

Policy A – Policy Framework for Accelerating Gains in Academic Achievement for All Students

The Board of Education is responsible for focusing its attention and energy on the quality of education provided by the District and on the achievement of our students. The Board is accountable to and is the representative of the entire community in setting academic priorities to ensure the best use of public resources made available to the District.

To this end, the Board is committed to a singular and ambitious vision for the Denver Public Schools:

We will lead the nation's cities in student achievement, high school graduation, college preparation, and college matriculation. Our students will be well prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education.

To fulfill this vision, the Board expects the district to accomplish the following mission:

The Denver Public Schools will provide all students the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our diverse society and to compete in the 21st century global economy.

In order to ensure that this vision and mission are fully enacted, the Board also establishes a comprehensive reform policy framework that includes core beliefs, a theory of action, and overall performance goals. This policy framework will provide the Board, the District and the broader community with a common understanding of our reforms. Furthermore, the Board calls upon District administration to prepare a strategic plan of action, as well as budgets, initiatives, and progress reports in alignment with this framework.

Core Beliefs

The Board holds five fundamental beliefs about our students, our staff, our schools and our community. These beliefs animate our work as policy makers and inform our staff, schools and community about our aspirations for Denver Public Schools.

- 1. ALL STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE AND GRADUATE AND WE CAN CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP. We believe that all students can learn at grade level or higher (no excuses), make dramatic gains in student achievement, reach their full potential and graduate prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, higher education, and competition in a global community. We believe this is true for all students and is not determined or limited by race, family income, native language, disability, gender, or area of residence.**
 - **Learning.** We must build a strong standards-based culture of learning across the district by promoting, supporting and expanding the most effective academic opportunities for each student every day, every year.
- 2. TEACHING AND LEARNING IS THE TOP PRIORITY. We believe that ensuring that the most effective teaching takes place in our schools is our number one responsibility and priority as a school district.**

- ***Quality Instruction.*** We must retain and recruit the most effective teachers and principals, and we must develop and support them so they are able to implement research-based best practice in every classroom and school.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PERFORMANCE BY ALL ADULTS MATTERS. We believe that creating a district-wide culture of “performance empowerment” will best ensure the ability to build and maintain optimal conditions for student learning in every school.

- ***Performing.*** We must use data to inform decision-making at all levels and empower teachers, leaders, and others to perform at high levels while holding all throughout the system responsible for improving the academic results for all students.

4. CHOICE, COLLABORATION, AND INNOVATION ARE KEY TO 21st CENTURY SUCCESS. We believe that developing new, innovative approaches to teaching and learning in current and future schools will lead to a rich and compelling array of educational options, promote the acceleration of student achievement gains, and give Denver children and families high quality choices.

- ***Innovating.*** We must develop new, innovative approaches to teaching and learning in our existing and future schools by offering incentives, giving schools more autonomy, expanding choices, and building the capacity for innovation.

5. ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A QUALITY EDUCATION SYSTEM. We believe that parents and the community are essential partners in the effort to improve student achievement and that it is our responsibility to engage them in that process while continuously seeking more systematic ways to institutionalize parent engagement.

- ***Engaging.*** We must develop new and more effective ways to engage our families, members of the broader Denver community, and other partners in improving the conditions for learning so that all students may achieve.