

Studies, Reports, and Data Collections that Inform Efforts of Denver Public Schools to Revise *Denver Plan 2020* (May 22, 2020)

Research Perspective

ERS (2017) points to 4-part theory of action

Upward-trending district-run schools must drive future plans. Strive to attract, develop, and retain hi-performing educators. Rely on public-private partnership \$s to fuel transformation. Shift central office (compliance officer → thought partner). Improve structures & processes important to school success. Key was a theory of action [that included]:

- Blend school flexibility with a strong accountability system,
- Support should focus on building strong teachers & leaders.
- Make continuous improvement of practice a central focus.
- Ensure equitable access, funding & opportunity for students.

Jefferson report (2019) lists 6 focus areas

No single, cohering equity definition found in DPS documents DPS needs robust, effective plan to accomplish equity mission Areas of focus possibly include:

- Senior leadership tm capacity: put equity in job description
- Principal supervisors' capacity: put equity in job description
- Continuous evaluation and improvement
- Onboarding
- Strategic planning
- Equity Impact Assessment

Bailey report (2018) targeted intervention

The qualitative report makes a persuasive case that without a focus on targeted initiatives for African American students, equity remains elusive. The most frequent themes emerging from the study were: (a) lack of qualified, culturally-competent teachers, (b) disproportionality in district response to discipline matters, (c) low expectations, (d) lack of culturally-relevant curriculum, and (e) lack of access to enrichment programs and experiences.

CREDO (2019) lists successes/chronic gap

From 2014-2017 DPS outperforms statewide average gains. Accomplishments include:

- DPS overall reading & math gains outpaced state average.
 - The same is true for students who are black, Hispanic, from low-income families, ESL, & those in special education
- One chronic area of need still exists in DPS:
- Wide gaps persist between subgroups (white vs students of color, and students in poverty vs those who are not)

RAND (2019) finds principal prep effective

Principal prep is a feasible, effective, & affordable way to lift performance of schools & students. Effective leadership is associated with better outcomes for students & schools. Concludes study of DPS & 5 other districts by noting:

- Schools with new principals out-performed comparison schools by 6 percentile points in reading (3 in math).
- New principals were 8 percentage pts more likely to remain at their school 3 years than counterparts.
- Achievement effects were positive (statistically significant for schools in lowest quartile of achievement distribution)

Public Perspective

Thought Leader Interviews (2020) cites findings

Asked why DPS overall performance has improved in 20 years but subgroup gaps persist, 10 hypotheses surfaced.

- This is a scaling challenge. We should do more of the same, just do it better than in the past. Stay the course.
 - Vision & focus are the challenge. We need coherent equity-focused vision. Too many priorities make focus hard.
 - This is mostly about misalignment. We need to do a better job of keeping the main thing the main thing.
 - Fresh thinking needed. System we have is designed to get us results we have. Past success makes it hard to change
 - Schools have so much flexibility there is little comparability site-to-site, so it is difficult to learn from one another.
 - Too few black/brown/low-income kids have access to rigorous expectations, curriculum, instruction, experiences.
 - Among staff (administrators), there is uneven, inadequate, ineffective use of culturally responsive educational practices.
 - An "all in" commitment to equity is lacking. An online module here or there is "drive-by equity." It is not enough.
 - Shifting to equity-focused educational practice requires adaptive change; this calls on staff to acquire new knowledge and skill.
 - DPS successfully uses targeted universalism with English learners but not yet with African American and black students
- Seven recommendations were identified:
- Orient the policy environment toward equity (define equity, base school quality on equity, adopt targeted universalism)
 - Create a unified system of accountability and support focused on collaboration (aimed at learning to get better at getting better)
 - Modify leadership development so all principals and their supervisors are culturally competent and culturally responsive.
 - Alter school budget process so equity is an organizing principle (enabling individual schools to make a case for added funding)
 - Develop a strategy to make a vision of enhanced equity compatible with desire to raise capital and operational funds.
 - Adapt the instructional model so it better supports and advances equity on a virtual learning platform.
 - Adjust management practice using a decision-making framework to clarify decisions of BOE vs central vs sites.

Community input into equity definition (2020)

TBD (Findings being assembled and authenticated)

Community input into DPS grad profile (2020)

TBD (Findings being assembled and authenticated)

Practitioner Perspective

Landscape Analysis (2019) unearths 5 ideas

- Challenges include too many initiatives, board approach to governance vs managerial attitude, and new directives.
- To revise *Denver Plan 2020*, aim is more-collaborative approach; co-create with community & BOE more involved
- What financial picture would be helpful?
- How do we use knowledge of our past to inform future; how do we use history to know what to replicate/avoid?
- Next step with respect to evidence is do a root cause analysis.

Data Workbook (2020) provides 3 viewpoints

- Flyover: Overview of Denver Public Schools
 - A "facts-and-figures overview of DPS
- Retrospective: Progress Toward Goals in the *Denver Plan 2020*
 - Part A: Goal-by-goal analysis supported with key data points
 - Part B: Conditions of teaching/leadership/culture aiding DPS
- Prospective: What a Next Generation *Denver Plan* may look like

Policy Perspective

TNTP Opportunity Myth (2018) names 4 levers

- Rigorous curriculum
- Rigorous instruction
- Rigorous expectation
- Rigorous experiences

The biggest barriers to student success in school are created by decisions within the control of adults:

- Whether students get to work on grade-appropriate assignments
- Whether they have teachers who ask them to find the answers to challenging problems
- Whether adults ask them about goals or assume because they're Latinx, Black, or poor college is unrealistic.

Three-quarter of a school year is wasted in classes that are boring, too easy, or irrelevant to students' life goals. Achievement gaps shrink when we make different choices about how resources are allocated. Here "resources" means rigorous curriculum, rigorous instruction, rigorous expectations, and rigorous experiences.

Every student & family is a partner and should have the opportunity to shape the experiences a student has in school. Adults believe their espoused commitments but in practice maintain status quo.

- Adults think "we're not the problem", when in fact they are.

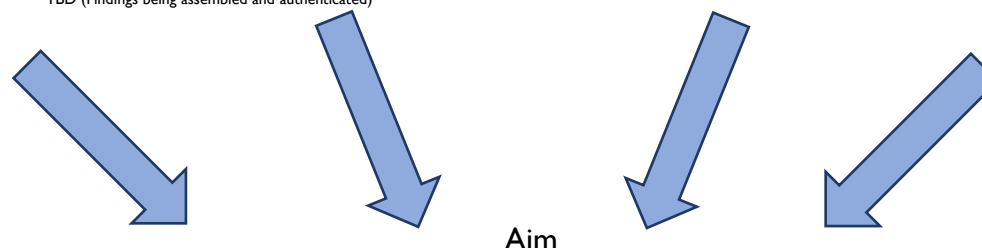
A+ Colorado (2019) critiques pace of change

Critical of the slow pace of improvement under *Denver Plan 2020*. Uses current pace of improvement under *Denver Plan 2020* to generate estimates of time it would take to close gaps.

Nat'l Academy of Sci (2019) lists inequity roots

Presents framework for measuring & monitoring equity throughout nation's P12 system. Lays out indicators & measures for framework that "provides the system architecture to help policymakers address questions of equity in public education." Identifies the means for appraising equity and mechanisms for "improving outcomes." Includes indicators that measure disparity in both student academic outcomes as well as the access students have to vital resources and opportunities. The framework is attentive to how "societal conditions such as income inequality and residential segregation intersect with the educational process in ways that have profound implications for efforts to reduce group disparities in educational progress, achievement, and attainment." Makes the case that in P12 system, inequity arises due to presence of one (or more) of three types of conditions:

- Excessive disparity between groups with respect to outcome (e.g. graduation), access to resource (e.g., Advanced Placement course), or progress toward goal (e.g., credit accumulation for graduation).
- Unacceptably poor fit between resources and student needs (focus is not just on if resources are targeted and provided to support terminal HS outcome; it is also on adequacy of P9 runway to HS).
- Inadequate effort to mitigate the effects of structural disadvantage – for instance, segregation – on a variety of vulnerable student groups (e.g., economically-disadvantaged students, English learners, African American or black students, Latinx, etc.).



Aim

Propose a framework for a revised *Denver Plan* that situates equity at the heart of District efforts to equip every student to thrive, pursue their dreams, and make a home, a life, and a future.