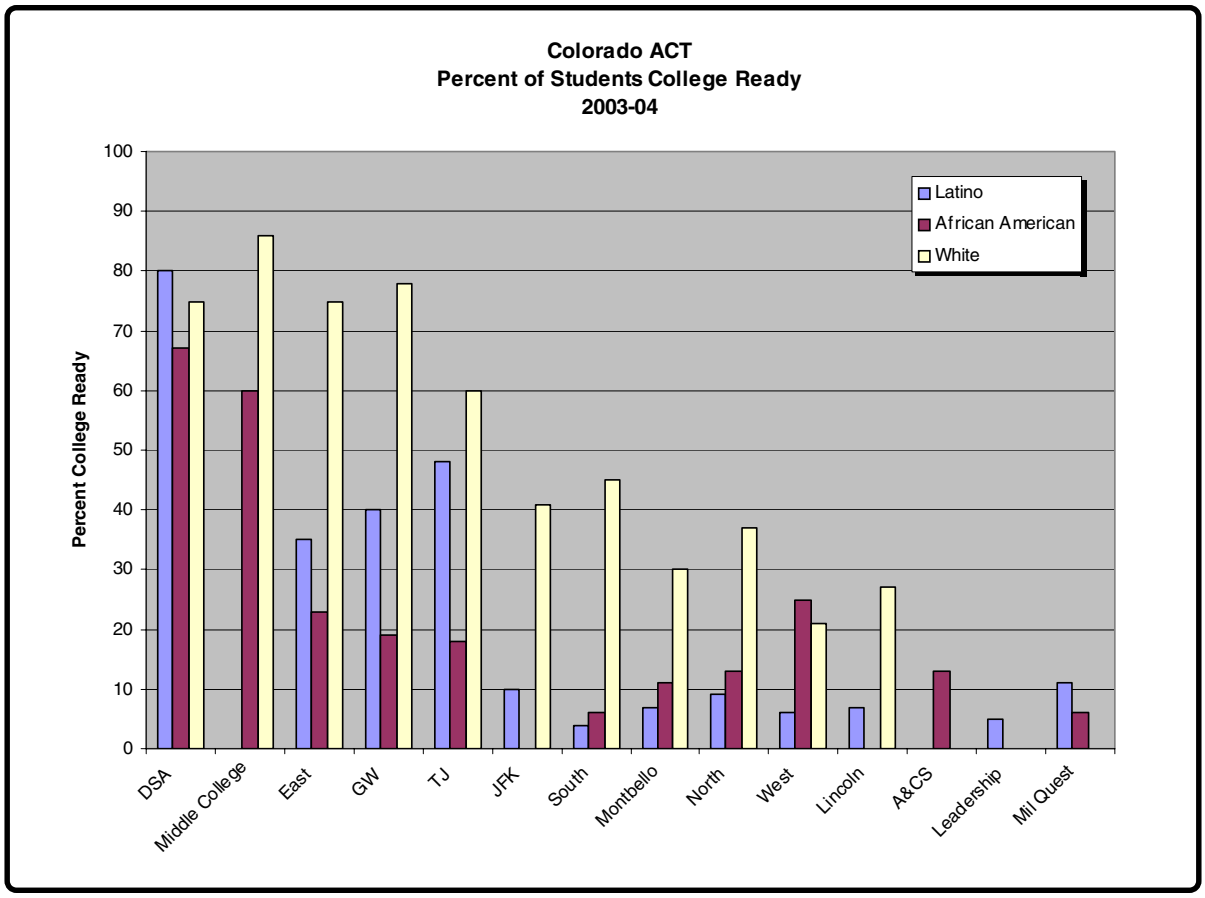
86 Percent attendance rate for high school students
- 83 percent for Latino students
- 88 percent for African American students
- 91 percent for white students

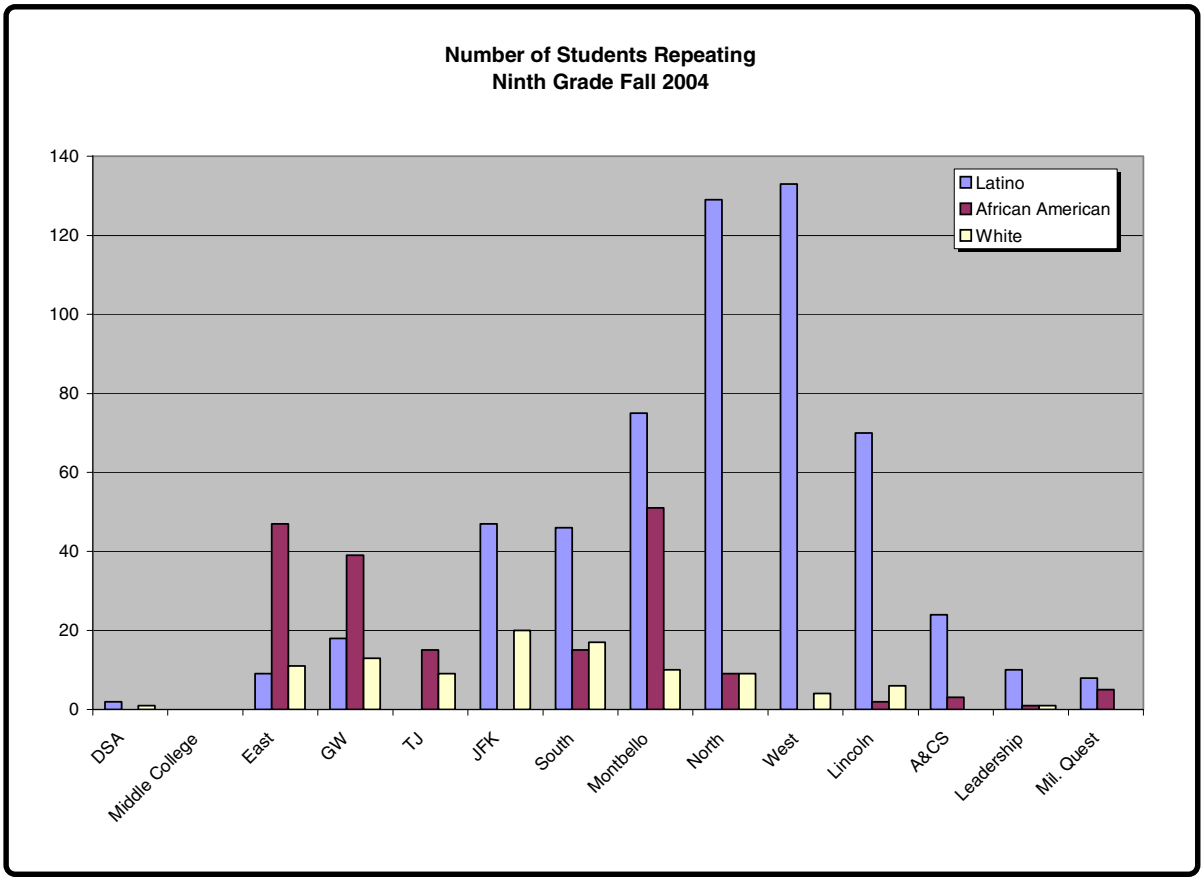
71 Percent of students graduating from high school in 2003[12]
- 62 percent Latino students
- 73 percent African American students
- 80 percent white students

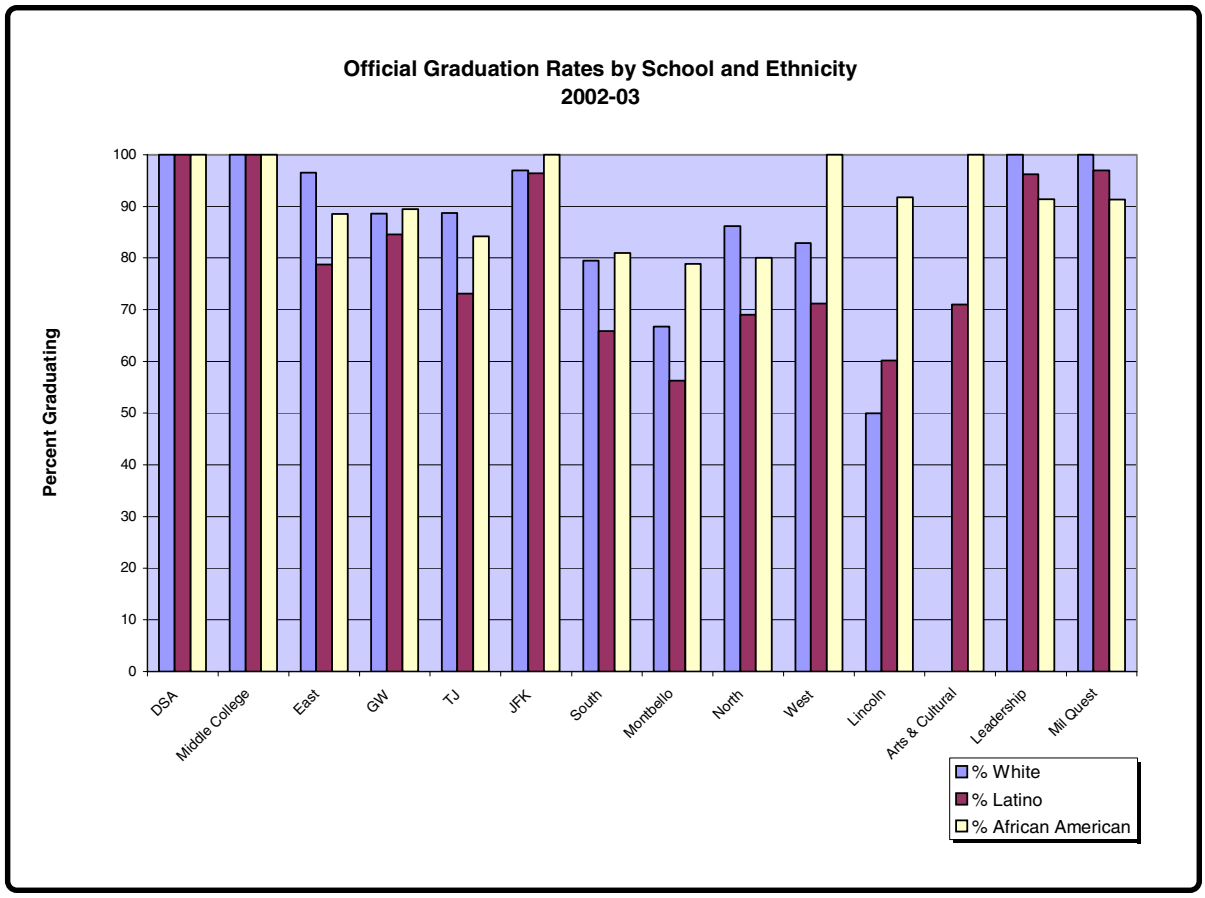
42 Percent of students who needed remediation at Colorado colleges

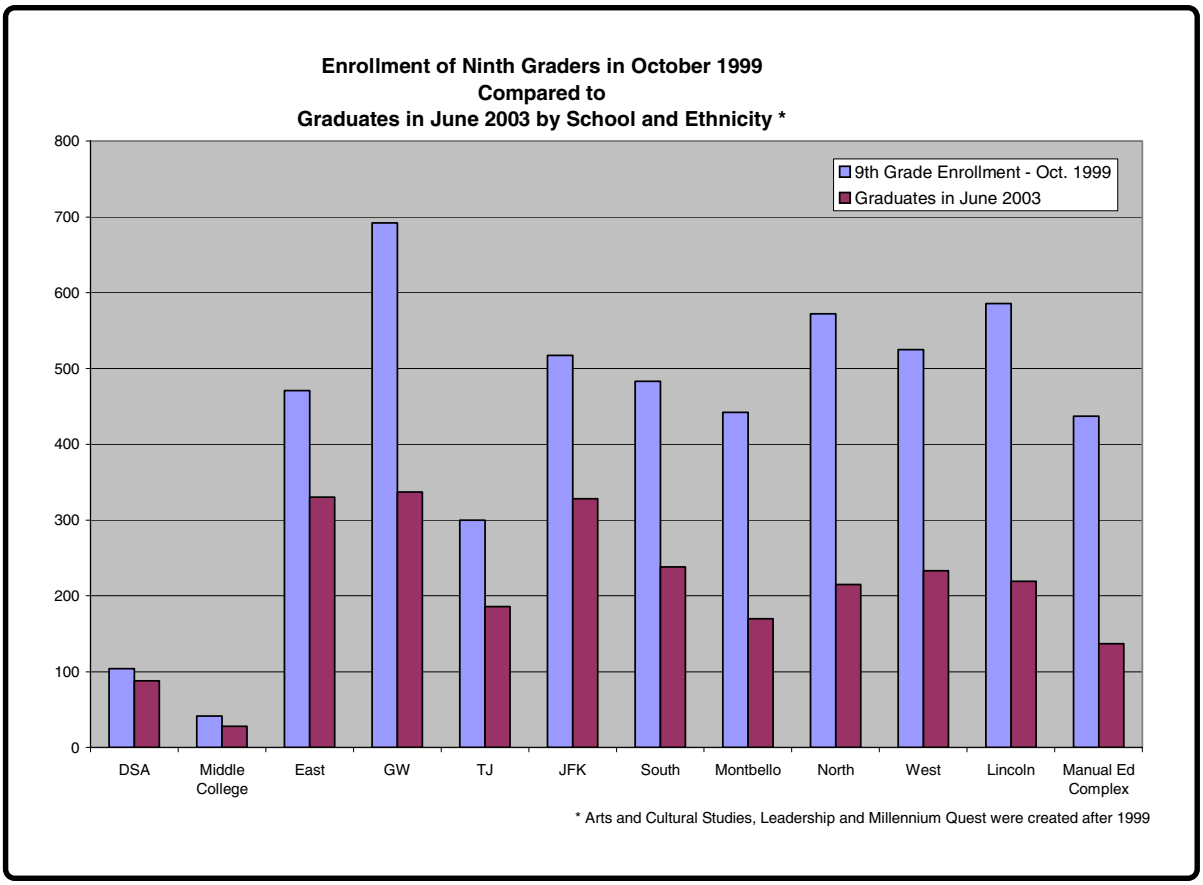

CSAP 9th Grade Reading by School
Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced
2003-2004
% Proficient or Advanced
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
White
African American
Latino
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
A&CS
Leadership
Mil Quest

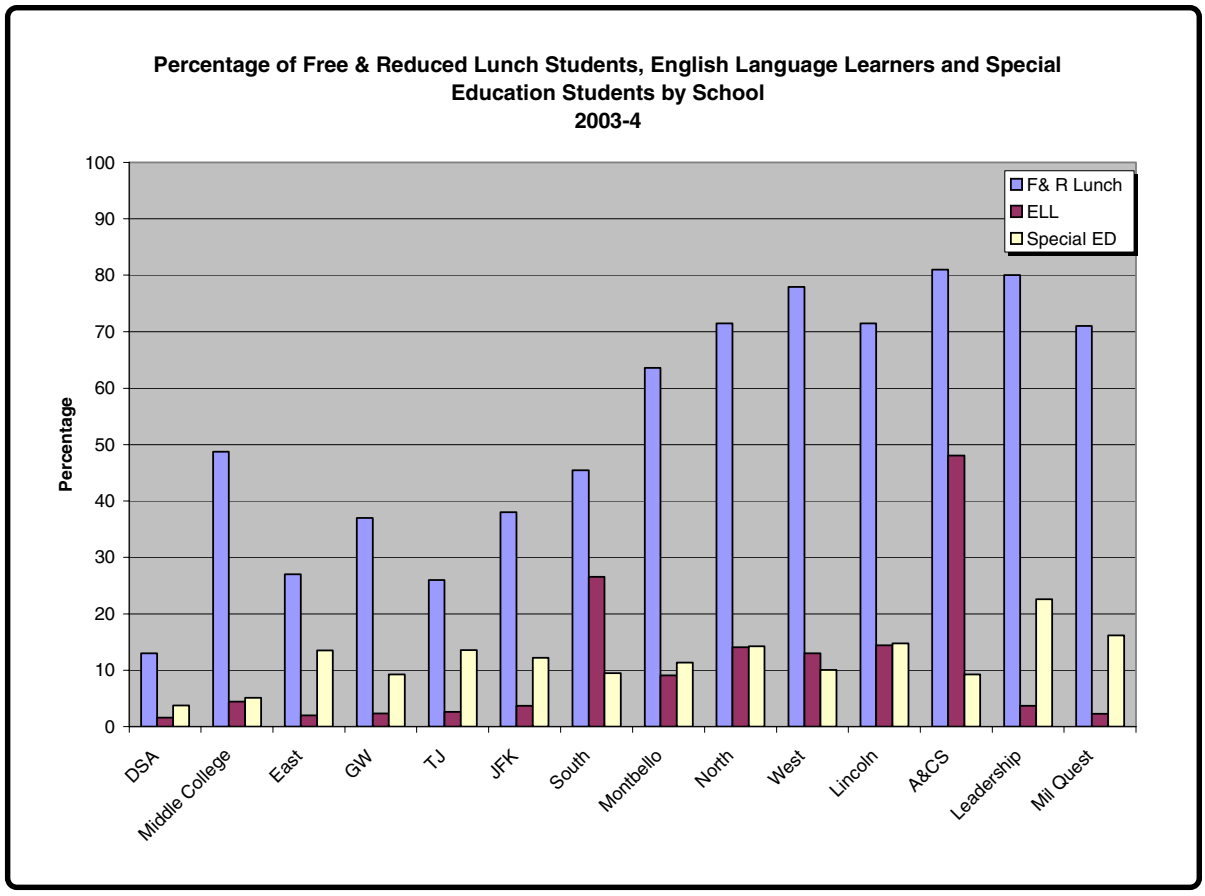

CSAP 9th Grade Math by School
Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced
2003-2004
% Proficient or Advanced
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
White
African American
Latino
DSA
CEC
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
A. Lincoln
A&CS
Leadership
Mil. Quest

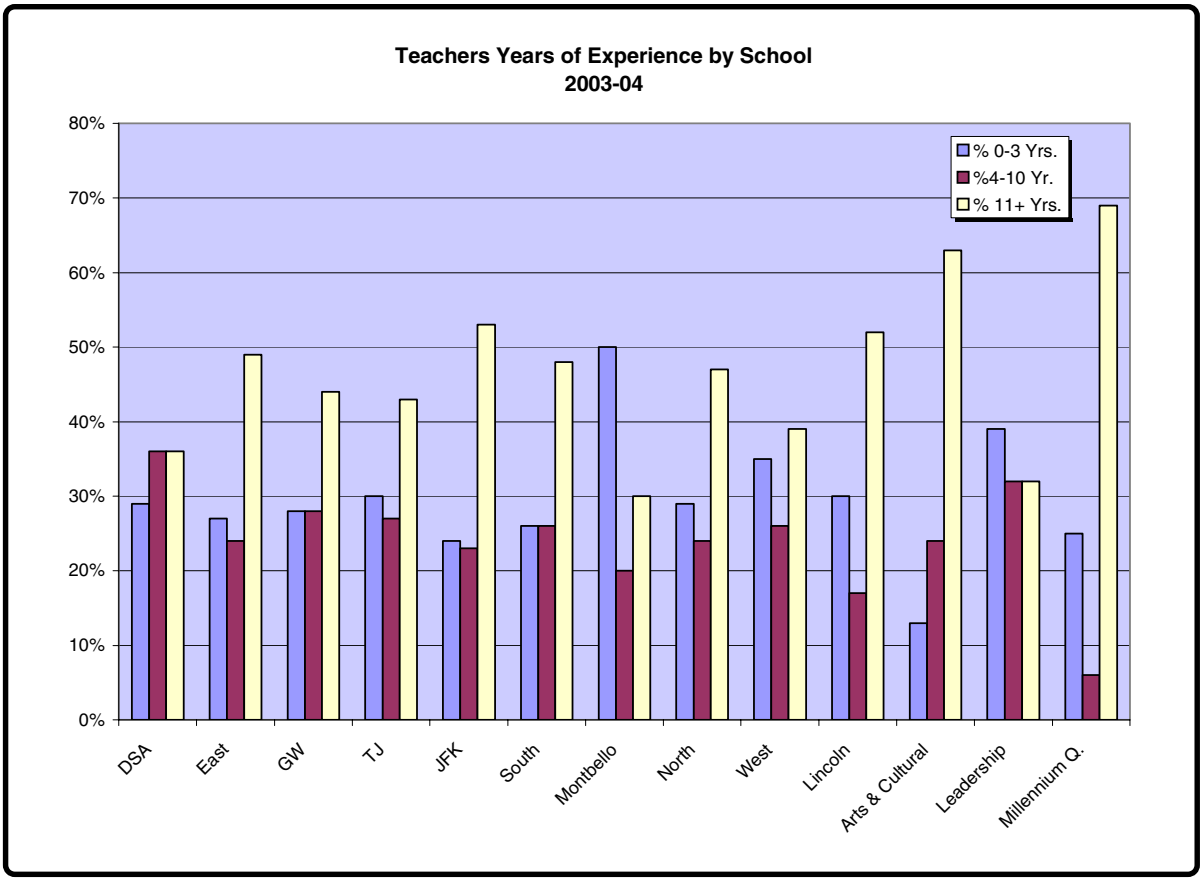

Colorado ACT
Percent of Students College Ready
2003-04
Percent College Ready
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Latino
African American
White
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
A&CS
Leadership
Mil Quest


Number of Students Repeating
Ninth Grade Fall 2004
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Latino
African American
White
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
A&CS
Leadership
Mil. Quest


Official Graduation Rates by School and Ethnicity
2002-03
Percent Graduating
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
Arts & Cultural
Leadership
Mil Quest
% White
% Latino
% African American


Enrollment of Ninth Graders in October 1999
Compared to
Graduates in June 2003 by School and Ethnicity *
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
9th Grade Enrollment - Oct. 1999
Graduates in June 2003
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
Manual Ed Complex
* Arts and Cultural Studies, Leadership and Millennium Quest were created after 1999


Percentage of Free & Reduced Lunch Students, English Language Learners and Special Education Students by School
2003-4
Percentage
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
F& R Lunch
ELL
Special ED
DSA
Middle College
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
A&CS
Leadership
Mil Quest


Teachers Years of Experience by School
2003-04
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
% 0-3 Yrs.
%4-10 Yr.
% 11+ Yrs.
DSA
East
GW
TJ
JFK
South
Montbello
North
West
Lincoln
Arts & Cultural
Leadership
Millennium Q.

who make up 72 percent of the student body. Taken together the data paint a startling picture of the disparity among racial and ethnic groups and among high schools within DPS. (See Figure 1 and Tables 1-10 in Appendix C.)

The Commission also looked at Advanced Placement (AP) and college level course taking, transfer and turnover rates, teen pregnancy data, and the number and characteristics of high school teachers.

In 2003-04, the 14 high schools offered a total of 78 AP courses. The Commission was unable to obtain an unduplicated count of students enrolled in AP classes. However, statistics show a total enrollment of 2,508 students. Seventy-seven percent of those enrolled took the AP exam; 39 percent of exam takers received a passing score of 3, 4 or 5. These figures suggest that of those who took AP courses, 30 percent passed an AP exam. In 2003-04, 316 students in DPS took college-level courses. We were not able to obtain data on the performance of these students, but students who pass these courses earn college credit.

The Commission had difficulty obtaining data on student transfers and turnover rates. However, in 2003-04, 69 percent of 12th graders in traditional high schools, DSA and Middle College High School at the Career Education Center (Middle College) had attended the same school for four years. In 2002-03, 84 percent of students who entered in October 2002 were in the same school at the end of the year. However, these figures vary significantly by school. We heard anecdotally during our school visits that some students transfer from DPS to schools in the surrounding counties and often return during the school year; others travel to Mexico for periods of time and may not return to their home high school. It also appears that there is considerable transfer between schools prior to the day when students are officially counted, October 1.

In 2002, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,329 young women from Denver high schools gave birth. Most of these young women were students at West, Lincoln, North, Montbello and schools in the Manual education complex. Florence Crittenton, a DPS alternative high school that provides services to pregnant and parenting teens, served 133 students in 2002.[11]

DPS employed 14,173 people in 2003-04; of those, 6,892 were full time and 7,281 were part time. There were 4,076 teachers in the system, including 830 at the traditional high schools and DSA. Forty-five percent of the teachers at these schools had 11 or more years of experience, 24 percent had four to 10 years, and 30 percent had zero to three years. Sixty-four percent of these teachers were female and 36 percent were male, 77 percent were white, 11 percent were Latino and 7 percent were African American.

There were some clear distinctions among the 14 target high schools. These are described below. Complete comparisons by school and ethnicity on CSAP, the Colorado ACT, courses passed with a C or better, graduation, attendance, suspensions, expulsions and ninth grade repeaters can be found in Appendix C.

Denver School of the Arts (DSA) has received an "excellent" rating by the state for the past three years. DSA has admission requirements. Although these requirements are not based on academic performance, students must audition, interview, provide letters of recommendation and express an interest in being part of a school with a distinctive theme. Among DPS high schools, DSA has one of the lowest percentages of Latino, ELA, special education and free and reduced lunch students and the highest percentage of white students. DSA has the highest percentage of students who are proficient or advanced on CSAP in reading and math across all racial and ethnic groups with the exception of white students in 10th grade math. Ninth graders at DSA passed 87 percent of the courses they took with an average of C or better. Scores of 11th graders on the Colorado ACT are high across all demographic groups, with more than 65 percent of all groups testing as college-ready. DSA offers four Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and four students also took college courses. In 2002-03 the school had a 100 percent graduation rate. DSA is a relatively small school with 441 students in grades nine through 12 in 2003-04.

Middle College High School at the Career Education Center (Middle College) is also one of the top performing high schools in the district based on test scores and graduation rates. Middle College's stated admission policy is a 2.5 Grade Point Average (GPA) and good references from several teachers. Students must submit an application, participate in an interview with a teacher and a student and provide a writing sample. Students with a lower GPA do apply and some are admitted. Middle College looks for a student's understanding of its program, desire to be there and interest in taking college level courses in the junior and senior years. In 2003-04, Middle College students were 52 percent Latino, 31 percent white and 13 percent African American. Forty-two percent of students qualified for free and reduced lunch and 4.4 percent are ELA. Sixty-five percent of Middle College ninth graders were proficient or above in reading and 21 percent were proficient or above in math. While 10th graders scored lower in both subjects, they still performed among the highest in the district. Ninth graders at Middle College passed 91 percent of their courses with an average of C or better. On the Colorado ACT, 86 percent of white and 60 percent of African American 11th graders achieved college readiness, but none of the nine Latino students did. Middle College does not offer AP courses; instead, students take college level courses in their junior and senior years. Most students complete at least one year of an associate's degree before graduating from high school. In 2003-04, 81 students took college courses. The school had a 100 percent graduation rate in 2002-03. Middle College is a small school with 271 students in 2003-04.

East, George Washington (GW) and Thomas Jefferson (TJ) are also considered to be among the higher performing schools in the city. They are large comprehensive high schools. Next to DSA, they have the lowest percentages of Latino, ELA and free and reduced lunch eligible students. Each school has a relatively large number of African American students. Of ninth and 10th graders in these schools, at least 57 percent scored at or above proficiency in reading on the 2004 CSAP and at least 14 percent scored at this level in math. When CSAP scores are broken down by race and ethnicity, however, the results suggest that there are significant achievement gaps at each school. (See Appendix C.) Ninth graders at each of the three schools passed more than 65 percent of their courses with an average of C or better and more than 86 percent of students graduated. At East and GW more than 75 percent of white 11th graders achieved college readiness on the Colorado ACT, while 60 percent achieved this level at TJ. No more than 23 percent of African American and 48 percent of Latino students tested as college-ready at any of the three schools. East offers 13 AP courses, the most of any high school; GW offers 11; and TJ offers six. Twelve students at East took college courses, 10 at GW and five at TJ. At GW and TJ, 78 percent of seniors had been in attendance all four years; 70 percent at East. East had 1,853 students in 2003-04, GW had 1,621 students and TJ had 1,110.

John F. Kennedy (JFK) and South are rated as "low performing." They are large comprehensive high schools. JFK and South had higher percentages of ninth and 10th graders proficient or above in math and 10th graders proficient in reading than other low performing schools. They also had higher percentages of students who tested as college-ready on the Colorado ACT and passed courses with a C or better. JFK and South have higher percentages of white students and free and reduced lunch students than other low-performing schools. South has the second highest percentage of ELA students of all the 14 high schools. JFK offers six AP courses; South offers seven. Twelve students at JFK and 27 students at South took college courses in 2003-04. Eighty-three percent of seniors at JFK and 62 percent at South started there as ninth graders. In 2002-03, JFK had a graduation rate of 96.6 percent and South's was 74.7 percent. JFK had 1,564 students in 2003-04 and South had 1,379 students.

Arts & Cultural Studies, Leadership Studies, Lincoln, Millennium Quest, Montbello, North, and West High Schools are rated as "low performing." Most of these schools have high percentages of Latino, ELA and free and reduced lunch students. Less than 33 percent of ninth and 10th graders are proficient or above in reading in all of these schools; 5 percent or fewer are proficient or above in math. All of these schools have at least 50 percent free and reduced lunch students. Arts & Cultural Studies has the highest percentage of Latino, ELA and free and reduced lunch students of the target high schools. Of the 11th graders at each of these schools, fewer than 26 percent of African American, 11 percent of Latino and 38 percent of white students achieved college readiness on the Colorado ACT. West and Montbello each offer nine AP courses; Lincoln offers six; North offers five; and Arts and Cultural Studies and Millennium Quest offer one each. At Lincoln, 95 students took college-level courses in 2003-04; 26 at Montbello; 21 at Leadership and 14 at Arts and Cultural Studies. Seventy-five percent of seniors were at North for all four years of high school; 68 percent at West and 66 percent at Lincoln. Leadership and Millennium Quest have high graduation rates – each greater than 90 percent – while graduation rates at the other schools are less than 78 percent.

THE GAP IN ACHIEVEMENT AND GRADUATION RATES

The statistics described in this report make clear that in high schools with high percentages of students of color, low-income students and ELA students, performance is lower than in schools with larger percentages of white and middle-income students. On every indicator, Latino, African American and American Indian students fare less well than white and Asian students. They perform at low rates on CSAP tests, on passing courses with a grade of C or better, and on the Colorado ACT. They are less likely to take AP or college-level courses. They have lower attendance rates, more suspensions and expulsions and lower graduation rates, and they are more likely to have to repeat ninth grade. Since Latino and African American students make up 72 percent of the DPS high school student population, their success or failure directly affects the District's success or failure.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

The Commission was not able to obtain or analyze all the data on DPS high schools. The assessments of each high school described in our Action Steps should dig deeper into the data. They should also identify data that are not now collected or easily available that will be needed to inform and advance the reform process.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The personal cost to students of the performance of our high schools is unacceptable; the economic and civic loss to our community is substantial. In personal terms, students who do not graduate from high school are less likely to be employed and have lower average earnings than high school graduates or those with some college.

In economic terms, today's economy is creating more new jobs that call for higher skills and more education. More than ever before, young people must have the knowledge and skills to continue their education after high school if they want to get a middle-class job. A 2004 study prepared for Denver's Workforce Development Office suggests that there will be a high demand for jobs that require at least a high school diploma and some postsecondary education. While undereducated young people may find a job, they are unlikely to have the education and skills to get or move up to higher paying jobs. Colorado has been fortunate in attracting many college-educated workers, but economic advantage is temporary in a global economy. Technology, finance and even human capital are more mobile than ever before. Other states and communities may become more attractive to well-educated workers.

The cost to our citizens of not educating our young people is sizeable. Students who do not graduate from high school cost taxpayers money through social programs such as unemployment, welfare, health care, and through costs associated with our criminal justice system. The Colorado Foundation for Children and Families, using data provided by a 1999 RAND Corporation study, estimates that one high school dropout can be expected to cost the public in excess of $200,000 over the course of his or her life.[13] According to the Employment Policy Foundation, the lifetime earnings payoff for graduating from high school rather than dropping out is more than $300,000.[14] In the 14 DPS schools we studied, 2,126 students who started ninth grade in 1999 did not graduate in June 2003. Estimating conservatively that one-third of these students dropped out rather than continuing their education elsewhere, the dropouts from the DPS class of 2003 in these schools alone will cost the public over $140 million during their lifetimes, and will forego in excess of $210 million in earnings.

In addition to these individual and economic costs, the potential harm to our civic life must be considered. The future leadership and well-being of our community will depend upon the talents and skills of our young people. If too many of our students are not ready to step into full participation in our economy or our democracy, if too many never reach their potential as citizens because we have failed to educate them, our community will feel the effects.

A NEW VISION

What would it take to change the current realities in Denver's high schools?

The Commission believes the District must start with a compelling vision and the will to accomplish it. As Yogi Berra once said: "If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there!"[15]

Many important initiatives are underway in our high schools. Incredible energy is being expended, much good will exists and lots of activity is occurring in every school and within the District administration. But the day-to-day activity is all-consuming and largely unfocused. It must be immediately harnessed and directed. The Commission proposes a new vision statement to guide the way:

Denver's public high schools will be the best educational choice for students and families. Every student who enters high school can and will graduate having mastered rigorous and relevant learning in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. All high schools will be of high quality.

To achieve this vision, there must be a laser-like focus on student achievement and on creating conditions that ensure each high school is a high quality school. There can be no excuses, and all personnel, systems, processes and resources at all levels within the District and its high schools must be aligned and held accountable for the achievement of this vision.

Denver's high schools have a long history. The first high school was established in 1873 with the first graduates receiving their diplomas in 1877. The basic design of Denver's comprehensive high schools began to take shape in the 1920s when the Carnegie unit was developed, and was firmly established in the 1950s. During the Depression, the idea grew that all young people should go to high school and that education was crucial to economic and social position. As more young people entered high school, educators sought ways to meet their diverse needs. In 1959, the Carnegie Corporation released an historic report, *The American High School Today*, based on a study headed by James B. Conant, former president of Harvard. After studying 55 high schools across the nation, including Denver's Manual High School, Conant concluded that in order to provide a comprehensive education for a broad range of adolescents, a school needed to serve at least 400 students and offer college preparatory, general and vocational courses of study. High schools adopted many of Conant's ideas and also tried to meet the needs of students by offering an ever-increasing variety of electives and after-school experiences.

The current structure of our high schools was modeled on the factory assembly line, with set schedules, courses and approaches to instruction and discipline. Classes are 45-50 minutes long. Students move from one class to the next with virtually no connection between what they are learning from class to class. The school day is highly structured, and teachers have little time to work and plan together or with students.

Fifty years ago, most jobs did not require a high school diploma, so it did not matter whether all students graduated from high school. Only a few jobs required a postsecondary education. A young person did not need a high school diploma to join the military, and many young women planned to be full-time homemakers.

Times have changed. The skills needed to participate in the workplace and our democracy are different than they were in the 1950s. A high school diploma is a prerequisite for entering the military and getting a good job. A higher level of academic skills and some postsecondary learning is required for most employment opportunities and for functioning effectively in society. Information is everywhere and students need to not only obtain knowledge and skills, but also be able to use them effectively. Many young people help raise and support their families by holding responsible jobs while also going to school. And modern research has expanded our knowledge about how learning occurs. We now know that the brain is still developing as young people enter their 20s.

While the demographics of Denver's students and the options available to them outside of school have changed, the structure of the school system and our high schools has not changed – constricting the ability of well-meaning educators to do what is best for students. We can no longer tinker around the edges of the 1950s-style high school and get the results we need for today's students.[16]

Our high schools must undergo dramatic transformation. We must rethink their organizational structure, how students and teachers spend their time, how the needs of individual students are met, what is taught and how it is taught, how teachers and students are supported, how resources are allocated, and what constitutes effective leadership at the school level. The role of the District must change to create a culture and capacity that supports the continuous improvement of each school.

Recommendation on Student Achievement

There should be a laser-like focus on student achievement and a culture of success that supports high expectations at all levels of the District.

Three Core Principles – Rigor, Relevance and Relationships

The Commission's vision is rooted in three core principles that form the foundation for each reform strategy and recommendation. The three intertwined principles are:

- Rigor – High universal expectations and a rich, challenging learning experience for every student.
- Relevance – Learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives, interests and future plans and are aligned with real-world experiences and expectations.
- Relationships – A safe, respectful and caring environment in the District and at every school.

While there are no easy answers, we are convinced that if the students of Denver's high schools experienced the curriculum and environment these R's represent, the current reality would look much different.

The First R – Rigor: High universal expectations and a rich, challenging learning experience for every student.

Rigor means creating learning experiences that prepare all young people for postsecondary learning and adult life. A rigorous education starts with an expectation that all students will achieve at high levels. It requires a clear and widely shared understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do – the results to be achieved. Standards, assessments and graduation requirements must reflect this understanding. Learning experiences at each school must be rich and challenging and designed to meet the needs of individual students.

High Expectations

The phrase "high expectations for all students" has become somewhat of a catch phrase – often seen in vision statements, but rarely inculcated into the belief system of a district, school, classroom or larger community. Americans have long believed that some students are born smart and others are not. While many also believe that any child who works hard can learn, they also expect that only those who are "smart" can achieve at high levels. Schools are organized to reflect this idea.

A new understanding of how to improve achievement has emerged. Achievement improves for all students in schools and classrooms with high expectations and a rigorous curriculum. The attitude of teachers about the ability of their students affects achievement, and students' perceptions of teachers' expectations serve as a strong predictor of how responsibly they engage in academic work.[17] Because it is difficult to overcome the belief that only some students can achieve at high levels, school districts and school leaders must be unrelenting in their efforts to convince students, families, teachers, staff members and the larger community that "smart is not something you are, it's something you get,"[18] and that hard work and high expectations will pay off for everyone. In order to do this, everyone must know that student achievement is Job #1.

A Shared Understanding of What Students Should Know and Be Able to Do

The Commission wrestled with how to define what students should know and be able to do when they graduate from a DPS high school. We concluded that at a minimum, students should master a high level of skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, measuring, estimating, calculating, observing and problem solving. They also should be developing the ability to make good choices; developing critical thinking skills; and taking responsibility for learning. These essential abilities are the required gateway skills for success in postsecondary education, the military, citizenship and the workplace and adult life. They should not be confused with basic skills; rather, they should reflect the high level of performance needed to succeed in life after high school.

Standards, Assessments and Graduation Requirements

Standards describe the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in school and life. Ideally, they outline a common core of expectations that are widely understood and embraced by schools, students, families and the community. Colorado has developed content standards and grade level expectations in reading, writing, math, economics, civics, history, foreign language, geography, science, physical education, visual arts, music, dance and theater arts. DPS has adopted these standards with some variations. The existing standards for reading, writing and math incorporate most of the essential skills that the Commission believes must form a common core of knowledge for students. These standards also form the basis for the DPS high school Literacy Studio and math programs. Teachers participating in the District's Secondary Teaching and Learning project are now working to develop common assessments that will incorporate the science and social studies standards.

New standards will need to be developed to measure the ability of students to make good choices, develop critical thinking skills and enable students to take responsibility for their own learning. Many of the models presented at our Colloquium on high school reform have techniques and components designed to accomplish these objectives.

The Commission found that the degree to which the current standards are accepted and used by teachers in

DPS high schools varies. Some teachers embrace the standards and incorporate them into their lessons and instruction; others do not. In addition, standards for reading, writing and math are not regularly integrated into other subjects, such as science and social studies.

Students seem to have limited knowledge of the standards and why they are important. This situation is reflected in student attitudes toward CSAP. Many told us they do not know why they have to take CSAP tests, do not see them as important and, as a result, do not try very hard to pass them. Some teachers share this view. It also appears that most families and community members have little knowledge or understanding of the standards. For a standards system to be effective, students, families and schools must know the essential knowledge and skills that will be expected of every student in order to graduate. These standards must be incorporated into curriculum, instruction and assessments. DPS is making some important strides in this area, yet as the District acknowledges, much remains to be done.

DPS can greatly enhance its ability to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap by conducting a public review of the current standards, adding new standards as noted above, ensuring that the essential core standards are clearly understood and embraced by stakeholders within and outside the school, and making sure that each high school's educational design incorporates the standards.

A rigorous education means being able to demonstrate proficiency and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of settings. Currently, the only measures of student academic success widely available to the public are the results of CSAP tests in reading, writing and math given to ninth and 10th graders and the Colorado ACT exam given to all 11th graders. Students seem to take the ACT test more seriously than they do the CSAP exams, because it counts for something. The CSAP tests do not count toward graduation, college admission or grades. If CSAP is important, then there should be some incentive for students to do well on these tests. If students could "test" out of courses by demonstrating proficiency on CSAP or get extra credit for doing so, or if scores counted toward demonstrating proficiency for graduation, then the exams would have value for students.

The state and the public on the other hand place great emphasis on CSAP. It is the only factor that determines whether schools are rated as unsatisfactory, low performing, average, high performing or excellent.

Most students are concerned about grades, passing courses and graduating, but none of these currently guarantees that students are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college or on the job. Grades are often based on factors such as attendance, punctuality, completing homework and passing tests. Grading policies often vary from teacher to teacher and from school to school. There seems to be little correlation between grades and the ability to demonstrate proficiency in meeting standards, acquire particular knowledge and skills, and apply that knowledge and skill in specific situations.

Making clear what skills are to be assessed and having common assessment criteria are critical. Offering alternative ways to assess mastery based on these criteria is also important. Alternative assessments include: completion of projects in which students demonstrate how academic concepts are applied in the real world, the development of portfolios of high quality work, and regular presentations of learning to community, in-school experts and peers. When teachers and administrators examine student work, agree upon what constitutes excellence and make this known to students, families and the community, everyone knows what to expect. They know whether standards are being met and whether students are learning. Grades and graduation then can be based on agreed upon standards of quality.

Our current system requires students to pass 22 Carnegie unit courses to graduate. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has specified a core curriculum of Carnegie unit courses for entry into state public colleges and universities, and the University of Colorado has proposed that students who take college level courses, obtain a 3.8 GPA or are in the top 10 percent of their class be automatically admitted to the University. The problem with most systems based on Carnegie units is that they focus on "seat time," grades and paper and pencil tests – not on mastering knowledge and skills and being able to apply knowledge and skills outside the classroom or in postsecondary education. Students generally know what they need to do to get a passing grade, what courses they need to take to graduate, and what they need to do to get into college. But many do not make the connection between what they learn in these courses and how they might use that knowledge to gain more knowledge or apply it in everyday life. A system based on Carnegie units may also constrain teachers and schools from offering courses that integrate subjects like math and science or English and social studies – even though in most jobs and in everyday life students will need to know how to effectively apply a combination of skills. Currently, DPS graduation requirements limit the number of electives that can be taken through community-based experiences. Yet, such experiences often help students make the connection between what they learn in school and how that learning can be applied outside of school.

Figure 2.
Current District Graduation Requirements

- **4 Years of Language Arts (4 Carnegie units or 40 semester hours, including Composition 1&2 and American Literature 1&2)**
- **3 Years of Math (3 Carnegie units or 30 semester hours, including Algebra and Geometry, except that students who take Algebra in middle school only need two years of high school math)**
- **3 Years of Science (3 Carnegie units or 30 semester hours, including Biology 1 & 2)**
- **2.5 Years of Social Studies (2.5 Carnegie units or 25 semester hours, including American History, Geography and American Government)**
- **1 Year Physical Education/Dance, Citywide Marching band or ROTC (1 unit or 10 semester hours)**
- **2.5 Years of Electives (8.5 units or 85 semester hours of which only 3 units can be community-based experiences)**

A Rich, Challenging Learning Experience

Creating a rigorous educational experience means providing students with curriculum and experiences that are challenging, interesting, coherent and focused. The learning experience needs to allow teachers and students to explore topics and ideas in depth. There is considerable debate about how much of the curriculum should be standardized across schools and how much should be left to the discretion of individual schools and teachers. Too much standardization leaves schools and teachers with little flexibility to meet the needs of individual students; too little may lead to inconsistent results for students. School districts across the country are struggling with this dilemma.

Students learn in different ways and at different rates. They come to school with varying degrees of knowledge. This is true for students who move from school to school or for those who stay in the same school until they graduate. Districts need the assurance that students across the system are getting a core set of essential knowledge and skills; schools need the flexibility to vary lessons to meet the needs of their particular students. One way to address this dilemma is to insist on common standards and assessments; provide curriculum guidance to schools describing the essential skills to be developed and major themes and questions to be explored; and give teachers the flexibility to use materials, experiences and assignments that meet the needs of their students. The idea here is not to have every teacher develop his/her own curricula, but rather to have the school collectively agree broadly on the materials and instructional approaches to be used in concert with its educational design and philosophy. This approach allows schools to develop their own educational designs in a standards-based context.[19]

The District's Secondary Teaching and Learning Project offers great promise in meeting the criteria of a rigorous education. Teachers are working together within their disciplines to develop common assessments that incorporate essential elements of what students need to know and be able to do. They are selecting materials and developing exemplar lessons to align with best practice and setting high expectations for student work. Materials are built on a progression of skills and assessments. Although teachers will eventually use common assessments, the process allows flexibility to choose materials and adjust lessons to meet the needs of individual students. And the process allows for continual improvement and refinement as teachers try out the lessons, materials and assessments and examine results. The project is creating professional communities of learners, a powerful way to improve both teacher and student performance. Over time, integration of skills across disciplines and a variety of assessment techniques could further enrich the process.

Recommendations on Rigorous Learning

Rigor should mean, at a minimum, mastering a high level of skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, measuring, estimating, calculating, observing, and problem solving; developing the ability to make good choices; developing critical thinking skills; taking responsibility for learning; and being prepared for postsecondary learning and adult life. These high level essential skills should form the core of the DPS standards.

Standards and graduation requirements should be reviewed and revised, as needed, with extensive input from the school community and the general public to ensure that they encompass high-level essential skills that are widely understood and shared. Curriculum should reflect the core set of standards and assessment criteria, and schools should be able to vary the materials and instructional approach within these parameters to meet the needs of their students.

Student success and completion of graduation requirements should be based on demonstrations of mastery. Students should be able to graduate when they have demonstrated proficiency in core competencies whether that takes more or less than four years.

The Second R – Relevance: Learning experiences that are relevant to students' lives, interests and future plans and are aligned with real-world experiences and expectations.

Relevance means making school and classes meaningful to students so they can understand how concepts and ideas apply to their everyday lives, interests and future plans. It also means creating learning experiences that connect students to their communities. Relevant learning aligns curriculum and learning experiences with real-world experiences and expectations.

When learning is rigorous and relevant, students are more motivated and achieve at higher levels.[20] Relevant learning cannot be at the expense of rigorous learning. The two are powerful in combination. Schools and teachers sometimes make learning relevant but fail to make it rigorous. This approach may keep students in school and engaged, but it does not produce academic results that prepare students for postsecondary education, careers or adult life. While students need to know some things that may not be immediately relevant, they will be more likely to learn theory when most of what they learn is relevant.

There are many ways to bring relevance to the schools and the curriculum. Some of these are outlined in Figure 3. Schools can create programs of study with unique themes or areas of emphasis that offer distinctive choices for students. Examples include: the Denver School of the Arts, in which rigor is not sacrificed but instead accomplished through the context of the performing and visual arts; Middle College, where students take rigorous academics and college courses in the context of a career interest; the Center for International Studies, which offers seven foreign languages and an emphasis on world citizenship; and the Alma Project, where teachers develop instructional units of study on the history, contributions and issues pertinent to Latinos in the Southwestern United States.

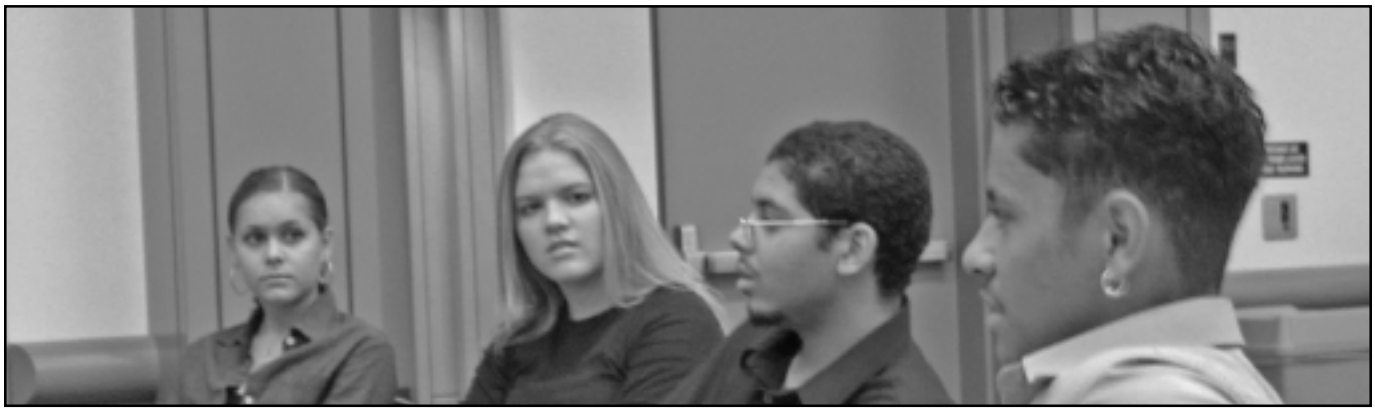
Figure 3.

Strategies to Make Learning Relevant, Increase Student Engagement and Improve Achievement

- Involve students in special projects, internships and community service.
- Use drama, the arts, simulations, role-plays, discussions, debates, projects, interdisciplinary work, small group instruction, graphic organizers and opportunities to examine issues from multiple perspectives.
- Have students study subjects in depth rather than pursing a curriculum that is "a mile wide and an inch deep."
- Involve students in choosing questions to research, books to read, subjects to write about and deciding how best to learn a new skill.
- Choose a variety of ways for students to complete assignments and demonstrate their learning.
- Create a rich classroom environment with lots of wall displays.
- Help students learn multiple ways to solve problems.
- Help students see how complex math concepts or historical events relate to their daily lives.[21]

Recommendation on Relevant Learning

Schools should be organized to meet the needs of individual students. Learning opportunities should be relevant to student interests and culture and help students develop their academic, social and career interests.



The Third R – Relationships: A safe, respectful and caring environment in the District and every school.

Relationship means being connected to other people. The quality of a relationship reflects how people interact and treat each other. Relationships are at the heart of providing high quality education and creating a high quality school district. If students do not feel that the adults in their school know them well or care about them, then it is unlikely they will be interested in learning from those adults or even spending much time in school. If students do not have strong, positive relationships with other students, it will have a similar effect. And if adults in a school or within a district do not have positive relationships with each other and feel respected, then they are unlikely to work together effectively or be able to do their best for students, their school or the district. A critical component of creating such relationships is developing a culture and an environment that is safe, comfortable and characterized by a climate of trust, respect, caring and dialogue.[22]

High schools that foster strong, positive relationships among adults, between students and adults and among students see a pay-off in learning. Building strong relationships and personalizing learning increases attendance, student engagement and learning, and decreases dropout rates and behavior problems.[23] All the organizations that presented at the Commission's colloquium on high school reform stress the importance of personalized learning and advocate the use of various techniques to achieve it. Students in schools and programs that build strong relationships feel they are supported, know they have someone to turn to in times of need and success, and develop the necessary understandings about how to succeed in school and prepare for their future.

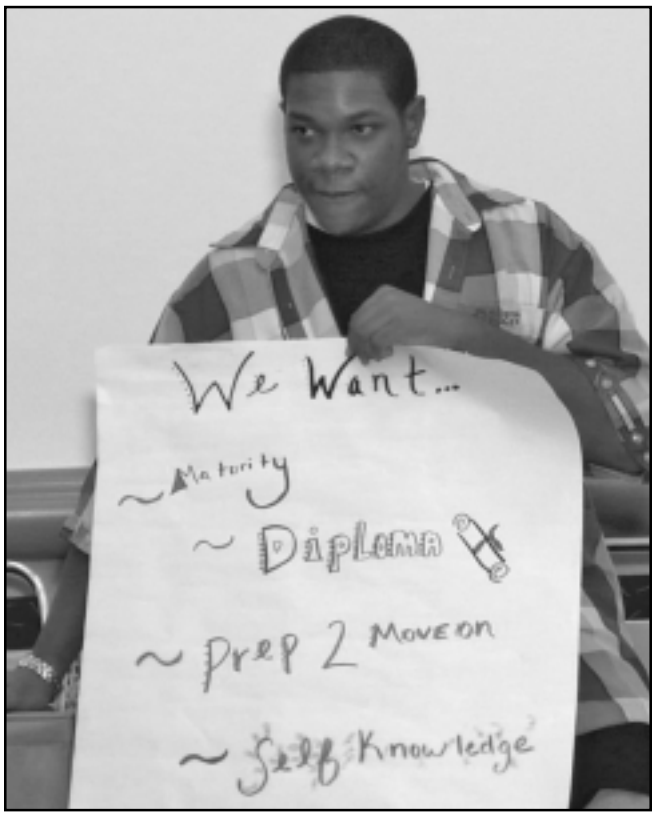
Successful organizations create strong, positive relationships among their leadership and employees and with their customers. They have a clear sense of mission and purpose. They value openness, honesty and collaboration. They encourage listening, ongoing dialogue about important issues and the sharing of information. They have personal regard for others, are open to criticism and model the behavior they want to evoke in others. They admit and learn from mistakes. They ask questions and do not feel the need to have all the answers, and they examine failures without blame. They celebrate and reward success and are fun places to work. Successful organizations have discovered that when relationships are strong, there is less need for reams of procedures, rules and policies, and issues of motivation, commitment and change take care of themselves.[24]

It does not take long to get a sense of a school's culture and environment – of whether there is a common purpose shared by students and adults, whether the school is a welcoming place to be, whether adults and students respect and trust each other, and whether everyone expects to learn and enjoys doing it. We found such environments in schools like Middle College, DSA, and the Denver School of Science and Technology and in programs such as the Center for International Studies at West High School and International Baccalaureate at George Washington. We also saw such environments in clubs, sports activities and after-school programs. Here there is a sense of common purpose, strong relationships and respect between students and adults, and students gaining knowledge and skills by engaging in an activity that they enjoy and in which they are interested.

Recommendations on Relationships

A climate of trust, respect, caring and dialogue should exist throughout the District and its schools. Schools should create environments that provide physical safety and personal comfort as prerequisites for success.

The District and each school should be organized to ensure there are personalized relationships among adults, between adults and students and among students.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The previous sections identify the vision and proven principles that have resulted in significant improvements in academic achievement, closing the achievement gap and increasing graduation rates in other schools and school districts around the country. While the concepts may be simple, they are not easily accomplished. There must be a systematic plan that creates the conditions that allow for change to occur. Six specific strategies provide the framework for a new era for Denver's high schools where student achievement and success are the expected outcomes. The six strategies are:

1. Treat students as individual learners.
2. Make every high school a high quality school based on the principles of rigor, relevance and relationships and honoring individual student needs.
3. Empower principals at each school with authority, responsibility and accountability for school operations and student success.
4. Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence and hold them accountable for student achievement.
5. Offer families and students a choice among high quality high schools that reflect students' learning styles and interests.
6. Create a new role for the District and reshape its relationship with schools and the community.

Strategy 1 – Treat Students as Individual Learners

Each young person is unique. Students come to school with different backgrounds, languages, interests, assets, learning styles, cultures, challenges, family situations and educational accomplishments.

In order to help students learn, teachers need to know what students already know; what their interests are; whether English Language Learners are performing at grade level in their own language or have very little formal education. They need to know which students learn best by doing and whether students work best alone or in groups. They need to know which students do well on standardized tests; which ones panic at the thought; which students need extra help and what kind of help they need. They also need an understanding of what students are experiencing outside of school.

Schools and classrooms should be places where teachers, administrators and students themselves can find answers to these questions, but the current structure and organization of today's high schools makes it very difficult for teachers to treat students as individual learners. Teachers often see as many as 150 students a day – too many to get an understanding of their individual learning styles and needs or to provide individual attention. Ninth and 10th grade classes are often large, yet this is when students need the most attention and are most likely to drop out. Guidance counselors have 300-500 students to counsel. At East High School, for example, 4.5 counselors are responsible for more than 1,800 students. Students told us at the Student/Teacher Forum that smaller classes and more opportunities for guidance and counseling would make learning better. Currently, counselors spend a great deal of time scheduling students rather than attending to their academic, career and social/personal needs. In order for counselors and teachers to have the opportunity to work together to meet the needs of individuals or small groups of students, the structure and organization of our high schools must change.

High schools expect teenagers to act like adults, but often treat them like children. In fact, teens are really "tweens" – young adults who are not quite adults but not children either. It is clear that a ninth grader is cognitively different from a 12th grader and there is no "typical" student. Students are maturing physically earlier than in generations past. Culturally and socially they are different than in the past. Many young people hold responsible jobs outside of school and having a job often provides teens with the responsibility and respect they do not get in high school. At the same time, recent research suggests that during high school, the adolescent brain is still developing. Up to age 16, or about 10th grade, high school students are experiencing growth spurts in the area of visual/spatial ability and in the regions of the brain that control language and emotion. The area of the brain that controls planning, organization, mood and working memory does not mature until about age 18 (12th grade), and the centers of the brain responsible for controlling reasoning and emotion do not fully develop until around age 20. In general, these changes occur earlier in girls than in boys. In addition, nutrition, physical activity and sleep all have an influence on learning.[25] The organization of today's high schools makes it difficult to take these developmental factors into account.

Our young people are complex human beings. We have attempted to account for this uniqueness in our comprehensive high schools by offering a wide variety of courses, steering students into college prep or vocational tracks, and setting up special programs for Gifted and Talented and Special Needs students. In spite of these efforts, an increasing number of students are not succeeding. In the future, we need to design our schools around the needs of individual learners. We need to accommodate this unique period in their lives and support them in assuming responsibility for their own learning, making good choices, and developing critical thinking skills by organizing learning in a way that treats them as individuals and maturing adults – more like college with supervision and support.[26]

As Commissioners shadowed students and talked with them at our Student/Teacher Forum, we found them eager to be treated with respect and to form strong relationships with adults. They have a lot to say about how they learn best and how schools could better meet their needs. The District and our schools must recognize this fact. We need a new type of high school whose purpose is to support and develop adolescents as they move to full adulthood. This means giving schools and teachers the ability and flexibility to take individual student needs into account in designing the educational program, including the curriculum, required sequence of courses, instructional methods and discipline.

The ultimate approach to treating students as individuals may be found at Skyland Charter School in Denver. Skyland, a Big Picture Company school, builds learning "one kid at a time." Each student has an advisor who works with 14 students over a four-year period. Students, with their families and advisor, design their own learning plans, work with mentors, keep journals, take college classes, and learn through internships, community service and special projects. Middle College and DSA also approach learning through the interests of individual students. They may look like traditional schools but they are very different in the way they organize instruction and build learning around students' interest in the arts and careers.

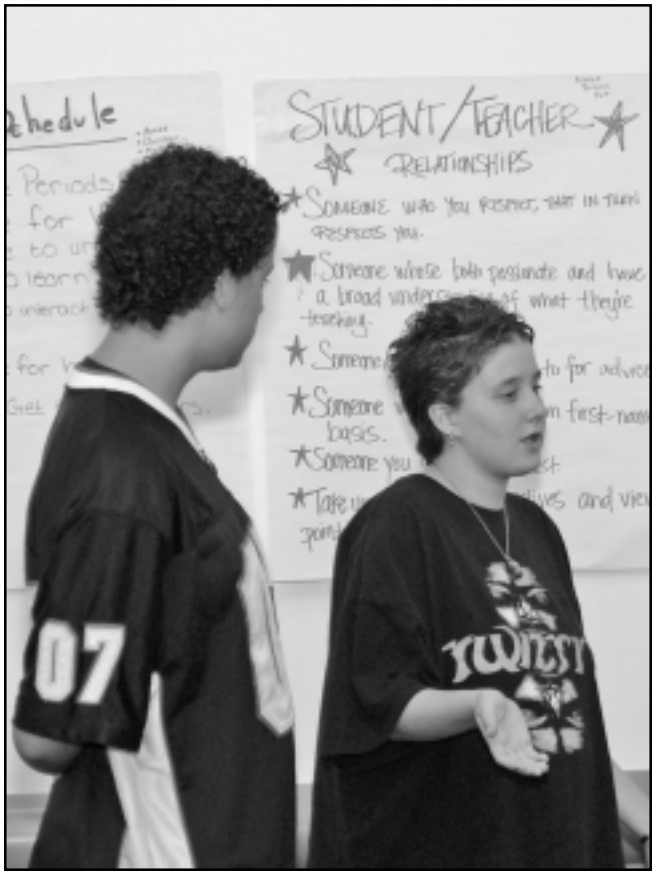
Another means for personalizing learning is to have students develop individualized learning plans. High Schools That Work, The Big Picture Company and Breaking Ranks are three high school reform models that use individualized learning plans as a way to ensure that students have a rigorous and relevant high school experience. High Schools that Work has perfected a six-year individualized learning plan that includes in-school and out-of-school activities and helps students set short- and long-term goals. The purpose of the plan is to get students thinking about where they want to be two years out of high school – the military, a four-year college, a technical school, a community college or in a job with a future. Students then identify, with the help of their advisor or counselor, the kinds of courses and experiences they need to have in order to achieve their goals. Plans are updated on a regular basis. Such plans can also help students understand how to take charge of their own learning and help families understand how they can support students in their learning. The theory behind individualized learning plans is that all learning is personal and that to engage students, learning must be meaningful to them and related to their interests.

Redesigning our high schools to treat students as individual learners requires new thinking about organizing school for learning and how to build rigor, relevance and relationships into the organizational structure and culture.

Recommendations on Treating Students as Individual Learners

All schools should begin to design experiences for students in all grades that stress individual attention, rigor, relevance and relationships. Efforts could include providing students with advisors or mentors, clarifying and communicating clear goals and expectations for students, and grouping students and teachers into smaller learning communities.

Students should have opportunities to develop individualized learning plans in concert with their families and teachers or advisor.



Strategy 2 – Make Every High School a High Quality School

The Commission believes that all high schools in DPS should meet the needs of individual learners and be of high quality. First and foremost, high schools must become learning organizations – places where both adults and students are learners. Each school must ensure that all students will achieve a set of high standards. Regardless of its size, educational design, or focus, each school must also have some common attributes based on the 3 R's: rigor, relevance and relationships. Commissioners held conversations with students, parents, teachers and administrators, reviewed the research, and examined lessons from successful high schools in Denver, schools throughout the country and national high school reform models. As a result, the Commission identified 21 common attributes of a high quality high school. (See Figure 9.) A sampling of our findings on lessons learned and research on what constitutes a high quality high school follows.

What Students Say About How They Learn

At the Commission's Student/Teacher Forum, students from each of Denver's high schools came together to talk about their current experiences in school and to work together to design their ideal high school. Their ideas reflected the views of students throughout the country who have participated in surveys, focus groups and similar forums. Their views are outlined in Figure 4. When asked to describe their ideal high school, parents and many teachers suggest similar attributes.

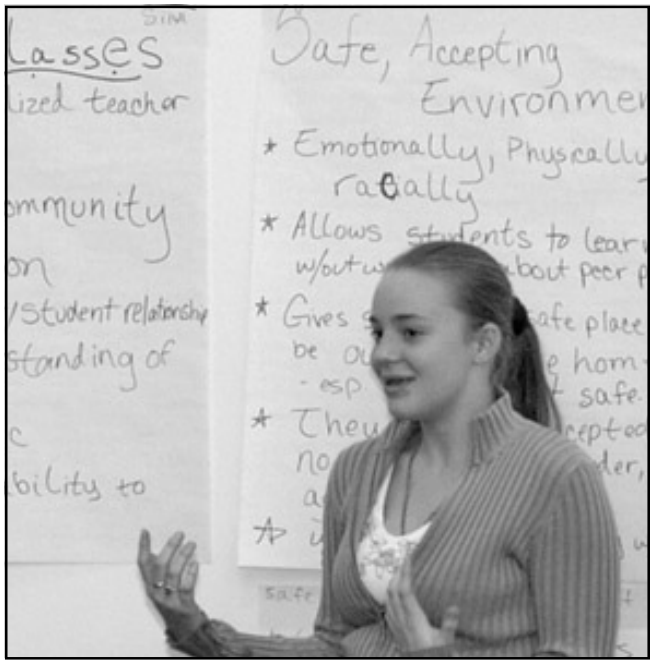


Figure 4.

What Students Say Would Improve Their Learning

- Teachers who know the material.
- Teachers and counselors who believe in students' ability to succeed and build their confidence.
- A belief that past academic failures do not dictate the future.
- Principals who listen to their concerns.
- A curriculum that is challenging and interesting.
- Access to challenging courses, such as honors, AP and college courses.
- A supportive person in the student's life outside of school.
- Small class size.
- Small school size.
- A warm, caring and safe environment.
- Being treated with respect and not made to feel "stupid" if they ask a question or do not under stand something.
- Caring adults.
- Positive role models within and outside of school.
- Personalized learning.
- Extra help and attention.
- Diagnosing learning disabilities.
- Learning to set goals, make decisions, develop social skills and understand the consequences of their actions.
- A program that meets their individual needs.
- Positive networks of peers who share their goals.
- Help finding financial aid and filling out college applications.[27]

Lessons from Denver's High Quality High Schools and National Models

There are important lessons to be learned from high quality high schools in Denver, such as Middle College and DSA. Learning is rigorous and relevant there, and relationships are nurtured. The achievement gap and transfer rates are smaller than at other high schools, and student achievement and graduation rates by all ethnic and racial groups are higher. Factors contributing to the success of these schools are outlined in Figure 5. At the Commission's Colloquium on high school reform, nine national organizations presented their approach and experience. Key elements of each design are listed in Appendix D. All of these models are built on the principles of rigor, relevance and relationships and honoring the needs of individual students.

Figure 5.

Lessons from Denver's High Quality High Schools

- A clear vision, mission, purpose and focus guide their curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- They have entrepreneurial principal leaders.
- Staff members choose to be there and support the school's vision.
- Students choose to be there and are attracted to the school because of its focus.
- They have relatively small student populations.
- Admission is based on the interest of students and students must actively demonstrate interest in attending.
- The environment is safe, comfortable and wel coming.
- They work on creating a culture of respect and strong, supportive relationships among students, between students and adults and among adults.
- They look for the talents and skills students bring to the school and build on them.
- They believe that all students can be successful.
- They emphasize teacher and student learning.
- Extra help is available to students who need it.[28]

What Works for Latino and African American Students

Because 72 percent of DPS high school students are either Latino or African American, it is important to know what learning strategies work best for these students. (See Figure 6.) Many of the same strategies work for all students – high expectations, clear standards, challenging curriculum, good teachers, varied instructional practices and extra help. Others are particularly important for Latino and African American students, including cultural awareness in curriculum and services, parental involvement, and professional development that prepares teachers to work with diverse populations.

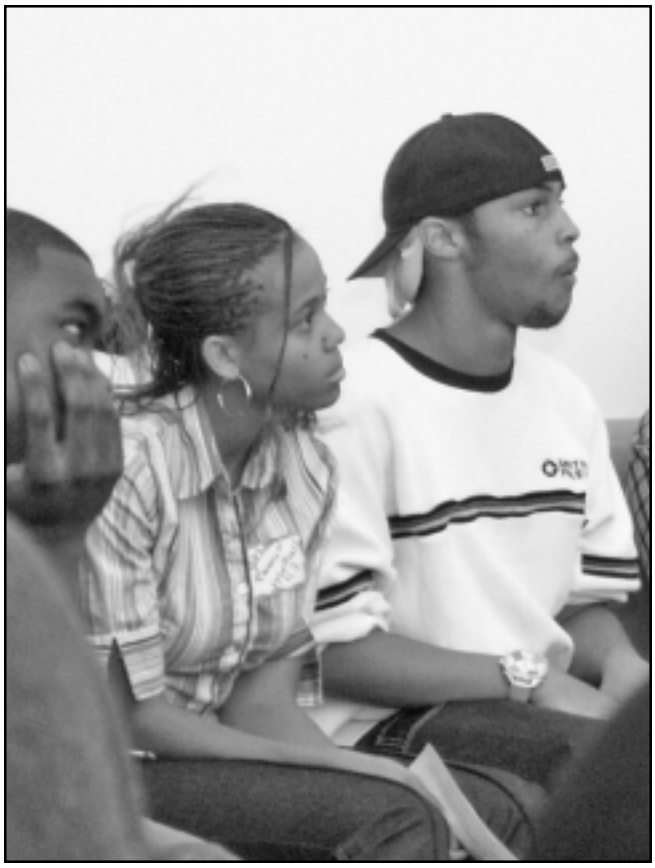


Figure 6. What Works for Latino and African American Students		
Strategy	**Latino Students**	**African American Students**
High Expectations	The impact of teacher expectations is greater for minorities, girls and low-income students. (Singham)	"Create learning environments where African American students are encouraged to succeed, to be self confident and personally responsible for their own academic achievement." (Ogbu)
Standards	Have clear and public standards for what all children should learn. These standards represent a contract between schools and their communities that these skills are the expectation for all students.	Clear and public standards for what students should learn at grade levels are crucial to solving the achievement gap.
Challenging Curriculum	Engage Latino students in a challenging curriculum aligned with these standards.	Ensure consistency among a challenging curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the school's goals that set high standards for all students. Provide access and encourage African American students to enroll in AP and other challenging courses.
Cultural Awareness in curriculum and services	Integrate Latino culture and cultural awareness into services and programs to help Latino students understand and deal with cultural differences among their home, community and school.	Create learning environments that incorporate African American students' culture meaningfully within the curriculum. Students' culture, traditions, heritage and historical experiences provide insight into how they understand their world and their learning style. Schools must focus on students' learning styles and ways of expression to meet their academic needs. (Ogbu)
Instructional Practice	Allow for instructional practices that include small-group work, self-directed learning, peer-group activities and leadership opportunities aimed at enhancing the academic achievement of Latino students.	Incorporate times when African American students have the opportunity to discuss their concerns and celebrations.
Assessment	Real-time turnaround to assist students once areas of weakness are discovered.	Assess African American students in multiple ways to allow for variations in how students demonstrate their academic ability and skill.
High Quality Teachers	Have high quality teachers who know their program goals and take steps to measure progress, confront obstacles and implement policies to achieve those goals.	Need teachers who know their subject well and know how to teach the subjects.
Professional Development	Teachers must be supported with strong professional development programs.	Provide site-based professional development for teachers and create opportunities for teachers to dialogue with each other regarding their practice. Prepare teachers to work in diverse environments. Familiarity with the community can make a difference in a student's academic performance.

Figure 6. What Works for Latino and African American Students

Strategy	Latino Students	African American Students
Extra Help	Provide extra time and support to Latino students who need it, those who seek it, and those who wish to excel, rather than simply catch up.	Provide supplemental instruction for African American students who need extra time or help with their learning.
Proven Practices and Programs	Support expansion of high school, community- and college-based programs for Latino students, particularly those that are academically at-risk and support the evaluation of existing programs and experimentation with new programs designed to enhance academic achievement of Latino students. Examples include dual language programs and the International School in New York, N.Y.	Support programs that have been shown to work for African American students, develop and study additional programs and ensure communication in transitions from middle school to high school.
Leadership	Have professional and capable leaders who develop strong networks with other stakeholders – including schools and colleges, clinics, community-based organizations, practitioners and professionals.	Have strong leaders who help set a tone of respect throughout the entire school community.
Funding	Give sufficient funding to schools so they can take the necessary steps to meet the needs of their Latino students.	Provide funding to ensure schools can meet the needs of African American students.
Parental Communication and Involvement	Incorporate and provide bicultural and bilingual services to include Latino parents in the educational development of their student's educational plan. Provide Latino parents with access to and information about public schools and services available so they can help their children.	Increase communication with parents of African American students and seek input from them about what should be going on in the school. Focus on individual African American students and their families through strategies such as home visits and student portfolios.
Support Services to Families	Offer support services to students and families.	Provide support to parents through job fairs, personal development, parent support groups and other measures to help them create positive learning environments at home.
Staffing of Schools	Recruit a staff to include Latinos who can recognize and address the specific needs of Latino students and serve as mentors.	

These components are based on information gathered from Excelencia in Education, The Education Trust, The RAND Corporation, The Alma Project, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission and Mano Singham, *The Achievement Gap,* Phi Delta Kappan, April 2003.

What Works for English Language Learners

A significant number of students in Denver's high schools are English Language Learners. Therefore, it is important that every high school have a program designed to help all students become proficient in English. Students who speak a language other than English bring an incredible resource to our schools and community. They need to learn English so they can communicate and function well in our English-speaking society, but their ability to speak more than one language is a major asset in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual community and in a global economy. Therefore, it is valuable to help each student become fluent and proficient in English while retaining the ability to use their native language and adding new academic skills to what they already know. While non-English speakers can learn to converse in English in a short period of time, it may require five to eight years to reach a level where they can achieve full academic parity with native speakers.

If students can learn academic content in their native language while they are learning English, it will take them less time to become academically proficient in English. In the dual-language approach, students learn part of the time in their native language and part of the time in English with a bilingual instructor.[29] If non-English-speaking students are in classes where only English is spoken, they will be more successful when their native language and culture are respected and their families are encouraged to nurture their native language outside of school. Regardless of whether students are in dual-language programs or immersion programs, it is important for schools to have an overall plan for developing both language and content knowledge across the school and across grades and to use a consistent approach. Students learning English, like other students, learn best when their individual needs are met, they are in a supportive environment, and they have strong relationships with caring adults.

Newcomer schools like the one at South High School are one way to make recent arrivals in Denver feel more comfortable. Time spent in such centers can vary from one or two semesters as it does at South to a full high school degree-granting program such as is now being offered at the New American School or the International Schools in New York.

How the Use of Time Affects Learning

Teachers need time to explore topics and ideas in depth with students and tailor the curriculum to meet their individual needs. Throughout our work, we heard principals and teachers say there simply is not enough time in the school day to do all that is expected, and that they feel strapped by the demands of the master schedule. We consistently heard there is not time for common planning among teachers, for covering the required curriculum, for attending all the required meetings and for planning and implementing reforms.

The National Commission on Time and Learning summed it up well in its 1994 report when it said, "learning in America is a prisoner of time."[30] Although students learn at different speeds, schools are time-bound. Time rarely varies. There is a set time for starting and ending the day and the school year, for each period, and for the number of minutes each child should spend in school each year. High school is divided into four years, usually two semesters each, and graduation is based on seat time.

Kati Haycock of the Education Trust estimated that in a typical school, less than four weeks is actually spent on classroom instruction per subject per year.[31] She came to this conclusion by adding up days for vacation; professional development; early dismissal and parent conferences; field trips; special assemblies, awards and events; and district and state testing. These activities have merit when they contribute to learning goals in a strategic way, but this is not always the case.

There are only two ways to get more time: lengthen the school day or year or reduce and prioritize the things schools are expected to do. For some students, extending the amount of time for learning is critical. Strategies such as Saturday school, after-school programs, summer school or even year-round school may make sense. Some schools may believe it is important to have a longer school day or year depending on their objectives and the learning needs of their students. Right now public schools are allowed little leeway in scheduling, but it should be one of the things over which schools have control. An assessment of District, school and classroom policies, practices and learning requirements on the use of time will be important to making reforms successful.

Lessons from Creating Small School Structures

The structure and size of a high school can affect its ability to make necessary changes. Reducing the size of schools is a growing strategy for producing environments that are more conducive to strengthening relationships and improving student achievement. In the 1950s, when James Conant conducted his study of the American high school, he suggested that schools needed at least 400 students to offer a comprehensive curriculum. Currently, most comprehensive high schools in DPS are three to five times that size. Thomas Jefferson has about 1,100 students and East, the largest high school, currently has more than 1,900 students.

Figure 7.

Research Suggests that Small Schools

- Matter most for students in schools with high concentrations of poor and minority students.
- Produce higher levels of student engagement among low-income and minority youth.
- Reduce the impact of poverty on student achievement.
- Have a positive impact on behavior, student and teacher morale, participation in extra-curricular activities and parent satisfaction.
- Offer better opportunities for creating strong positive relationships and for teachers to personalize learning.
- Provide a better chance for teachers, administrators, parents and students to agree on a vision, develops curriculum tailored to the needs of theirs students, collect and regularly analyze data, and hold ongoing conversations about improvement and professional development.[32]

DPS has mixed experience with small schools – some, like DSA and Middle College, are producing good results; others, like those at the Manual Education Complex, are struggling. Denver knows from first-hand experience that while small size may be a condition for success, it is not sufficient in and of itself to change the outcomes for students. Because there is skepticism within the community about the efficacy of small schools and small learning communities, it is important to understand why some efforts to create small schools and learning environments have faltered in Denver while others have succeeded.

The experience of dividing Manual into three small schools has been studied extensively. Reflection on this experience provides important insights on the conditions that need to exist for success. Researcher Patrick McQuillan found that there is a prevailing sense that reform at Manual was rushed and that much more preplanning was necessary. "Even now," says McQuillan, "three years into reform, the uncertain foundation on which this conversion was founded appears to affect the schools' day to day operation." He also notes that the experience of ninth and 10th graders did not change in significant ways, and there was not enough attention paid to instruction or retention of ninth graders. He found that while the schools were more personal and there were improved student-teacher relationships, the link between personalization and improvements in student achievement was weak. Importantly, he found that the teachers in each school did not come together around a set of common goals, teaching and discipline philosophies, or even the value of small schools. He also concluded that budget cuts drastically reduced the number of teachers and that the District made no real distinctions between these schools and other high schools and provided relatively little support.[33] McQuillan points out that most of the conditions that are needed to have high quality small schools were not present at Manual.

It is clear from the experience at Manual that certain conditions need to be present for small schools to be successful. (See Figure 8.) While these conditions apply to small schools, they can also contribute to the effectiveness of larger schools.

Figure 8.

Conditions for Creating High Quality Small Schools and Small Learning Environments

- High quality instruction.
- A continual focus on vision and mission, student learning, instruction and personalization.
- The use of curricula, assessments and pedagogy that support the mission and success for all students.
- Autonomy to make key decisions on vision, personnel, curriculum, instruction, budget, schedule and space within a framework of standards and expectations.
- Time, in advance of start-up, for teachers, administrators and other stakeholders to plan the vision and mission of the school in order to guide and inspire reform.
- Stability of personnel.
- Creating strong relationships with parents and external partners.
- A reexamination of district rules, regulations and policies on operations, financing and personnel to ensure they promote the viability of high quality schools.[34]

Other Strategies that Support Student Learning

Creating a sense of community and a friendly, caring environment may be easier to accomplish in a small setting, but it is not impossible in a larger one. It starts by adults modeling the behavior they want to see in students and other adults. Some strategies that could work in large and small high schools include ninth grade academies, advisories, mentors and giving students a voice in decision-making.

Incoming ninth graders are the students most susceptible to failure. It is important that they feel welcome and secure and understand what is expected of them. There can be a positive impact on attendance and academic performance by placing small groups of ninth graders in "houses" or "academies" where they work with a group of teachers for their core academic subjects and meet together in small groups with an advisor on a regular basis throughout their freshman year.[35] Several high schools are experimenting with this approach. DSA actually has a ninth grade "academy" even though it is a grade 6-12 school.

Some schools assign an advisor to each student and set aside time for groups of students to meet together in an "advisory" on a regular basis throughout their high school career. Advisories create settings where students can form strong bonds and a sense of community with each other and with an adult. When the purpose of the advisory is linked to the vision and mission of the school and if it is done well, it can be a powerful force in creating a strong, positive culture and have a constructive impact on classroom learning.[36]

Partnering a student with a mentor who stays with him/her throughout high school increases graduation rates and college-going.[37] Mentoring programs, such as "I Have A Dream," are particularly strong when entire cohorts or classes of students are paired with adult mentors. Mentors provide a wide array of support services to the students they serve, reaching far beyond the school walls and adapting their approach to the needs of the individual student. In addition to these services, it is the personal, sustained and caring relationships developed between students and adults that are critical to success. Augmenting any strong relationships students have with their teachers and family, mentors provide one-on-one attention to help students succeed.

Giving students a voice and role in decision-making is another important way to make school meaningful and build a positive learning environment. Most schools have student councils, but few give students a real say in the big decisions affecting their school life, the quality of their environment or how they are going to learn. When students are sitting at the table, adults are more likely to take their needs into consideration in making decisions. Also, students bring a perspective that cuts across departments and helps adults view the organization as a whole. Their ideas add relevance to the work of the school.[38]

Attributes of a High Quality High School

Based on our review of the research and best practices noted above, the Commission compiled 21 attributes that define a high quality high school. They include: a rigorous education program based on high expectations for all students; a clear purpose shared by all staff and stakeholders; a rich, challenging standards-based and relevant curriculum; instructional practices that personalize learning for students; a variety of assessments to measure proficiency; regular examination of data and student work to assess progress; and alignment of programs and resources with mission. They also include: a focus on relationships; an environment that is safe and respectful; time for teachers and students to work together; a voice for teachers and students in decision-making; an organizational structure that supports learning; and meaningful family and community involvement. (See Figure 9.) The Commission believes these common attributes should form the basis for developing qualitative indicators of a high quality high school against which DPS high schools should be assessed. They also should form the basis of all high school reform efforts.

High quality high schools do not need to look alike or be limited to students in grades nine through 12. For example, they might be organized as K-12, 6-12, 7-12, 9-12 or be ungraded. Some high schools, like Denver School of the Arts, already serve students in lower grades as well as high school students. Schools could have themes like DSA and the Denver School of Science and Technology. Schools could have a distinctive focus like Middle College or the Center for International Studies. At Middle College, students earn college credits as well as a high school diploma; at the Center for International Studies, language and international culture are the focus of the curriculum. Schools could have a unique approach to learning like Skyland High School and the Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning (RMSEL.) At Skyland, students have individualized learning programs and do most of their learning outside of the classroom; at RMSEL teachers connect high quality academic learning to adventure, service and character development through a variety of experiences including interdisciplinary projects. Although not all schools will look alike they should contain the 21 attributes of a high quality high school.

Figure 9.

Attributes of a High Quality High School

Rigor

1. Sets and communicates high expectations for each student.
2. Has a clear purpose, mission and goals that are shared by staff, students and other stakeholders.
3. Offers a rigorous curriculum that meets an essential set of high standards.
4. Uses a variety of assessments based on common criteria to measure student proficiency and demonstrate mastery, including projects, portfolios and presentations.
5. Views a second language as an asset and helps English Language Learners become proficient in English, increase their proficiency in their native language and improve their academic skills.
6. Organizes curriculum, instruction, assessments, schedules, professional development, the use of fiscal resources and learning opportunities to align with the school's purpose, mission and goals, and promotes student development and achievement.
7. Provides students with the opportunity to learn at their own pace and graduate when they have demonstrated proficiency whether that takes more or less than four years.
8. Provides experiences that help students make the transition from the lower grades to high school and from high school to postsecondary education and careers.
9. Uses quantitative and qualitative data and student work for decision-making and assessing student achievement and progress toward achieving the school's mission and goals.

Relevance

10. Offers a curriculum and set of learning experiences that are relevant to students' culture, everyday lives, interests and future plans.
11. Uses instructional methods that meet the needs of individual students.
12. Provides opportunities for internships, community service, project-based learning and taking college courses.
13. Provides opportunities for students to develop personalized learning plans with their families and teachers or advisors.

Relationships

14. Has leadership that promotes trust, on-the-job learning, flexibility, risk-taking, innovation and adaptation to change.
15. Is a place where learning, respect, trust, dialogue and supportive relationships exist among adults, between adults and students and among students.
16. Provides an advisor or mentor to each student and ensures that they work with no more than 25 students each.
17. Provides opportunities for students and teachers to work together in small groups.
18. Provides sufficient time and resources for teachers to plan and work together.
19. Gives teachers and students a meaningful voice in decision-making.
20. Forms partnerships with schools that serve students in the lower grades and with postsecondary institutions.
21. Involves families and the community in a meaningful way.[39]

Recommendation to Create High Quality High Schools

All high schools should be high quality schools, incorporating the attributes of rigor, relevance and relationships. To accomplish this objective, the District should create new schools and reform its large schools. New small schools, small schools-within-schools, small learning communities, theme schools, personalized comprehensive high schools and schools based on successful models should be part of the mix of high school choices.

Strategy 3 – Empower Principals with Authority, Responsibility and Accountability for School Operations and Student Success

School leadership is key to the success of high school reform. The Commission believes that principals are the most important leaders in the system. One of the most important roles of the principal is to create a climate of respect and trust in which the culture and mission of the school will be shaped. Studies show that when schools share a common mission, promote strong bonds between adults and students and have adults that take responsibility for student success and development, there are better outcomes for students (less class cutting, less absenteeism, lower dropout rates, and fewer disparities in outcomes associated with ethnicity and class) and teachers (greater satisfaction, higher morale, lower absenteeism).[40]

Another important role for principals is the creation of environments that foster student achievement. There is a clear relationship between leadership and student achievement. Good leadership can increase student achievement; ineffective leadership can have a negative impact.[41] A path-breaking study of principal leadership has been conducted by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), a nationally recognized, private, nonprofit organization located in Colorado. McREL's study identified 21 leadership responsibilities positively correlated with increased student achievement. (See Figure 10.) The authors caution "that not all stakeholders experience change in the same way," and that "in order to be effective leaders, principals must understand the different implications changes can have for their staff members and other stakeholders and skillfully adjust their leadership practices accordingly."[42]

Placing Authority, Responsibility and Accountability at the School Level

If schools are to be held accountable for the achievement of their students, then principals need the flexibility, authority and responsibility to lead and manage for student success. They must have authority over those factors that affect student learning, such as hiring and firing of personnel, professional development, educational design, scheduling and budgeting. In DPS, principals have some control over hiring, minimal control over educational design, and limited control over professional development and scheduling. Principals also have limited control over their budgets. While they are permitted to hire teachers and other staff, the number of staff they can hire and the amount of funding they receive to do so is fixed based on staffing formulas that take into account student enrollment and other factors. Thus, principals only have discretionary control over 8-12 percent of the dollars they receive.

In this new scenario, the principal's role and that of his or her support team changes dramatically. For example, principals would choose their own management team and have the flexibility to hire whomever they feel is appropriate to run a successful school. Some schools may want to use a business or operations manager instead of an assistant principal and should have the flexibility to make such decisions.

To assume these responsibilities, principals will need training and ongoing support. They will need to learn about personnel procedures, budgeting and scheduling. They will need to learn how to analyze data, evaluate student work and use information gathered from customer satisfaction surveys to guide decision-making. They will need to be entrepreneurs but also know how to distribute leadership within their schools. They will need to be able to lead change and be flexible enough to change directions when things are not working. They will need to be able to design professional development, schedules and instruction to meet the needs of their schools and students. They will need to know how to implement strategies that positively impact student achievement and be accountable for results.

The Commission heard repeatedly that "we tried site based management in Denver and it didn't work." We are proposing something quite different. This approach is much more than simply creating a committee to make decisions in a system where policies and procedures are primarily controlled centrally. Under Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) and its replacement, the Collaborative School Committee (CSC), the stakes were relatively low and the range of decision-making authority and responsibility was and is limited within parameters controlled by the District. In our proposed system, the range of decision-making authority is broad and the stakes are high, especially for the principal but also for the staff.

Michael Fullan, an expert on school change, notes, "Leaders in a culture of change… are actually more influential on the ground…than they are with traditional, more (seemingly) control-based strategies."[43] Fullan cautions, however, that in times of change, there needs to be a balance between central control and local control and that circumstances need to dictate how that balance is achieved.[44]

We see these responsibilities devolving to the schools over time. Based on the experience of Seattle and other cities, it is prudent to gradually release control of the budget and other functions to principals as they develop their leadership and management capacity. Some principals within the District are ready and eager to assume these responsibilities as soon as possible. In other cases, as high schools begin to implement new designs or new schools are started, principals would assume responsibility for these functions as part of the transition process. It may be useful for the District to conduct a pilot project that recruits and trains principals to assume these responsibilities, particularly in the areas of budgeting and staffing.

It will be essential that all principals have the desire, skills, qualities, training and capacity to lead and manage a school and that the District have a plan for identifying, recruiting, hiring, retaining and training principals to assume these roles. A compensation plan should be established that recognizes these increased responsibilities and rewards principals when they accomplish the desired results.

Placing authority, responsibility, and accountability at the school level is not a guarantee of student achievement, but it does empower principals and teachers so that everyone on the staff can work together to identify what is best for their students and structure the school accordingly.

Recommendations on Empowering Principals

High quality schools must be led by high-quality leaders who have the capacity to lead change, create a clear and focused vision and assume responsibility for improving student achievement. Over time and with training and support, principals should assume control of the budget, hiring, firing, scheduling, professional development and educational design at their schools.

Each principal should be responsible for and evaluated on improving student achievement, closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates and creating a culture that fosters strong, positive relationships. Principals and schools should engage students, families, teachers and other stakeholders in developing and implementing the strategic plan for the school.

Figure 10. Role of the Principal. Balanced Leadership Framework Responsibilities & Practices[45]

Responsibility	Associated Practices
Affirmation	· Systematically and fairly recognizes and celebrates accomplishments of teachers and staff · Systematically and fairly recognizes and celebrates accomplishments of students
Change agent	· Consciously challenges the status quo · Is comfortable leading change initiatives with uncertain outcomes · Systematically considers new and better ways of doing things
Communication	· Is easily accessible to teachers and staff · Develops effective means for teachers and staff to communicate with one another · Maintains open and effective lines of communication with teachers and staff
Contingent rewards	· Recognizes individuals who excel · Uses performance vs. seniority, as the primary criterion for reward and advancement · Uses hard work and results as the basis for reward and recognition
Culture	· Promotes cooperation among teachers and staff · Promotes a sense of well-being · Promotes cohesion among teachers and staff · Develops an understanding of purpose · Develops a shared vision of what the school could be like
Discipline	· Protects instructional time from interruptions · Protects/shelters teachers from distraction
Flexibility	· Is comfortable with major change in how things are done · Encourages people to express opinions that may be contrary to those held by individuals in positions of authority · Adapts leadership style to needs of specific situations · Can be directive or non-directive as the situation warrants
Focus	· Establishes high, concrete goals and the expectation that all students will meet them · Establishes high, concrete goals for all curricula, instruction and assessment
Ideals/Beliefs	· Holds strong professional ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching and learning · Shares ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching and learning with teachers, staff, and parents · Demonstrates behaviors that are consistent with ideals and beliefs
Input	· Provides opportunities for input from teachers and staff on all important decisions · Provides opportunities for teachers and staff to be involved in policy development · Involves the school leadership team in decision-making
Intellectual stimulation	· Stays informed about current research and theory regarding effective schooling · Continually exposes teachers and staff to cutting-edge ideas about how to be effective · Systematically engages teachers and staff in discussions about current research theory · Continually involves teachers and staff in reading articles and books about effective practices
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment	· Is knowledgeable about curriculum and instructional practices · Is knowledgeable about assessment practices · Provides conceptual guidance for teachers, regarding effective classroom practice
Monitors/ Evaluates	· Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum · Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of instruction · Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of assessment

Responsibility	Associated Practices
Optimizer	· Inspires teachers and staff to accomplish things that might seem beyond their grasp · Portrays a positive attitude about the ability of teachers and staff to accomplish substantial things · Is a driving force behind major initiatives
Order	· Provides and enforces clear structures, rules and procedures for students · Provides and enforces clear structures, rules and procedures for teachers and staff · Establishes routines regarding the running of the school that teachers and staff understand and follow
Outreach	· Ensures that teachers and staff have necessary materials and equipment · Ensures that teachers have necessary professional development opportunities that directly enhance their teaching
Relationships	· Remains aware of personal needs of teachers and staff · Maintains personal relationships with teachers and staff · Is informed about significant personal issues in the lives of teachers and staff · Acknowledges significant events in the lives of teachers and staff
Resources	· Ensures that teachers and staff have necessary materials and equipment · Ensures that teachers have necessary professional development opportunities that directly enhance their teaching
Situational Awareness	· Is aware of informal groups and relationships among teachers and staff · Is aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord · Can predict what could go wrong from day to day
Visibility	· Makes systematic and frequent visits to classrooms · Is highly visible around the school · Has frequent contact with students

Strategy 4 – Engage Teachers as Full Partners in Achieving Educational Excellence

Teachers are the lynchpin for ensuring that students are successful. They are the primary point of contact with students and make profound differences in students' learning experiences. Nothing is more important in the learning process than a good teacher. There are some key characteristics of highly qualified teachers that have a positive impact on student achievement. They include: preparation and knowledge about their subject; a belief that all students can achieve to high standards; the ability to organize and manage their classroom; and the skill to implement instruction and assessment techniques appropriate to the needs of their students.[46]

Adults in a school need to feel valued, respected and trusted and they need to have time to plan and to work with each other and with students. They cannot create effective, supportive learning environments for students and do their jobs well when these conditions are not present.

Teachers assume new responsibilities in a decentralized system. They not only become leaders in their classrooms, but also have a stake in decision-making and their school's success.

Getting the right teachers for the right schools is the most important decision schools make. Choosing the right school – one that shares a teacher's learning philosophy – is the most important choice a teacher can make. Teachers are likely to be more adaptable to a change of direction or willing to adopt particular teaching methods if they are knowledgeable about their field, share a common philosophy, enjoy working together and are valued for their professional judgment. A teacher who likes to teach in 50 minute periods using a structured curriculum may be the right fit for a high school that builds its curriculum around Carnegie unit courses, but not for a school that is moving to block scheduling, differentiated instruction and integrated teaching.

Professional Development

Professional development has long been the purview of districts. However, in many high-performing districts, the practice of offering district-wide professional development is being replaced by new school-based approaches designed to improve instruction and classroom management. Teachers are establishing learning communities, conducting their own action research and often have coaches to help them improve classroom practice. Teachers report that networking and having common planning time with other teachers, researching topics of professional interest, mentoring and being mentored improve their classroom teaching.[47] Many of these practices underpin the District's Teaching and Learning Project. To enhance school-based professional development, researcher Paul Hill has recommended that a district's role in professional development might be strengthened by:

- Creating independent institutions to provide assistance, advice and teacher training.
- Setting up venture capital funds to encourage formation of new non-profit and university-based assistance organizations.
- Creating incubators to generate the capacity to create new schools by giving groups of school administrators and teachers a time and place to work together and receive expert help and advice.[3]

District-DCTA Collaboration

To accommodate the new role for teachers, the District/DCTA Agreement must be in alignment with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and focus on improving student achievement. Denver is fortunate that the Denver Classroom Teachers Association is a member of the Teacher Union Reform Network – one of only 40 teachers' unions in the country to belong to this organization. The primary goal of the organization is "to create new union models that can take the lead in building and sustaining effective schools for all students." The District and DCTA have already demonstrated an ability to work collaboratively to develop ProComp, an alternative compensation system that is one of only a few such plans in the nation. Under ProComp, teachers will receive bonuses based in part on student performance, engaging in professional development to improve their teaching, and teaching subjects that are understaffed. ProComp was designed and is being piloted collaboratively by the union and the District. Such collaboration must become the norm if high school reform is to be successful in DPS.

There are three areas where a strong partnership could facilitate high school reform. First, the DCTA and the District could work to develop procedures that would allow variation in working conditions across schools depending on the school's philosophy and operations. Rochester, N.Y. is beginning a pilot in school-site decision-making that could serve as a model for a similar pilot in Denver. Second, teachers need to have a real voice in decision-making at the school level. The DCTA-District partnership could initiate professional development that would help teachers play a constructive role in school redesign, learn how to use data and examine student work to make decisions about instruction and assessment, and help teachers learn how to effectively contribute to school-based decision-making. Third, if responsibility for hiring and firing staff is located at the school level, the DCTA-District partnership could help teachers learn how to select schools and participate in the design of procedures to make this a mutually satisfactory process. Promoting the use of temporary Memorandums of Understanding, which spell out conditions at individual schools, and conducting selected pilot programs to test different strategies are two options that hold promise for learning about how best to implement reforms.

The District-DCTA Agreement allows for waivers of some provisions, but we urge the District and DCTA to work toward changes in the Agreement that will proactively promote high school reform. Areas that should be addressed include hiring, transfers, working conditions and responsibilities. The District and the DCTA should join in partnership to open and sustain a dialogue about these recommendations and how best to implement them.

Recommendations on the Changing Role for Teachers

Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence, creating strong and effective teacher leaders. Ensure that District policies and the District/DCTA Agreement are in alignment with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and focus on improving student achievement.

Hiring processes should ensure that all teachers are highly qualified based on practices for good instruction and building relationships. Clear expectations regarding student performance should be established for each teacher.

Ongoing training and professional development should focus on improving student achievement.

Strategy 5 – Offer Families and Students a Choice among High Quality High Schools that Reflect Students' Learning Styles and Interests

To meet the needs of individual students, there must be a wide variety of quality high school options in neighborhoods and across the community. This selection of schools should offer students the opportunity to learn in a setting that fits their interests, needs and learning styles. Parents who choose the schools their children attend are more satisfied with schools than parents who do not choose,[49] and when students and families have a choice, it appears to have a positive impact on student achievement.[50] Students are also more likely to learn when they have more choice over the courses they take, the material they study and the strategies they use to learn and demonstrate learning.[51]

Information, Outreach and Counseling

Students and their families will need good information about the philosophy of the school, its approach to learning, its performance and its teachers and staff. Special efforts are needed to ensure that students from low-income families have good information and an equal opportunity to choose. A 2002 study suggests that African American and Latino students and families need to be encouraged to take advantage of choice.[52]

Equity

The key to an effective system of choice is that all schools in a district must be of high quality. They must have high quality administrators and teachers that "fit" with the school's philosophy of instruction, and they must be able to attract students on the basis of their distinctiveness.[53] Unless all schools are of high quality, choice can be discriminatory. Concerted efforts must be made to ensure that "choice" does not have the unintended consequence of fostering racial or economic segregation. Schools will need to actively recruit children of all races and income levels, admission policies must be fair and open, and transportation needs must be considered.[54]

Access

Providing transportation must be part of the strategy to ensure that all students have access to the schools of their choice and that policies foster integration. This will require redesigning the current transportation system for high school students so that those who need it have access to a free RTD pass or other form of transportation to travel to the school of their choice. Currently about 3,000 of the nearly 18,000 DPS high school students are eligible for a free RTD pass. Students attending schools of choice are not eligible for free passes unless they attend a magnet school. An RTD pass costs the District $19 per month or $190 per year for each student, but students must pick up their passes each month and on average 2,200 students do so.

Demonstration of Interest

To increase the chance that students and families choose schools that meet their needs, students need to actively demonstrate an interest in the school – just showing up is not enough. We do not intend that there be admission criteria based on academics, but we do think that students should actively express interest through a letter or interview (including in a student's native language if that is appropriate) on why they have chosen the school. An active expression of interest engages the students and their families on the front end and helps establish the shared responsibility for success.

Recommendations on Choice Among High Quality High Schools

Offer students a choice of high quality schools and vibrant opportunities that reflect different learning styles and interests.

Create an effective system to disseminate information about school choice to parents. Make special outreach efforts to minority, low-income and special needs students and their families. Information should describe the connection between choice of school and learning success and be available in the student's language.

Transportation options should be created to assist students in exercising choice in school selection.

Strategy 6 – Create a New Role for the District and Reshape Its Relationships with Schools and the Community

High-performing schools require leadership and support from a high-performing district. Just as each school must align its structure, systems and programs to focus on student achievement, the District must align its operations to focus on supporting the work of the schools.

There is no one "right" way to organize and run a school district. The structure and approach of the district has to fit with the norms of the community and reflect its goals for the education of its children. The real test of a district's effectiveness is whether it is achieving the results the community wants and expects from its schools.

Characteristics of High Performing Districts

School districts are beginning to take a page out of the book of successful business organizations and non-profits in rethinking their role and operational practices. Most successful organizations are abandoning command and control leadership. They have a clear, focused mission and framework for the organization, but place responsibility for quality and results at the level closest to the customer – where people are in the best position to make a decision. These organizations believe that people are their most important asset. They are flexible and can adapt to the rapid changes they face every day. They are friendly places to work and value their employees and customers equally. They use data and input from employees and customers to improve and adjust their practices as the climate demands.

Many studies suggest that districts organized for student success share characteristics similar to these successful business and non-profit organizations. These districts set expectations for schools, but do not dictate how they should be operated. They create a collaborative environment within the district and with the community. They help develop the capacity of principals and teachers to increase student achievement. They build data systems to collect and interpret information that is used to inform decisions and provide assistance to their own staff and to the schools in how to understand and apply the data. They allocate resources in a way that will maximize student achievement. They seek a balance between central control and school-based decision-making. They align operations on all levels around common goals and superior service. They build public support for reform.[55]

Districts that want to achieve results are positioning themselves as change leaders and service organizations. Under this approach, the district's main mission is to:

1. Create a positive climate of respect and trust throughout the district.
2. Establish and communicate clear goals and expectations.
3. Develop and maintain data systems that provide timely and useful information to schools and stakeholders.
4. Hold schools accountable for results.
5. Recruit, hire, develop and retain strong and effective school leaders and develop a principal leadership program to build a pool of highly qualified administrators.
6. Function as a service organization and ensure that all departments and staff see schools, students and the community as their customers.
7. Build the capacity of district staff, principals, teachers and support staff.
8. Provide resources to the right kinds of activities to achieve its goals.

Creating a Positive Climate

According to Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great,* great organizations create a climate of open communication and inclusiveness in decision-making. They are able to "confront the brutal facts of their current reality"[56] yet maintain an unwavering faith that they will be successful in their efforts to fulfill their mission. They create an environment where employees at all levels feel valued, trusted and respected. They also establish a sense of urgency that change and reform cannot wait. They form strong alliances and coalitions as they undertake change. They work hard at supporting collaboration with and among their employees, staff in the field, and key organizations that can help to advance their mission.

The Commission heard concerns that District decision-making is closely held and that communication is often a one-way street. Some employees do not feel valued, trusted or respected. While collaboration between the DCTA and the District seems strong in the development of ProComp, it is fragile in other areas. There is a need to strengthen the sense of common purpose and focused mission throughout the system and to foster two-way conversations on how to achieve the mission.

DPS can model a climate of open communication and inclusiveness in decision-making and create an environment where employees at all levels feel valued, trusted and respected. District leaders must maintain and constantly communicate the belief that all students can

achieve at high levels. The District must also establish a sense of urgency – that reform cannot wait – among District staff, principals, teachers, parents, students and the community. And the District must work hard at supporting collaboration with the DCTA and with the greater community.

DPS can also model the characteristics of a learning organization by engaging the Senior Management Team and all District staff in processes that explore the need for change and how the ideas being discussed will impact their functions. In doing so, it is critical to align and synchronize programs and services across District departments and staff with the overarching focus on student achievement. Equally important will be the elimination of programs, initiatives, services, rules, regulations and procedures that do not add value to accomplishing this goal.

Establishing and Communicating Clear Goals and Expectations

The Commission believes District operations and staff should focus on three key goals: student success, positive relationships and customer service. A key job for the Superintendent and the Board will be to personally, publicly and repeatedly reinforce District goals and standards and champion the core belief that it is possible for every student to achieve high standards and that every student will graduate. Earlier in the report, the Commission recommended that the District examine the existing academic content standards and additional ways to measure student performance so that stakeholders can see the correlation between CSAP and other forms of assessment. Goals and standards for measuring positive relationships and customer service also are needed. The District conducts annual surveys of students, teachers and parents to measure customer satisfaction, and it should ensure that these surveys are providing useful information and that the results are used in decision-making.

Developing and Maintaining Effective Data Systems

At every level of education it seems that data are collected for someone else. Teachers send data to the front office. The principal sends data to the central district administration. District staff send data to the state. The state sends data to the federal government. Very little of the data seems to be used to improve student success, district and school climate or customer satisfaction. At the school level, administrators and teachers need to be able to use ongoing assessments and data to inform and improve the decisions they make about their instruction and curriculum, with a special emphasis on closing the achievement gap. At the district level, data are important for assessing the performance of schools and for identifying areas that need special attention.

To be valuable, data need to be timely, packaged in a useable format, and useful for decision-making. For example, while aggregate CSAP scores are released in early summer, schools need CSAP results on the performance of individual students on specific test items and on groups of students by ethnicity and gender before school opens in August. Data also need to be user-friendly and formatted in a way that enables schools to meaningfully use the information. For example, while the state provides information on how individual students perform on each CSAP test item (such as reading for understanding), schools cannot easily use that information to determine which students in which classes did well on a particular test item.

A useful data system must be able to integrate information on student performance, student demographics, and educational programs so that schools can determine whether a particular program, like the Literacy Studio, is working and for whom, and whether test scores improved as a result. This kind of data provides the basis for conversations at the school level among teachers and between teachers and the principal. It also provides the basis for conversations between the Superintendent and the principals.

A useful data system should also be able to track the progress of individual students. As noted above, the state is trying to set up such a system and is requiring districts to report graduation data for 2004 using individual student identifiers.

Schools have rarely been expected to use data to improve student success or examine the effectiveness of particular classes or programs. As a result, there is limited capacity among principals and teachers to use data for decision-making and continuous improvement. In fact, in the current climate where the most common use of data is to identify "failing schools," there may be a reluctance to look too deeply at the available information. High school staff need encouragement and significant support to use data in a meaningful way. While a more sophisticated data system is needed, it is possible to learn much about a school by looking at information currently available.

Holding Schools Accountable for Results

The central ingredients of an effective accountability system are:

- Clear, simple, understandable goals that are known to students, teachers, parents, principals and the community.
- Standards that support the goals.
- A variety of ways to effectively measure progress toward achieving the goals.
- Timely and useful data and information and the ability to use them.
- Support to schools to help them achieve results.
- Accountability where learning takes place – at the school and with principals, teachers and students.
- A system to monitor progress and drive toward continuous improvement.

DPS does not have free reign in creating its own accountability system; it must deal with multiple federal and state requirements. There are state tests, federal requirements that students make adequate yearly progress, state report cards, state accreditation requirements, and state-designed consequences that can turn unsatisfactory schools into charter schools. Yet, in spite of these various accountability mechanisms, many students are not successful and the consequences of failure rest primarily on them. DPS needs additional mechanisms to improve accountability. We have already discussed the need for clear goals and standards, a variety of ways to measure progress, an effective data system and support to schools to help them achieve results. In addition, the Commission believes that in order to better connect accountability with authority and responsibility, each high school should operate under a performance contract with the District.

Edmonton, Canada has pioneered the use of performance agreements with its principals and schools. The process for developing, negotiating and reviewing the performance contracts between schools and the District forms the basis of Edmonton's system to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement at both the school and District levels. The principal negotiates his/her performance agreement annually with the Superintendent and reports directly to him. The agreement spells out the district's expectations for the principal and its obligations to the principal and his/her school. The central office staff regularly prepares detailed reports for the Superintendent and the principals on each school's performance. These reports are used to review each school's progress and identify areas where schools and principals need support and assistance. The Superintendent visits each school annually to review progress and the terms of the performance agreement. Principals have the opportunity to rate district services and discuss these with the Superintendent.[57]

DPS already has performance agreements with its charter and contract schools, and the format of these agreements can serve as a starting point for developing model contracts with its high schools. Performance contracts enable schools to have more freedom *and* greater accountability. They make clear the results expected from each principal and school, as well as the District's obligations to the school. They establish the terms by which each school will be structured and operate. The contract would include clear measures for how each school will meet district standards for student achievement, positive relationships and customer service. The contract would allow individual schools to specify and ultimately evaluate how their schedule, curriculum, instruction, use of resources, staffing and professional development would help reach the standards. Increasing the use of contracts with clear accountability measures would help individual schools clarify their goals and the means they will use to reach them. It will also focus the District's efforts on supporting schools while holding them accountable for the success of their students. Each principal should have a single point of contact, either the Superintendent or a designee, with whom he or she negotiates a contract and discusses progress. The District must have timely, detailed information on each school and the results of customer satisfaction surveys. DPS currently has one-year employment contracts with its principals. Consideration should be given to extending these contracts to three years and providing compensation commensurate with the new responsibilities a principal will assume.

Recruiting and Hiring Effective School Leaders

One of the most important functions of the District is to identify, recruit, develop and retain high quality principals. According to Jim Collins, the key role of a leader is to get and keep the right people.[58] Selecting the right principal is a crucial decision, particularly in a decentralized system. These individuals should have the capacity to lead change, create a clear focused vision, assume responsibility for the leadership and management of their schools, select teachers, and get results. (See Figure 10.)

But principals are not necessarily interchangeable. Each school is unique and what makes a good principal in one school does not necessarily hold true in another. It is important to get the right principal in the right school setting. Principals need to be chosen to fit with the school context. If schools are part of a national network, such as the Big Picture Company or Expeditionary Learning, then the national organization plays a role in the hiring by recruiting and training individuals who support its philosophy. In District-run schools, not only must principals possess the characteristics necessary to be a good leader and manager, but they must also wholeheartedly support the philosophy of the school that they will lead.

Functioning as a Service Organization to Support Schools

The central office should be reshaped into a service organization with the primary functions of achieving student success and supporting schools. The District administration must give high priority to creating open and frequent communication with principals, teachers, parents and students. The services provided by each department should be clearly defined, as should the expectations for delivering those services to schools and to other district operations. In Edmonton, Canada, the school district uses a fee-for-service model to ensure customer service. Schools have the flexibility to purchase services from the district or from outside vendors.

There are advantages to having some centralized analysis and support services. The trick is to find the right balance between central and school-based responsibilities. This balance should be determined through discussions and negotiations with individual principals and may be different in individual schools and circumstances. The District will need to experiment and be flexible as situations dictate.

Building the Capacity of District Staff, Principals, Teachers and Support Staff

The District must assess the capacity of its central administration staff to carry out new roles and ensure that they receive the training and ongoing support they need to become skilled leaders and managers. Tapping the expertise of Denver's business and non-profit communities could provide valuable assistance to the District as it seeks to review its policies, processes and procedures and prepare and support personnel for new roles and responsibilities.

For principals, going from a management role to a leadership role such as the Commission envisions will be extremely challenging. The District must arrange for extensive preparation and training for principals and provide adequate time for this training. For example, the District will need to develop guidelines and training on budgeting, contracting, and hiring and dismissal of personnel to help principals build the capacity to assume responsibility for their schools. It is especially challenging for principals, who manage schools all day, to take the time for this training and to put concepts into action once they return to their schools. One way to facilitate the transition is to provide principals with the opportunity to work with a coach who can support and assist them in assuming new and different responsibilities. A District leadership assistance team, consisting of experts and former principals, could be a valuable resource for providing ongoing support. Building a strong network among principals will also be important. The network should meet regularly and be a place for peer learning and sharing challenges and best practices.

Teachers will also need training to carry out their new responsibilities. While much of this training will take place at the school level, the District has an important role to play in creating the conditions for professional development and ensuring that it occurs. Time is a big factor in teacher training. It is difficult for teachers who carry a full teaching load to take the time for extensive training and to put concepts into action once they return to their schools. Coaches, professional learning communities, networking with other teachers, on-site action research projects and adequate time to participate in these activities will be critical.

The District has already initiated some strategies to enhance the capacity of teachers and principals, including literacy and math coaches, the Secondary Teaching and Learning Project, and the DPS Leadership Initiative. The Leadership Initiative is designed to improve the quality of DPS personnel and develop a cadre of outstanding leaders dedicated to the success of Denver's students. Based on ongoing evaluation, these strategies should be adapted or expanded as appropriate.

Providing Resources to the Right Kinds of Activities

Achieving the goals established in this report will require changes in where funds are spent throughout the District and how funds are allocated among schools. About 45 percent of DPS' operating budget goes directly to schools through an allocation formula based mostly on school size, but also factoring in elements of the specific needs of students. The formula allocates the number of teachers for each school based on the number of students. The number of assistant principals and administrative assistants is based on school size and the percentage of free-lunch eligible students. Fifty-five percent of operating revenues remain in the District budget, but a significant percentage of that amount is distributed to schools based on the numbers of free and reduced lunch students (Title I), special education students and English Language Learners. Estimates are that schools receive an additional 30 percent of the DPS budget from the central office. The District estimates that about 8 percent of the operating budget covers district administration; leaving about 17 percent for central facilities, capital/insurance reserve, and other non-school costs.

There are inequities built into current budgetary policies. For example, the dollars allocated to each school under the staffing formula are based on average teacher salaries. If a school has more veteran teachers, it is held harmless for higher salary costs because it is only charged for the average teacher's salary. Students in schools with more veteran teachers get the benefit of their experience, while their costs are shared by other schools that have less experienced teachers. In addition, many DPS programs are not included in the fund-

ing formula and their distribution by the central office contributes to the differences in funding across schools.

The Commission is intrigued with the idea of using a Weighted Student Formula to improve parity and achievement across the District. The concept behind a Weighted Student Formula is that money follows the student. Each student is assigned a weighted dollar amount based on certain factors, such as grade level, socio-economic income status, special education needs or whether he/she is an English Language Learner. When the student enrolls in a particular school, he or she would bring those resources to that school. For example, a student who is from a low-income family and has a special education need would bring a greater amount than a native English speaker from a middle-income home. Districts usually also allocate a base amount of funding to each school to reflect the fact that there are fixed operating costs regardless of the number or type of students.[59] This idea would need to be studied carefully and implemented thoughtfully but could help assure that resources are directed where they are needed most.

We are concerned that there be adequate resources to undertake the reforms we recommend in this report. While the mill levy funds are important and should be used to support secondary school reform efforts, additional resources will be required. The District should seek additional financial support from foundations and the private sector. The District should also explore the redirection of existing resources. While the state determines per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) for each district and controls the use of certain funds, there is flexibility in the budget. Studies of the DPS budget by the Center for Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington and Colorado University Professor Paul Teske for the Donnell-Kay Foundation have shed some light on how resources are being spent and allocated to schools within DPS. We believe that the results of these studies and additional analysis should be used to identify the resources necessary to implement these recommendations. The possibility of the District reallocating resources and staffing to school sites and decreasing administrative overhead should also be evaluated.

Recommendations on Creating a New District Role

To ensure success, the Superintendent must be the face and champion of reform, accountable to the Board and the community for its success. At the same time, the process of reform must engage all stakeholders.

Join with key public and private stakeholders to create a "Denver Compact for High Performing High Schools" to stimulate community involvement in the reform process, establish ongoing forums for community dialogue and provide valuable assistance to the District and principals.

Set the tone for excellence by establishing clear goals and expectations for student achievement, positive climate and customer satisfaction, with the involvement of school leaders, teachers, students and the community. Promote a culture of integrity, teamwork, respect and accountability with District staff, school leaders, teachers, students, families and the community.

Recruit, hire, develop, retain and adequately compensate strong, effective principal leaders. Assess the capacity of each high school principal to lead change and assume increasing responsibility for the performance of his or her school. Create performance contracts between the District and high school principals that specify the results that are expected from the principal and the school, as well as the District's obligations to the school.

Develop and maintain timely and user-friendly information systems to integrate data on student performance, student characteristics and educational programs and use a unique student identifier, in concert with the state system, to follow individual student progress and provide accurate information on dropout, transfer and graduation rates, as well as indicators of student success.

Reshape the District's central office into a service organization with a primary function of achieving student success and supporting schools. Assess the capacity of central office staff and school leadership to carry out new roles and ensure that they receive the training and ongoing support they need to become proficient leaders and managers. Ensure that there is open and frequent communication with principals, teachers, parents and students.

Study and develop recommendations on changes in the methods of allocating funds to schools based on student characteristics. Commission studies on how resources can best be reallocated to support reform efforts, reflecting a clear focus on student achievement.

An Action Agenda for Implementing Change

The Commission has laid out suggested action steps and a timeline to implement its recommendations and begin the high school reform process. We also make recommendations for the use of the mill levy funds available to support reform efforts.

As noted above, the Superintendent must be the face and champion of reform, accountable to the Board and the community for its success. At the same time, the process must engage all stakeholders within schools and the community.

To provide support for the Superintendent and the Board, the District should join with the private sector, DCTA, non-profits, government, postsecondary institutions and other community organizations to create a "Denver Compact for High Performing High Schools." The Compact would not be an organization as such, although it could have a small staff that might be located at one of the participating entities. Its purpose would be to engage stakeholders in a collaborative process to represent the community's ownership of the high school reform efforts. Participants in this initiative – many of them already deeply engaged with Denver's youth – would work together to design, support and monitor the implementation of a long-term plan based on the Commission's recommendations.

The Compact would develop formal mutual agreements designed to: 1) engage a broad array of stakeholders in a structured, collaborative process to identify ways to support needed high school reforms and empower them to contribute constructively to those reforms; 2) establish a forum for ongoing civic dialogue and support for improvements in educational outcomes for DPS' high school students; 3) adopt measures against which high school reform and community efforts supporting it can be evaluated; 4) establish approaches for communicating with each other about Denver's reform efforts; and 5) create constructive and collaborative ways to celebrate successes and address challenges that will inevitably emerge over time as the partners do their work. The Denver Compact would empower all community members – and support the Superintendent and Board – in creating and sustaining the energy and focus that will be necessary for the success of high school reform. Similar efforts have been put in place in Boston, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. Members of those communities could provide insights and lessons on the work of a potential Denver Compact.

Denver is fortunate that voters have approved a $2 million annual mill levy to support change at the middle and high school level. We would recommend these resources be used to:

- Support the redesign of large high schools using the attributes of high quality high schools with priority for high schools with low levels of student achievement;
- Support school assessments to identify and prioritize high schools for redesign;
- Support an application process to offer planning and implementation grants to groups within or outside of the school that want to apply to design new schools or redesign existing schools;
- Provide technical assistance and support for the redesign effort;
- Involve stakeholders within and outside the school in designing new schools and redesigning existing schools;
- Support a capacity building effort to identify and prepare principals to assume their new roles;
- Support the development of an effective data information system;
- Support the work of the DPS Compact for High Performing High Schools to provide guidance, support and oversight for the reform effort;
- Support studies and pilot projects to explore the best method of allocating resources to schools and best practices for devolving responsibility for budget and key operational functions to the schools.

Implementation Plan and Timeline

Suggested Time	Recommendation
March to September 2005	**Community Engagement:** Engage all stakeholders in conversation about the recommendations and the implementation of them.
	Standards and Benchmarks for School Assessments: Adopt benchmarks for assessing each high school based on the principles of rigor, relevance and relationships. Standards should include quantitative indicators, such as performance on state and local assessments and the Colorado ACT and graduation rates and qualitative indicators based on the attributes identified in the recommendations (see Figure 9) of high quality high schools. *
	Assessment Process: Design and implement a process to assess how well each high school meets the standards and benchmarks. Use the results of these assessments to prioritize schools for access to mill levy funds.
	Plan for the Future: Require and support each high school in developing a plan for its future – encouraging schools to be innovative and enabling them to seek outside assistance to support their efforts. An application process could be used to offer planning and implementation grants and technical assistance to groups within and outside of the school who want to apply to reform the school or start new schools.
	Empower Principals: Assess the capacity of each high school principal to lead change and assume increasing responsibility for their school's performance. Identify, recruit and develop principals for their new roles. Over time and with training and support, principals should have authority and responsibility for the budget, hiring, firing, scheduling, professional development and educational design for their schools.
	Performance Contracts: Develop a format for annual performance contracts with principals that will specify the results that are expected from the principal and the school, as well as the District's obligations to the school. The agreements currently used with charter and contract schools could provide a starting point.
	Teacher Involvement: Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence, creating strong and effective teacher leaders. Ensure that District policies and the District/Denver Classroom Teachers Association Agreement support these recommendations and focus on improving student achievement.
	Denver Compact: Join with key public and private stakeholders to enter into a "Denver Compact for High Performing High Schools." This would stimulate community involvement in the reform process, establish ongoing forums for community dialogue and provide valuable assistance to the District and principals.
	Focus on Individual Students: Ensure that all schools begin to design experiences for students in all grades that stress individual attention, rigor, relevance and relationships. Efforts could include providing students with advisors or mentors, clarifying and communicating clear goals and expectations for students, and grouping students and teachers into smaller learning communities.
2005 - 2006 School Year	**Choice Among High Quality High Schools:** All schools should be of high quality and students and families should have a choice of high quality schools. New schools, small schools within schools, small learning communities, theme schools, personalized comprehensive schools and schools based on successful models should be part of the mix of high school choices.
	Information About Choice: Create an effective system to disseminate information about school choice to parents. Require students to demonstrate an interest in attending their school of choice. Develop a program to reach out and counsel families and students, particularly low income and minority students, about school choices. This program should be in place for the 2006-2007 school year.

*See Brown, Paper prepared for the Commission. Pages pp. 12 and 13.

Suggested Time	Recommendation
2005 - 2006 School Year	**Transportation:** The District should review its transportation policies for high school students to determine how it could provide free RTD passes or other transportation options to students who choose a school outside of their neighborhood.
	Improve Data Systems: Develop a timely and user-friendly information system to integrate data on student performance, student characteristics and educational programs. Use a unique student identifier, in concert with the state system, to follow individual student progress and provide accurate information on dropout, transfer and graduation rates as well as other indicators of student success. Train District and school staff on how to use data for decision-making.
	District Staff Assessment: Assess the interest and capacity of staff to carry out new roles and ensure that they receive the training and ongoing support they need to become proficient leaders and managers.
	District as a Service Organization: Reshape the District's central office into a service organization with the primary functions of achieving student success and supporting schools. The District administration must give high priority to creating open and frequent communication with principals, teachers, parents and students. Relationships between the central office and its schools must be based on trust. The focus of the central administration must be on establishing clear goals and expectations; revising standards and accountability measures; developing leadership for change at all levels; monitoring progress; and disseminating data.
	Standards and Graduation Requirements: Analyze and revise district standards and graduation requirements to include at a minimum mastery of a high level of skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, measuring, estimating, calculating, observing and problem solving; developing the ability to make good choices; developing critical thinking skills; taking responsibility for learning; and being prepared for postsecondary learning and adult life. This review should engage a broad range of stakeholders. Once these standards are in place, schools should measure student success on demonstration of mastery. The District should base graduation on demonstration of mastery of the standards and provide students with the flexibility to graduate in more or less than four years.
	Budget and Resource Allocation Practices: Undertake studies and make recommendations on the method of allocating funds to schools based on student characteristics and on how resources can be reallocated and secured to support the Commission's recommendations with an emphasis on instruction and student achievement.
	Professional Development: Provide support to principals in creating high quality and customized professional development for teachers focused on improving student achievement. The District should design district-wide professional development with input from principals and teachers.

CONCLUSION

Today's achievement levels are unacceptable. Denver's high schools are not working, particularly for Latino, African American and American Indian students, who comprise a majority of the District's student population. Reform must occur.

After careful analysis, the Commission, through its recommendations, calls upon the District to ensure that all students will master a rigorous and relevant learning program in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. None of these recommendations is intended as one-size-fits-all reform. The recommendations will, however, begin a transformation that will:

- Ensure that all high schools are of high quality with high expectations for all students.
- Provide the best educational choices for students and families.
- Close the achievement gap.
- Increase graduation rates.

Undertaking such fundamental reform will not be easy. It will challenge administrators, principals and teachers, and it will require the participation of students, parents and community stakeholders. It will require a change of culture, a change of will and a piercing focus on student achievement. And it will take time. The community must be prepared to stay the course. The investment will reap untold dividends for all of Denver – especially for its children. Denver simply cannot afford to *not* transform its educational system.

The time is now. There's not a moment to lose!

RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Achievement

1. There should be a laser-like focus on student achievement and a culture of success that supports high expectations at all levels of the District.

Rigorous Learning

2. Rigor should mean, at a minimum, mastering a high level of skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, measuring, estimating, calculating, observing and problem solving; developing the ability to make good choices; developing critical thinking skills; taking responsibility for learning; and being prepared for postsecondary learning and adult life. These high-level essential skills should form the core of the DPS standards.

3. Standards and graduation requirements should be reviewed and revised, as needed, with extensive input from the school community and the general public to ensure that they encompass high-level essential skills that are widely understood and shared. Curriculum should reflect the core set of standards and assessment criteria, and schools should be able to vary the materials and instructional approach within these parameters to meet the needs of their students.

4. Student success and completion of graduation requirements should be based on demonstrations of mastery. Students should be able to graduate when they have demonstrated proficiency in core competencies whether that takes more or less than four years.

Relevant Learning

5. Schools should be organized to meet the needs of individual students. Learning opportunities should be relevant to student interests and culture and help students develop their academic, social and career interests.

Relationships

6. A climate of trust, respect, caring and dialogue should exist throughout the District and its schools. Schools should create environments that provide physical safety and personal comfort as prerequisites for success.

7. The District and each school should be organized to ensure there are personalized relationships among adults, between adults and students and among students.

Treat Students as Individuals

8. All schools should begin to design experiences for students in all grades that stress individual attention, rigor, relevance and relationships. Efforts could include providing students with advisors or mentors, clarifying and communicating clear goals and expectations for students, and grouping students and teachers into smaller learning communities.

9. Students should have opportunities to develop individualized learning plans in concert with their families and teachers or advisor.

Create High Quality High Schools

10. All high schools should be high quality schools, incorporating the attributes of rigor, relevance and relationships. To accomplish this objective, the District should create new schools and reform its large schools. New small schools, small schools-within-schools, small learning communities, theme schools, personalized comprehensive high schools and schools based on successful models should be part of the mix of high school choices.

Empower Principals

11. High quality schools must be led by high-quality leaders who have the capacity to lead change, create a clear focused vision and assume responsibility for improving student achievement. Over time and with training and support, principals should assume control of the budget, hiring, firing, scheduling, professional development and educational design at their schools.

12. Each principal should be responsible for and evaluated on improving student achievement, closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates and creating a culture that fosters strong, positive relationships. Principals and schools should engage students, families, teachers and other stakeholders in developing and implementing the strategic plan for the school.

Changing Role for Teachers

13. Engage teachers as full partners in achieving educational excellence, creating strong and effective teacher leaders. Ensure that District policies and the District/DCTA Agreement are in alignment with the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and focus on improving student achievement.

14. Hiring processes should ensure that all teachers are highly qualified based on practices for good instruction and building relationships. Clear expectations regarding student performance should be established for each teacher.

15. Ongoing training and professional development should focus on improving student achievement.

Choice Among High Quality High Schools

16. Offer students a choice of high quality schools and vibrant opportunities that reflect different learning styles and interests.

17. Create an effective system to disseminate information about school choice to parents. Make special outreach efforts to minority, low-income and special needs students and their families. Information should describe the connection between choice of school and learning success and be available in the student's language.

18. Transportation options should be created to assist students in exercising choice in school selection.

New District Role

19. To ensure success, the Superintendent must be the face and champion of reform, accountable to the Board and the community for its success. At the same time, the process of reform must engage all stakeholders.

20. Join with key public and private stakeholders to create a "Denver Compact for High Performing High Schools" to stimulate community involvement in the reform process, establish ongoing forums for community dialogue and provide valuable assistance to the District and principals.

21. Set the tone for excellence by establishing clear goals and expectations for student achievement, positive climate and customer satisfaction, with the involvement of school leaders, teachers, students and the community. Promote a culture of integrity, teamwork, respect and accountability with District staff, school leaders, teachers, students, families and the community.

22. Recruit, hire, develop, retain and adequately compensate strong, effective principal leaders. Assess the capacity of each high school principal to lead change and assume increasing responsibility for the performance of his or her school. Create performance contracts between the District and high school principals that specify the results that are expected from the principal and the school, as well as the District's obligations to the school.

23. Develop and maintain timely and user-friendly information systems to integrate data on student performance, student characteristics and educational programs and use a unique student identifier, in concert with the state system, to follow individual student progress and provide accurate information on dropout, transfer and graduation rates, as well as indicators of student success.

24. Reshape the District's central office into a service organization with primary functions of achieving student success and supporting schools. Assess the capacity of central office staff and school leadership to carry out new roles and ensure that they receive the training and ongoing support they need to become proficient leaders and managers. Ensure that there is open and frequent communication with principals, teachers, parents and students.

25. Study and develop recommendations on changes in the methods of allocating funds to schools based on student characteristics. Commission studies on how resources can best be reallocated to support reform efforts, reflecting a clear focus on student achievement.

Board of Education Resolution Creating the Commission

A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE, A PROVISION OF THE 2003 MILL LEVY

WHEREAS, a recent report on high schools prepared by the Education Trust for the National Assessment Governing Board shows that for the nation

1. academic growth for students slows in high school compared to earlier grades;
2. achievement gaps widen between White and African-American/Hispanic students; and
3. achievement of students in the United Stated declines in high school compared to the achievement of students in other countries; and

Similar trends are evident in Denver; and

WHEREAS, Colorado currently spends more than $19 million to provide remedial education for more than 18,000 high school graduates who lack the skills needed for success in higher education; and

WHEREAS, a recent study shows that "only 37 percent of Colorado ninth graders are likely to graduate in four years and enroll in college within a year" and "that Colorado's low-income students' 'chance for college' in 2001 was a mere 17.2 percent;"

WHEREAS, at the tenth grade level, only 37 percent of Colorado students achieve at the *proficient* or *advanced* level in mathematics and only 52 percent achieve at these levels in writing; and

WHEREAS, by any measure, the number of students who enter DPS high schools but fail to graduate is unacceptably high; and

WHEREAS, in the Denver Public Schools the gap in achievement, graduation, and college attendance between high performing students and lower performing students is of great concern; and

WHEREAS, the Denver Public Schools has been named the most improved school district in Colorado for two years in a row, yet achievement gains in secondary schools have not kept pace with the district as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the future of our community depends upon a well-educated population who can participate as citizens in the democratic process, contribute to the economic vitality of the region and provide economic security for their families; and

WHEREAS, in November 2003, the citizens of the City and County of Denver approved a mill levy override that included a provision to improve graduation rates and student achievement through a focus on secondary school reform;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 IN THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, COLORADO, that the Commission on Secondary School Reform be established to study the issues inhibiting student success and graduation rates in secondary schools and to recommend needed policy and programmatic changes to ensure that students successfully transition to postsecondary education and the workforce.

DENVER COMMISSION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM

Membership

The Commission is composed of 27 members, including three students, K-12 and postsecondary educators, and representatives of foundations, businesses and community organizations. The Commission is co-chaired by Lucia Guzman, Vice President of the Denver Public Schools Board of Education, and Dorothy Horrell, President of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. Patricia McNeil serves as the Executive Director and Elizabeth Aybar as the Assistant Director. The Commissioners represent a broad cross-section of the community. A complete list of Commissioners appears on the back cover of the report.

The Commission's Work

The Denver Public Schools Commission on Secondary School Reform was among the first of its kind in the nation. While several states have created Commissions on high school reform, Denver is one of the few school districts to do so. The Denver Board of Education created the Commission to make recommendations on ways to revitalize Denver's high schools. The Commission's job was to understand the needs of DPS students, to know what DPS high schools are doing well and where they need to improve, to learn about various reform ideas and to make recommendations that uniquely meet the needs of Denver's current and future high school students.

The Commission was charged with making recommendations to the Board that would significantly improve the success of all students, increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap. The Commission was asked to identify priorities for the use of the mill levy funding that voters approved in November 2003, which earmarked $2 million annually for secondary school reform, and to suggest ways to maximize the use of existing resources to improve high school education.

The Commission gathered information on Denver's public high schools and studied research and best practices in order to make recommendations that would provide substantive, lasting and positive changes for Denver's high school students. In order to gather this information, the Commission held monthly meetings; formed three Action Groups on Teaching and Learning, Culture and Organization, and Accountability; shadowed students and met with principals and teachers at Denver's high schools; held a High School Model Colloquium; convened a Student/Teacher Forum with teams of students and teachers from each high school; held a Community Forum; and met with community organizations and members. In addition, the Commission's co-chairs and staff had many meetings with people in Denver's high schools, in DPS administration, and outside of DPS to better inform the Commission's work.

The Commission also had three papers prepared on issues related to its work:

- "The Role of the District in Driving School Reform," by Robert D. Muller
- "Regarding Teaching and Learning," by Candy Systra
- "School Culture and Organization: Lessons from Research and Experience," by Rexford Brown

Commission Meetings

The Commission held a public meeting each month from May 2004 through January 2005, except during August when Commissioners met in small groups for conversations about the Commission's vision. The Commission's meetings included discussions on readings about high schools, adolescents and best practices; presentations by DPS personnel about Denver's high schools; conversations with outside reform agents (such as Greg Richmond from Chicago Public Schools); debriefings of the Commission's activities; and formulation of the Commission's recommendations. The minutes of these meetings are posted on the Commission's website.

All meetings were open to the public and were attended by observers, including DPS personnel, the media, Board of Education members and interested community members. Meetings were often held at Denver's high schools where Commissioners had the opportunity to see the school and talk with staff and students.

Commission Activities

Commissioners were encouraged to participate in many activities that were either held by outside organizations or developed by the Commission staff. These activities helped give Commissioners a more comprehensive understanding of Denver's high schools as they are now and could be. Below is a description of the Commission's activities.

May 21st, Commission Meeting

At the first Commission meeting, DPS Superintendent Jerry Wartgow welcomed the Commissioners. After introductions, Commissioners discussed: What should high schools do well for their students? What should the Commission explore as part of its work? What are the most important issues facing high school students today? Of the solutions you have heard about for improving secondary schools, which ones would you like to explore? Following the conversation, Chief Academic Officer Sally Mentor Hay and Assistant Superintendent Wayne Eckerling provided an overview of DPS high schools.

June 3rd and 4th, Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) Conference

Commissioners had the opportunity to participate in the CASE Conference on High School Reform. At the conference, the Commission sponsored a dinner with Denver's high school principals and DPS administrative personnel to discuss reform issues.

June 18th, Commission Meeting

Commissioners spoke further with Sally Mentor Hay and Wayne Eckerling about Denver's high schools. In addition, they discussed readings on the history of high schools, adolescent development and school reform. Commissioners who attended the CASE Conference discussed what they learned at the conference. They discussed their plan for completing their work.

July 9th, Commission Meeting

Commissioners began the meeting with a discussion of readings about approaches to school reform and ways to close the achievement gap. They finalized the work plan and began consideration of the Commission's vision. This conversation continued in small groups during the month of August.

September 10th, Commission Meeting

Commissioners agreed upon a working vision and divided into three Action Groups – Teaching and Learning, Culture and Organization, and Accountability – to discuss and develop recommendations. The meeting was held at North High School where Principal Darlene LeDoux and two of her students spoke with Commissioners about the reform process at North.

September 27th – 30th, Student Shadowing Days

Commissioners each spent a day in one of Denver's high schools. During these Student Shadowing Days, Commissioners met with teachers to learn about the school and discuss reform. They shadowed a student for four classes and talked with students during one of those classes about their ideas for school reform. They also toured the school and discussed their experiences with the principal. Student Shadowing Days helped expand Commissioners' understanding of what DPS high schools are doing well and what needs to change.

October 7th, Denver Colloquium on High School Reform Models

The Commission held a Colloquium in which nine high school reform models (Big Picture Company, Coalition of Essential Schools, Early College High School, Expeditionary Learning, First Things First, International High School, New Technology High School, Project GRAD USA and Talent Development) presented overviews of their approach to high school reform and shared lessons learned from implementing their designs throughout the country. (See Appendix D for a description of each model.) This Colloquium had more than 100 participants, including Commissioners, DPS Administrative personnel, DPS high school and middle school principals, and interested community members.

October 8th, Commission Meeting

Commissioners debriefed and discussed their Student Shadowing experience and the Colloquium on High School Reform Models. They then worked in their Action Groups to further discuss and develop recommendations. Greg Richmond, Chief Officer of New Schools Development with Chicago Public Schools, shared information about Chicago's 2010 reform plan and talked with Commissioners about what Denver might learn from Chicago's efforts.

October 20th, Mayor's Summit on Latino Academic Achievement

The Commission was one of the sponsors for this summit. Many Commissioners attended the summit, learning more about factors that affect Latino academic achievement and what should happen in Denver's high schools to improve the achievement of all Latino students.

November 4th, Panel with Dr. William Ouchi and Dinner with Denver's High School Principals and Dr. Ouchi

The Commission co-sponsored a presentation by Dr. William Ouchi, author of *Making Schools Work,* with the Piton Foundation and the Leadership Denver Alumni Association of the Denver Metro Chamber Foundation that was attended by about 100 members of the business community and the general public. The event was organized by Leadership Denver and included a student panel moderated by Tina Griego and a panel discussing Dr. Ouchi's ideas on school reform with Commissioner Rick O'Connell and North High School Principal Darlene LeDoux. In the evening, the Stapleton Foundation and Commissioner Hank Baker hosted a dinner with high school principals, Commissioners and Dr. Ouchi. This dinner allowed for informal conversation about school reform among Commissioners and principals, as well as dialogue about Dr. Ouchi's ideas.

November 11th and 12th, Commission Retreat

Commissioners discussed initial draft recommendations.

November 19th, Student/Teacher Forum

The Commission held a Student Forum and a Teacher Forum at the Colorado Convention Center. The Commission strongly believed that it was essential to gather input from the many communities involved in the school reform process and developed the Forums to hear from students and teachers. Principals from each of Denver's high schools were asked to identify a team of five students, representing different ethnicities, genders, ages, levels of success in school and learning styles, to attend the Forum. In addition, the Commission asked principals to select one teacher to participate in a concurrent Teacher Forum. About 100 students and 20 teachers and staff from Denver's high schools and two local organizations (YouthBiz and Urban Peak) participated in the Forums.

Forum participants arrived on school busses at 8:30 on Friday morning. After breakfast, student Commissioners David Barber, a senior at CEC Middle College, and Lydia Landa, a sophomore at West High School, welcomed the participants and reviewed the agenda for the day. Participants spent the morning in small groups of two teams each working with a facilitator to complete a survey on their current school or teaching experiences, discuss what helps students learn, and describe what challenges they face. They then created a presentation on their ideal school. After lunch, teams presented their vision of the ideal high school to the Commissioners. At the end of the presentations, participants completed a Reflection/Evaluation Survey and returned to their home schools.

Based on the Reflection/Evaluation Survey results, most teachers and students enjoyed the day, felt they could express their honest opinions and believed their ideas would make an impact on the Commission's recommendations.

December 9th, Community Forum

The Commission held a Community Forum to offer community members the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences with the Commission. Commissioners heard from 10 individuals and organizations, including parents, teachers, principals, organization leaders and interested community members.

December 10th, Commission Meeting

Commissioners discussed draft recommendations.

January 5th, Conversation with Rochester School District Union President and Superintendent

Commissioners held a conference call with Rochester Teachers' Union President Adam Urbanski and Superintendent Manuel Rivera to discuss Rochester's strong union-district relationship. Commissioners unable to participate in the conference call were able to listen to the call on compact disk.

January 7th, Commission Meeting

At this meeting, Commissioners decided on the content of their recommendations.

January 31st, Commission Meeting

The Commission met to review and finalize its recommendations, a transmittal letter to the Board of Education and an executive summary of its report.

March 2nd

The Commission presented its final report to the Board.

Acknowledgements

The Commission's work was greatly enhanced by the help and commitment of many people throughout the community. These individuals provided us with important information, talked with us about our ideas and their potential for success, helped make our meetings and events a success, and pushed us to make recommendations that will make substantive, lasting changes for Denver's high school students. We wish to thank:

Denver Public High School principals for helping us plan Student Shadowing Days and our Student/Teacher Forum; hosting Commission meetings; meeting with Commission members on numerous occasions; and responding to our many requests for information. Teachers for welcoming us into their classrooms on Student Shadowing Days; participating in the Student/Teacher Forum; and giving feedback and ideas via email. Students for allowing Commissioners to shadow them for a day in September and sharing their ideas with us at the Student/Teacher Forum.

School Board members for their commitment to our work and attendance at our meetings. DPS Superintendent Jerry Wartgow; Chief Academic Officer Sally Mentor Hay; Assistant Superintendent Wayne Eckerling; as well as Norm Alerta, Josh Allen, Nan Baumbusch, Clara Biddlecom, Jonel Filipek, Rosanne Fulton, Bob Kahn, John Leslie, David Lowry, Marcy Moreno Maestas, Mary Ellen McEldowney, Tim Summers, Maureen Sanders, Mark Stevens, the School Choice office and the many others who helped the Commission with its work.

DCTA President Becky Wissink, Executive Director Bruce Dickinson and Coordinator of the DPS/DCTA ProComp Project Brad Jupp for talking with us about ideas for high school reform.

Commission meeting hosts: Young Americans Center for Financial Education, Education Commission of the States, North High School, Denver School of the Arts, West High School, George Washington High School, and National Jewish Medical and Research Center.

Event hosts: Adam's Mark Hotel for hosting the Denver Colloquium on High School Reform Models and the October Commission meeting; Colorado Convention Center for hosting the Student/Teacher Forum; and Manual Educational Complex for hosting the Community Forum.

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APPENDIX B

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OCTOBER 2004

School Name	American Indian	Asian	African American	Latino	White	Total
Abraham Lincoln High School	16 (1%)	53 (4%)	30 (2%)	1125 (86%)	83 (6%)	**1307**
Arts & Cultural Studies	1 (0%)	(0%)	35 (10%)	325 (90%)	1 (0%)	**362**
Career Education Center	3 (1%)	4 (1%)	31 (11%)	173 (62%)	66 (24%)	**277**
Challenge Choice and Images	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	93 (97%)	1 (1%)	(0%)	**96**
Colorado High Charter School	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	41 (35%)	48 (41%)	24 (20%)	**118**
Community Challenges	1 (2%)	(0%)	3 (6%)	43 (90%)	1 (2%)	**48**
Contemporary Learning Center	4 (2%)	(0%)	65 (38%)	88 (52%)	13 (8%)	**170**
Crittenton School	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	14 (11%)	91 (75%)	12 (10%)	**122**
Denver Online High School	(0%)	(0%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)	**12**
Denver School of Arts	4 (1%)	21 (4%)	70 (14%)	58 (12%)	349 (70%)	**502**
Denver Science & Technology	1 (1%)	8 (6%)	54 (41%)	26 (20%)	42 (32%)	**131**
DPS Night High School	2 (8%)	(0%)	4 (15%)	17 (65%)	3 (12%)	**26**
East High School	43 (2%)	41 (2%)	722 (38%)	243 (13%)	867 (45%)	**1916**
Emerson Street School	2 (4%)	(0%)	14 (27%)	29 (57%)	6 (12%)	**51**
Emily Griffith Opportunity School	7 (1%)	11 (2%)	144 (28%)	276 (53%)	83 (16%)	**521**
Escuela Tlateloco	1 (2%)	(0%)	2 (3%)	57 (95%)	(0%)	**60**
GED High School	(0%)	(0%)	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	3 (33%)	**9**
George Washington High School	13 (1%)	74 (5%)	832 (51%)	258 (16%)	457 (28%)	**1634**
Gilliam School	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	24 (47%)	19 (37%)	5 (10%)	**51**
John F. Kennedy High School	23 (1%)	88 (6%)	27 (2%)	948 (61%)	471 (30%)	**1557**
Leadership	1 (0%)	1 (0%)	102 (39%)	152 (58%)	6 (2%)	**262**
Life Skills Center High School	5 (1%)	3 (1%)	91 (26%)	204 (58%)	48 (14%)	**351**
Millennium Quest	(0%)	(0%)	101 (35%)	182 (64%)	2 (1%)	**285**
Montbello High School	2 (0%)	39 (3%)	692 (48%)	648 (45%)	74 (5%)	**1455**
New America School	(0%)	1 (0%)	8 (2%)	312 (97%)	(0%)	**321**
North High School	31 (2%)	12 (1%)	47 (3%)	1155 (86%)	104 (8%)	**1349**
Prep Assessment Center	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	15 (38%)	15 (38%)	7 (18%)	**39**
PS1 Charter School	14 (5%)	1 (0%)	58 (22%)	95 (36%)	99 (37%)	**267**
Ridgeview Academy	12 (3%)	11 (2%)	102 (22%)	177 (39%)	152 (33%)	**454**
Skyland Community High School	(0%)	1 (1%)	68 (72%)	11 (12%)	15 (16%)	**95**
South High School	9 (1%)	136 (10%)	257(19%)	523 (39%)	409 (31%)	**1334**
*Special Placement High School	(0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	**13**
SW Early College	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	8 (6%)	98 (68%)	32 (22%)	**145**
Thomas Jefferson High School	13 (1%)	47 (4%)	305 (27%)	188 (17%)	560 (50%)	**1113**
West High School	16 (1%)	18 (1%)	44 (3%)	1299 (89%)	83 (6%)	**1460**
Total	238	581	4112	8895	4087	**17913**

*SASI holding code- not a school

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OCTOBER 2003

School Name	American Indian	Asian	African American	Latino	White	Total
Abraham Lincoln High School	19 (1%)	76 (5%)	42 (3%)	1188 (83%)	114 (8%)	**1439**
Arts & Cultural Studies	(0%)	(0%)	37 (9%)	388 (91%)	1 (0%)	**426**
Career Education Center	8 (3%)	3 (1%)	36 (13%)	140 (52%)	84 (31%)	**271**
Challenge Choice and Images	(0%)	(0%)	30 (100%)	(0%)	(0%)	**30**
Colorado High Charter School	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	32 (29%)	40 (36%)	36 (32%)	**112**
Community Challenges	1 (2%)	(0%)	2 (4%)	41 (82%)	6 (12%)	**50**
Contemporary Learning Center	3 (2%)	5 (3%)	76 (40%)	93 (49%)	11 (6%)	**188**
Crittenton School	2 (2%)	3 (2%)	15 (12%)	103 (81%)	4 (3%)	**127**
Denver Online High School	(0%)	(0%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	**6**
Denver School of Arts	6 (1%)	13 (3%)	59 (13%)	65 (15%)	298 (68%)	**441**
DPS Night High School	(0%)	1 (4%)	6 (26%)	12 (52%)	4 (17%)	**23**
East High School	39 (2%)	47 (3%)	696 (38%)	221 (12%)	850 (46%)	**1853**
Emerson Street School	(0%)	(0%)	22 (47%)	22 (47%)	3 (6%)	**47**
Emily Griffith Opportunity School	10 (2%)	16 (3%)	163 (28%)	308 (52%)	92 (16%)	**589**
GED High School	(0%)	(0%)	7 (33%)	5 (24%)	9 (43%)	**21**
George Washington High School	15 (1%)	98 (6%)	794 (49%)	239 (15%)	475 (29%)	**1621**
Gilliam School	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	19 (33%)	31 (53%)	6 (10%)	**58**
John F. Kennedy High School	26 (2%)	97 (6%)	41 (3%)	867 (55%)	533 (34%)	**1564**
Leadership	1 (0%)	2 (1%)	140 (43%)	173 (53%)	9 (3%)	**325**
Life Skills Center High School	1 (1%)	6 (3%)	27 (15%)	142 (77%)	9 (5%)	**185**
Millennium Quest	2 (1%)	1 (0%)	111 (37%)	185 (61%)	3 (1%)	**302**
Montbello High School	4 (0%)	36 (3%)	704 (51%)	567 (41%)	83 (6%)	**1394**
North High School	39 (3%)	10 (1%)	35 (2%)	1230 (84%)	158 (11%)	**1472**
Prep Assessment Center	1 (3%)	(0%)	8 (25%)	17 (53%)	6 (19%)	**32**
PS1 Charter School	14 (5%)	1 (0%)	63 (23%)	96 (35%)	104 (37%)	**278**
Ridgeview Academy	8 (2%)	8 (2%)	87 (21%)	180 (43%)	138 (33%)	**421**
Skyland Community High School	(0%)	2 (3%)	41 (68%)	6 (10%)	11 (18%)	**60**
South High School	11 (1%)	124 (9%)	255 (18%)	558 (40%)	431 (31%)	**1379**
*Special Placement High School	(0%)	2 (13%)	7 (44%)	6 (38%)	1 (6%)	**16**
Thomas Jefferson High School	15 (1%)	41 (4%)	316 (28%)	157 (14%)	581 (52%)	**1110**
West High School	20 (1%)	29 (2%)	56 (3%)	1479 (88%)	105 (6%)	**1689**
Total	**248**	**624**	**3929**	**8561**	**4167**	**17529**

*SASI holding code- not a school

Table 1. District-wide High School Statistics by Race and Ethnicity 2003-04

	White	Asian	African American	Latino	American Indian	**Total**
CSAP 9th Grade Reading Proficient or Above	71% (1062)[60]	50% (162)	40% (1134)	25% (2816)	36% (95)	**38% (5269)**
CSAP 9th Grade Math Proficient or Above	37% (1063)	22% (164)	5% (1141)	4% (2843)	7% (95)	**11% (5306)**
CSAP 10th Grade Reading Proficient or Above	70% (932)	58% (143)	33% (891)	25% (2022)	49% (63)	**39% (4051)**
CSAP 10th Grade Math Proficient or Above	30% (939)	21% (144)	2% (892)	2% (2046)	9% (64)	**10% (4085)**
% Of Courses passed by 9th Graders with C or better[61]	78%	79%	62%	53%	49%	**61%**
11th Graders Passing CO ACT with score above 20	60% (491of 820)	30% (36 of 121)	17% (101 of 580)	12% (119 of 979)	33% (8 of 24)	**30% (756 of 2532)**
Graduation Rates (02-03)	80.3%	80.8%	73.3%	62.1%	61%	**70.6%**
Attendance	91%	91%	87%	82%	82%	**86%**
Individuals Suspended	13%	1%	35%	48%	2%	**2634**
Expulsions	7%	1%	44%	47%	0%	**72**
% & No. of students who Repeated 9th Grade[62]	14% (164)	16% (22)	17% (232)	20% (713)	25% (20)	**18% (1154)**

Table 2. Percentage of 9th Graders Proficient or Advanced in Reading and Number of Students Tested at Target Schools by Race and Ethnicity – 2003-04

SCHOOL	9th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced White	9th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced Latino	9th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced African American	Total All 9th Graders **Reading** Proficient or Above
DSA	95% (81)[63]	90% (21)	84% (19)	91%
CEC Middle College	92% (12)	61% (18)	60% (65)	65%
East	91% (225)	41% (187)	46% (52)	65%
GW	83% (120)	48% (274)	44% (99)	57%
TJ	76% (139)	51% (89)	52% (46)	63%
JFK	62% (115)	56% (9)	37% (268)	46%
South	65% (111)	16% (70)	17% (171)	31%
Montbello	47% (32)	38% (177)	22% (197)	32%
North	47% (43)	28% (18)	21% (406)	24%
West	60% (35)	23% (13)	23% (517)	26%
Lincoln	26% (19)	17% (12)	16% (353)	17%
A&CS	0% (0)	29% (14)	10% (122)	12%
Leadership	17% (6)	42% (19)	19% (57)	24%
Millennium Quest	0% (1)	22% (37)	27% (59)	24%

Table 3. Percentage of 9th Graders Proficient or Advanced in Math and Number of Students Tested at Target Schools by Race and Ethnicity – 2003-04

SCHOOL	9th Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced White	9th Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced African American	9th Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced Latino	Total All 9th Graders **Math** Proficient or Above
DSA	69% (80)	29% (21)	58% (19)	58%
CEC Middle College	33% (12)	11% (18)	20% (65)	21%
East	65% (225)	5% (188)	12% (52)	34%
GW	58% (120)	5% (274)	15% (99)	22%
TJ	26% (141)	3% (89)	12% (49)	15%
JFK	16% (115)	10% (10)	4% (278)	9%
South	32% (111)	3% (72)	1% (171)	11%
Montbello	16% (32)	4% (177)	2% of 197	4%
North	12% (42)	6% (18)	3% (404)	4%
West	23% (35)	0% (13)	2% (519)	3%
Lincoln	0% (20)	0% (12)	1% (353)	2%
A&CS	0% (0)	0% (14)	2% (125)	1%
Leadership	0% (6)	5% (20)	5% (61)	5%
Millennium Quest	0% (1)	3% (38)	2% (59)	2%

Table 4. Percentage of 10th Graders Proficient or Advanced in Reading and Number of Students Tested at Target Schools by Race and Ethnicity – 2003-04

SCHOOL	10th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced White	10th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced African American	10th Grade **Reading** Proficient or Advanced Latino	Total All 10th Graders **Reading** Proficient or Above
DSA	95% (75)	75% (16)	79% (14)	90%
CEC Middle College	67% (15)	50% (4)	53% (38)	58%
East	88% (189)	34% (160)	48% (50)	62%
GW	86% (108)	41% (206)	46% (56)	57%
TJ	71% (146)	57% (69)	49% (45)	64%
JFK	53% (135)	70% (10)	31% (220)	42%
South	64% (97)	20% (45)	25% (130)	39%
Montbello	50% (10)	23% (171)	23% (162)	26%
North	54% (28)	40% (10)	27% (279)	30%
West	52% (25)	31% (13)	25% (347)	28%
Lincoln	44% (32)	20% (10)	16% (304)	19%
A&CS	0% (0)	22% (9)	4% (82)	5%
Leadership	0% (6)	12% (26)	28% (29)	19%
Millennium Quest	100% (1)	22% (36)	20% (50)	22%

Table 5. Percentage of 10th Graders Proficient or Advanced in Math and Number of Students Tested at Target Schools by Race and Ethnicity – 2003-04

SCHOOL	10h Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced White	10th Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced African American	10th Grade **Math** Proficient or Advanced Latino	Total All 10th Graders **Math** Proficient or Above
DSA	48% (75)	0% (16)	21% (14)	37%
CEC Middle College	20% (15)	0% (4)	8% (38)	10%
East	50% (189)	5% (160)	10% (50)	27%
GW	56% (108)	4% (207)	11% (56)	22%
TJ	23% (150)	3% (70)	2% (47)	14%
JFK	10% (136)	0% (10)	4% (221)	7%
South	27% (97)	0% (45)	5% (130)	12%
Montbello	0% (10)	1% (171)	4% (162)	2%
North	3% (29)	0% (10)	1% (291)	2%
West	12% (25)	0% (13)	1% (350)	2%
Lincoln	9% (33)	0% (11)	1% (306)	2%
A&CS	0% (0)	0% (9)	0% (86)	0%
Leadership	0% (0)	0% (27)	3% (31)	2%
Millennium Quest	0% (1)	0% (36)	0% (50)	0%

Table 6. Enrollment, Free & Reduced Lunch, ELA and Special Needs Students at Target Schools – 2003-04

SCHOOL	Enrollment	% of Latino students	% of African American students	% of White students	% Free, Reduced Lunch Students	% of ELA students	% of Special Needs students
DSA	441	15%	13%	68%	13%	1.5%	3.8%
Middle College	271	52%	13%	31%	49%	4.4%	5.1%
East	1,853	12%	38%	46%	27%	2.1%	13.2%
GW	1,621	15%	49%	29%	37%	2.5%	9.3%
TJ	1,110	14%	28%	52%	26%	2.6%	13.6%
JFK	1,564	55%	3%	34%	37%	3.7%	12.3%
South	1,379	40%	18%	31%	45%	26.5%	9.5%
Montbello	1,394	41%	51%	6%	64%	9.1%	11.4%
North	1,472	84%	2%	11%	71%	14.1%	14.3%
West	1,689	88%	3%	6%	78%	13.0%	10.1%
Lincoln	1,439	83%	3%	8%	71%	22.9%	14.8%
A&CS	426	91%	9%	0%	81%	48.1%	9.3%
Leadership	325	53%	43%	3%	79%	3.7%	22.6%
Millennium Quest	302	61%	37%	1%	71%	2.3%	16.2%

Table 7. Percent of Students Passing ACT, Courses with a C or Better, and Graduation at Target Schools – 2003-04

School	Percent Passing Colorado ACT - College Ready 2003-04				Percent of Courses Passed by 9th Graders with a C or Better 2003-04				Official Graduation Rates 2002-03			
	Latino	African American	White	**Total***	Latino	African American	White	**Total***	Latino	African American	White	**Total***
DSA	80%	67%	75%	**75%**	77%	83%	93%	**87%**	100%	100%	100%	**100%**
Middle College	0%	60%	86%	**45%**	92%	93%	85%	**91%**	100%	100%	100%	**100%**
East	35%	23%	75%	**52%**	61%	64%	92%	**77%**	79%	89%	97%	**91%**
GW	40%	19%	78%	**44%**	64%	64%	83%	**69%**	85%	90%	89%	**89%**
TJ	48%	18%	60%	**47%**	55%	58%	73%	**65%**	73%	84%	89%	**86%**
JFK	10%	-	41%	**25%**	61%	67%	70%	**65%**	96%	100%	97%	**97%**
South	4%	6%	45%	**22%**	50%	62%	78%	**62%**	66%	81%	80%	**74%**
Montbello	7%	11%	30%	**10%**	50%	59%	64%	**56%**	56%	79%	67%	**71%**
North	9%	13%	37%	**14%**	42%	45%	47%	**43%**	74%	80%	91%	**77%**
West	6%	25%	21%	**8%**	49%	56%	63%	**50%**	71%	100%	83%	**73%**
Lincoln	7%	0%	27%	**7%**	55%	65%	52%	**55%**	60%	92%	50%	**63%**
A&CS	0%	13%	0%	**2%**	57%	61%	-	**57%**	71%	100%	-	**74%**
Leadership	5%	0%	-	**2%**	49%	67%	63%	**54%**	96%	91%	100%	**94%**
Mil. Quest	11%	6%	-	**9%**	52%	56%	87%	**53%**	97%	91%	100%	**95%**

*Total includes Asian and American Indian students, as well as Latino, African American and white students.

Table 8. Number of Students Repeating Ninth Grade, Percent of Attendance, Number of Students Suspended at Target Schools by Race and Ethnicity – 2003-04

School	9th Grade Repeaters				Attendance Rates				Suspensions			
	Latino	African American	White	**Total**	Latino	African American	White	**Total**	Latino	African American	White	**Total**
DSA	2	0	1	**3**	97%	97%	97%	**97%**	14	11	37	**72**
Middle College	0	0	0	**0**	90%	90%	91%	**91%**	11	11	10	**35**
East	9	47	11	**69**	89%	90%	94%	**92%**	19	160	36	**218**
GW	18	39	13	**72**	86%	90%	92%	**90%**	22	171	28	**229**
TJ	15	9	15	**42**	89%	89%	91%	**90%**	28	90	43	**165**
JFK	47	0	20	**70**	88%	88%	91%	**90%**	126	11	42	**190**
South	46	15	17	**85**	80%	84%	87%	**84%**	116	93	60	**284**
Montbello	75	51	10	**137**	82%	83%	88%	**83%**	49	110	6	**166**
North	129	9	9	**151**	75%	83%	79%	**76%**	168	9	23	**207**
West	133	0	4	**143**	81%	83%	82%	**81%**	183	9	14	**211**
Lincoln	70	2	6	**81**	82%	80%	82%	**82%**	160	13	18	**202**
A&CS	24	3	0	**27**	93%	93%	91%	**93%**	123	20	1	**144**
Leadership	10	1	1	**12**	96%	97%	93%	**96%**	46	45	2	**94**
Millennium Quest	8	5	0	**13**	78%	77%	86%	**78%**	56	54	1	**72**
Total	**586**	**181**	**107**	**905**	**83%**	**88%**	**91%**	**87%***	**1121**	**807**	**321**	**2329**

* Total includes Asian and American Indian students, as well as Latino, African American, and white students.

Table 9. Enrollment of Ninth Graders in October 1999 v. Graduation Rates for 12th Graders in May 2003 by Target Schools and Race and Ethnicity

SCHOOL	9th Grade Enrollment Oct. 1999 Total*	No. Graduated June 2003 Total	9th Grade Enrollment 1999 Latino	No. Graduated 2003 Latino	9th Grade Enrollment 1999 African American	No. Graduated 2003 African American	9th Grade Enrollment 1999 White	No. Graduated 2003 White
DSA	104	88	14	9	11	6	74	67
Middle College	41	28	18	11	5	7	8	10
East	471	330	59	26	207	123	189	166
GW	692	337	112	44	327	137	205	132
TJ	300	186	48	19	86	48	156	110
JFK	517	328	280	159	11	8	187	128
South	483	238	192	72	74	47	175	101
Montbello	442	170	101	40	291	112	35	14
North	572	215	487	167	14	4	62	40
West	525	233	427	188	26	7	54	29
Lincoln	586	219	462	160	15	11	65	17
A&CS	437	29	262	22	149	5	23	0
Leadership		62		25		32		5
Millennium Quest		56		32		21		3
Total 14 schools	4645	2519	2485	974	1218	568	1233	822
Total District*	5170	2742 (53%)	2549	1051 (42%)	1258	618 (49%)	1282	917 (74%)

*Total includes American Indian and Asian Students. A&CS, Leadership and Millennium Quest were originally one school, Manual High School. They became separate small schools in fall 2000.

Table 10. Number of Teachers, Years of Experience, Number of Students per Teacher, Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch – 2003-04*

School	Number of Teachers	0-3 Yrs.	% 0-3 Yrs.	4-10 Yrs.	% 4-10 Yrs.	11+ Yrs.	% 11+ Yrs.	Enrollment	No. of Students per Teacher	Free & Reduced Lunch
Arts & Cultural	24	3	13%	6	25%	15	63%	426	17.8	81.46%
Leadership	19	7	37%	6	32%	6	32%	325	17.1	79.38%
West	97	34	35%	25	26%	38	39%	1689	17.4	77.93%
A. Lincoln	82	25	30%	14	17%	43	52%	1439	17.6	71.46%
North	79	23	29%	19	24%	37	47%	1472	18.6	71.30%
Millennium Quest	16	4	25%	1	6%	11	69%	302	18.9	70.63%
Montbello	74	37	50%	15	20%	22	30%	1394	18.8	63.58%
South	81	21	26%	21	26%	39	48%	1379	17.0	45.43%
JFK	79	19	24%	18	23%	42	53%	1564	19.8	37.47%
GW	85	24	28%	24	28%	37	44%	1621	19.1	37.26%
East	96	26	27%	23	24%	47	49%	1853	19.3	27.18%
TJ	56	17	30%	15	27%	24	43%	1110	19.8	26.28%
DSA	42	12	29%	15	36%	15	36%	441	10.5	13.26%
Totals	**830**	**252**	**30%**	**202**	**24%**	**376**	**45%**	**15,015**	**18.1**	

*Number of Teachers was not available for Middle College.

DPS Commission on Secondary School Reform
Comparison of Colloquium High School Reform Model Principles

On October 7, 2004, the Commission held a Colloquium on nationally recognized high school reform models. The models all stress the importance of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. The information below is based on materials provided by each of the model developers. It includes a brief explanation of how each model meets the Commission's vision of providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum in an environment that fosters strong, positive relationships. These elements are incorporated into our vision of the elements of the attributes of a high quality high school.

REFORM MODEL	RIGOR	RELEVANCE	RELATIONSHIPS
Big Picture Company	Rigorous standards are set for academic areas, as well as for student internships. Students set goals to meet these standards in their Individualized Learning Plans.	Students develop Individualized Learning Plans together with their advisors and families to chart the appropriate learning course that will meet their needs and interests. All students participate in internships in which they have real-world experiences in specific areas of interest.	There is one "advisor" (teachers are called advisors) for a group of 15 students. Students have the same advisor for all 4 years of high school. This advisor does not teach courses; rather he/she spends the day supporting those 15 students work toward completion of their Individualized Learning Plans.
Coalition of Essential Schools	Use District/State standards and hold all students to high expectations. Small learning environments help students and teachers set, strive toward and reach high expectations. Multiple assessments based on authentic tasks help hold students accountable for demonstrating they have mastered standards.	Teachers provide students with personalized instruction to address individual needs and interests. Schools focus on democratic principles and practices to ensure students have a role in creating the school's learning environment and learning opportunities.	Schools and classrooms are small so teachers and students know each other well and work in an atmosphere of trust. Schools focus on creating strong ties with the community to ensure close relationships outside the school walls.

REFORM MODEL	RIGOR	RELEVANCE	RELATIONSHIPS
Early College High School	Schools are designed so that all students can complete two years of college credit as they are earning a high school diploma. Students begin college work based on their performance in their high school classes. By reaching out to middle schools and providing extensive support, early college high schools ensure that all students are ready for college-level courses in high school.	Students can choose focus areas for college classes they feel will be most relevant to their lives.	Teachers and other adults work with students to ensure they are taking steps toward doing what they want to do after graduation.
Expeditionary Learning	Students are challenged to make connections across disciplines and apply them to their learning. Teachers work to create and implement interdisciplinary projects that set high expectations for students and give them the necessary support to reach those expectations.	Students use interdisciplinary projects to connect their learning to the outside world and their own interests. Projects often involve activities outside of the school where students can immediately understand how what they are learning in school can be applied to their own lives.	Schools create small learning groups where a caring adult looks after their progress and acts as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger students to help build strong relationships among the student body. Projects and trips foster trust and respect, helping students build positive relationships with each other and with teachers.
First Things First	Learning is based on District/State standards. Professional development focuses on improving teaching and learning to maximize learning opportunities for students. All teaching staff are supported in their study and practice of rigorous standards-based instruction that actively engages all students and yields improved performance on high-stakes assessments.	Students are in small learning communities (SLC) organized around themes. They stay together for core instruction time during the day and across multiple years. Students can find a theme that meets their own individual interests.	The Family Advocate System creates a bridge between the SLC and the students' families. Each staff member becomes an advocate for 15 to 17 students and their families, stays with them the entire time they are in the school and does what it takes to help those students succeed.
International High School	English Language Learners acquire the ability to understand, speak, read, and write English to realize their full potential in an English-speaking society.	Students develop language skills in context in experiential, language-rich, interdisciplinary study that draws on their own background and culture.	Students understanding of non-English languages is valued and encouraged in schools. Students learn in heterogeneous, collaborative groups that foster strong relationships, trust and respect among students and between students and teachers.

REFORM MODEL	RIGOR	RELEVANCE	RELATIONSHIPS
New Technology High School	The curriculum is focused on content standards and specific, articulated academic, workplace and citizenship skills. Professional development ensures teachers understand the best methods of helping students master those standards and skills.	The curriculum is project-based, problem-based and interdisciplinary to help students connect learning to their lives.	Students and staff feel known and respected in an environment that promotes professional relationships based on trust and responsibility. Leadership encourages communication, collaboration, contribution and staff commitment.
Project GRAD USA	Learning is based on District/State standards. Freshman year is extended by requiring a summer session for all students to provide more time on task in core academic areas. Students are expected to attend institutes at college campuses beginning in the summer between their ninth and 10th grade years to prepare them for rigorous high school academic work and to motivate them to see college as a realistic goal. Academic coaches provide teachers with the tools to both remediate and teach at a rigorous level.	Ninth grade is structured in houses so there are small learning environments that can help personalize education for individual students. Individual students' needs are identified so they can receive any necessary assistance or extra time.	Throughout the grades an Adult Advocate Program ensures that every student has a meaningful, ongoing relationship with an adult. It is this adult's responsibility to monitor the progress of that student throughout his or her high school career.
Talent Development High School	Learning is based on District/State standards. Ninth grade students take additional math and reading/writing courses to provide a double dose of these core academic subjects to ensure students have the necessary basic skills. Summer school, Saturday School, and after-hours Credit School are offered so students can receive extra support.	Career Academies for 10th through 12th graders provide a core college preparatory curriculum and work-based learning experiences where students choose a theme that best fits their learning interests. The schedule is organized around four 80- to 90-minute periods that allow for a greater variety of "student-centered" instructional approaches such as cooperative learning, projects, and simulations that help students connect their learning to their lives outside of school.	Schools divide ninth graders into smaller learning communities to help foster strong relationships among students, among teachers and between teachers and students. The 10th through 12th grade Career Academies provide small learning communities where students and teachers develop strong relationships over the three years they are together.

APPENDIX E - NOTES

[1] Heilbrunn, J. and K. Seeley, "Saving Money, Saving Youth: The Financial Impact of Keeping Kids in School," National Center for School Engagement, Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, October 2003.
[2] Employment Policy Foundation, "Education Pays: Stay in School," February 2004. Available online at http://www.educationpays.org/rreport.asp.
[3] The principles of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships are key tenets of the Bill and Melinda Gates initiative on reforming high schools.
[4] There are at least seven ways to calculate graduation rates. Under the guidelines of the Colorado Department of Education, DPS determines the graduation rate by following one group of students over a four-year period from grades nine through 12 and adjusting that number for withdrawals and transfers.
[5] Colorado Commission on Higher Education. In 2002-03 there were 2,724 DPS high school graduates. Of them, 60 percent went on to college in Colorado. Six hundred eighty-three, or 42 percent, required some form of remediation.
[6] The statistics used in this report are from the 2003-04 school year unless otherwise noted.
[7] The percentages of free and reduced lunch, English Language Learners and special needs students are estimates because a few schools serve students in addition to ninth through 12th graders and totals for these schools include the entire student body. Students counted in the percentage of ELL are those enrolled in English Language Acquisition programs.
[8] CSAP scores are one-time snapshots of a student's performance. Therefore, it is useful to look at data on grades received by students to see how they might align with CSAP scores. The data presented here are based on the number of courses taken and the percentage of courses passed by students. The data is a very rough indicator of performance because it cannot account for grade inflation or the fact that grades often reflect other factors besides demonstration of content knowledge, such as completing homework assignments, doing extra work or attendance in class. While a more in depth analysis would be needed at the individual school level to develop a complete understanding of grade and CSAP alignment, these data provide some preliminary information on students' in-school performance.
[9] Colorado requires all 11th graders to take the Colorado ACT, a test specially designed for the state. The ACT tests students in math, English, reading and science. A score above 20 out of a possible 36 points indicates that a student will have the skills necessary to succeed in a four-year college without remediation.
[10] Attendance is computed by taking the total days students were enrolled and dividing that number into the total number of days students were recorded as present.
[11] Human Services Inc., June 17, 2004.
[12] 70.6 percent is the official graduation rate as reported by the state. Other calculations show graduation rates as low as 48 percent, with 36 percent for Latino students, 48 percent for African American students and 63 percent for white students.
[13] Heilbrunn, J. and K. Seeley, "Saving Money, Saving Youth: The Financial Impact of Keeping Kids in School," National Center for School Engagement, Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, October 2003.
[14] Employment Policy Foundation, "Education Pays: Stay in School," February 2004. Available online at http://www.educationpays.org/rreport.asp.
[15] Berra, Yogi, *The Yogi Book*, Workman Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1998, p. 102.
[16]Tyack, David and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995.
[17] National Research Council Institute of Medicine, *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn*, The National Academies Press, 2004, pp. 34-45.
[18] Howard, Jeff, Getting Smart, The Efficacy Institute, Boston, Mass., 1990, and *The Detroit News*, "Smart is something you GET," March 14, 1991.
[19] Darling-Hammond, Linda, *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools that Work*, Jossey-Bass Inc. San Francisco, 1997, pp. 224-233.
[20] National Research Council, *Engaging Schools, 2004,* pp. 78-85.
[21] For a detailed discussion of these issues and how they reflect what we know about brain research and education theory, see Systra, Candy, "Regarding Teaching and Learning," a paper prepared for the Commission, pp. 20-23, and National Research Council, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School,* National Academy Press, 2000.
[22] The National Research Council's report, *Engaging Schools,* finds that "students are most engaged when the social context provides physical safety, provides some structure and opportunities for youth to develop new skills in a context of warm supportive relationships; and promotes positive social norms."
[23] Ibid, "Student engagement and learning are fostered by a school climate characterized by an ethic of caring and supportive relationships; respect, fairness and trust; and teachers' sense of sharing responsibility and efficacy related to student learning."
[24] Collins, Jim, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap…and Others Don't*, HarperCollins, New York, 2001; Muller, Robert, "The Role of the District in Driving School Reform," a paper prepared for the Commission, November 2004.
[25] Systra, paper for the Commission, pp. 7-8.
[26] Botstein, Leonard, *Jefferson's Children: Education and the Promise of American Culture*, Doubleday, New York, N.Y., 1997, p. 99.
[27] Student Presentations at the Commission's Student Forum; Gregory, Lynn, "The 'Turnaround' Process: Factors Influencing Academic Success Among Urban Youth," Academy for Educational Development, Washington, D.C. 1994; Joseph, Oscar, "A Research-Based Assessment of the Disparity in Educational Achievement Between Black and White Students," Colorado Commission on Civil Rights, Denver, Colo., May 2002; HeadFirst Colorado, " Focusing on the Future: Voices of Students at West High School," Winter 2004.
[28] McNeil, Patricia W., memo prepared for the Commission, November, 2004.
[29] Ibid, pp. 14-17.
[30] National Education Commission on Time and Learning, "Prisoners of Time," Washington, D.C., 1994, p. 7.
[31] Presentation to the DPS Secondary Teaching & Learning Institute, July 22, 2004.

[32] Fowler, W.J. and Walbert, H.J., "School Size, characteristics and outcomes," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 13 (2), 1991, pp. 189-202; Howley, C., and Bickel, R., "Results of four-state study: Smaller schools reduce harmful impact of poverty on student achievement," The Rural School and Community Trust, Washington, D.C., 2000; Wasley, Patricia, Fine, M., Gladden, et al, "Small Schools, Great Strides: A Study of New Small Schools in Chicago, Street College, New York, 2000; National Institute of Health, Adolescent Health Study, Washington, D.C., 1999.

[33] McQuillan, Patrick, "Three Years Down the Road: Small School Reform at the Manual Education Complex," Lynch School of Education, Boston College, Boston, Mass., August 2004.

[34] Wasley, Patricia and Fine, Michele, et al, "Small Schools Great Strides: A Study of New Small Schools in Chicago," Bank Street College, New York, 2000.

[35] In the 1980s, researcher Robert Felner and colleagues tested the idea of creating separate Freshmen Learning Academies where 60-100 ninth graders took their four academic subjects with the same four teachers in classrooms that were grouped together and where each student was in an advisory where they received guidance and counseling. The study found initial improvements in attendance and academic performance that were sustained through ninth grade. In 1995, the Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. undertook a similar study, which had positive results. See Quint, Janet, et al, "Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed," MDRC, New York, April, 1999.

[36] Brown, Rexford, "School Culture and Organization: Lessons for Research and Experience," paper prepared for the Commission, p. 15.

[37] Hahn, Andrew, Evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Program, Heller School, Brandeis University, Boston, Mass., 1993.

[38] Adapted from James L. Reinertsen, "A Theory of Leadership for the Transformation for Health Care Organizations," Alta, Wyo., January 13, 2004.

[39] Brown, paper for the Commission, p. 5, adapted.

[40] Lee, V.E. and Smith, J.B., "Restructuring high schools for equity and excellence: What Works," Sociology of Education Series, Teachers College Press, New York, 2001, p. 104; National Research Council's *Engaging School,* p. 101.

[41] A recent study of student performance among Maryland districts on that state's assessment found that standout schools in every category – urban, suburban, and rural; high income, moderate income and low income – had principals who were instructional leaders. These leaders were clear about their priorities and focused their efforts on recruiting good teachers, set high expectations for quality instruction, monitored student achievement and procured extra resources to meet their goals. In contrast, principals of the less successful schools functioned more as managers and had low instructional expectations for teachers.

[42] Waters, Tim, and Grubb, Sally, "The Leadership We Need: Using Research to Strengthen the Use of Standards for Administrator Preparation and Licensure Programs," 2004, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, Aurora, Colo., p. 8-9.

[43] Fullan, Michael, *Leading in a Culture of Change,* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2001, p 115.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Waters and Grubb, *The Leadership We Need,* pp. 10-11.

[46] Stronge, James H., "Qualities of Effective Teachers," Alexandria, Va., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002; Systra, paper prepared for the Commission, pp. 26-29.

[47] Participation in Professional Development: Contexts of Elementary and Secondary Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 2002.

[48] Hill, Paul T., Campbell, Christine, Harvey, James, *It Takes a City: Getting Serious about Urban School Reform*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2000, p. 68.

[49]A Report from the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education, " School Choice: Doing It the Right Way Makes A Difference," The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 2004, p. 20.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Bryk, Anthony, and Schneider, Barbara, *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*, Russell Sage Foundation, N.Y., 2002; Guthrie, J., Wigfield, A. and VonSecker, C., "Effects of Integrated Instruction on Motivation and Strategy Used in Reading," *Journal of Education Psychology*, 92, 2000, pp. 331-341.

[52] Yonezawa, S., Wells, Al, and Serna, I., "Choosing Tracks: 'Freedom of choice' in detracking schools," *American Educational Research Journal*, 39, pp. 37-67, 2002.

[53] "School Choice: Doing It the Right Way Makes A Difference," p. 32.

[54] Ibid, p. 33.

[55] Muller, paper for the Commission, p. 1.

[56] Collins, *Good to Great,* p. 69.

[57] McBeath, Angus, "Changing Rules and Roles: A Primer on School-Based Decision Making," Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Chicago, Ill., 2001.

[58] Collins, *Good to Great,* pp. 41-48. Collins also suggests other attributes of a successful organizational leader, including being willing to confront the current reality of his/her situation, having unwavering faith that the enterprise will be successful and building momentum for success by working on continuous improvement and accumulating visible results.

[59] Teske, Paul, "Stepping Up or Bottoming Out? Funding Colorado's Schools," Donnell-Kay Foundation, Denver, Colo., January 2005, p. 20.

[60] Number in parenthesis indicates number of students taking the test.

[61] Includes data from 14 target schools only.

[62] These figures represent the number and percent of students who were retained in each ethnic group. For example, 713 of 3,518, or 20 percent, of Latino ninth graders were retained in May 2004. However, of the 1,154 ninth graders retained, 62 percent were Latino students.

[63] Number in parenthesis equals number of students taking the test.

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