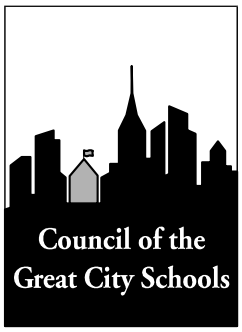
Accelerating Achievement in the Denver Public Schools

Report of the Strategic Support Team of the Council of the Great City Schools

Submitted to the
Denver Public Schools

By the
Council of the Great City Schools



Winter 2008-09

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Council of the Great City Schools thanks the many individuals who contributed to this project to improve student achievement in the Denver Public Schools. Their efforts and commitment were critical to our ability to present the district with the best possible recommendations.

First, we thank former Superintendent of Schools Michael Bennet. It is not easy to ask for the kind of review that a project like this entails. It takes courage, openness, and an uncompromising commitment to the city's children. He has those qualities in abundance. And we know he will bring those attributes with him to the U.S. Senate.

Second, we thank the School Board of the Denver Public Schools for requesting and supporting this effort and for meeting with our team to discuss issues and challenges that the district faces.

Third, we thank the staff members and teachers in the Denver Public Schools, who provided all the time, documents, and data that the Council team needed in order to do its work. Their openness was critical to our understanding of the challenges faced by the Denver school district.

Fourth, we thank the many individuals, groups, organizations, and associations with which we met. Our only regret is that we were unable to meet with everyone that we know had something valuable to contribute.

Fifth, the Council thanks the Miami Dade County Schools for contributing staff to this effort *pro bono*. The enthusiasm and generosity of individual school districts serve as another example of how the nation's urban public school districts are working to help one another improve student performance. I also thank Muffet Garber, recently retired Associate Superintendent for Curriculum in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, for lending her expertise to the team.

Finally, I thank Council staff members Gabriela Uro and Ricki Price-Baugh, who drafted this report. Their skills were critical to the success of this effort. Thank you one and all.

Michael Casserly
Executive Director
Council of the Great City Schools

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INTRODUCTION

The Denver Public Schools are pursuing some of the most comprehensive and substantive reforms of any major urban school district in the nation. These reforms have been a long time coming for the city. For many years, the Denver school district struggled through periods of considerable contention and upheaval. Not until the superintendency of Jerry Wartgow, spanning the period from 2001 to 2005, did the school district begin to settle down and focus itself on its core mission. It was the leadership of the current school board and former Superintendent Michael Bennet, however, that took the stability created by Wartgow and began translating it through the ambitious *Denver Plan* into serious and sustainable reform and improvement.

The school district, of course, continues to face major challenges, but it has made important changes over the last several years that have the potential to move the system well ahead of other major cities in critical ways. Former Superintendent Bennet, his excellent staff, and a focused school board devoted considerable energy to developing a grand theory of action that redefines the school district's instructional program, its human capital needs, and its financial resources in ways that are both innovative and promising. On the instructional side of the house, the district's leadership has delineated an approach that defines what it is that will be taught, to whom, and in what sequence in ways that are similar to some of the faster moving urban school districts across the country.

The district has been clearer over the last several years about its academic goals. It is moving to strengthen a common curriculum and has brought in new, more promising programs; developed pacing guides and standards-based report cards; enhanced the capacity of its data systems; and closed poorly performing schools while opening new ones. It has also increased graduation requirements, strengthened its literacy program, renegotiated its teacher contract, instituted benchmark assessments and end-of-course exams, improved its intervention systems, expanded its early childhood programming, and took serious steps to realize the promise of the long-standing consent decree brought against the district to improve academic services for English language learners.

The school district paired this increasing clarity about the district's instructional direction with an equally straightforward strategy to give principals and schools greater authority over their personnel hiring and their budgeting. The experience of many urban school districts over the years is that they will centralize all instructional, personnel, and budgeting decisions at the headquarters level—or they will delegate them lock, stock, and barrel to the schools. Rarely does the leadership of a school district think through the wisdom of centrally defining its bottom line, higher student achievement, while assigning

decisions about people and money to school-based staff members who will be held accountable for the results.

These instructional reforms were also matched with an accompanying vision for better use of the talent or human capital the school district employs and stronger expectations and accountability for results. The district placed considerably more emphasis on developing its principal and assistant principal ranks. The district leadership, moreover, provided more decision-making authority and autonomy to those responsible for running the individual schools, but it also coupled that authority and autonomy with a unique, multidimensional performance management system that is clearer about what is expected at the district and school levels and is incentivized in a way that encourages people to pursue the larger district goals.

Moreover, the ProComp system, backed with funds from the community, provides the mechanism by which that incentivizing is done. The district widened the pipeline through which talent enters the system. It placed greater emphasis on rewarding early-career teachers and encouraging them to stay in the system. It welcomed people from outside the traditional education system. It created alternative paths to certification. It provided bonuses and incentives for performance and for working in unusually difficult settings. It began to evaluate its people more convincingly on their performance. And it started to work on its human resource operations to support the entire enterprise.

Finally, the school district has begun to think more carefully about how it uses its financial resources. The district improved the transparency through which its resources were managed. It made substantial cuts in spending and stabilized the district's financial standing in order the weather the economic storm clouds. It is attempting to merge its independent pension system with the goal of redirecting millions of dollars of recurring revenue into the classroom. And it introduced a new student-based budgeting system that holds the promise of providing greater equity in allocations to schools over time.

The architecture of these reforms—instructional, financial, and human capital—is among the most seamlessly conceived in all of urban education in the United States. But it is more than conceptual; this new approach is beginning to take shape in ways that are attracting good people to the school district and that have significantly revamped how the district does its work. More importantly, the work is producing results in the classroom and among students. The student achievement gains in Denver Public Schools have been among the most rapid in Colorado. Few districts in the state have seen academic improvements as sizable as Denver's.

Still, the battle to improve the Denver Public Schools has not been won. Victory has not been declared, for the school district has considerable work in front of it. Many of the reforms that the district has pursued conceptually have not yet taken firm root in schools and classrooms. This district still needs to be clearer about what it expects. It needs to find a better way to enhance its professional development for teachers and staff. It needs to sharpen its instructional program. It needs to continue improving its data and its ability to use it. It needs to strengthen programming for its English language learners. And it needs to further augment its accountability system.

Considerable work remains to be done in strengthening the district's program of professional development. Instructional guides require further work to ensure that teachers are clear about what needs to be taught. The district's systems for intervening with students who slip behind are new, barely tested, or not well articulated. And much programming for English language learners and gifted and talented children needs to be much better defined.

However, the Denver Public Schools have made significant progress on their instructional program since the Council of the Great City Schools conducted its first reviews of the district in 2005 and 2006. The district is on the right track and should not wonder from it.

The academic gains in the Denver schools are clearly evident but insufficient. Almost everyone concerned with the school district wants student achievement to improve faster and aspires to have Denver second to none in improvement.

The elevation of Tom Boasberg to the district's superintendency presents an excellent chance to reflect on the district's reforms to date and to think through the opportunities to accelerate the gains the district has seen over the last several years. It is clear, though, that the foundation for improvement is solid and substantial. Future progress is more likely to come from quickening the pace and depth of reforms rather than turning them upside down and starting again. The school district is moving in the right direction and should not think about charting a new course.

The work to deepen and broaden the reforms the district has pursued in recent years will take more time, but there is every indication that the Denver Public Schools are on the right track and could, in time, be one of the finest urban school districts in the country.

PURPOSE AND ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban school districts, presents this report and its recommendations for improving student achievement to the Denver Public Schools. We thank the school board and former Superintendent of Schools Michael Bennet and his leadership team for requesting and coordinating this project.

To conduct its work, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Team of curriculum and instructional leaders with experience in other urban school districts across the country that have worked to address many of the same issues faced by the Denver Public Schools. Council staff members accompanied and supported the team and prepared this report summarizing its findings and proposals.

The team reviewed the school district's efforts to improve student achievement, compared the district's practices with those of urban school districts that have seen significant gains in student achievement, and recommended strategies to improve student achievement in Denver.

The team made its site visit to the Denver Public Schools on September 14-17, 2008. The team's meetings began with a discussion with then-Superintendent Bennet and members of his leadership team on the changes achieved since the Council's last team visited the district in 2006. The team also discussed challenges faced by the district and efforts the district was making to overcome them. That initial discussion was followed by two days of fact-finding and a day devoted to synthesizing the team's observations and proposing preliminary strategies for improvement. The team debriefed the superintendent and members of his instructional leadership team at the end of the site visit.

We commend former Superintendent Bennet, the school board, and staff for their courage and openness in conducting a review such as this. It is not easy to subject oneself and the institution one leads to the scrutiny that such an analysis entails, particularly when the state was conducting a review at the same time. These leaders deserve the public's thanks.

PROJECT GOALS

The purposes of this review by the Council of the Great City Schools were to—

- Review progress made in implementing the instructional portions of the *Denver Plan* and recommendations from the Council's 2006 report, *Foundations for Success in the Denver Public Schools.*

- Assess the status of the district's instructional program and curriculum and the academic progress made by students in the district over the last several years.

- Propose ways for the Denver Public Schools to strengthen its instructional program and accelerate gains in student achievement.

THE WORK OF THE STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

The Strategic Support Team visited the Denver Public Schools September 14-17, 2008. The team included senior curriculum and instructional experts with experience in raising student achievement in other major urban school districts across the country.

The team used the initial discussion with Superintendent Bennet and his instructional leadership team to focus its fact-finding. The work included attending portions of a principals' convocation and conducting extensive interviews with about 75 central-office staff members, board members, principals, teachers, representatives of outside organizations, parents, and others (Appendix D).[1] The team also reviewed an extensive array of documents and reports (Appendix E) and analyzed data on student performance (Chapter 1 and Appendix B).

The team examined the district's broad instructional strategies, materials, core reading and math programs, assessment programs, and professional development efforts. It also reviewed district priorities and analyzed how the strategies and programs of the Denver school district reflected those priorities. At the end of the site visit, the team briefed Superintendent Bennet and his senior staff on preliminary findings and proposals.

This approach of using peers to provide technical assistance to urban school districts is unique to the Council and its members and is proving effective for a number of reasons.

First, the approach allows the superintendent to work directly with talented, successful practitioners from other urban districts.

Second, the recommendations developed by these peer teams have validity because the individuals who developed them have faced many of the same problems now encountered by the school district requesting the review. These individuals are aware of the challenges faced by urban schools, and their strategies have been tested under the most rigorous conditions.

Third, using senior urban school managers from other communities is faster and less expensive than retaining a management consulting firm. It does not take team members long to determine what is going on in a district. This rapid learning curve permits reviews that are

[1] The Council's peer reviews are based on interviews of staff and others, a review of documents provided by the district, observations of operations, and our professional judgment. The team conducting the interviews relies on the willingness of those interviewed to be truthful and forthcoming, and make every effort to provide an objective assessment of district functions. However, it cannot always judge the accuracy of statements made by all interviewees.

faster and less expensive than could be secured from experts who are not as well versed in urban education.

Finally, the teams provide a pool of expertise that a school district superintendent, board, and staff can use to implement the recommendations or to develop other strategies. The Strategic Support Team included the following members—

STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM[2]	
Muffet Garber Associate Superintendent of Curriculum, Retired Charlotte Mecklenburg School District.	Michael Casserly Executive Director Council of the Great City Schools
Joanne Urrutia Administrative Director for the Division of Bilingual Education and World Languages, Miami-Dade County Public Schools	Ricki Price-Baugh Director of Academic Achievement Council of the Great City Schools
	Gabriela Uro Manager, ELL Policy and Research Council of the Great City Schools

CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

This report begins with an introduction that summarizes the Council's overall observations about Denver's instructional work and the contexts in which that work exists. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the Denver Public Schools and its student achievement data and trends. Chapter 2 presents the findings of the Strategic Support Team. Chapter 3 provides recommendations for improving student achievement. Chapter 4 summarizes and discusses the findings and recommendations.

The appendices of the report contain additional information. Appendix A summarizes the broad goals of the Denver Public Schools that are articulated in The *Denver Plan*, the district's strategic plan. Appendix B presents 2007-08 CSAP data for grades 3 through 8 and a set of tables disaggregating those data by racial/ethnic subgroups. Appendix C provides data on Advanced Placement tests. Appendix D lists the people with whom the team talked. Appendix E lists the documents that the team reviewed. Appendix F presents brief biographical sketches of team members. And Appendix G gives a brief description of the Council of the Great City Schools and lists the teams the organization has conducted over the last 10 years. The group has now conducted more than 170 Strategic Support Teams in some 45 major city school districts in a variety of instructional, management, organizational, and operational areas.

[2] Bios of team members can be found in Appendix D.

The Council has shied away from using a specific school reform model or template to guide its fact-finding or recommendations. Instead, it has taken a distinctly district-level orientation to reform and tailors its reports specifically to each district and the particular challenges it faces. The Council recognizes that each city is different. No city has the same mixture of student demographics, staffing patterns, and resources that Denver has.

The Council, however, relies extensively on research from the groundbreaking report *Foundations for Success* conducted for the Council by MDRC, a national social-science research firm.[3] This research uncovered key organizational and instructional strategies behind the academic gains of some of the most rapidly improving urban school districts in the nation, and described how those strategies differ from those in districts that have not seen much progress from their reforms.

It is also important for the reader to note that this project did not examine everything that one might examine in a district's instructional program. This analysis cannot be considered an audit as such. For example, we did not spend time looking at special education, federal programs, or teacher credentials. We also did not look extensively at school board policies or other governance issues. Our focus in this report is exclusively on student achievement and how to improve it.

[3] Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., & Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND

This chapter summarizes basic characteristics of the school district, its leadership and governance structure, the demographics of its students, and the academic performance of the school district.

SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

The Denver Public Schools is governed by a seven-member, elected school board. All board members serve staggered four-year terms with no more than four members elected at any one time. Single districts elect five members, and two members are elected at-large. The Board of Education convenes its regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month, followed by a public comment session.

On Mondays prior to regular meetings, the board holds work sessions to prepare for the scheduled meetings. The board also meets quarterly for "Focus on Achievement" study sessions, an unusual but excellent way for the governing body to conduct more in-depth study of work on its core mission. These four-hour meetings are held on the first Thursday of October, February, April, and June.

Colorado statute charges the school board with a number of broad responsibilities: To establish educational goals, initiate and adopt policies, consider the superintendent's recommendations on personnel and programs, select and evaluate of the superintendent, prepare the annual budget, assess district programs, and solicit public comment.

Over the last 14 years, the district has had six administrations (see list below). The highest turnover occurred between 1999 and 2001, during which time the district had four interim or permanent superintendents. Michael Bennet, the district's outgoing superintendent, provided stable leadership from June 2005 to January 2009. Following his appointment to the United States Senate, the Board of Education appointed Tom Boasberg, the district's chief operating officer, to the superintendent's post.

- Tom Boasberg, January 2009 to present
- Michael Bennet, June 2005-January 2009
- Jerry Wartgow, June 2001-June 2005
- Bernadette Seick. (Interim) April 2000-June 2001
- Chip Zullinger, August 1999-April 2000
- Sharon Johnson, (Interim) May 1999-August 1999
- Irv Moskowitz, 1994-May 1999

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The Denver public school district is the second largest school district in Colorado, enrolling some 72,312 students in 2005-2006, the most recent year for which comparable nationwide data on major cities are available from the National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES).[4] Some 18 percent of Denver's enrollment was African American that year, 58 percent of students were Hispanic, 20 percent were white, and 4 percent were from other racial groups. In addition, about 65 percent of the district's students were poor enough to qualify for a federal free or reduced-price lunch, and about 12 percent were students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Moreover, some 36 percent of the district's students were English language learners.

Denver's demographic composition differs substantially from that of the average school district in Colorado. Students in Denver were three times more likely to be African-American in 2005-06 than other districts in the state, and were over twice as likely to be Hispanic. Students needing to learn English as a second language were 36 times more likely to be in the Denver Public Schools than in other school districts statewide, where ELL (English language learners) made up only 1 percent of the state's enrollment. In other words, the district enrolled about 9 percent of the state's students, but had a disproportionately large share of the state's poor children and English language learners. Conversely, statewide enrollment was 63 percent white and was considerably less poor and less limited in English proficiency than Denver's enrollment. Both the city and the state had about the same proportions of students with disabilities—about 10 percent each.

In addition, the average school in Denver enrolled about 500 students.[5] Both the city and the state show slight increases in their student-teacher ratios over the last several years. In 2002-03, the district had a lower student-teacher ratio than the state (16.1 versus 16.6). By 2005-06, the district had a higher student-teacher ratio (18) than the state (17).

Exhibit 1. Comparison of the Denver Schools with Colorado and all Great City Schools, 2005-2006*

	Great City Schools	Denver	Colorado
Enrollment	7,220,450	72,312	779,826
Percent African-American	37	18	6
Percent Hispanic	35	58	27
Percent White	21	20	63
Percent Other	7	4	4
Percent Free & Reduced Price Lunch	64	65	33
Percent of Students with IEPs	13	12	10
Percent of English Language Learners	17	18	13
Number of FTE Teachers		3,974	45,841
Student-Teacher Ratio	16	18	17
Number of Schools	11,400	148	1,707

*Data source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in *Beating the Odds*, Council of the Great City Schools, 2008.

[4] The Council has used NCES data rather than Colorado Department of Education data here because some comparisons in this report are made to districts in other states.
[5] Denver data show the average school having about 489 students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Our analysis of student achievement in the Denver Public Schools (DPS) was conducted in a number of ways. We examined the district's 2008 performance; trends in reading, writing, and math in grades 3 through 10; racially-identifiable achievement gaps, compared with those statewide; status on the federal *No Child Left Behind* and state accountability systems; and indicators of college preparation.

Colorado administers the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) to its students, and the Council used these data to draw a number of conclusions about student achievement, but the organization is aware that test scores can sometimes be one-dimensional measures of performance. This report examines CSAP data from 2005 through 2008 for all tested grade levels in reading, writing, mathematics, and science, while the Council's 2005 report looked at data from 2001 through 2005 in selected grades.

State Assessment Results in 2008

The state converts student raw scores or scale scores on the CSAP into one of four performance bands: unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, and advanced. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations are based on the percentage of *partially proficient, proficient, and advanced.* This report, however, focuses on the percentage of students achieving at the *proficient* and *advanced* levels, in keeping with the district's goal to aim for the highest standards.

Furthermore, the Council—in conducting its analysis—removed Denver students from the statewide CSAP data, so comparisons between DPS and Colorado would be based on unduplicated counts of Denver scores. The removal of the DPS scores, of course, elevates statewide results since Denver is below statewide levels, but the comparison gives a more accurate assessment of how Denver is improving or not improving relative to the state.[6]

The results of the analysis of 2008 reading data show that no more than about 50 percent of DPS students were proficient or advanced in grades 4 through10. Moreover, at those grade levels, the percentage of city students reading at or above the proficient level was 21.5 to 26.6 percentage points below the statewide figures.

The testing results show that about 50.7 percent of Denver's third-graders scored at or above proficiency levels in reading on the CSAP in 2008, compared with 72.1 percent of non-DPS third-graders statewide—a gap of 21.4 percentage points.[7]

Some 41.8 percent of Denver's fourth-graders read at or above proficiency levels that year, compared with 68.4 percent of fourth-graders statewide—a gap of 26.6

[6] See Appendix A for a comparison of CSAP scores at or above the proficient level for Denver Public Schools, the State of Colorado, including Denver (as reported on the Colorado Department of Education website), and Colorado achievement excluding Denver.
[7] Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100 percent,

percentage points. At the fifth-grade level, there was a gap of 22.9 percentage points. And 49.3 percent of Denver's fifth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels, compared with 72.2 percent of their statewide peers.

Moreover, middle school reading scores in Denver (i.e., the percentage at or above proficiency level) declined slightly from sixth through eighth grades (48.8 percent in sixth grade, 45.6 percent in seventh, and 45.3 percent in eighth). The pattern is approximately the same at the state level, where the percentage of proficient scores dropped from 73.2 percent in the sixth grade to 67.2 percent in the seventh grade before leveling off at 69.0 percent in the eighth grade.

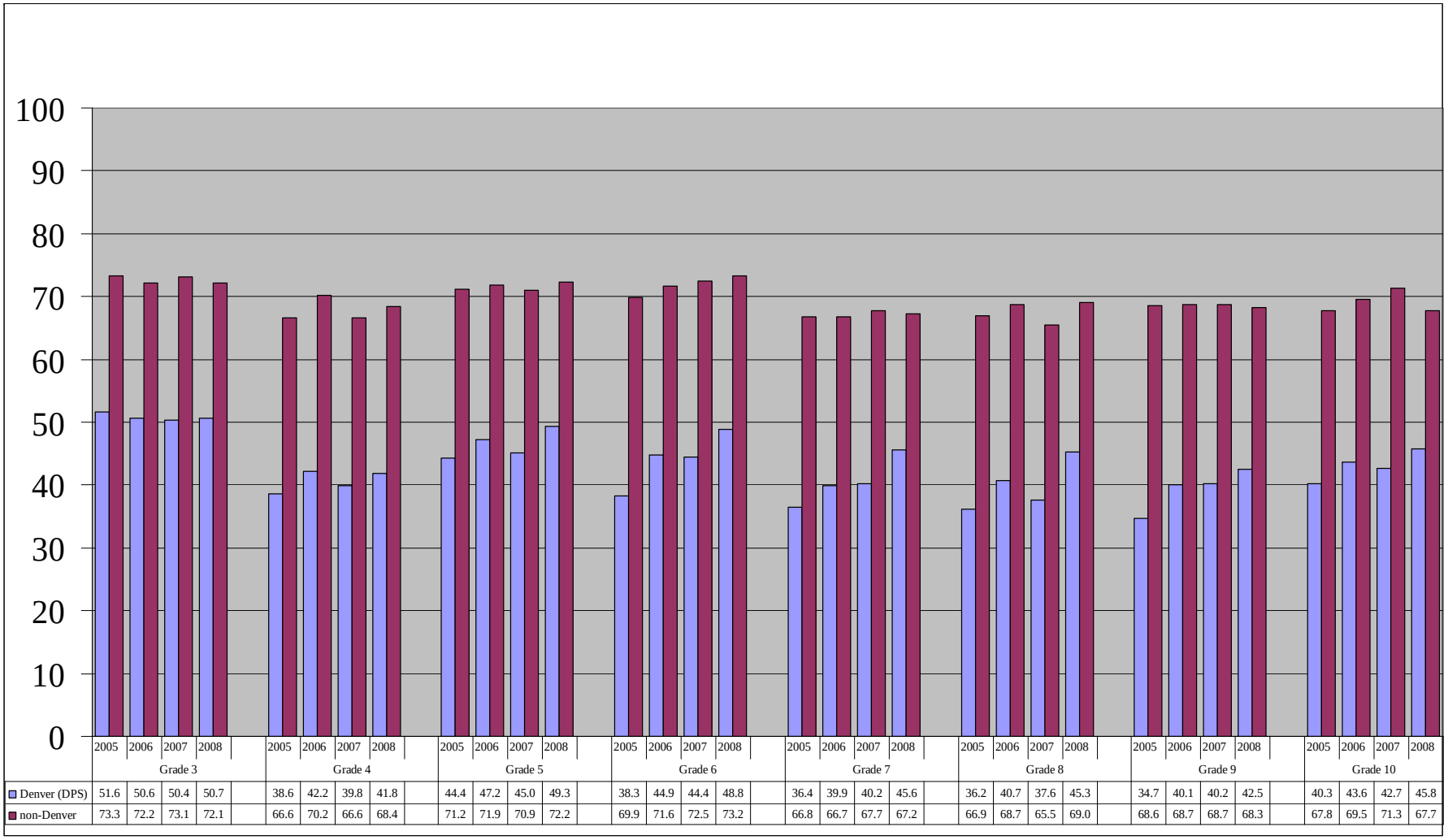
Finally, some 42.5 percent of the city's ninth-graders and 45.8 percent of DPS tenth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels on the CSAP reading test in 2008, compared with 68.3 percent of non-DPS ninth-graders and 67.7 percent of non-DPS tenth-graders statewide—a gap of 25.8 percentage points in ninth grade and 21.9 percentage points in tenth grade. (See Exhibit 2.)

In writing, CSAP scores both in Denver and statewide were consistently lower than reading scores, while gaps between DPS and non-DPS students statewide were similar to the gaps in reading—ranging from 20.2 percentage points in the tenth grade to 24.0 percentage points in the fifth. The percentage of DPS students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels on the writing test did not vary widely across the grades as it did in reading. The lowest figure was 27.4 percent in ninth grade, the highest, 38.4 percent in sixth. In contrast, non-DPS students statewide attained proficient or advanced levels on the CSAP writing test at rates ranging from 48.7 percent in tenth grade to 61.6 percent in sixth grade. (See Exhibit 3.)

In math, 46.1 percent of Denver's third-graders were proficient or higher on the CSAP in 2008, compared with 72.2 percent of non-Denver third-graders statewide—a gap of 26.1 percentage points. At the fourth-grade level, 48.1 percent of the city's students were proficient or better, compared with 70.5 percent of non-DPS fourth-grade students statewide—a gap of 22.4 percentage points. About 47.3 percent of DPS fifth-graders were proficient or advanced in math—some 19.6 percentage points lower than their non-DPS peers statewide.

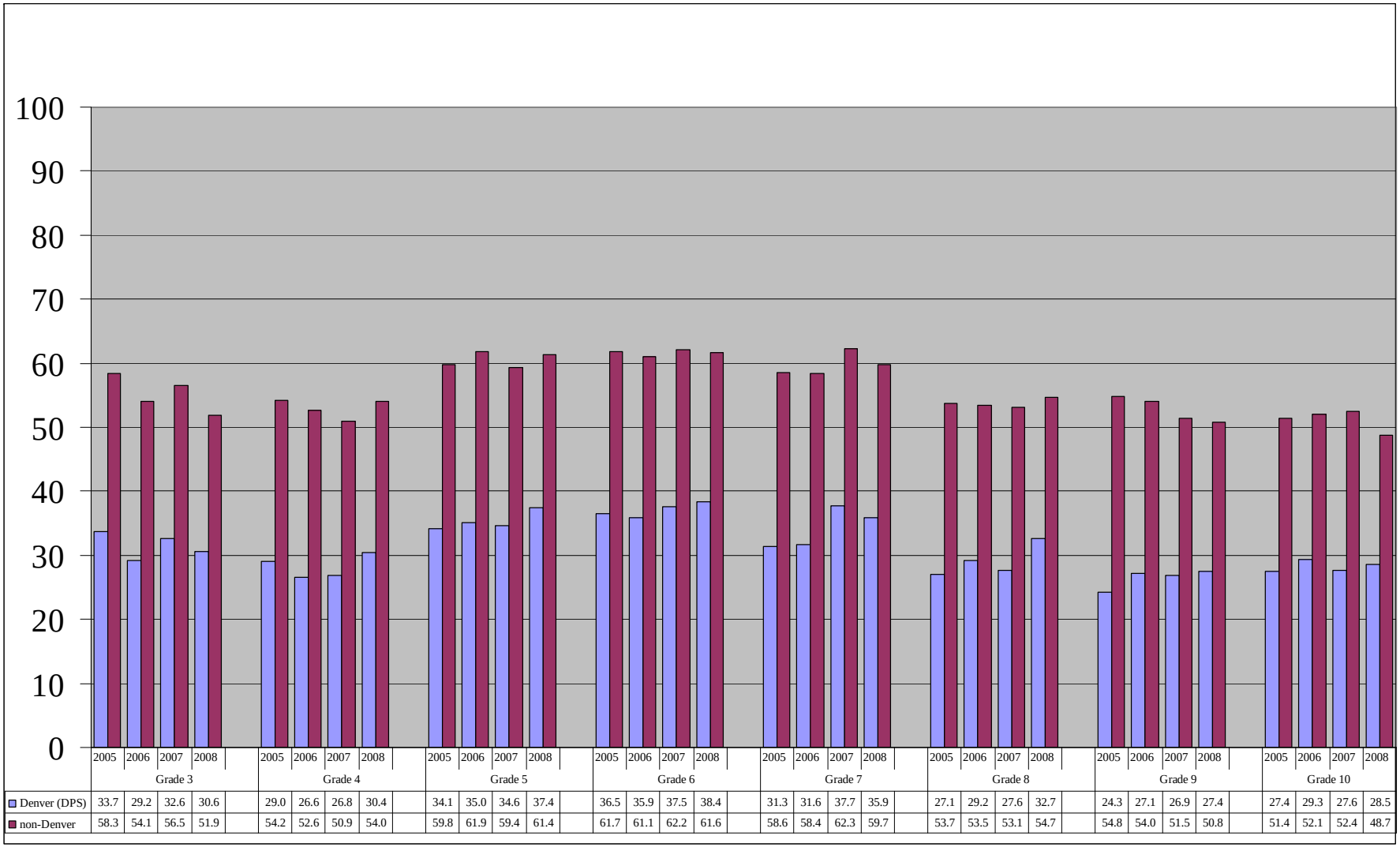
More than either reading or writing results, math scores show substantial declines in the percentage of students at or above proficiency in both Denver and statewide, although there are still substantial gaps between the two. Some 42.6 percent of DPS sixth-graders performed at proficient or advanced levels in mathematics in 2008, 20.2 percentage points lower than non-DPS sixth-graders statewide (62.8 percent). Results among seventh- graders, however, showed that only 26.6 percent of Denver students and 47.9 percent of non-DPS seventh-graders were at proficient or better levels in mathematics. By the eighth grade, 25.5 percent of Denver's students scored at or above proficiency levels, compared with 48.9 percent of non-DPS eighth-graders—a gap of 23.4 percentage points. Only 18.6 percent of DPS ninth-graders and 15.6 percent of DPS tenth-graders reached these proficiency levels in math in 2008, while 39.6 percent of non-DPS ninth-graders and 31.6 percent of non-DPS tenth-graders statewide did so—gaps of 21.0 and 16.0 percentage points, respectively. (See Exhibit 4.)

Exhibit 2. Denver and Colorado (without Denver) Test Results: Percentage Proficient or Above in Grades 3-10 in CSAP Reading Spring 2005 through Spring 2008



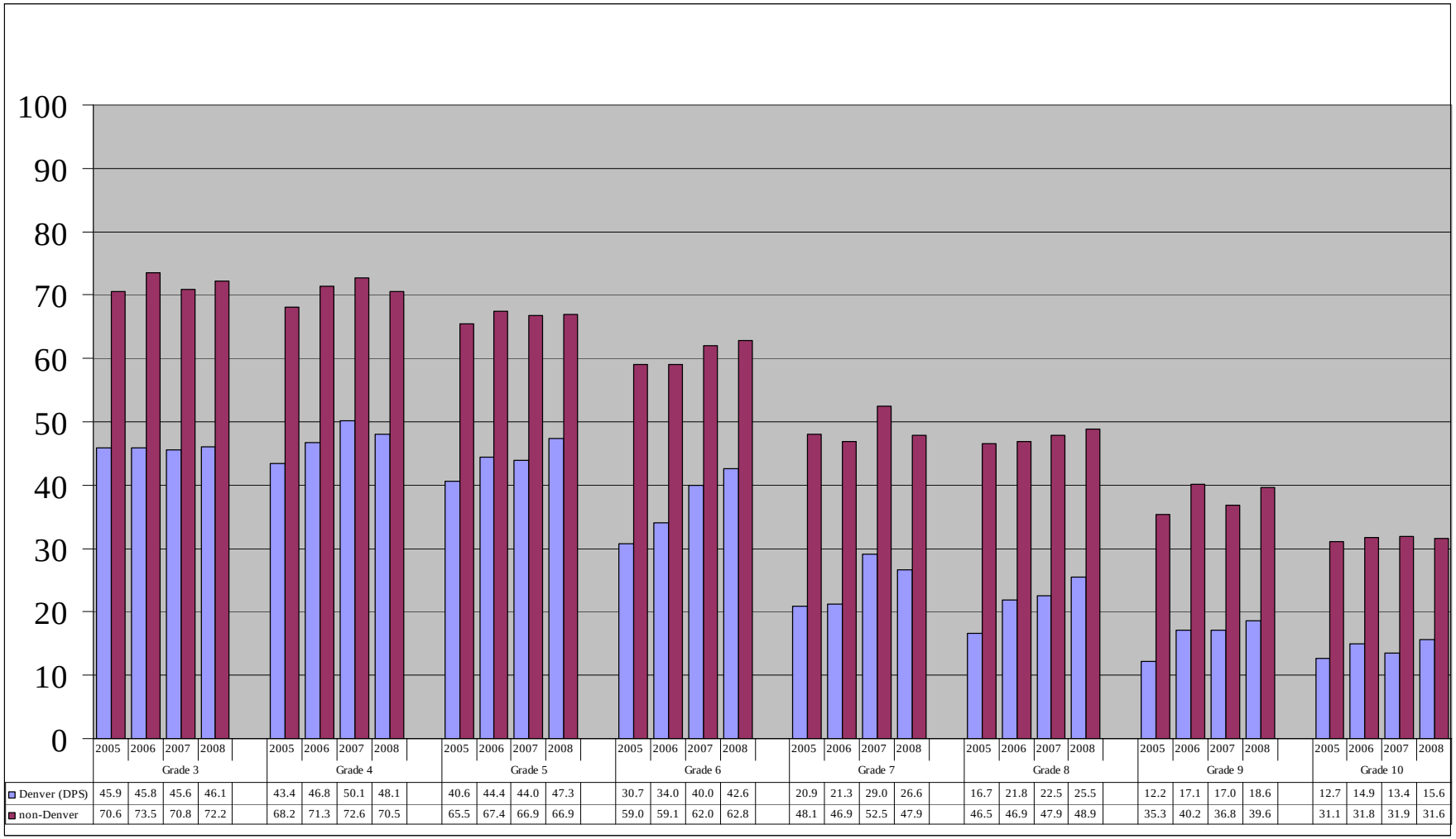
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5				Grade 6				Grade 7				Grade 8				Grade 9				Grade 10			
Denver (DPS)	51.6	50.6	50.4	50.7	38.6	42.2	39.8	41.8	44.4	47.2	45.0	49.3	38.3	44.9	44.4	48.8	36.4	39.9	40.2	45.6	36.2	40.7	37.6	45.3	34.7	40.1	40.2	42.5	40.3	43.6	42.7	45.8
non-Denver	73.3	72.2	73.1	72.1	66.6	70.2	66.6	68.4	71.2	71.9	70.9	72.2	69.9	71.6	72.5	73.2	66.8	66.7	67.7	67.2	66.9	68.7	65.5	69.0	68.6	68.7	68.7	68.3	67.8	69.5	71.3	67.7

Exhibit 3. Denver and Colorado (without Denver) Test Results: Percentage Proficient or Above in Grades 3-10 in CSAP Writing Spring 2005 through Spring 2008



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5				Grade 6				Grade 7				Grade 8				Grade 9				Grade 10			
Denver (DPS)	33.7	29.2	32.6	30.6	29.0	26.6	26.8	30.4	34.1	35.0	34.6	37.4	36.5	35.9	37.5	38.4	31.3	31.6	37.7	35.9	27.1	29.2	27.6	32.7	24.3	27.1	26.9	27.4	27.4	29.3	27.6	28.5
non-Denver	58.3	54.1	56.5	51.9	54.2	52.6	50.9	54.0	59.8	61.9	59.4	61.4	61.7	61.1	62.2	61.6	58.6	58.4	62.3	59.7	53.7	53.5	53.1	54.7	54.8	54.0	51.5	50.8	51.4	52.1	52.4	48.7

Exhibit 4. Denver and Colorado (without Denver) Test Results: Percentage Proficient or Above in Grades 3-10 in CSAP Mathematics Spring 2005 through Spring 2008



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5				Grade 6				Grade 7				Grade 8				Grade 9				Grade 10			
Denver (DPS)	45.9	45.8	45.6	46.1	43.4	46.8	50.1	48.1	40.6	44.4	44.0	47.3	30.7	34.0	40.0	42.6	20.9	21.3	29.0	26.6	16.7	21.8	22.5	25.5	12.2	17.1	17.0	18.6	12.7	14.9	13.4	15.6
non-Denver	70.6	73.5	70.8	72.2	68.2	71.3	72.6	70.5	65.5	67.4	66.9	66.9	59.0	59.1	62.0	62.8	48.1	46.9	52.5	47.9	46.5	46.9	47.9	48.9	35.3	40.2	36.8	39.6	31.1	31.8	31.9	31.6

Exhibit 5. Average Rate of Gain in CSAP Reading Scores for School Districts in Colorado over Varying Periods

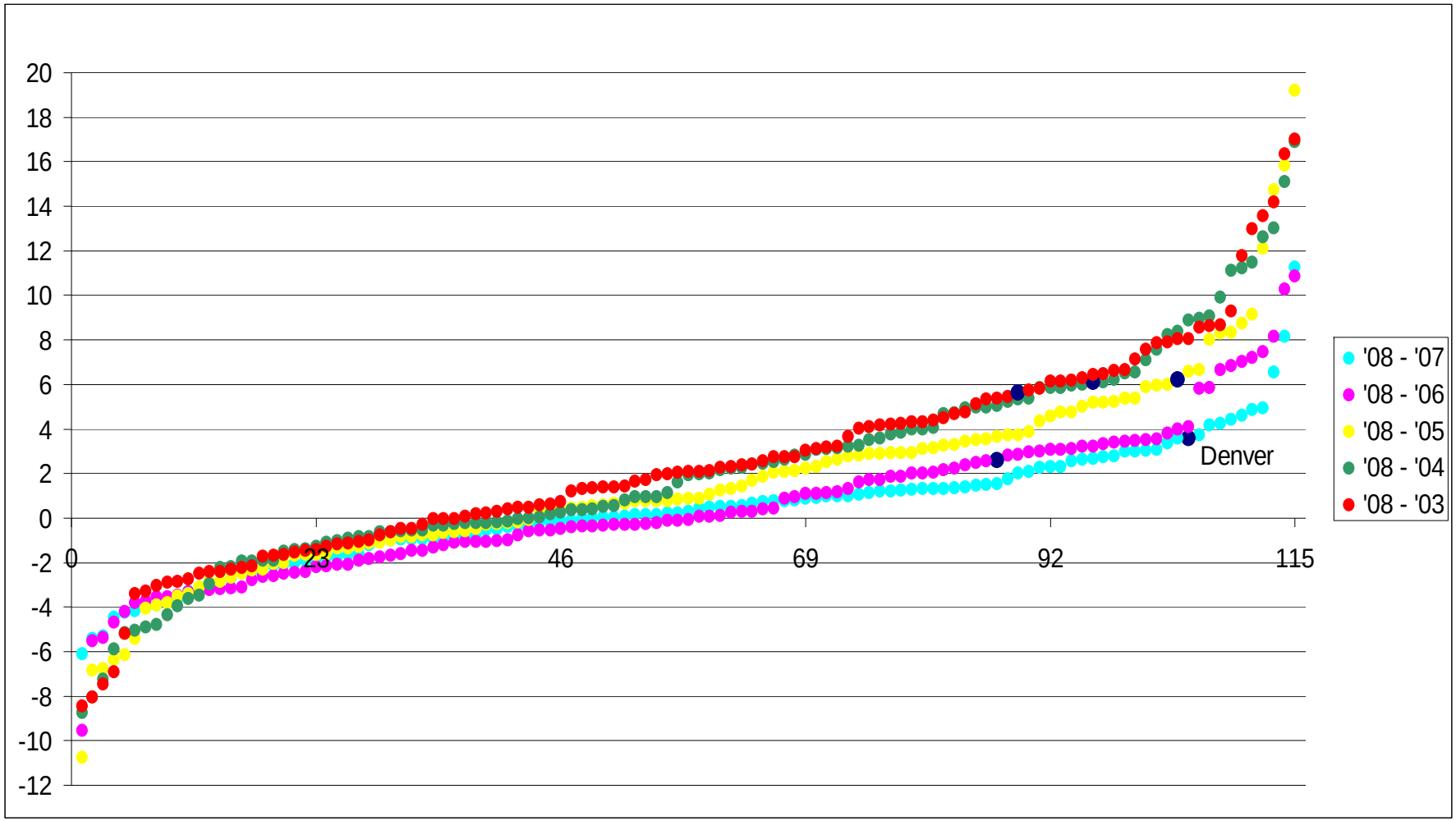
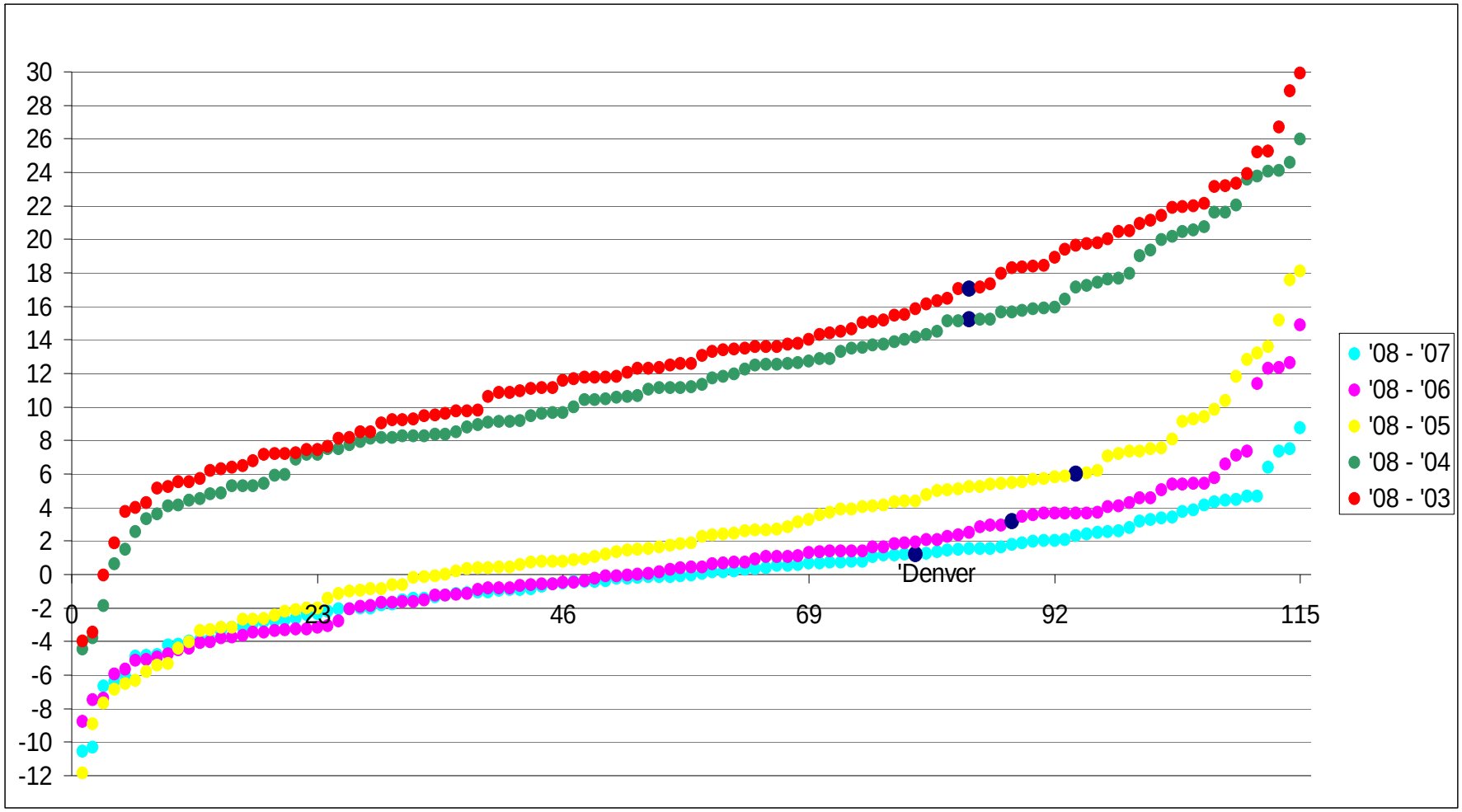


Exhibit 6. Average Rate of Gain in CSAP Math Scores for School Districts in Colorado over Varying Periods



Achievement Trends between 2005 and 2008

The 2008 CSAP data indicate that Denver's students are behind their peers statewide in reading, writing, and math, but trends show that DPS students are improving at a faster rate than statewide averages. Exhibits 5 and 6 show this conclusion most clearly. Exhibit 5 shows that only 10 districts (out of 115 districts in Colorado that had data for all grades 3-10 posted on the state website) had faster gains in reading between 2007 and 2008. Only 28 districts had faster reading gains between 2006 and 2008, and only 11 districts had faster gains between 2005 and 2008—the period over which the *Denver Plan* was in effect. Only 18 districts in the state outpaced Denver's reading gains between 2004 and 2008, and 26 did so between 2003 and 2008. The districts outpacing Denver, however, were not the same districts from period to period. In fact, only two districts—West Grand and Branson Reorganized—outpaced Denver in all five periods.[8]

Similar trends were seen in math. Thirty-six districts outpaced Denver in math between 2007 and 2008, while 27 districts in Colorado did so between 2006 and 2008. Twenty-one districts showed faster gains than Denver between 2005 and 2008. And 31 districts outpaced Denver in math between 2004 and 2008, while 30 districts showed faster gains between 2003 and 2007. Again, these more rapidly improving districts were not the same ones from ones from period to period. Only nine districts showed faster gains than Denver in all five periods—Weld, Widefield 3, Ault-Highland, Canon City, South Routt, Lake County, Branson Reorganized, Payton 23, and Bennett 29.[9]

Appendix B provides more detail on the 2005 to 2008 trends—the period over which the *Denver Plan* has operated. The proportion of Denver's third-graders reading at or above proficiency levels, for instance, fell by 0.9 percentage points, compared with a statewide decline of 1.1 percentage points among non-DPS third-graders. Denver's fourth-graders improved their reading proficiency rates by 3.2 percentage points over that period, compared with a 1.8 percentage-point gain among non-DPS fourth-graders. DPS fifth-graders improved by 5.0 percentage points between 2005 and 2008, while non-DPS fifth-graders improved only 1.1 percentage points.

Middle school students in DPS improved at even faster rates than their elementary school counterparts. Over the same period, DPS sixth-graders improved their reading proficiency rates by 10.5 percentage points; the statewide rate was up 3.4 percentage points. DPS seventh-graders raised their proficiency rates by 9.2 percentage points, compared with a statewide gain of only 0.4. DPS eighth-graders raised their rates by 9.1 percentage points, compared with statewide gains of 2.2. Furthermore, the proportion of Denver's ninth-graders reading at or above proficient levels improved by 7.7 percentage points between 2005 and 2008, while the percentage of non-DPS ninth-graders statewide declined by 0.3 percentage points. Finally, tenth-graders in DPS improved their reading proficiency by 5.5 percentage points over the three-year period, while non-DPS tenth-graders declined by 0.1 percentage points.

[8] In addition to being considerably smaller, West Grand has a free lunch eligibility rate of 26.8 percent and Branson Reorganized has a rate of 9.7 percent, compared with a free lunch rate of 58.1 percent in Denver.
[9] None of these districts had either the scale or the poverty rates that Denver did.

If we combine all CSAP reading test results at all grade levels, it is evident that the proportion of Denver's students reading at or above proficient levels on the state's CSAP reading test improved by 6.2 percentage points between 2005 and 2008—more than six times the statewide gain of only 0.9 percentage points. Still, these DPS gains are less than the 3.5 percentage-point *annual* goal Denver Public Schools has set for itself. (See Exhibit 1 and Appendix B.)

However, progress on writing has been harder to come by in Denver. The gains among DPS students between 2005 and 2008 ranged from 1.1 percentage points in tenth grade to 5.6 percentage points in eighth grade, rates of improvement that were smaller than those in reading. Still, the performance of non-DPS students statewide generally declined over the same period. Only non-DPS students in the seventh and eighth grades had positive gains statewide in writing (1.1 and 1.0 percentage points, respectively). The percentage of non-DPS students statewide writing at or above the proficient levels actually declined in all other grades, with decreases ranging from 0.2 percentage points in the sixth grade to 3.9 percentage points in ninth. (See Exhibit 3 and Appendix B.)

In mathematics, the proportion of Denver and non-DPS students achieving at proficient or advanced levels generally increased between 2005 and 2008 at every grade level, but gains in Denver were faster than those among non-Denver students, although still small. For example, between 2005 and 2008, the proportion of Denver's third-graders, scoring at or above proficiency levels in mathematics increased only 0.2 percentage points, and the statewide gain among non-DPS third-graders was only 1.6 percentage points. The rate of improvement among Denver's fourth-graders was 4.7 percentage points, compared to 2.3 percentage points for non-DPS fourth-graders. Denver fifth-graders improved by 6.7 percentage points, compared with 1.4 percentage points for non-DPS fifth-graders statewide.

Denver's middle school students showed faster gains in math than students in the elementary grades. The proportion of Denver students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels improved by 11.9 percentage points in sixth grade (compared to 3.8 percentage points for non-DPS students statewide), 5.7 percentage points in seventh grade (compared with a drop of 0.2 percentage points for non-DPS students statewide), and 8.8 percentage points in eighth grade (compared with 2.4 percentage points among non-DPS students statewide. In the sixth and seventh grades, the greatest jump in Denver's math proficiency rates occurred between 2006 and 2007.

High school math scores in the city and statewide remained nearly flat and low. The proportion of Denver students at or above proficiency increased by about 6.4 percentage points for ninth-graders (compared with 4.3 percentage points for non-DPS ninth-graders statewide) and 2.8 percentage points for tenth-graders, compared with 0.4 percentage points for their non-DPS counterparts statewide. (See Exhibit 4.)

If we combine math scores of all students in all grade levels, the percentage of Denver students improving their math achievement at or above the proficient level increased 6.0 percentage points—almost three times the improvement of non-DPS students statewide (2.1 percentage points). (See Appendix B.)

City-State Achievement Gaps

In general, the gaps in scores between Denver and the state decreased between 2005 and 2008 in all three content areas—reading, writing, and mathematics. The only exception was in third-grade mathematics, where the gap opened by 1.4 percentage points. On the other hand, the gap in seventh-grade reading closed by 8.7 percentage points (from 30.4 to 21.6). (See Exhibit 7.)

Exhibit 7. Percentage-Point Achievement Gaps between Denver Students and Non-DPS Students Statewide on the CSAP, 2005-2008

Reading

Grade 3					Grade 4					Grade 5				
2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change
21.7	*21.6*	*22.8*	*21.5*	-0.2	*28.0*	*28.0*	*26.8*	*26.6*	-1.4	*26.8*	*24.7*	*25.9*	*22.9*	-3.9

Grade 6					Grade 7					Grade 8				
2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008	
31.6	*26.7*	*28.0*	*24.4*	-7.1	*30.4*	*26.8*	*27.5*	*21.6*	-8.7	*30.6*	*28.0*	*28.0*	*23.7*	-6.9

Grade 9					Grade 10					All Reading Combined				
2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008	
33.9	*28.6*	*28.5*	*25.8*	-8.0	*27.5*	*25.8*	*28.6*	*21.9*	-5.6	*28.9*	*26.3*	*26.9*	*23.6*	-5.3

Writing

Grade 6					Grade 7					Grade 8				
2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change
25.3	*25.2*	*24.7*	*23.2*	-2.1	*27.2*	*26.7*	*24.5*	*23.8*	-3.4	*26.6*	*24.3*	*25.5*	*22.1*	-4.5

Grade 9					Grade 10					All Writing Combined				
2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008	
30.5	*26.9*	*24.5*	*23.4*	-7.1	*24.0*	*22.8*	*24.8*	*20.2*	-3.7	*26.1*	*25.4*	*24.5*	*22.7*	-3.4

Mathematics

Grade 3					Grade 4					Grade 5				
2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change	2005	2006	2007	2008	Change
24.7	*27.6*	*25.2*	*26.1*	1.4	*24.8*	*24.6*	*22.5*	*22.4*	-2.3	*24.8*	*23.0*	*22.9*	*19.6*	-5.2

Grade 6					Grade 7					Grade 8				
2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008	
28.3	*25.1*	*22.0*	*20.1*	-8.1	*27.2*	*25.6*	*23.4*	*21.3*	-6.0	*29.8*	*25.1*	*25.4*	*23.4*	-6.4

Grade 9					Grade 10					All Mathematics Combined				
2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008		2005	2006	2007	2008	
23.1	*23.1*	*19.8*	*21.0*	-2.1	*18.4*	*16.8*	*18.5*	*16.0*	-2.4	*24.2*	*22.9*	*21.5*	*20.3*	-3.9

The data are clear, at this point, that the Denver Public Schools score at a level below the state, but it made important gains in reading, writing, and mathematics between 2005 and 2008. The gains, moreover, exceed those made statewide in nearly every grade and subject.

Racially Identifiable Achievement Gaps

The Council of the Great City Schools also looked at Denver's achievement results by race and examined various performance gaps among the three largest ethnic groups in Denver. In general, the results show that African-American and Hispanic students score below their white counterparts in the city and across the state by wide margins. Appendix B provides detailed data on each tested grade by race and ethnicity. The following narrative, however, discusses results only for grades 3, 6, and 9 and summarizes results across all grades.

About 77.2 percent of Denver's white students across all grades scored at or above the proficient level on all CSAP reading tests in 2008, compared with 78.7 percent of all non-DPS students statewide, a gap of only 1.5 percentage points. Exhibit 8 shows the percentages of white students at all sample grade levels scoring at or above the proficient level in reading. The results show that Denver's white students at the third, sixth, and ninth grades scored similarly (78.4, 78.5, and 73.8 percent, respectively), but were slightly lower than non-DPS white students statewide (80.6, 82.1, and 78.1, respectively). The reading scores of Denver's white students, moreover, increased over the last three years, with gains ranging from 0.4 percentage points in the sixth grade to 3.7 percentage points in ninth grade.[10] (See Exhibit 8.)

Exhibit 8. Disaggregated Reading Scores at or Above Proficient for Denver Students and Non-Denver Students Statewide by Year

	2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3 yr change		
Ethnicity	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State Non-DPS**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**
Grade 3															
Black	45.5	59.5	14.0	43.9	57.6	13.7	45.4	61.5	16.1	43.5	58.4	15.0	(2.0)	(1.1)	0.9
Hispanic	42.4	54.8	12.4	40.9	53.2	12.3	39.6	54.4	14.8	40.6	53.7	13.1	(1.8)	(1.1)	0.7
White	77.2	80.8	3.6	79.3	80.1	0.8	79.1	81.4	2.3	78.4	80.6	2.3	1.2	(0.1)	(1.3)
Black/ Wh Gap	(31.7)	(21.2)		(35.4)	(22.5)		(33.7)	(19.8)		(34.9)	(22.2)		(3.2)	(1.0)	
White/ Hisp Gap	(34.8)	(26.0)		(38.4)	(27.0)		(39.5)	(27.0)		(37.8)	(27.0)		(3.0)	(1.0)	
Grade 6															

[10] The sample grade levels may not reflect the highest, lowest, or even most typical results for the district or the state. Appendix A provides additional information regarding gains, declines, and gaps at each grade level for the district as a whole and by subgroups. For example, in the sample grade levels only, Denver white students had reading test score gains ranging from 0.4 percentage points to 3.7 percentage points. The appendix tables, however, indicate that the range of gains in reading among white students in Denver was 0.4 in third grade to 7.3 percentage points in eighth grade.

	2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3 yr change		
Ethnicity	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State Non-DPS**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State DPS Gap**
Black	37.9	51.7	13.8	46.7	56.8	10.1	40.4	56.2	15.8	46.4	59.2	12.9	8.5	7.5	(1.0)
Hispanic	26.1	44.9	18.9	33.0	49.0	16.0	34.4	50.0	15.7	38.8	52.2	13.4	12.8	7.3	(5.5)
White	78.1	80.0	2.0	78.6	80.8	2.2	77.4	81.9	4.4	78.5	82.1	3.5	0.4	2.0	1.6
Black/ White Gap	(40.2)	(28.3)		(31.9)	(24.0)		(37.1)	(25.7)		(32.1)	(22.8)		8.0	5.5	
White/ Hisp Gap	(52.0)	(35.1)		(45.7)	(31.9)		(43.1)	(31.8)		(39.7)	(29.9)		12.3	5.3	
Grade 9															
Black	33.0	49.9	16.9	38.5	51.6	13.2	35.8	51.7	15.9	38.4	51.8	13.4	5.4	1.9	(3.5)
Hispanic	22.3	42.3	20.0	27.1	44.2	17.1	29.3	44.7	15.4	31.2	44.8	13.6	8.9	2.5	(6.4)
White	70.0	77.9	7.8	72.9	78.0	5.2	72.8	78.2	5.4	73.8	78.1	4.3	3.7	0.2	(3.5)
Black/ Wh Gap	(37.0)	(28.0)		(34.4)	(26.4)		(37.0)	(26.5)		(35.4)	(26.3)		1.7	1.7	
White/ Hisp Gap	(47.7)	(35.5)		(45.8)	(33.8)		(43.5)	(33.5)		(42.6)	(33.3)		5.2	2.2	
ALL CSAP READING GRADES 3-10															
Black	37.7	51.4	13.7	40.8	54.0	13.2	38.5	53.2	14.7	41.7	54.5	12.8	4.0	3.0	(0.9)
Hispanic	28.2	45.0	16.8	32.1	47.5	15.4	31.4	47.2	15.7	35.6	48.6	13.0	7.4	3.6	(3.8)
White	73.7	77.8	4.1	76.5	78.7	2.3	75.8	78.7	2.9	77.2	78.7	1.4	3.5	0.8	(2.7)
Black/ Wh Gap	(36.0)	(26.4)		(35.7)	(24.7)		(37.3)	(25.5)		(35.6)	(24.2)		0.4	2.2	
White/ Hisp Gap	(45.5)	(32.8)		(44.3)	(31.2)		(44.4)	(31.6)		(41.6)	(30.0)		3.9	2.8	

Among African-American students, there was a wider gap than among white students between city and state averages. The percentage of black students at proficient and advanced levels in reading across all grade levels was 41.7 percent in Denver and 54.5 percent statewide. Some 43.5 percent of the city's third-grade African-American students read at or above proficiency levels in 2008, compared with 58.4 percent of non-DPS African-American students statewide. A similar proportion of African-American sixth-graders in Denver (46.4 percent) scored at or above reading proficiency levels, compared with 59.2 percent of non-DPS African-American sixth-graders statewide. At the ninth-grade level, however, only 38.4 percent of Denver's African-American students were reading at or above proficient levels in 2008, compared with 51.8 percent of African-American students statewide.

Moreover, the reading achievement of Denver's African-American third-graders declined by 2.0 percentage points since 2005, compared to a 1.1 percentage-point drop among non-DPS black third-graders statewide. At the sixth-grade level, DPS black students improved their reading proficiency by 8.5 percentage points, one percentage point faster than their statewide peers. And Denver's ninth-grade black students improved by 5.4 percentage points, while their statewide peers gained only 1.9 percentage points over the same period. (See Exhibit 8.)

Hispanic students, who make up 58 percent of Denver's enrollment, consistently score below white and African-American students in reading. Denver's Hispanic students, moreover, score about 13 percentage points lower than their non-DPS Hispanic peers statewide. Furthermore, the proportion of Hispanic students reading at or above proficient levels declines from grade to grade in both the city and the state.

If one combines the CSAP reading scores among all Hispanic students in Denver, it is clear that only 35.6 percent of these students read at or above proficient levels, compared with 48.6 percent of all non-DPS Hispanic students statewide. The individual grades show similar patterns. Some 40.6 percent of Denver's Hispanic third-graders read at or above proficiency on the state test, compared with 53.7 percent of Hispanic non-DPS students statewide. Some 38.8 percent of the city's Hispanic sixth-graders read at or above proficiency levels, compared with 52.2 percent of Hispanic ninth-graders statewide. And 31.2 percent of Denver's Hispanic ninth-graders read at this level, compared with 44.8 percent of Hispanic ninth-graders statewide. (See Exhibit 8.)

However, gains among Denver's Hispanic students between 2005 and 2008 have outpaced those of their non-DPS Hispanic peers statewide, except in third grade. Generally, gains in reading among Denver's Hispanic students across all grades were double those of Hispanic students outside Denver (7.4 vs. 3.6 percentage points).

Mathematics scores were generally lower than reading scores in all racial and ethnic groups in the sample grades. The differences appear to increase most between third and ninth grades. Among white students, for instance, the difference between reading and math proficiency rates grew from 3.6 percentage points in the third grade to 33.0 percentage points in the ninth grade.

In general, white students in Denver scored about as well in mathematics as their white counterparts statewide. If one combines the CSAP math scores of Denver's white students across all grades tests, one can see that about 62.3 percent of them scored at or above proficient levels. Non-DPS white students statewide scored 63.2 percent—a difference of only 0.9 percentage point. Results at the individual sample grade levels show similar patterns. For instance, some 74.7 percent of the city's white third-graders scored at or above proficiency levels in math in 2008, compared with 80.7 percent of non-DPS white third-graders statewide. Some 69.1 percent of white sixth-graders in Denver scored at proficient levels or above, compared with 71.4 percent of their non-DPS white counterparts statewide. However, only 47.1 percent of Denver's white ninth-graders performed at proficiency or above levels in math, a low level but one similar to the 48.7 percent of non-DPS white students statewide who scored at or above proficiency.

Over the last three years, the average math performance of white students in Denver declined by 2.5 percentage points in the third grade but improved 4.3 percentage points in sixth grade and 9.0 percentage points in ninth grade. Non-DPS white students statewide improved at all three sample grade levels by small amounts (from 1.7 to 5.7 percentage points). (See Exhibit 9.)

Among African-American third-graders both inside and outside Denver, math achievement was lower than—but similar to—reading achievement. By ninth grade, however, math performance was 25.7 percentage points lower than reading performance for African-American students in Denver and 23.4 percentage points lower among African-American students statewide. Data on the individual grades show similar patterns.

In 2008, 36.5 percent of African-American third-graders in Denver scored at or above proficiency levels in math, compared with 54.4 percent of non-DPS black third-graders statewide. Only 29.3 percent of Denver's African-American sixth-graders scored at or above proficiency, compared with 43.5 percent statewide. And only 9.0 percent of the city's African- American ninth-graders scored at or above proficiency levels in math. Statewide, non-DPS black ninth-graders did little better, with 18.5 percent scoring at or above the proficient level.

Improvement in math scores among African-American students between 2005 and 2008 was generally measured in the single digits. Scores among Denver's third-graders declined 1.3 percentage points, while black sixth-graders in the city gained 9.1 percentage points. Conversely, non-DPS black students statewide scored gains of 1.7 percentage points in third grade, 7.7 percentage points in sixth grade, and 4.9 percentage points in ninth. (See Exhibit 9.)

Among Hispanic students, the overall proficiency level across all grade levels was 27.5 percent in math. Statewide, only 35.4 percent of non-DPS students across all grade levels performed at or above the proficient level in math.

In 2008, 38.0 percent of Denver's Hispanic third-graders performed at or above proficiency levels on the state math tests. About 54.9 percent of all non-DPS Hispanic third-graders scored at this level statewide. Some 36.4 percent of Denver's Hispanic sixth-graders scored at or above proficiency in math, compared with 42.2 percent of their racial counterparts statewide. Only 10.2 percent of the city's Hispanic ninth-graders scored at or above proficiency in 2008, compared with 17.6 percent of non-DPS Hispanic ninth-graders statewide. Patterns of growth were mixed. (See Exhibit 9.)

Exhibit 9. Disaggregated Math Scores at or Above Proficient for Denver Students and Non-Denver Students Statewide by Year

	2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3-yr change		
Ethnicity	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State/ DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**
Grade 3															
Black	37.8	52.7	14.8	38.0	54.9	16.9	36.1	53.5	17.4	36.5	54.4	17.9	(1.3)	1.7	3.1
Hispanic	37.6	51.0	13.4	38.5	54.9	16.5	37.2	51.8	14.6	38.0	54.9	16.9	0.4	3.9	3.5
White	77.2	79.0	1.8	74.3	81.8	7.4	76.1	79.8	3.7	74.7	80.7	5.9	(2.5)	1.7	4.2
Black/ White Gap	(39.4)	(26.4)		(36.3)	(26.9)		(40.0)	(26.3)		(38.3)	(26.3)		1.2	0.1	
White/ Hispanic	(39.6)	(28.0)		(35.9)	(26.8)		(38.8)	(27.9)		(36.7)	(25.8)		2.9	2.2	

	2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3-yr change		
Ethnicity	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State/ DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**	**DPS**	**State (Non-DPS)**	**State / DPS Gap**
Gap															
Grade 6															
Black	20.2	35.8	15.5	27.1	38.8	11.7	30.2	43.1	12.9	29.3	43.5	14.1	9.1	7.7	(1.4)
Hispanic	23.0	35.8	12.9	25.7	36.8	11.1	33.0	39.9	6.9	36.4	42.2	5.8	13.4	6.4	(7.0)
White	64.8	68.5	3.6	65.4	68.4	3.0	67.7	71.1	3.5	69.1	71.4	2.2	4.3	2.9	(1.4)
Black/ White Gap	(44.6)	(32.7)		(38.3)	(29.6)		(37.5)	(28.1)		(39.8)	(27.9)		4.8	4.8	
White/ Hispanic Gap	(41.9)	(32.6)		(39.7)	(31.6)		(34.7)	(31.2)		(32.7)	(29.1)		9.1	3.5	
Grade 9															
Black	5.8	13.6	7.8	9.4	19.1	9.7	9.2	14.2	5.0	9.0	18.5	9.5	3.2	4.9	1.7
Hispanic	4.9	13.4	8.5	8.5	17.0	8.5	9.6	14.8	5.2	10.2	17.6	7.4	5.4	4.2	(1.1)
White	38.1	43.0	4.9	44.6	49.0	4.4	43.1	45.6	2.6	47.1	48.7	1.6	9.0	5.7	(3.3)
Black/ White Gap	(32.3)	(29.5)		(35.2)	(29.9)		(33.9)	(31.4)		(38.1)	(30.2)				
White/ Hispanic Gap	(33.2)	(29.7)		(36.1)	(32.0)		(33.5)	(30.8)		(36.9)	(31.1)				
ALL CSAP MATH GRADES 3-10															
Black	19.7	32.6	13.0	22.1	34.3	12.2	23.0	35.1	12.1	23.5	35.5	12.0	3.9	2.9	(1.0)
Hispanic	21.4	32.2	10.8	24.0	34.3	10.3	26.4	34.9	8.6	27.5	35.4	8.0	6.0	3.2	(2.8)
White	57.1	60.7	3.6	59.9	62.5	2.5	61.1	63.2	2.1	62.3	63.2	0.9	5.2	2.5	(2.7)
Black/ White Gap	(37.4)	(28.0)		(37.8)	(28.1)		(38.1)	(28.1)		(38.8)	(27.7)		(1.4)	0.4	
White/ Hispanic Gap	(35.6)	(28.4)		(36.0)	(28.2)		(34.7)	(28.3)		(34.8)	(27.8)		0.8	0.7	

Overall, there are large achievement gaps among the racial and ethnic groups in Denver and across the state in both reading and math, although the gaps in Denver are generally larger than those statewide for the same groups.

In reading, there was a 34.9 percentage-point proficiency gap between Denver's white and African-American third-graders in 2008. Statewide, this gap between whites and blacks was 22.2 percentage points. At the sixth grade, the gap between whites and African Americans was 32.1 percentage points in Denver and 22.8 percentage points statewide. And in ninth grade, the reading achievement gap was 35.4 percentage points in Denver and 26.3 percentage points statewide. For all grade levels combined, the reading proficiency gap between whites and blacks was 35.6 percentage points in Denver and 24.2 percentage points statewide. (See Exhibit 8.)

The white–Hispanic achievement gaps were somewhat larger than the white–black gaps. In the third grade, the reading achievement gap between Denver's white and Hispanic students was 37.8 percentage points, compared with 27.0 percent statewide. At the sixth-grade level, the gap was 39.7 percentage points in Denver and 29.9 percentage

points statewide. And in the ninth grade, the reading gap was 42.6 percentage points in Denver and 33.3 percentage points statewide. (See Exhibit 8.)

In math, the gap between white and African-American third-graders was 38.3 percentage points in Denver and 26.3 percentage points statewide. At the sixth-grade level, the math gap was 39.8 percentage points in Denver and 27.9 percentage points statewide. And in the ninth grade, the gap was 38.1 percentage points between white and African-American students in Denver and 30.2 percentage points statewide. As in reading, the math gap between white and black students across all grade levels combined was 38.8 percentage points in Denver and 27.7 percentage points statewide. (See Exhibit 9.)

The white–Hispanic achievement gap in math was 36.7 percentage points at the third-grade level in Denver and 25.8 percentage points statewide. Sixth-graders saw a white–Hispanic gap of 32.7 percentage points in Denver and 29.1 percentage points statewide. And among ninth-graders, the gap between the groups was 36.9 percentage points in Denver and 31.1 percentage points statewide. (See Exhibit 9.)

Finally, the data suggest that the district's success in narrowing these gaps in groups relative to the state was mixed.

Advanced Placement

The Council also examined Advanced Placement (AP) scores to determine the opportunities for students to take advanced courses that provide a strong foundation for postsecondary work and the potential of earning college credits. Many colleges award credit for scores of 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exams. Exhibit 10 presents data on AP course offerings in 13 Denver high schools. In analyzing the data, the Council's team counted the course title only once when two or more semesters of the same title of a course were listed. In general, high schools offered from three to 23 different AP course titles. Denver high schools most commonly offered AP Geometry/Calculus, AP Calculus AB, AP English Language and Composition, AP Spanish Language, and AP United States History. AP Computer Science is only offered at two sites. (See Exhibit 10.)

The team also looked at the list of AP exams that Denver students took in 2008, together with the total number of students tested and the number of students scoring a 3 or better. The results showed that Denver students took 2,549 AP exams in 2008. The most popular test was United States History (367) of which 24.5 percent scored 3 or better. Nearly as many students (362) took the English Language and Composition exam, and 40.9 percent of them earned a score of 3 or better. Team members also noted that the Denver School of the Arts had no participants in the arts-focused AP tests, while other high schools did. Only 11 students citywide took the AP Computer Science exam. In addition, the data indicate that many students taking AP courses did not sit for the AP test in those courses. (See Exhibit 11.)

The reader should note that the district furnished the Council's team with AP course data on 13 high schools but provided AP test-taking results on only 10. The team

did not receive any test results for three high schools that offered AP courses.[11] Furthermore, the team did not receive any AP course listings or exam data for 19 additional schools classified as DPS high schools on the Colorado Department of Education website.[12]

Exhibit 12 shows results from selected AP tests taken at the 10 DPS high schools on which the team was provided data.[13] We omitted reported subscale test grades and adjusted the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher accordingly. The number of tests taken varies greatly from a low of 56 at West High School to a high of 967 at East High School. The percentage of AP test results of three or better ranges from 7.5 percent at Montbello High School to 51.9 percent at East High School. East High School students participated in 20 different AP tests titles, while West High School students took only three different AP tests. AP test results furnished to the team indicate that East High School had 100 percent of test-takers scoring a three or better in Music Theory and in Physics B. Abraham Lincoln High School had 100 percent scoring a three or higher in Spanish Language. There were also 20 different tests where participants at a given high school failed to score a single three or higher (see Appendix C).

[11] The three schools were: Denver Online High School which offered three AP courses, Denver School of Science and Technology which offered four AP courses, and the Center for International Studies High School which offered nine AP courses.

[12] High schools listed on the state website that were not included in the AP results were: Ridge View Academy Charter School, Academy Of Urban Learning, Emerson Street School, Fred N Thomas Career Education Center, Challenges, Choices & Images Charter, Colorado High School, Ace Community Challenge Charter School, Emily Griffith Opportunity School, Escuela Tlatelolco School, Florence Crittenton High School, Life Skills Center Of Denver, Manual High School, Martin Luther King Middle College, Contemporary Learning Academy HS, Bruce Randolph School, Prep Assessment Center, P.S.1 Charter School, Skyland Community High School, and Southwest Early College Charter School.

[13] Appendix B provides a complete table of AP tests taken and the percentage of students by school scoring a 3 or higher.

Exhibit 10. AP Courses Offered in Denver Public Schools, 2008

AP Courses Offered	Lincoln HS	East HS	Washington HS	Kennedy HS	North HS	South HS	Jefferson HS	West HS	Montbello HS	Center for International HS	Denver School of the Arts	Denver Science and Technology	Denver Online	**Total Offered**
Art: Studio Art Drawing	x	x				x			x					**4**
Biology		x	x			x	x		x		x			**6**
Calculus AB	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		**12**
Calculus BC	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		x			**8**
Chemistry		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x				**8**
Computer Science A		x										x		**2**
Econ.: Macroeconomics		x				x								**2**
Econ.: Microeconomics		x				x								**2**
Eng. Lang. & Com.		x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x		x	**9**
English Lit. & Comp.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		x	**10**
Environmental Science														**0**
European History	x	x	x	x	x	x					x			**7**
French Language		x	x							x				**3**
French Literature														**0**
Gov. & Pol. U.S.		x				x	x		x					**4**
History of Art						x							x	**2**
Human Geography		x							x					**2**
Music Theory		x												**1**
Physics B	x	x	x							x		x		**5**
Psychology		x	x		x									**3**
Spanish Language	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			**10**
Spanish Literature	x							x						**2**
Statistics		x			x					x		x		**4**
United States History	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x			**10**
World History		x					x		x	x	x			**5**
Geometry/Calculus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			**11**
Comp.Gov & Econ		x				x								**2**
Chemistry Lab				x		x		x						**3**
Biology Lab						x								**1**
AP Titles Per School	**10**	**23**	**13**	**9**	**11**	**15**	**11**	**7**	**13**	**9**	**10**	**4**	**3**	

Exhibit 11. All Advanced Placement Tests Taken in Denver Public Schools, Number of Students Receiving a 3 or Better, and Percentage Scoring 3 or Higher, 2008

AP Exam Title	Number of Students Taking in 2008	Number of Students Receiving a 3 or better	Percentage of Total Students Receiving a 3 or better
Art: Studio Art 3-D Design	12	6	50.0
Art: Studio Art 2-D Design	3	0	0.0
Art: Studio Art Drawing	23	7	30.4
Biology	124	27	21.8
Calculus AB	92	28	30.4
Calculus BC	95	29	30.5
Chemistry	88	27	30.7
Computer Science A	11	1	9.1
Economics: Macroeconomics	10	1	10.0
Economics: Microeconomics	9	0	0.0
English Language & Composition	362	148	40.9
English Literature & Composition	311	117	37.6
Environmental Science	1	1	100.0
European History	222	69	31.1
French Language	18	5	27.8
French Literature	1	0	0.0
Government & Politics United States	139	27	19.4
History of Art	10	5	50.0
Human Geography	84	33	39.3
Music Theory	14	14	100.0
Physics B	53	19	35.8
Psychology	90	53	58.9
Spanish Language	223	133	59.6
Spanish Literature	43	12	27.9
Statistics	43	11	25.6
United States History	367	90	24.5
World History	101	41	40.6
Total	**2,549**	**904**	**35.5**

Finally, the data indicate that the number of students scoring 3 or better on these exams was low. Only 35.5 percent of the tests taken showed a score of 3 or higher. The district did not furnish scores disaggregated by subgroups. Similarly, the team did not have the data to compare how many students taking AP courses participated in AP tests for that course.

Exhibit 12. Denver Public Schools Selected Advanced Placement Exams Taken and Percentage of Students by School Scoring a 3 or Higher, 2008

School Name	Biology	Calculus AB	Calculus BC	Chemistry	Comp. Science A	English Lang.	English Lit.	Eur. History	US Government	Human Geography	Physics B	Psychology	Spanish Lang	Spanish Literature	US History	World History	Number of Tests (Not all shown on this table)	% Scoring 3 or higher
Abraham Lincoln HS		5					26	49			28		33	19	21		181	24.3
Denver Arts	10	9				36	18	63							27	23	191	50.8
East High School	48	24	46	16	11	144	142	51	26	57	19	65	66		129	40	967	51.9
George Washington HS	19		37	7		58	17	9	2		6	4	10		13		190	20.0
John F Kennedy HS			10	12			20	15					16	1	10		84	46.4
Montbello High School	26	9		17		62	46		49	27			25		33	25	333	7.5
North High School		14	2	7		18	27	11				21	30		53		183	16.9
South High School	15	13		12			8	24	16				17		37		176	29.5
Thomas Jefferson HS	6	18		4		44	7		46				6		44	13	188	31.9
West HS				13									20	23			56	28.6
TOTAL TESTS TAKEN	**124**	**92**	**95**	**88**	**11**	**362**	**311**	**222**	**139**	**84**	**53**	**90**	**223**	**43**	**367**	**101**	**2549**	

Graduation and Dropout Rates

The Council also requested graduation and dropout data from the district. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) calculates graduation rates by dividing the number of graduates in a class by the number of students that entered ninth grade four years earlier, adjusted for verified transfers in and out of the school district through the end of the twelfth-grade year. Since 2005, students who opt for a General Education Development (GED) program are kept in the denominator for determining the graduation rate for a class, in effect reducing the graduation rate. However, students who receive a GED certificate from a district-run program do count in the completer rate for the district. CDE has not yet released its calculations for the class of 2008, so Exhibit 11 presents data for 2006 and 2007. Exhibit 13 Colorado data include Denver students in the calculations for statewide figures, and the Council's team had no way of separating the figures.

The data indicate that 257 more students graduated from DPS in 2007 than in 2006, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the state's total increase in its number of graduates. The overall graduation rate in Denver was 51.7 percent in 2006 and 52.0 in 2007, over 20 percentage points lower than statewide rates during the same period (74.1 and 75.0).

Moreover, the data show that the various racial and ethnic groups in both the city and statewide graduate in the same rank order. Asian-American students graduated at higher rates than any other racial group in Denver and statewide. However, the Asian-American graduation rate of 65.1 percent in Denver was 18.4 percentage points lower than the Asian-American graduation rate of 82.5 percent statewide. Still, the Asian-American completion rate is the highest in DPS despite the subgroup's decline from 73.8 percent in 2006 to 65.1 percent in 2007.

White students graduated (62.9 percent in Denver and 82.1 percent statewide) at rates similar to those of Asian-American students.

On the other hand, only 53.8 percent of Denver's African-American students graduated with their class in 2007, almost 12 percentage points lower than black students statewide (65.4 percent).

And, Hispanic graduation rates were lowest in Denver and statewide, following the same pattern as the black subgroup. About 45.4 percent of Denver's Hispanic students graduated in 2007, a rate almost 12 percentage points lower than their statewide Hispanic peers (57.1 percent). (See Exhibit 13.)

Exhibit 13. Graduation and Completer Rates in Denver Public Schools and Colorado, 2006 and 2007

	Denver			Colorado		
	2006	**2007**	**Change**	**2006**	**2007**	**Change**
All Students Final Grad Base	5,157	5,414	257	59,972	60,847	875
All Students Graduates	2,664	2,814	150	44,424	45,628	1,204
All Students Grad Rate	**51.7**	**52.0**	**0.3**	**74.1**	**75.0**	**0.9**
All Students Completers Total	3,248	3,289	41	48,276	48,557	281
All Students Completion Rate	63.0	60.7	-2.3	80.5	79.8	-0.7
Asian Final Grad Base	164	186	22	1,959	1,957	-2
Asian Graduation Rate	**73.8**	**65.1**	**-8.7**	**82.5**	**83.5**	**1.0**
Asian Completion Rate	81.7	68.8	-12.9	85.9	86.3	0.4
Black Final Grad Base	1,170	1,217	47	3,395	3,695	300
Black Graduation Rate	**53.3**	**53.8**	**0.5**	**62.7**	**65.4**	**2.7**
Black Completion Rate	62.8	61.9	-0.9	69.7	70.7	1.0
Hispanic Final Grad Base	2,447	2,675	228	13,626	14,197	571
Hispanic Graduation Rate	**44.4**	**45.4**	**1.0**	**56.7**	**57.1**	**0.4**
Hispanic Completion Rate	53.9	52.9	-1.0	63.6	62.5	-1.1
White Final Grad Base	1,300	1,250	-50	40,293	40,242	-51
White Graduation Rate	**61.3**	**62.9**	**1.6**	**80.8**	**82.1**	**1.3**
White Completion Rate	78.1	75.4	-2.7	87.1	86.7	-0.4

The gap in graduation rates in 2007 between Hispanic and white students in Denver was 17.5 percentage points, while the statewide gap was 25 percentage points. These gaps widened slightly since 2006 (0.6 percentage points in Denver and 0.9 percentage points in 2007). Furthermore, the gap in graduation rates for Hispanic students and black students is about the same at the city and state levels (8.4 percentage points and 8.3 percentage points, respectively). In addition, the graduation-rate gap in DPS between black students and their white counterparts was 9.1 percentage points in 2007—slightly less than half of the gap seen at the state level (16.7 percentage points). Between 2006 and 2007, the black/white graduation gap increased slightly (1.1 percentage points) in Denver but closed by 1.4 percentage points at the state level.

Completion rates, of course, are higher than graduation rates. The difference between completion rates and graduation rates in Denver in 2007 varied between 3.7 (for the Asian-American subgroup) and 12.5 percentage points (white subgroup). Completion rates at the state level were closer to each group's graduation rate, ranging from 2.8 (Asian-American subgroup) to 5.4 (white subgroup).

Exhibit 14. Dropout Rates for Denver and Colorado, 2006 and 2007

	Denver				Colorado		
	2006	**2007**	**Change**		**2006**	**2007**	**Change**
All Student Count	36,217	35,126	-1091		40,4671	40,9704	5033
All Dropouts	4017	3649	-368		18,031	18,027	-4
All Students Dropout Rate	**11.10%**	**10.4%**	**-0.7%**		**4.5%**	**4.4%**	**-0.1%**
Asian Student Count	1035	1027	-8		12,457	12,720	263
Asian Dropout Rate	**9.0%**	**6.6%**	**-2.4%**		**3.1%**	**2.6%**	**-0.5%**
Black Student Count	7942	7586	-356		26,517	27,415	898
Black Dropout Rate	**10.3%**	**9.5%**	**-0.8%**		**6.6%**	**5.8%**	**-0.8%**
Hispanic Student Count	19,224	18,708	-516		101,876	105,829	3953
Hispanic Dropout Rate	**12.5%**	**11.9%**	**-0.6%**		**8.2%**	**8.0%**	**-0.2%**
White Student Count	7506	7329	-177		258,564	258,316	-248
White Dropout Rate	**8.3%**	**7.7%**	**-0.6%**		**2.8%**	**2.8%**	**0.0%**

Finally, the district furnished dropout data to the team indicating a decline in enrollment in grades 7 through 12 in Denver between 2006 and 2007, while state enrollment increased at those grade levels. (See Exhibit 14.) The state requires districts to gather documentation for each child who leaves the district in order not to have the child count as a dropout.[14] Dropout rates declined slightly between 2006 and 2007 for both DPS and the state. Denver had a high dropout rate (10.4 percent) in 2007, compared with a 4.4 percent dropout rate statewide. Denver subgroups had dropout rates between 6.6

[14] The Colorado dropout rate is an annual rate, reflecting the percentage of all students enrolled in grades 7-12 who leave school during a single school year. According to the CDE website, it is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts by a membership base which includes all students who were in membership any time during the year. The website further recognizes that documenting transfers to avoid having them be counted in the dropout rate is a challenge for districts with high numbers of transfers, and that inability to document student movement may result in the appearance of higher dropout rates.

percent for Asian-American students and 11.9 percent for Hispanic students. The subgroup dropout rates for Colorado ranged from 2.6 percent for Asian-American students statewide and 8.0 percent for Hispanic students statewide. The high dropout rate for Hispanics, combined with the high proportion of Hispanic enrollment in Denver, helped explain but not excuse the high dropout rate for the district.

College Entrance Examination Scores (Colorado ACT)

The Council also looked at scores on the district's most frequently taken college entrance exam, the Colorado ACT. According to the furnished data, over 3,000 students took the Colorado ACT in Denver in 2008. (All 11th graders take the Colorado ACT.)

The average Denver Colorado ACT reading score in 2008 was 18.0—about 1.6 points lower than the statewide reading average. Average Colorado ACT reading scores that year ranged from 11.5 at Emerson Street School to 25.1 at Denver School of the Arts. Trends also varied from a decline of 2.8 points (PS2 Charter) to a gain of 5.0 points (Academy of Learning).

In addition, the average Colorado ACT math score in Denver was 17.6, while statewide scores on the math test averaged 19.3 points. Individual Denver high schools ranged from 13.5 points at Escuela Tlatelolco to 21.1 points at the Denver School of the Arts. Trend lines also ranged from a drop of 1.2 points (Escuela Tlatelolco) to a gain of 1.7 points (Denver Online High School).

Exhibit 15. Comparison of Numbers of Denver Public Schools and Colorado Students Taking the Colorado ACT and Their Average Scores, 2006-2008*

	2006				2007				2008			
School	Reading N	Reading Ave.	Math N	Math Ave.	Reading N	Reading Ave.	Math N	Math Ave.	Reading N	Reading Ave.	Math N	Math Ave.
Denver School of Arts	117	24.1	117	19.8	129	23.6	129	20.7	114	25.1	114	21.1
East High School	406	22.1	406	20.5	411	21.0	411	19.9	460	21.4	460	20.0
George Washington HS	332	20.5	332	19.3	333	19.6	334	19.1	304	20.5	304	20.0
Denver Online HS	--		--		11	17.4	11	16.5	31	21.0	32	18.2
Thomas Jefferson HS	207	19.3	207	18.2	210	18.4	210	18.1	217	19.0	217	17.7
CEC Middle College of Denver	72	17.9	72	17.4	58	18.0	58	17.1	73	18.0	73	18.0
South High School	252	16.3	252	16.4	247	16.4	247	16.7	267	17.4	267	16.7
Ridgeview Academy	72	15.3	72	15.7	51	15.7	51	15.8	38	17.2	39	16.7
John F. Kennedy HS	259	17.2	259	17.2	263	17.1	263	17.1	268	17.2	268	16.5
PS1 Charter School	41	19.2	41	16.8	27	16.9	27	14.7	46	16.5	46	16.0
North HS	178	15.8	179	15.6	176	14.8	176	15.7	174	15.6	174	16.0
Emily Griffith Opportunity School	8	14.6	8	15.3	46	16.4	46	14.9	41	15.9	41	15.3

Colorado High Charter School	--		--		38	15.1	39	14.8	34	15.4	34	15.3
Montbello HS	181	15.1	179	15.4	283	15.1	284	15.1	263	15.0	264	15.5
Crittenton School	28	13.3	28	14.3	20	14.5	20	14.0	27	15.2	27	14.7
West HS	211	16.2	211	15.5	168	14.4	169	15.0	154	14.6	154	15.2
Challenge Choice and Images	17	14.5	17	14.4	31	15.5	31	15.2	43	14.9	43	14.9
Abraham Lincoln HS	195	14.5	195	15.2	235	14.2	235	15.1	233	14.3	233	15.5
Contemporary Learning Academy	44	15.4	44	15.0	41	13.2	41	14.4	34	14.8	34	15.0
Life Skills Center HS	--		--		21	14.6	21	14.9	31	14.3	32	15.3
Academy of Urban Learning	1	9.0	2	13.5	10	15.0	10	14.6	14	14.0	14	14.6
Skyland Community HS	24	13.5	24	14.3	22	13.4	22	14.2	16	13.9	16	14.2
Emerson Street School	2	10.5	2	14.5	3	13.3	3	11.0	2	11.5	2	15.0
Escuela Tlatelolco	16	14.9	16	14.8	13	14.2	13	15.6	13	12.5	13	13.5
District	2,830	17.8	2,829	17.2	3,024	17.5	3,028	17.3	3,079	18.0	3,083	17.6
State (All Records)*	49,070	19.4	49,070	18.9	50,436	19.4	50,436	19.2	51,490	19.6	51,490	19.3
State (Valid Records)*	47,320	20.1	47,320	19.5	48,789	20.1	48,789	19.8	49,471	20.4	49,471	20.0

*State figures are calculated by Colorado Department of Education, using different exclusion criteria, making it difficult to compare DPS and state data.

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

The district handles two disparate accountability systems: the state's School Accountability Report (SAR), on which all Denver schools have met state accreditation, and the federal No Child Left Behind system that requires schools and school districts to make adequate yearly progress on multiple accountability measures.

The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets set by the state require students who have been in the school district for at least 12 months to perform at the *partially proficient*, *proficient*, or *advanced* levels on the CSAP or CSAP-A. Students districtwide and in each school must attain specific targets, which increased from 5.09 to 13.25 percentage points between 2007 and 2008, depending on the subject and grade span. (See Exhibit 16.)

Exhibit 16. Colorado Adequate Yearly Progress Proficiency Performance Targets in Reading and Math by School Level, 2006-2009

Year	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
2006	82.69	83.64	80.21	69.63	84.74	60.25
2007	82.69	83.64	80.21	69.63	84.74	60.25
2008	88.46	89.09	86.81	79.75	89.83	73.50
2009	88.46	89.09	86.81	79.75	89.83	73.50

According to data furnished to the team, 58 Denver schools were classified as being in one form of "school improvement" status or another under the federal *No Child Left Behind* act. Six of Denver's Title I schools were in Year 1 of school improvement; ten were in Year 2; eight were in corrective action; nine were in restructuring planning; ten were in restructuring implementation year 2; six were in restructuring implementation year 3, eight were in restructuring implementation year 4, and one was in restructuring implementation year 5. Some 37 Title I elementary schools were in school improvement status for inadequate performance in reading and 22 elementary schools were in sanction because of weak math performance. In addition, 10 middle schools were in sanction because of poor performance in reading, and 12 middle schools were in sanction because of inadequate math performance. Finally, four high schools were in school improvement because of inadequate achievement in reading, and five were in that status because of inadequate achievement in mathematics. (See Exhibit 17.)

Exhibit 17. Number and Percent of Title I Schools by Level and Sanction Due to Failure to Meet Adequate Yearly Progress, 2008-09*

Overall Status											
School Level	S1	S2	CA	RP	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total	Total Title I	% Sanctions
Elementary	4	9	7	3	7	6	5	0	**41**	71	**58%**
Middle	2	0	1	4	1	0	3	1	**12**	30	**40%**
High	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	**5**	9	**56%**
Total	6	10	8	9	10	6	8	1	**58**	110	**53%**
Reading Status											
School Level	S1	S2	CA	RP	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total	Total Title I	% Sanctions
Elementary	3	7	7	4	6	5	5	0	**37**	71	**52%**
Middle	0	0	2	4	0	0	3	1	**10**	30	**33%**
High	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	**4**	9	**44%**
Total	3	7	9	11	7	5	8	1	**51**	110	**46%**
Math Status											
School Level	S1	S2	CA	RP	R2	R3	R4	R5	**Total**	Total Title I	% Sanctions
Elementary	9	5	2	1	2	3	0	0	**22**	71	**31%**
Middle	2	0	1	4	1	0	3	1	**12**	30	**40%**
High	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	**5**	9	**56%**
Total	11	6	3	7	5	3	3	1	**39**	110	**35%**

*Data source: Denver Public Schools.
Abbreviations:
S1 and S2 - School Improvement, Year 1and Year 2
CA – Corrective Action
RP – Restructuring Planning
R2, R3, R4, R5 – Restructuring Implementation, Years 2, 3, 4, and 5

About 51 percent of non-Title I schools also failed to meet targets in reading and mathematics. Some 83 percent of non-Title I high schools did not meet CSAP performance targets. Math was a problem for six of the nine non-Title I elementary schools, all 10 of the non-Title I middle schools, and 12 of the 15 non-Title I high schools that failed to meet CSAP targets in 2007-08. Reading was a challenge at seven of the nine elementary schools, two of the ten middle schools, and 11 of the 15 high schools. (See Exhibit 18.)

Exhibit 18. Number and Percentage of Non-Title I Schools Whose Students Did Not Meet 2007-08 State NCLB Targets in Reading, Math, or Both

2008-09	Number of Schools	Reading Only	Math Only	Reading and Math	Total Not Meeting Targets	Percent Not Meeting Target
Non-Title I Schools						
Elementary	30	3	2	4	9	30%
Middle	19	0	8	2	10	53%
High School	18	3	4	8	15	83%
Total	67	6	14	14	34	51%

In summary, a high percentage of Title I and non-Title I schools are not yet meeting AYP performance targets in reading and math. Many Title I schools have been unable to move student achievement sufficiently to pull themselves out of sanction. The targets will continue to increase at the state level, a situation that is likely to cause more Title I schools to fall into sanction status and more non-Title I schools to fail to meet targets.

CHAPTER 2. FINDINGS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the Council's Strategic Support Team. The Council team did not examine every possible document or review every program that the district has, but it did pay particular attention to levers the Council has identified as often explaining why some urban school districts show faster academic gains than others.

Research conducted by the Council has found that urban school districts that have improved significantly often share a number of common characteristics that set them apart from urban school districts that have not shown much progress.[15] This chapter organizes the team's findings around 10 key features that are often common to faster improving urban school districts and that differ from districts where improvement is not as fast: political preconditions; goals; accountability; curriculum and instruction; human capital, teacher quality, and professional development; reform press (or the ability to get reforms into the classrooms); data, assessment, and evaluation; and lowest-performing students and schools and special populations; early childhood education, gifted and talented, and elementary schools; and secondary schools. There is also an extended section on English language learners.

The team also paid particular attention to the district's instructional program for English language learners, to the district's reading and math programs, and to possible explanations for why student achievement gains had not moved more rapidly, a question on the minds of both board members and the administration.

Critical observations included the following—

HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ The school district's academic and reform efforts are generally driven and defined around a solid theory of action that has the potential over the long run to produce much more convincing academic progress than it has historically.

- ★ The school board's decision to replace its outgoing superintendent with the district's chief operating officer made considerable sense as a way of maintaining if not accelerating the district's reform agenda and presents the district with new opportunities to make further gains.

- ★ The school district has made substantial progress on its *Denver Plan* and has shown significant gains in student achievement as a result. Progress in Denver on state tests significantly outpaces most other school districts in the state.

- ★ Through the use of its School Performance Framework (SPF) and aligned incentives, the district has made substantial progress in breathing new accountability for results into the system.

[15] Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Herlihy, C. (2002). *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement*. MDRC for the Council of the Great City Schools.

★ The district's performance compensation system for teachers (ProComp) and principals and its incentives for rebuilding the human capital of the school district put it on the leading edge of urban school reforms nationwide.

★ The school district has substantially redeployed and leveraged its financial resources to add transparency and stability to its budgeting, focus more dollars on the classroom, and provide the resources necessary to carry out its long-range vision for reform and improvement.

★ The school district has considerable talent at its disposal at the leadership, school, and classroom levels.

★ The school district has many of the components of its reforms in place at the central office level, but they have not always taken deep root at the school and classroom levels.

★ The school district's high teacher turnover and transfer rate and system of providing professional development to its teachers is a major impediment to the district's ability to build capacity and accelerate student achievement.

★ Curriculum and other instructional materials developed by the district are not always explicit enough to inform teachers what needs to be taught and at what level of rigor, nor are they used uniformly enough to produce a stronger districtwide effect.

★ The district's professional development system is not strong or focused enough to support the broader reforms the school district is trying to carry out.

A. POLITICAL PRECONDITIONS

Urban school districts that have improved significantly have a number of common characteristics. These commonalities also set them apart from urban school districts that have not seen significant improvements. One key indicator of an urban school district likely to make greater academic gains is the political unity of the school board, its focus on student achievement, and its ability to work with the administration to improve academic performance. Another is the support of the community and the readiness of staff to focus systematically on the most effective strategies to accomplish the board's vision for improving student achievement. Finally, faster-improving urban school districts often find the resources necessary to fund the reforms they need to put into place.

Positive Findings

- The board of education has built a strong consensus around reforming the district's instructional program. It works in tandem with the superintendent to set the direction of the school district and shape its reforms.

- The board has strong leadership that works hard to keep the district on track and moving forward. In general, the board is high quality and cohesive with well-

informed members who participate in nationally available professional development opportunities and are familiar with the reform processes taking place in other cities.

- The school board has largely focused on improving instructional outcomes in the school district rather than micromanaging the instructional process.

- The board of education conducts regular study sessions over and above regular school board meetings that focus on specific district challenges and the reforms in other major urban school districts. The minutes of each of three regular Board of Education meetings furnished to the team[16] contain reports from the chief academic officer. The August 21, 2008 agenda refers to a CSAP update from the superintendent. Most agenda items, however, call for the approval of various contracts, budget items, resolutions, facility use agreements, grievance resolutions, and the like. Approval of such items was normally included on the consent agenda.

- The out-going superintendent, Michael Bennet, developed a strong political base in Denver and cultivated the respect of the school board, community members and school district staff. The new superintendent, Tom Boasberg, is working to build on that foundation.

- The superintendent and his leadership team devoted substantial time and energy to building the foundation for long-term improvement. To that end, after five years of cuts totaling $83 million, the district balanced its nearly $712 million budget, and redirected $20 million to the instructional program. In addition, the superintendent has raised considerable funds to support specific programs, ideas, and reforms.

- Having balanced the budget and directed more funds to instruction, the district asked the public for a $454 million bond in November 2008, which was passed by a wide margin.

- The district has created the ambitious *Denver Plan*—a strategic plan often referred to by staff and community members during our interviews. The most recent update of the plan carried a February 1, 2006 date.

- The district's theory of action calls for schools to decide on hiring, budgets, and use of time while preserving a centrally defined set of curriculum content. This allows flexibility to schools to serve their students, while maintaining a school district where students can transfer to a new school confident that they will always have access to a standard curriculum. In general, the Council found Denver's vision for reform to be one of the most promising and comprehensive in the nation.

[16] June 19, 2008; June 26, 2008, and August 21, 2008

- The pension merger bill signed into Colorado law in 2008 permits merging the Denver Public Schools pension system with the state's Public Employee's Retirement Association (PERA). The merger is expected to save the district millions of dollars and enable teachers to move in and out of DPS without harming their pensions, thereby removing an obstacle to hiring or rehiring the best teachers. The district had seen an increase of about $40 million in pension and retirement-related costs between 2003 and 2008. (Denver was the only school district in the state funding its own independent retirement system, a situation that resulted in the school district's paying almost $1,200 more per student than other Colorado school districts in retirement costs because of the differences in benefits and the high ratio of retirees to currently employed workers.)

- The district's leadership initiated a student-based budgeting system that altered and improved the way dollars were allocated to individual schools. The new system replaced the previous staffing-based system with one that was based on poverty rates, grade levels, gifted and talented designations, and other factors. Schools were given flexibility in the use of allocations for teachers, interventions, paraprofessionals, librarians, and other staff. (The new budgeting allocations—which increased funds to most schools by 5 to 11 percent—were funded in part through modifications to the manner in which the district funded its pension liabilities.)

- The new budgeting system has freed up additional resources for pre-K, full-day kindergartens, secondary schools, special education, gifted and talented, and low-performing schools. (See later sections.)

- The district and the union have agreed to a new three-year teacher contract, eliminating the need for annual negotiations.

- Over the past year, teachers at Bruce Randolph, Manual, and Montclair formally requested to waive various contract provisions (e.g., hiring, staffing, and scheduling) that they felt worked against improving student achievement.

- The superintendent encouraged the establishment of A+ Denver, a 100-member community advisory group. It helped to develop community-vetted, well-reasoned criteria for closing schools and took an active role in determining that the criteria were followed. In addition, it provided an outside sounding board for union negotiations on the ProComp system. The group is committed to being "a vocal and engaged community advocate for changes critical to achieving excellence in the Denver public schools."[17] A+ Denver is developing a new vision of its advisory role now that some of its initial goals have been realized.

- The Council's Strategic Support Team found staff members in the school district to be knowledgeable and dedicated to their mission.

[17] Report of the A+ Denver Finances and Facilities Subcommittee, July 27, 2007, page 4.

- The district has initiated a "5280 program" to encourage parental involvement in instructional activities.

- In September 2008, the district announced a multiyear initiative to engage parents in a written agreement to spend 30 minutes per day working to support their children's education. Parents are to track the time spent on suggested activities such as reading with their children, participating in cultural activities, helping with homework, or discussing current events. The mayor of Denver and many community partners have endorsed the project.

- The district has published parent guides for how to interpret the standards-based reporting of schools by grade level ("Parent Guide to Standards-Based Reporting"). The guides explain district goals in literacy, writing, social sciences, math, and science and describe what students will be learning in each subject at every grade level. The pamphlets offer suggestions for how parents can support student learning for selected standards in core content areas.

Areas of Concern

- The school district lacks a carefully planned communications strategy to foresee and address issues and to inform disparate community groups about the challenges the district is addressing, the reforms that the district is undertaking, and the progress it is making.

- Some parents claimed that the district appears to communicate with them only when a bond issue is coming up for a vote.

- It appears that a considerable portion of school-to-parent communications takes place online, which may pose an accessibility problem. It assumes, moreover, that parents will actively choose to go to the district's website.

- Community groups expressed concerns to the team that they were not always getting a full picture of the status of various district projects and student achievement in the district

- Parents interviewed by the team were not aware of the existence of parent liaisons that are available to assist in resolving issues and concerns at the school and district levels.

- Parents interviewed by the team reported that they often had difficulty deciphering how well their children were doing on all the varying accountability systems—a problem that was exacerbated by language barriers. Parents were sometimes unsure about how to navigate all the various school options and programs and how to access the school registration process.

- Interviewees expressed concerns about the purposes of the bond issue, indicating that some members of the community were not clear on why the money was needed and how it will be spent. This is a perennial issue in all school districts about to float a local bond.

B. GOALS

Urban school districts that have seen significant gains in student achievement often have a clear sense of where they are going. This clarity is exhibited not only in the consensus of the leadership about the system's direction, but also in how leaders translate that broad vision for reform into explicit academic goals that are set for both the whole school district and for its individual schools. These goals are realistic, but they also stretch the system and its performance beyond its current comfort levels. Finally, goals are measurable and accompanied by specific timelines for meeting the targets.

Positive Findings

- The district's overarching goals—stated in *The Denver Plan*[18]—include the following—

> *Our children will learn from a highly skilled faculty in every school that is empowered by robust professional development and timely assessment data.*
> *Highly trained principals and assistant principals will serve as instructional leaders of the faculty in DPS schools.*
>
> *Collaboration among the Denver community and all DPS stakeholders will support our children in a safe, orderly, and enriching environment in every school and classroom.*

- District leadership told the team that their main priorities included improving instruction, accountability, finances, community, and building human capital.

- The district has also set an annual goal of a 3.5 percent increase in the numbers of students who attain a ranking of partially proficient/proficient or above on CSAP. The August 7, 2008 draft five-year goals statement was updated by the school board on February 5, 2009.

- The August 7, 2008 draft five-year goals statement balances goals for improving academic achievement with goals for increasing enrollment in district schools. Goal areas included student enrollment goals, school readiness goals, student growth goals, student performance goals, and postsecondary readiness goals. All goals were stated in specific and measurable terms with corresponding timelines. For example, the district's enrollment goal indicated that it would increase student enrollment by at least 500 students per year (3.5 percent) between 2007-08 and 2012-13. A second goal stated that the district's annual reenrollment rate would be at least 84 percent, excluding graduating students. The team saw these goals as a positive and systematic effort to improve academic achievement while attracting more students and doing so without pushing out low-performing students. Increased enrollment, moreover, would raise state funds to provide additional money for student instructional needs.

- The draft five-year goals statement also sets targets for college readiness, indicating high expectations for students. It proposes a 3.5 percent annual increase

[18] See Appendix A for full list of goals of objectives in the *Denver Plan.*

in the number of students taking AP classes, the number of students taking AP exams, and the number scoring a 3 or better on the exam. In addition, it expects a 3.5 percent per year improvement in the number of students scoring above 20 points on the Colorado ACT. The goals would also improve graduation rates by 5 percent per year. Finally, the district proposed a goal of increasing the number of district students enrolling in college by 3.5 percent each year.

- The district's reform strategy[19] includes conducting a series of instructional reforms articulated in the *Denver Plan* and creating a number of innovative new schools in 2009 and beyond, expanding early childhood education, stabilizing the district's budget by financing pension liabilities and selling surplus real estate, closing eight buildings and creating five new schools in existing buildings, and ensuring a better educational opportunity for all students affected by school closures.

- The "Guiding Principles of School Improvement Planning" document specifically states that school improvement plans (SIPs) must be aligned with the *Denver Plan*; principals must be at the helm of the process; and all stakeholders, including students and parents, should be involved in the process. In addition, multiple sources of data and research should be the basis for decisions about goals and solutions to challenges. There is a broad expectation, moreover, for ongoing monitoring and adjustment of programs and processes. The SIP is to be a three-year plan, formally revised twice a year. Peers and supervisors are to review the plan in a three-step process.

- The district has also developed measurable goals and targets for academic improvement at the network and school levels and has grounded the school improvement reports in attainment of the district's academic goals.

- The district has a straightforward organizational structure (built around a Division of Teaching and Learning, a Division of Instructional Support, and a Division of Student Services) for realizing its broad instructional goals and objectives. Reporting to the chief academic officer is a deputy CAO (a position never filled), a director of academic operations, a director of assessment and research, an executive director of teaching and learning, an executive director of student services, and a series of instructional superintendents for each network and grade span, including alternatives schools.

- The state enables local school districts to develop their own school accreditation process. The district responded by developing its School Performance Framework (SPF) in August 2008. The SPF is a system for annually reviewing school performance and doing so in the form of a multidimensional school-level scorecard. Based on a series of indicators and measures, each school is given a rating under the SPF of distinguished, meets expectations, accredited on watch, or accredited on probation.

[19] Office of New Schools PowerPoint, from Section 7 of the Notebook furnished to the Strategic Support Team.

The Council's Strategic Support Team believes that the SPF far exceeds state and federal requirements in its examination of student achievement levels on CSAP by subgroup, the performance of English language learners on the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA), and high school graduation rates. Indeed, the SPF considers a broad range of factors to measure a school's success and progress, including—

- *Student Progress over Time (Growth).* These measurements include individual student progress compared with other students in the state who have the same performance history and the percentage of students transitioning from a lower to higher performance level of proficiency on CSAP in reading, math, and writing (e.g., moving up from unsatisfactory to low-partially proficient). Furthermore, the system considers the percentage of students staying in the proficient and advanced categories or students moving from proficient to advanced in CSAP reading, math, and writing. It also examines growth in AYP status and the progress of students who have remained continuously enrolled in their schools.

- *Student Achievement Level (Status).* These measures include overall performance ratings relative to the state; AYP status of the school; the percentage of students proficient on the CSAP; the percentage proficient on CSAP compared with similar schools; achievement gaps among various racial, ethnic, disability, income and language subgroups; the percentage of students on grade level using the DRA/EDL; the percentage of students who are at the advanced level on CSAP; and the percentage proficient on CELA.

- *Postsecondary Readiness.* The SPF considers credits earned, the percentage of students enrolled in AP classes, and the passing rate in those classes. As previously recommended by the Council, the SPF system also measures the percentage of students who took an AP course and an AP test in the same content area, as well as the percentage of AP tests scoring a 3 or higher. It also tracks postsecondary readiness at high school (e.g. the percentage of students whose composite score on the Colorado ACT in reading, English, math, and science is 20 or above). Beginning in September 2009, the high school measures will include college acceptance rates.

- *Student Engagement and Satisfaction.* In September 2009, the SPF will add attendance rates (relative to the district's overall rate) and student satisfaction and response rates to survey forms.

- *School Demand.* The SPF, moreover, will look at enrollment changes in the individual schools and examine reenrollment rates.

- *Parent and Community Engagement.* Finally, to gauge parent and community satisfaction with the schools, the SPF will begin in September 2009 to include parent satisfaction and response rates to survey forms.

Areas of Concern

- The proposed 3.5 percent increases for grade-level cohorts in reading, writing, and math would still leave some 38 percent of students performing below proficient in CSAP reading, and some 48 percent below proficient in CSAP writing and in CSAP math by 2012-13.

- The proposed improvements of 3.5 percent for English-language learner proficiency on the CELA each year would still leave over 75 percent of ELL students below proficient on CELA in 2012-13.

- The district is not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the state's CSAP testing program. Interviews suggested that making AYP was not always viewed as a major district goal.

- District and school goals do not always reflect subgroup performance needed to make AYP, although the SPF system has a subgroup component.

- The sheer number of indicators articulated by the SPF system, as good as they are, has the potential of creating confusion at the school level, diffusing the focus of school improvement planning, and baffling the public. School improvement plans, principal compensation incentives, and state accountability systems are not always in complete alignment.

- Not everyone interviewed by the team was familiar with efforts by the district to revise and sharpen its goals.

- The district's instructional unit organizationally separates services for students with disabilities from those for other students, so special education does not fall under the Division of Teaching and Learning but is its own unit. The district reports increasing levels of collaboration, however, between the departments.

C. ACCOUNTABILITY

It is usually not sufficient for a school district, particularly an urban one, to have goals if no one is held accountable for attaining them. Urban school districts that have seen substantial improvement in student achievement have devised specific methods for holding themselves responsible for academic performance, usually starting at the top of the system and working down through central office staff and principals. Many successful districts have also instituted rewards for achieving their targets.

Positive Findings

- The Council of the Great City Schools notes that, since its previous report, the district has undergone a substantial cultural change toward greater accountability for results.

- The district has made substantial progress in the development of a "Performance Management Initiative" with funds from the Dell, Broad, and Piton Foundations.

The goal of the initiative is to improve student achievement and organizational effectiveness through the use of data, accountability, and incentives for performance. The performance management team includes the superintendent, chief academic officer, chief operating officer, chief strategy officer and deputy, data quality manager, chief human resources officer, and the director of ProComp. The team developed a School Performance Framework (SPF), an instructional management system, five-year district performance goals, a data quality management initiative, an operational performance improvement project, and an employee performance management program.

- Schools can receive a rating of excellent, high, average, low, or unsatisfactory on the state School Accountability Report (SAR), and all DPS schools have state accreditation. However, the district has instituted additional accreditation measures that go beyond SAR, so even schools that do well on SAR must continue to improve.

- The district instituted and has continued to develop greater sophistication in its incentive system for teachers and principals. Leveraging local funds with grant dollars, DPS workgroups of principals and administrators targeted incentives on school-level improvements in student achievement in 2007-2008. The district's incentive system is based on the district-developed School Performance Framework (SPF).

- The SPF focuses on the impact schools have on student learning from year to year. The SPF not only uses the school's actual Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), School Accountability Report (SAR) ratings, and CSAP scores to measure status in a given year, but also assigns about 60 percent of the SPF to assess the growth of individual student's achievement over time.

- The SPF system has explicit, numeric rubrics for awarding schools one of four designations for each performance and accountability category. A series of rewards and/or interventions accompanies each category.

- In 2007-2008, sixty percent of principal bonuses are based on student growth and 30 percent on the actual level of the test scores (status). By meeting specified criteria, principals can receive bonuses of several thousand dollars annually—

  a. $4k-$6k for principals in schools that show overall improvement in student achievement on the SPF year over year.

  b. $2k-$3k for principals in schools that show improvement in particular subject areas.

  c. $6k-$10k for principals in schools that are rated either "distinguished" or "meets expectations."

  d. $7.5k-$10k for principals in 20 high performance schools who document effective practices.

- The principal incentive system is funded by a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. The district has adjusted the incentives in the 2008-2009 school year.

- The district also has an incentive of $6,000 for principals (and $4,500 for assistant principals) to work in "hard-to-serve" schools.

- As part of the school district's TIF grant, the district has an ongoing project with New Leaders for New Schools to document effective practices.

- Principals and instructional superintendents meet frequently throughout the year.

- The evaluation of principals is conducted three times a year by the instructional superintendents and includes an initial appraisal conference to set goals at the beginning of the school year, a midyear evaluation conference, and an end-of-year conference. The School-Based Administrative Evaluation Handbook[20] states that, during their reviews, evaluators will use data to describe the performance of the administrator, the status of a school, and the effectiveness of the school's instructional programs. Periodic school visits are also made. Each principal, moreover, has a professional development plan that corresponds to the goal-setting process.

- The School-Based Administrator Evaluation Handbook provides indicators for each of the criteria that measure the five performance standards (school improvement planning and assessment, instruction, safety and organization, communications and community relations, and professionalism). These standards are the basis for evaluating principals and assistant principals each year.

- The district's leadership has renegotiated its groundbreaking ProComp system in August 2008 to link teacher pay to the school district's SPF. The system rewards schools and teachers who meet or exceed expectations in performance and student academic growth. The program began in 2006 with $25 million in funding from a mill levy approved by Denver voters in 2005.

- Teachers and school staff (in addition to the principals) receive bonuses for moving their schools beyond district academic expectations, working in hard to serve schools, and participating in professional development opportunities. The performance incentives ($2,345) go to faculty whose schools are in the top 50 percent on the SPF and to those whose schools are among the 50 percent that improved most rapidly on the SPF.

- Article 10 of the new three-year agreement with the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) links the purpose of teacher evaluation to improving instruction, directing the workforce toward district objectives, enhancing the implementation of program curriculum, measuring professional growth, determining satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance, and measuring the level of performance.

[20] Denver Public Schools, Administrative Evaluation Handbook, page 15.

- The district's process for evaluating individual teachers is laid out in the Classroom Teacher Comprehensive Evaluation Form and the *Professional Evaluation Handbook for Teachers, Student Services Professionals, Student Services Professionals—Itinerant, Curriculum Specialists, and Evaluators*.

Areas of Concern

- Under its school performance framework, the district places a weight of over 60 percent on student academic growth, and about 30 percent on actual scores earned. The relatively heavy weight placed on growth has implications for how the district manages or spurs improvement of student performance. The emphasis on growth properly incentivizes top performing schools to move higher, but may unintentionally permit low-achieving schools to move more slowly than is necessary for them to catch up. The team understands that the district intends to review this performance system periodically.

- The use of numerous growth measures may raise the community's suspicions about the strength of the actual academic gains unless the district better explains what the measures mean.

- The indicators for each criterion for the administrative performance standards are never referenced or scored in the school administrator evaluation form. Similarly, there is no indication in the Administrator Evaluation Handbook how the use of data will inform their evaluation rating. Therefore, the ratings of exceeding, meeting, or not meeting each of the criteria may vary from one evaluator to another.

- While the Classroom Teacher Comprehensive Professional Evaluation Form and the Professional Evaluation Handbook both reference the fact that every standard has from three to five criteria, neither source listed the criteria.

- The postsecondary readiness indicator in the SPF document does not disaggregate minority student achievement data explicitly by subgroup.

- Central office leaders, other than the superintendent, are not explicitly held accountable contractually for attainment of district goals in the sense that they are not explicitly evaluated on whether the district has attained its stated goals.

D. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Urban school districts that have seen substantial improvements in student achievement have a curriculum that is focused, coherent, rigorous, and articulated clearly. Also, these districts analyze the content of their basal textbooks, if used, and compare those programs, adopting or creating supplemental materials to fill in identified gaps between state standards and tests and local reading and math programs. The result is a complete package of texts, supplemental materials, and interventions needed to move student achievement forward.

To form its findings, the team examined third-grade reading, writing, and mathematics instructional planning guides. In addition, the team examined mathematics instructional planning guides and pacing guides at the middle and high school levels. The team did not conduct a complete audit of the curriculum, nor did it conduct an extensive analysis of how precisely the documents were aligned with state standards and assessments. These would require separate analyses. Nonetheless, the team made a number of key observations.

Positive Findings

- The school district has adopted common textbooks in core subjects and has developed standard curriculum planning guides for teachers. There has been substantial progress in this work since the last Council report.

- Instructional superintendents are provided rubrics for assessing each principal's ability to ensure that classroom teachers adhere to the core curriculum and improved differentiation of instruction for their students, implementation of data and data analysis strategies to inform student achievement, and use of school improvement plans as a roadmap for school initiatives and reforms.[21]

- The district has adopted TRACKS, a hands-on science program with a strong literacy component.

- District staff members are beginning to work on better intervention strategies using network teams.

Reading and Writing

- A school district policy requires 90 minutes of reading instruction daily in recognition of national recommendations and the need for substantial time for reading. The district has also developed guidelines for how to use the 90-minute block to fully implement the district's English language arts program.

- The district developed a Literacy Instructional Planning Guides for grades ECE through 8 in reading and writing to address the vagueness in the prior implementation of the Reader's and Writer's Workshop (balanced literacy program) noted in the Council's first report.

- The Grade 3 Literacy Instructional Planning Guide provided to the team used lesson activities to clarify the content of reading and writing lessons. For example, in Unit 2, teachers have a list of the features of nonfiction text and examples of charts students are to be able to complete regarding those features. It is therefore clear districtwide what terms students are to know about nonfiction text and how they are expected to demonstrate their understanding of those terms.

- The Grade 3 Literacy Instructional Planning Guide devotes a unit of study early in the school year explicitly to understanding test-taking skills around the literacy

[21] Three Common Expectations document dated 7/29/2008.

standards. The unit relies on active engagement and does not over-drill students. Spanish language practice items are also in the appendix for the unit.

- In the Literacy Instructional Planning Guides, current lessons being taught are explicitly linked to prior lessons in order to bring forward information for review.

- English language learner connections provided in the Literacy Instructional Planning Guide range from Spanish-language books where students can practice the same instructional objectives, to indications of specific vocabulary to clarify or emphasize concepts and pre-preparation of language frames (grammatically correct phrasing or stems) that students need in order to answer questions in group discussions.

- The district took the first step towards developing written addenda to fill curriculum gaps by creating an advisory working group of teachers and central office staff to find and analyze gaps between its reading and writing programs and the CSAP.

- The district asked Houghton Mifflin to create a skills program to address the five components of reading for students in kindergarten through second grade. At grades 3-5, the skills program will focus on spelling, vocabulary, and the writing process. The Council considered this a strong addition to the district's previous balanced reading program.

- The district has also incorporated units of study developed by America's Choice in each grade level to encourage strong reading practices and attitudes and to build greater comprehension skills in students.

- The district has invested $25,000 in every elementary school for leveled-book libraries.

- The district has developed a series of "Look For" documents in reading and writing to assist principals and other administrators in monitoring classroom instruction. The "look fors" include program and lesson components (including whole group, independent work, and small group work), the classroom environment (including room arrangement, displays, and use of materials and tools), and assessments (including formal and informal assessments of student progress).

Mathematics

- The district also developed a series of Mathematics Instructional Planning Guides to accompany the school district's *Everyday Math* (grades ECE to 5), *Connected Math* (grades 6 to 8), and *Discovering Math* (grades 9 to 12) programs.[22]

[22] *Everyday Math* and the Connected Math Project (CMP) were developed through the University of Chicago with support from the National Science Foundation and the GE Foundation.

- The Mathematics Instructional Planning Guides have columns to indicate alignment to the Colorado Assessment Frameworks, progress indicators, sample CSAP-released test items, and differentiation options for readiness, enrichment, extra practice, and some ELL support. The guides also have Colorado Department of Education practice worksheets aligned to the content of the unit under study. However, the framework items are not unpacked to clarify the precise concepts and skills students need to master.

- The Mathematics Instructional Planning Guides also list key concepts for each unit, lesson objectives, and references to the *Everyday Math* program materials adopted by the district.

- The mathematics pacing guides provide an indication of time allotments to complete chapters within the adopted textbooks in core mathematics courses.

- The mathematics department developed "look for" documents for school administrators. These documents refer to the district's mathematics textbook and pacing guides in addition to referencing generic differentiation practices and preferred instructional practices. The documents are also accompanied by tips on best practices in math instruction by grade span.

- The district also has a clear three-tiered intervention system in math to work with students if they fall behind. The district uses differentiated instruction, *Everyday Math Skill Links*, and *Math Navigator* as a tier II intervention in the elementary grades, and *Number Worlds* and *Hands-on Standards Mathematics* as a tier III intervention. For tier II interventions at the middle school level, the district uses the CMP *Additional Skills and Practice Workbook*, the *CMP Special Needs Handbook*, the *Skills Intervention Kit*, and the *FI Applets and Math Navigator*. As tier III interventions, the district uses *Numbers Worlds*. At the high school level, the district uses *Bridge to Algebra* and *Math Navigator* as a tier II intervention, and *Number Worlds* and *Hands-on Standards* as a tier III intervention.

Areas of Concern

- Interviews conducted by the team revealed that there was no clear distinction among staff members about the differences between the curriculum and the textbooks. Believing that the textbook is the curriculum can sometimes lead to poor alignment between classroom practice and state expectations for a given grade level.

- The Literacy Instructional Planning Guides do not provide teachers and administrators with clear expectations for the level of rigor required of student work at each grade. Teachers and others were not clear about the depth of knowledge students should meet for the content topics being taught. Furthermore, the instructional planning guides do not feature anchor papers or student work samples that could assist in clarifying the level of rigor expected of children at

each grade level. Finally, it is not always clear in the documents what the instructional priorities are.

- Interviews indicated that there was uneven implementation and understanding of the Literacy Instructional Planning Guides at the school and classroom levels.

- The ELL adaptations or suggestions are more extensive in the Literacy Instructional Planning Guides than in other materials, where teachers have limited guidance unless the teacher's editions of the textbooks provide their own suggestions. However, teacher-edition guidance for ELL differentiation may or may not be adequate for DPS students. The omission of an endorsement or mention of ELL suggestions in the teacher edition may indicate to teachers that ELL differentiation lacks importance. It may also mean that the teacher edition contains no modifications for ELL students.

- The team did not see any instructional planning guides with specific references to modifications for special education or for gifted and talented students.

- The district lacks a standard time for instructional planning for teachers at the school level.

- Parents reported to the team that their children were not adequately challenged, that there was sometimes inadequate numbers of textbooks in classrooms, and that some schools forbid students from taking books home.

Reading

- Teachers are not always clear about which literacy skills are instructionally mandatory and which are voluntary. The Literacy Instructional Planning guides do not reference the use of the skills program, making it easy for a teacher to infer that it is not required.

- Objectives listed in the Literacy Instructional Planning Guides are simply the state standards. The guides do not unpack the standards with notations that would clarify for teachers the precise knowledge and skills students need to master in that unit. To get that information, teachers must read the unit activities and infer the content and level of rigor. Since the standards are not unpacked, a principal conducting a walkthrough would also have to refer to the entire unit in the instructional planning guide for every grade level to determine if the curriculum was being implemented.

- The Literacy Instructional Planning Guide is not always clear about the level of mastery students are to acquire by the end of units and the end of the school year.

- There is not a clear system of literacy interventions for students who are beginning to slip behind during the school year or who are already behind.

- DPS is not always clear about which tool teachers are trying to get students to do well on (e.g. DRA, Running Records, portfolios, benchmarks, CSAP, teacher formative assessments).

- Content specialists and other staff interviewed by the team offered differing definitions of what balanced literacy means, suggesting that not everyone was clear about what theory of action they were pursuing with regard to literacy instruction.

- A districtwide system of interventions has not been clearly defined in English language arts as it has been in math, although the district makes some use of *Wilson Reading* and *Language!* as interventions.

Mathematics

- The low achievement levels in secondary mathematics assessments[23] indicate either a lack of alignment of the curriculum, planning guides, and instruction with the state expectations, or a lack of understanding by teachers about what is tested and at what level of comprehension. It appears that the district has not yet assessed where the problem lies.

- Interviews revealed that not all schools teach math for the required 75 minutes.

- The Math Instructional Planning Guide in elementary mathematics does not reference all of the items in the Colorado Assessment Framework. The team examined the Grade 3 Mathematics Planning guide, dated summer 2007. That guide contained over 90 references to the Colorado Assessment Framework correlating some of the district textbook objectives. Many of the Colorado assessment standards were not addressed. Frequently, some standards were addressed only once for the year, but one standard was addressed six times and another 11 times.[24]

- In the Math Instructional Planning Guide examined by the team, there was no apparent attempt to fill gaps between the textbook and the CSAP, nor an indication of moving any topics earlier in the year to ensure that students have had an opportunity to learn what will be tested on the CSAP. The textbook's sequence of topics determines the district's sequence of objectives.

- In interviews, the team heard the complaint that the district's curriculum calls for teaching the topic of probability at the end of the fourth grade. However, this content is actually tested in fifth grade and there is no explicit review of probability in that grade level in the guides.

[23] See Graph 3 in Chapter 1.

[24] Computation 6.3a "Demonstrate understanding of basic multiplication facts of ones, twos threes, fives, and tens" appears 11 times and Number Sense 1.2a "Read, write, and order numerals 0 to 9,999" appears six times. Standards from the Colorado Assessment Framework are specifically mentioned by strand. The greatest number of correlations ranges from 31 to 9 for each strand: Computation (31), Number Sense (26), Geometry (17), Data and Probability (10), and Measurement (9).

- About 25 percent of CSAP items are constructed response items, while only 17 percent of the items on the third Grade 3 mathematics district assessment require students to write short, medium, or extended responses.

E. HUMAN CAPITAL, TEACHER QUALITY, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A common feature of many of the faster-improving urban school districts across the country is a high-quality and cohesive professional development program that is closely aligned with the curriculum. These professional development programs are often defined centrally, built around the district's instructional program, delivered uniformly across the district, differentiated in ways that address the specific needs of teachers and administrators, and evaluated for their effects on student achievement. These faster-improving districts also find ways to ensure that some of their better teachers are working in schools with the greatest needs.

Positive Findings

- The school district's ProComp system is one of the most progressive and innovative teacher pay and incentive systems that the Council has seen among its member urban school districts. Over time, the system would result in total annual compensation (base pay, performance incentives, market incentives, and pension benefits) of over $150,000 to teachers with over 20 years experience. More importantly, as an incentive to recruit and retain new talent, new teachers would start at around $42,000 and see rapid increases in base pay in the initial years. Over time, the size of non-base pay incentives rises in relation to base pay.

- The Denver Public Schools utilize several pipelines for new teachers—including Teach for America, Denver Teacher Fellows, Teachers in Residence, and new teachers participating in a Boston-style teacher residency program.

- The school district has hired 12 retired teachers to serve as mentors for new teachers based on a University of California-Santa Cruz model.

- The school district has instituted $2,340 incentives for teachers to work in high-need schools and hard to staff assignments.

- The district has five days beginning with one in December (followed by one each in January, February, April, and May) when each school has a late-start time to enable professional development at the campus level. Some schools have scheduled additional time for professional development as well.

- The district conducted professional development as part of its rollout of the curriculum guides. The curriculum guides were ready for distribution in summer institutes.

- Professional development in social studies received particularly positive reviews from participants.

- The district provides professional development for its substitute teachers, a practice often absent in other big-city school districts.

- The district has begun this school year to implement the "CORE Matters" professional development system, an on-site series of full-day workshops. (See www.corelearningmatters.com.) It is too soon to determine the overall effects of the program.

- The school district has built a network to support principals and facilitators with instructional specialists to provide some professional development and support instruction.

- The Principal's Institute attended by principals, assistant principals and facilitators, is well regarded. It is held monthly throughout the school year and features interactive activities on such practical issues as "Response to Intervention Core Instruction," standards-based progress reports, budget management reports, integration with district operations and business services, HR procedures, research findings, special education, language acquisition, adolescent literacy, law enforcement requirements, and other topics.[25]

- The district also offers a mentor program for new principals and assistant principals.

- The Denver Public Schools received a $3.7 million grant for its aspiring principals program.

- Principals are able to hire the teachers they want, although teachers under contract who are not picked up by the principals are put into a direct-placement pool by the district.

- Instructional specialists meet monthly with central office curriculum directors.

- Directors are working with facilitators on cognitive coaching to enhance work with teachers at school level.

Areas of Concern

- The school district's teacher hiring process appears to result in the substantial loss of teaching candidates during the recruiting process, according to a number of individuals interviewed. The team heard extensive comments about slow district response times, unreturned phone calls, etc.

- The district appears to have a high turnover and transfer rate among teachers each year, a situation that may be undermining the district's implementation of initiatives and programs and its ability to institutionalize reforms. Furthermore, the district does not appear to have a system in place to address this issue.

[25] The Council's Strategic Support Team reviewed a year's worth of agendas from the Principal's Institute and attended one day's sessions during its site visit.

- The team did not see any evaluations of the effectiveness of the various new pipelines of teachers, so it was hard to assess how successful these new teachers are relative to others.

  The Denver Public Schools employ approximately 4,014 teachers. The team asked the district for data to assess the stability of the teaching staff in the individual schools. The difficulty in obtaining the data indicated that this is not a regularly monitored function. Gathering the data apparently required district staff to merge data from multiple sources and consumed considerable time and effort, but the results were illuminating. There were 478 newly-hired teachers and 651 internal transfers in 2008-09, over one-fourth of the entire district teaching force.

- The Denver school district adjusts its teacher allocations by school based on enrollment 30 days from the beginning of the school year. High numbers of these adjustments exacerbate the teacher mobility problem.

- About one in five or 20 percent of district teachers leave the school district in their first five years.

- There were approximately 120 teachers in the direct placement pool in March 2008, compared with 240 in March 2007. By the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, the pool of 120 teachers had been reduced to 12.

- Individuals interviewed by the team indicated that it was still difficult to remove unsatisfactory teachers. Only a handful of teachers are dismissed from the school district each year due to unsatisfactory performance.

- An evaluation of ProComp's first year indicated that incentives for teachers to teach in hard to serve schools were too small to be effective.[26] Data also indicated that only 20 percent of mid-career teachers had opted into ProComp.

- The district still has a menu-driven professional development system that is voluntary in nature and not tied to instructional priorities. (The current system simply allows teachers to pick coursework or workshops they wish to take from a menu or catalogue of offering, the sum total of which may not address the needs and priorities of the district or the actual needs of the individual teacher.) These professional development units (PDUs) also count as part of the teacher compensation system. Teachers are paid a base building incentive for the first PDU they earn in a year if they have 14 or fewer years of experience. Teachers with 15 or more years are paid a non-base building bonus. Second and subsequent PDUs are paid as bonuses. PDUs can come from a course catalogue or developed new. A teacher must register for the PDU, gain approval for the work, and complete it within a specific timeframe. There is nothing that aligns these course offerings and PDUs with district priorities or identified student skill deficits.

[26] Source: Ed Wiley et al, Denver ProComp Evaluation: Year 1 Report, February 2008.

- Professional development in the district is not aligned with reform initiatives, is often fractured, and is not capable of helping to drive additional academic improvement.

- Professional development offerings represent competing priorities that confuse staff members and scatter focus. Time limitations impose limitations on what a teacher can possibly participate in. Furthermore, teachers did not perceive the professional development they received as valuable.

- The team saw little evidence that the school district exercises any level of quality control over the professional development that is offered in the schools.

- The team also saw no evidence that the school district evaluates professional development for how well it is being implemented or its effects on student achievement.

- Professional development appeared not to have been differentiated based on teacher expertise or experience level.

- The district has not systematically incorporated ELL issues and needs into its overall, systemwide instructional professional development program, which could lead some staff to perceive that ELL needs are a low priority. The English Language Acquisition department reported it was not always included in meetings to coordinate districtwide professional development. (Court-ordered professional development requirements for ELL programs are discussed in Section I below.)

- The school district does not appear to provide adequate professional development for teachers on the use and interpretation of achievement data to guide instruction.

- The district spends all of its federal Title II funds on professional development (and facilitators) rather than class-size reduction, but it has not evaluated the effect of these funds on academic performance. The district also uses its 10 percent professional development set-aside funds under Title I for facilitators.

F. REFORM PRESS

Urban school districts that are succeeding in improving student achievement are not waiting for their reforms to trickle down from the central office into the schools and classrooms. Instead, these faster-improving school districts have developed specific strategies to ensure that instructional reforms are reflected in their schools and classrooms, and they create strategies to monitor the implementation of their reforms to ensure their integrity and comprehensiveness.

Positive Findings

- The former superintendent met regularly with principals and was seen as caring about the quality and success of the instructional program of the district.

- The former superintendent set rules with the assumption that school autonomy is lost, not earned.

- The former superintendent established a series of districtwide networks to replace the previous regional organization of the district. (There are five elementary school networks, one middle school network, one high school network, and one alternative school network.)

- The nine instructional superintendents (one for each network) are required to spend 50 percent of their time in schools, and they appear to do so. The instructional superintendents sign off on school improvement plans, visit schools, conduct learning walks, and work with and evaluate principals (twice a year).

- The instructional superintendents in each network have an average of 7 specialists to help build capacity at the school level and serve in a variety of content areas and student-need areas.

- The school improvement planning documents are among the most comprehensive that the Council has seen in reviewing many cities' instructional programs. The templates for planning lay out a clear process, an expectation that plans will align with the Denver Plan and be led by school principals, establish specific instructional priorities, hold faculty to high standards, inform budget and staffing decisions, and engage parents. Strategies, objectives, and activities are articulated in each plan. And the federal Title I schoolwide planning and technology planning have been nicely integrated into the overall school improvement planning process.

- Principals report they are actively engaged in developing school improvement plans and that they use peer reviews from other principals in developing their plans.

- Schools have an average of two facilitators—coaches—to conduct model teaching and co-teaching and to provide some professional development on site.

- Principals select facilitators from an eligibility pool, with potential facilitators having to pass a screening test and interview process.

- Principals report that their learning walks actively involve teachers.

- The district has developed "look fors" for all content areas and grade bands for building administrators to use in classroom observation.

Areas of Concern

- Facilitators are sometimes being used as substitute teachers or put on lunch or bus duty rather than performing their coaching role. This may be a result of tight school budgets, but it is an expensive and ineffective way to utilize the facilitator position.

- Training of new facilitators may be inadequate to ensure quality implementation of the curriculum.

- The district's math/science facilitators are spread too thinly across schools to make much of a difference academically.

- Teachers are not always clear about what the roles of the facilitators are.

- Teachers do not always understand the purpose and intent of instructional strategies (e.g., Some teachers viewed word walls as a compliance requirement rather than as an instructional tool.).

- "Look for" and walk-through results do not necessarily inform classroom instruction or changes in instructional practice.

- Implementation of reforms is uneven school by school and is contingent on the principal of the building.

- High transfer rates within the school district complicate the implementation of reforms. Principals cannot always rely on having a stable staff over time.

G. Data, Assessment, and Evaluation

Two of the most critical features of urban school districts that are seeing significant improvements in student achievement involve the regular assessment of student progress and the use of data to decide on the nature and placement of intervention strategies. Districts that are more effective also use data to shape and define their curricula and their professional development. Moreover, these districts use data to monitor school and district progress and to hold people accountable for results.

Positive Findings

- The district uses a variety of data tools to assess its progress. While the state assessment program utilizes CSAP to gauge progress districts and schools make, the Denver school district uses additional measures, including parental demand for particular schools, student growth on CSAP rather than just status, and student surveys about perceptions of the schools they attend.

- The district has developed new three times-a-year benchmark tests in reading, writing, and math for grades 3 through10, linked to the pacing guides. The benchmark tests were initially developed in partnership with Princeton Review and subsequently developed exclusively by the school district. The assessments include a mixture of multiple choice and extended-response questions.[27]

- The district is developing end-of-course exams in high schools and has them in place for 19 courses.

[27] The Council's team did not have enough information to determine whether the tests were adequately aligned with the state standards, had sufficient predictive validity, or were in the same form as the state tests.

- Each school has a data team charged with analyzing school data.
- The district has added assessment specialists and administrators to its network teams to assist with the interpretation and use of data.
- Interviewees were familiar with the OASIS data warehouse that stores test-score data and student demographic information. The team was also told that the school district has moved forward with the merger of data systems into a single warehouse, and has rolled it out to principals.
- The team saw evidence of a close collaboration between the assessment unit and content directors regarding benchmark testing.
- The district conducts a regular review of benchmark test results and the testing process.
- Data reports are available for the district as a whole, by individual schools, teachers, and students. In addition, schools can see how their progress compares with schools with similar demographics and prior CSAP performance.
- The district compares its growth in student achievement with state results by matching similarly scoring students. (Growth percentile, page 3 of SPF.)
- The Principal Institute's training sessions build data interpretation into their professional development.
- DPS has created a Dean's Roundtable to discuss teacher induction, conduct research, and develop university partnerships—a follow-up to one of the Council's initial recommendations.
- Teachers are allowed time to score the constructed response answers on benchmark tests. This time should also be valuable for sharing strategies and as a professional tool.

Areas of Concern

- Data systems (OASIS, Infinite Campus, Edusoft) in the district do not always communicate with each other, a factor that made it so difficult to get data on teacher transfer rates. The difficulty the district has in tracking teachers according to their teaching assignment and school may also impede the district's ability to differentiate professional development by teacher experience level and its ability to understand why some reforms may be working and others not.
- According to teachers interviewed, student achievement data are housed in at least two databases that teachers often lack the skill to access.
- According to teachers interviewed, the results of benchmark tests are not always returned to teachers in time to inform ongoing instruction.

- Teachers were not always clear about how to interpret data or how to use it to modify instruction.

- The district provides benchmark assessments for reading, writing, and mathematics, but there are no formal criteria or guidelines on how they are to be used by classroom teachers.

- Schools lack uniform protocols, rules, and procedures for accommodating ELL and special education students on the state assessments.

- The state's School Accountability Report and the district's SPF are sometimes contradictory, and parents reported to the team that they are sometimes confused by the results of each.

- The team was told that students had no incentive to do well on CSAP since proficiency is not a requirement for graduation, even though the results appear on their transcript.

- The district lacks a calendar by which to guide the regular evaluation of programs. The individual academic departments appear to evaluate their own programs.

H. Lowest-Performing Students and Schools and Special Populations

Urban school districts that are seeing substantial improvement in student performance have a targeted strategy to intervene in and increase achievement in their lowest-performing schools and with their lowest-performing students. These school districts also have clear strategies for teaching special populations such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Such strategies may vary from city to city, but they share a number of common elements.

Positive Findings

- The district has positioned a Chief Strategy Officer to lead some of the more difficult components of the district's reform.

- The district recently closed eight of its lowest-performing schools.

- The lowest-performing 25 schools have been designated as "CORE Matters" schools (Collaborative Opportunities for Responsive Education). The program is grounded in the Denver Literacy Plan and focuses on the five components of reading and language development. Participating staff members are expected to attend six to seven day-long professional development workshops each year provided by district staff and national consultants.

  The very lowest-performing 16 schools get an extra person to serve as a data and school improvement administrator.

  In addition, the lowest-performing schools receive extra funds to focus on the fidelity of curriculum implementation in literacy, data-driven school

improvement, student progress monitoring, and use of the School Improvement Plan to inform all school reforms and initiatives.

- Instructional superintendents devote extra time to the lowest-performing schools and assign a specialist to each of them.

- DPS has designated schools as "hard to serve" by using criteria based on the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch or status as an alternative school. To attract and retain the best leadership for those hard-to-serve schools, the district offers an incentive of $6,000 per principal and $4,500 for assistant principals.

- The district has implemented an "Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC)" program through New Leaders for New Schools. The program provides incentive pay for administrators for wide-scale sharing of effective educational practices with lower- performing schools.

- The district has attempted to pair higher-performing schools with lower-performing ones in the same clusters.

- All schools have facilitators to work with teachers to improve student achievement.

- The district offers parents the option of moving their children from a school in their neighborhood to one outside of their attendance zone, as long as space is available. The district has three application periods, one running from January 7 to January 31, a second running from February 1 to August 30, and the third spanning the period from September 2 to the end of the school year. Generally, the district does not provide transportation unless the choice is made available under *No Child Left Behind*. About 40 percent of the district's students attend a school outside of their immediate neighborhood.

- In the 2007-08 school year, the district provided supplemental education services (SES) under *No Child Left Behind* to 3,525 students in 43 schools. The largest number of students was served by Education Station.[28] The district serves about 15 percent of eligible students.

- The district conducts evaluations of its supplemental education services programs (SES) programs using achievement data for matched students. Results to date indicate the effects of these programs to be very mixed to weak. The Department of Extended Learning uses the district's curriculum in its SES program and appears to get the best results on the CSAP.

[28] Service providers included A to Z Home Tutoring; Accelerated Schools; Advantage Tutoring Services; Adventures in Learning; Bennie E. Goodwin Educational Foundation; Brainfuse; Bridge Project; Catapult Online; Center for Hearing, Speech and Language; Chancellor Supplemental Educational Services; Club Z!; Department of Extended Learning; Education Station; GEO Foundation Educational Services; Huntington Learning Centers; John Corcoran Foundation; Lutheran Family Services of Colorado; Results learning; Summer Scholars; Tutor Train; and Whiz Kids.

- Middle schools have implemented double-blocking in reading and mathematics for students who are not achieving at grade level.

- The elementary mathematics program has designated a three-tier response to intervention (RTI) model. At elementary levels, *Everyday Mathematics* (2007) is the tier 1 intervention for all students. Tier 2 is addressed with the *Everyday Mathematics Skills Links* with a pilot program in *Math Navigator*. Tier 3 employs *Number Worlds* and *Hands-on Standards Mathematics*. These same two programs are used in every grade level for tier 3 intervention.

- The middle school mathematics program also designates programs for a three-tier response to intervention model. Tier 2 uses extra skills blocks and workbooks from the *Connected Mathematics Program*. There is also a pilot of *Math Navigator* and *FI Applets* at tier 2. The program requires the installation of Java on the computers that will use those activities.

- The mathematics intervention for high school is the use of a double period for students who are below proficient in mathematics and *Bridge to Algebra* for ninth-graders. Again, *Math Navigator* is also being piloted for tier 2 intervention at the high school level.

- The district provides some "double-blocking" for students who are below proficiency levels in core subjects.

- The district serves approximately 9,500 students with disabilities—or about a 12 percent placement rate.

- The district is not under any consent decree or other court order regarding its special education program and does not appear to have any unusual issues with disproportionality.

- The district has put its Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) into a web-based system for easier access.

- Unlike the situation during our previous visit, the district now uses its general education programs and materials as part of its special education programming.

Areas of Concern

- The district has decided not to develop specific criteria for triggering a school restructuring, but it does lack a clear strategy for schools that are being restructured.

- The district has not clarified which student assessment tools and results are used to trigger student interventions at each tier.

- The school district does not have clear literacy intervention strategies like it has in math.

- It is unlikely that using the same intervention at all levels of mathematics instruction will prove to be a successful tier 3 intervention, but it may be a bridge to future differentiation of interventions.

- The school district lacks a meaningful, sizeable summer school or large-scale extended-time program for students who need additional time to master grade-level knowledge and skills.

- The team did not hear of any action steps to improve the reading skills of students who are on Individualized Literacy Plans because they are not reading at grade level by third grade, as required by the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. (CBLA).

- The district distributes its federal Title I funds uniformly to schools across the district because of the high proportion that are above the 75 percent threshold for mandatory service. The district encourages schools to use these funds for facilitators, but it can't always tell how well the expenditure of these federal funds aligns with district instructional priorities.

- The district does not appear to have a strong process for monitoring or evaluating the use of school improvement grants that it gets under Title I through the state.

I. English Language Learners

The Denver Public Schools, like many urban school districts across the country, have particular concerns about the achievement of English language learners (ELLs). Many big-city school districts continue to struggle with how best to raise the academic attainment of these students, but research is emerging about the best ways to do this. The Council's team had a number of observations about the district's instructional programming for English language learners.

Positive Findings

- There are some 13,639 English language learners in Denver—almost 18 percent of the district's total enrollment. The largest share of the district's ELLs—11,924 or 87 percent—are Spanish speakers. The top five languages spoken are Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Russian, and Somali. Spanish-speaking students, not all of whom are ELLs, comprise 40 percent of the district's total enrollment. Most ELLs—9,406—are enrolled at the elementary school level, although the number enrolled at the secondary level is substantial. (See Exhibit 19.)

Exhibit 19. Count of English Language Learners by School Level

	Spanish Speaking	Other	Total
Elementary	8,426	980	9,406
K-8 schools	1,005	97	1,102
Secondary	1,738	511	2,249

- The Denver Public Schools have committed considerable new resources and personnel to improving the district's capacity to address the academic needs of English language learners. Since the Council's last report, the district created a new English Language Acquisition (ELA) department. The district (1) staffed the department with a curriculum coordinator and instructional specialists to provide professional development for leadership and teachers, (2) began to align English language acquisition programs with the core curriculum, (3) began to design professional development on language acquisition strategies, (4) began to assess progress among English language learners, and (5) added a research analyst to examine student progress over time.

- The Denver Board of Education has increased its explicit attention to the needs of ELLs by devoting entire study sessions to the issues related to the achievement of these students. The Board has also recognized that the district requires improved data to properly track the progress of ELLs by program and intervention.

- The district is beginning to pair its focus on complying with the consent decree (http://ela.dpsk12.org) with improving the overall quality of instruction for English language learners. The district has discussed with community activists the need to do both.

- The district uses an English language acquisition program that involves providing both Transitional Native Language Instruction (TNLI) and English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies. The number of students in a school and the languages spoken determine the model used. (The models include native language instruction in the TNLI approach, supported English content instruction, and English language development.)

- The team saw evidence of closer collaboration between the literacy and the ELA departments at the district, network and school levels. Examples included the following—

    a. The district assembled a team composed of staff from the English Language Arts unit and the English Language Acquisition department to conduct a gap analysis of the literacy program and the ELA program.

    b. The ELA instructional facilitators and specialists are included in network meetings.

    c. The user group established to review the curriculum guides included staff from the ELA department and resulted in identifying explicit ELL teaching strategies.

    d. An attempt is being made to integrate ELL issues into the general professional development carried out in the summer and not limit it solely to ELA teachers.

    e. The ELA department has been working with the math department and is being included on work groups, in part because of the strong relationship being built between the math department and the ELA director.

- The district has formally adopted a new ECE-5 textbook for ELLs (*Avenues*) and has adopted *Shining Star* and *Keys to Learning* (Pearson/Longman) for middle and high school ELLs (6-12).

- The ELA department has made progress in gradually increasing the amount of explicit English language instruction for ELLs—now 30-45 minutes a day for English Language Development (ELD). Also, an ELA advisory group was created to develop the district's new Language Allocation Guidelines, specifying how much English and Spanish instruction should be taking place. The advisory group included plaintiffs in the consent decree, community members, and researchers.

- The district uses Hampton Brown's *Avenues* program to help students develop their language and literacy skills during the English Language Development block through shared reading, differentiated instruction, content instruction, and writing. Both oral and academic language skills are emphasized with English language learners.

- The district uses its federal Title III funds for welcome centers, tutors, English language acquisition training, English proficiency testing, and other purposes.

- Documents indicate that the district uses a Spanish language literacy test in grades 3 and 4 to determine literacy levels in Spanish on which to base instructional decisions.

- Since the team's site visit, we learned that the ELA department offered its first professional development session for principals in December 2008 to walk them through the Language Allocation Guidelines. Two additional sessions will be offered (on a volunteer basis) in the spring of 2009. Similarly, the ELA department is providing training to instructional superintendents so they understand the new guidelines in order to assist with implementation, supervision, and monitoring.

- District staff members indicated to the Council's team that the system's efforts to fill ELA teacher vacancies have largely been successful, with fewer than 10 ELA vacancies in September.

- The early childhood programs have hired a number of ECE and ELA-S qualified teachers through international recruiting efforts and are providing resources to these individuals to allow them to earn their certification within the year of hiring.

- Discussions are now taking place between the teaching and learning department and the student services department about how best to improve English language development, the referral process for English language learners, and the identification of appropriate instructional interventions for these students.

- The district is also developing new data collection capabilities, related to ELL students, as part of its efforts improve data systems overall. The ELA department provided detailed data to the Council that indicated that the district now has the

capability of generating ELL enrollment figures by English proficiency levels, school, and type of ELA program.

- The district has discussed instructional program options with consent decree plaintiffs, resulting in some program improvements for ELLs. For example, zone schools were created and agreed to in order to secure the critical number of ELLs needed to support an ELA-S program based on the court order's staffing criteria. ELLs are now coming from schools that do not have enough students to create an ELA-S program.

- The district has created new program centers (zoned schools) for ELLs in order to concentrate services at middle schools and high schools. This approach gives extra attention, capacity, and programming to the needs of ELLs, particularly those in the secondary grades.

- In its last report, the Council recommended that the district establish an annual review process for exiting ELLs in the ELA program, arguing that this approach could minimize disruption and reduce the procedural burden. The district, however, established a twice-yearly exit review to allow for timely corrections to be made on the placement of ELL students. Specifically, if a student has been exited in the first semester of the school year and the data show that s/he was not adequately prepared, that student can be reassigned to the ELA program in the second cycle (end of second semester) instead of waiting until the next year. This approach makes considerable sense.

- The ELA department has begun a series of meetings with parents of ELLs to increase their understanding of the ELA program and the choices available to them. The ELA department has learned that parents sometimes refuse ELA program services for a variety of reasons—

  a. Lack of understanding of the instructional approaches available for ELLs and the models used to provide them with instructional support

  b. Socio-economic concerns

  c. Language barriers

  d. Immigration concerns

  e. Concerns that the ELD requirement would impede graduation (i.e., meeting the ELD requirement would mean foregoing classes to meet graduation requirements)

  f. School and district staff did not take the time to explain the program.

- The ELA department is funding a summer language program for teachers who wish to develop their language proficiency in one of the top five languages

spoken by students in the district. Federal Title III funds and other ELA department funds are supporting the effort.

- The team learned that the ELA department is leading an effort during the summer to bring together teachers from DPS with teachers from Spanish-speaking countries to identify key components that should be incorporated into a planning guide for the instruction of Spanish language and "Literacy in Spanish," a component of the TNLI.

- The ELA department has established partnerships with local universities to provide instructional coaching and to meet the court-ordered professional development endorsement requirements of 150 hours on which the district devotes $750,000.

- Unlike three years ago when the Council did its initial report, the district is now able to disaggregate gifted and talented participation data for ELLs. The district has enhanced its effort to improve the process of identifying ELLs and students eligible for free and reduced price lunch who are eligible for gifted and talented programs and helping them access those programs.

- Some schools with ELL students now use Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocols (SIOP).

Areas of Concern

- The ELA program is still too vague on how much to increase the number of hours for English Language Development instruction. This lack of specificity probably results in teachers and principals interpreting the guidance in any number of ways. The ELA department has information for principals posted on its website, including the Language Allocation Guidelines by grade span and language proficiency, but the guidelines may not be sufficient for principals to fully understand how to design an ELA program at their respective schools.

- Although the ELA department is increasing the amount of professional development they offer on language acquisition, implementing the Language Allocation Guidelines will probably be difficult because (1) schools can still choose to design their own instructional program, and (2) the professional development the ELA department offers to principals and instructional superintendents is voluntary, so school leaders may not have the same level of understanding of—or commitment to—the objective of the guidelines.

- There is no effective mechanism in place so far to monitor the district's language acquisition and allocation guidelines. Without such monitoring, the district is unable to tell which schools are implementing the guidelines effectively or why some schools may be showing better results than others.

- The Elementary Language Allocation table provided to the team shows that kindergarten students have only 30 minutes of English Language Development

(of which 10 minutes are devoted to mathematics). The team considers 30 minutes of ELD in a full day kindergarten to be insufficient to enable students to develop proficiency in the later grades. By first grade, the district's allocation increases to 45 minutes of ELD and 15 minutes of math.

- Some schools transition ELLs who have been in an ELA-S program since kindergarten from instruction in Spanish to instruction in English as early as second grade. The team was told that what prompts some schools to transition ELLs based on their grade level are concerns about ELL's performance on the third-grade test, which is administered in English. In this case, school leadership believes that by instructing ELLs in English that they will be better prepared for the third-grade CSAP assessment. Transitioning ELLs to English instruction in this way essentially means exiting these students from the ELA program. Transitioning ELL students from ELA-S to ELA-E, as well as from ELA-E to mainstream instructional programs, however, is supposed to be done based on English proficiency and other assessment criteria—not grade level. The assessment criteria are defined in the court-ordered ELA Program and in the ELA department guidance. The ELA department has ramped up its professional development for principals and instructional superintendents to ensure that any transitioning of ELLs is done appropriately.

- The Table on Elementary Literacy Block (Grades 2-5) has four components: Readers Workshop (60-90 minutes), Writers Workshop (60 minutes), Skills Block (30 minutes), and ELD Block (45 minutes). Schools have discretion in determining the 60- to 90-minute block for Readers Workshop, but it was not clear to the team what criteria are used to make the determination. In addition, the skills block focuses on components of English language literacy but not necessarily Spanish literacy. It is unclear how the skills block instruction time is used for ELA-S students who receive instruction in Spanish and for whom certain literacy skills are less relevant in Spanish than in English (e.g., phonics).

- It was not clear to the team how the Individualized Literacy Plan (under Colorado state law) is carried out for ELLs or articulated with the literacy and ELD requirements.

- ELL students might not be receiving the full curriculum due to scheduling difficulties needed to incorporate the 45 minutes for English language development. For example, staff indicated that the 45 minutes for ELD may be provided at the expense of social studies or science. Others interviewed indicated that ELD is provided at the expense of electives.

- The district does not have a Spanish language literacy assessment beyond the fourth grade by which to determine native-language literacy levels.

- It was not clear to the team that the "look fors" for the ELA program are used to inform classroom instruction.

- The team heard that instructional materials and resources for ELLs were adequate for the math and science instruction and for English Language Development. The materials and professional development accompanying the "Literacy in Spanish" component of the TNLI, however, do not support teachers who are teaching literacy in L1 (Spanish) in the same way that teachers are supported in the general literacy program. For example, there is no planning guide for teaching Spanish literacy.

- It was unclear to the team whether the district had successfully aligned the secondary level ELA curriculum with the district's core curriculum. The district formally adopted *Shining Star* and *Keys to Learning* as the required programs for all ELD courses in middle and high school, but the team is unclear about the degree or depth of the alignment with the curriculum and/or other literacy programs being used in the district. For example, *Keys to Learning* (an ESL program for ELLs with low levels of literacy in their native language) can be implemented either in a 45- to 55-minute daily block or in a two- to three-hour segment. The team was not sure which was being used and how either option was being integrated into overall daily instructional time requirements for other content areas.

- Staff members interviewed by the team indicated that if English language learners were not seeing substantial benefits from the district's early reading and literacy efforts, then it may be due to some of the following mitigating factors—

  - ✓ The high mobility of the ELL population, resulting in extended absences from school

  - ✓ Low participation rate of ELLs in preschool programs

  - ✓ District instructional staffs need to better understand reading development, particularly among ELLs

- District documents indicate that the ELL model chosen at each school is based on the total number of students in the school and the languages spoken—consistent with the court order. Furthermore, district documents indicate that for the 2008-09 school year, 81 elementary schools, 11 middle schools and six high schools will provide ELA program services in Denver Pubic Schools. The district's website lists schools that offer ELA programming this year. The ELA department works with the planning and research office to make three- to-five-year projections of ELLs in the school district. The ELA department reviews these figures, and schools are given an ELA designation with specified services, as outlined in the court order and determined by the number of ELLs and languages spoken at the school.

- The ELA program requirements of the court order, in combination with the mobility rate of the district, may pose challenges. For instance, the court order requires specific staffing ratios for the ESL and the Transitional Native Language Instruction models at both elementary and the secondary levels. The models

themselves, however, are determined by the number of ELLs and the language spoken at each school, but these numbers and languages can change from year to year. Increased enrollment of ELLs in any given school may be the result of enrollment choices or simply the natural growth in the ELA program. In either case, when a school's ELL enrollment increases beyond court-order thresholds, changes in the ELA program must ensue regardless of the effectiveness of the program in place. The exhibit below shows enrollment changes between 2007-08 and 2008-09 in a sample of schools.

Exhibit 20. Enrollment Changes in Sample Denver Schools

Variability in Enrollment from 2007-08				
	2007-08 ELL Enrollment		Total Enrollment Change from 2007-08 to 2008-09	
School	#	% of total enrollment	#	%
Westerley Creek Elem	3	2.7%	81	42.9%
Green Valley Elem	139	22.6%	-103	-15.4%
Smith Elem	131	36.6%	109	29.1%
Gilpin Middle	76	19.4%	-88	-22.0%
Kunsmiller Middle	114	19.8%	-311	-51.2%
North High School	86	9.0%	-118	-10.9%
Bruce Randolph HS	68	15.8%	79	35.4%

a. The figures in the exhibit above illustrate the enrollment changes from one year to the next in several Denver schools, including changes in the numbers of ELLs. The changes in some of the sample schools, however, suggest that a school will either have to implement an ELA program or alter the program it currently uses. For example, Kunsmiller Middle School saw a total decrease of 311 students. The court order would require Kunsmiller to provide a TNLI program for its 114 ELLs, but if ELLs account for 30 of the 311-student decrease, then the school could change its program offering from TNLI to something else, like ESL.

b. These enrollment changes appear to be more likely to affect elementary schools and their ELA programs. For example, if ELLs account for 80 of the 103-student decrease in enrollment at Green Valley Elementary, the school would be under the 60-ELL threshold that would trigger that school to offer a TNLI program through the court order.

These enrollment shifts, moreover, are likely to hinder the district's ability to provide effective and timely professional development for the ELA programs in any given school. Finally, it is conceivable that program "buy-in" at each school is also hindered by the shifting ELA school designations. We were unclear how the district handles this challenge.

- In some middle schools, 85 percent of students are scoring below proficient, a situation that triggers interventions (RTI). Suitable and effective interventions for ELLs depend on whether the instructional need is related to literacy or to English language development. The team heard, however, that neither the district nor the schools have a formal way to make this determination. In addition, the district is able to assess literacy in L1 (Spanish) at the elementary grade levels, but has no such assessment at the secondary.

- A considerable number of ELL students are probably being served through the district's Supplemental Education Services (SES) program, but the team did not see evaluation results disaggregated specifically for English language learners.

- The team did not devote extensive time to the issue of special education and ELLs, and the district indicates that there is not a substantial program with the over-representation of various subgroups in special education. Still, district staff indicated that analyses of the proportion of ELLs referred to special education had not been completed, so the Council's team has reserved judgment on the district's progress on this front.

- Data provided to the team showed ELL participation rates in gifted and talented programs school-by-school. The following exhibit data for a sample of Denver schools—

Exhibit 21. ELL Participation in Gifted and Talented Programs

Sample of Schools in Denver Public Schools			Identified as Gifted and Talented			
	ELL as	G&T as	ELL		Non-ELL	
School	% of Total Enrollment	% of Total Enrollment	#	% of G&T	#	% of G&T
Goldrick Elem	66.0%	3.70%	15	65.2%	8	34.8%
Knapp Elem	60.3%	3.70%	10	40.0%	15	60.0%
Newlon Elem	49.0%	1.20%	3	50.0%	3	50.0%
Force Elem	44.0%	1.20%	2	33.3%	4	66.7%
Godsman Elem	44.0%	4.20%	7	33.3%	14	66.7%
Cheltenham Elen	43.0%	1.30%	2	33.3%	4	66.7%
Harrington MS	34.0%	2.70%	1	7.7%	12	92.3%
Gilpin Elem	20.0%	1.80%	0	0.0%	6	100.0%
A.Lincoln HS	15.0%	10.3%	6	3.1%	185	96.9%
Grant MS	12.4%	14.70%	1	2.1%	47	97.9%
Whittier Elem	7.0%	4.20%	0	0.0%	13	100.0%
Hill of A&S	7.0%	24.70%	1	0.5%	182	99.5%
Westerly Creek	2.7%	1.80%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
Polaris at Ebert	2.4%	68.00%	4	1.7%	228	98.3%
Hamilton MS	2.0%	35.50%	0	0.0%	351	100.0%

Morey MS	2.0%	45.50%	6	1.5%	365	98.4%
Cntr for Int'l MS*	0.0%	49.20%	7	4.5%	148	95.5%
*Enrollment data is not consistent with G&T table figures						

a. Schools that enroll a high percentage of ELLs generally have significantly low percentages of students identified as gifted and talented—rarely above 3 percent of the total school enrollment. Conversely, schools that enroll low percentages of ELLs had high percentages of students identified as gifted and talented, ranging from 20 to 50 percent of total enrollment. For example, Polaris at Ebert has an enrollment that is 2.4 percent ELLs and 68 percent of its students are identified as gifted and talented.

b. In schools where ELLs represent 12 percent or less of the enrollment, there appear to be almost none in the gifted and talented group. On the other hand, schools with a significant presence of ELLs (40 percent and above) were more likely to identify ELLs as gifted and talented (e.g., ELLs represented 30 percent of the gifted and talented students).

c. Consequently, a very small number of ELL students are identified for gifted and talented program even in schools where there are larger numbers of gifted and talented students.

- The district's menu-driven professional development system does not allow enough focus on ELA issues, even when teachers in the district may need training on how to differentiate instruction for ELLs in their classrooms. The current system simply allows teachers to pick coursework or workshops they wish to take from a menu or catalogue of offering, the sum total of which may not address the needs and priorities of the district or the actual needs of the individual teacher.

- The team was told that several ELA specialist positions remained unfilled and that some of the content area specialists did not have ESL training. In middle and high schools, there is only <u>one</u> ELA specialist to provide assistance in all content areas for 3,351 high school students (9.6 percent of high school enrollment) and 1,102 K-8 students (17 percent of K-8 enrollment).

- The team was told that the depth of the professional development on ELA issues varies from school to school. The team also heard varying descriptions of the value and purpose of ELA instruction.

- The use of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is spotty across the schools and is not uniformly monitored. There were no evaluation data that would help the district determine if using SIOP has had a positive effect on ELL achievement.

- Disaggregated data on ELL students in early childhood programs were not readily accessible. The district's Early Reading First data has a comparison sample for free and reduced-priced lunch and half-day and full-day students, but no mention of ELL status. As the ELL students enter into either ELA-S or ELA-E programs

in the Denver Public Schools, the lack ELL disaggregated data (for pre-school) makes it difficult to determine the differential effects of pre-school participation for ELLs and non ELLs.

- The district's early childhood staff indicated that is was very difficult to find ECE-qualified and ELA-S qualified individuals.

- The state has determined that the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) will be administered to English language learners in January, a period when an unusually high number of students return from winter break in Mexico—according to a number of individuals interviewed by the team. The team was unable to independently verify the assertion, but, if true, the result may be that unusually high numbers of ELLs either miss the test or do not do well after having been immersed in a non-English environment for an extended period.

- The district's data system is capable of disaggregating CSAP achievement data by ELA program participation. The analysis of such data, however, appears to be limited. It was not obvious to the team that the highly disaggregated achievement data for both CELA and CSAP are being analyzed and translated into information by which program decisions can be made.

- The team saw significant evidence that the district is producing reports designed to inform the schools and Central Office about how ELA programs are doing. The district reports data on the numbers of students participating in various ELA models, but there appears to be no *tracking of a matched set or cohort* to help determine the effectiveness of the ELA services provided to such groups.

- Beginning in 2007, the Denver Public Schools were required to report the number of ELLs whose parents had refused ELA services for their child (*Parental Refusals*). The district is now collecting these data, but it may not be tagging and separating the parental refusal data from the data on ELLs receiving ELA services. Consequently, the district has not reported on the relative academic status of students who participate in no ELA program. The overall data suggest that about half of all parents whose children are eligible for ELA programming decide not to participate in those services.

- The average academic attainment of ELLs—regardless of their participation in an ELA program—falls off dramatically as students move up the grade levels.

    a. The 2006 assessment scores show that 21.6 percent of third-grade ELLs scored at proficient or advanced levels, but the percentage drops for fourth grade and continues a downward trend through the ninth grade—where only 3.8 percent score at proficient or advanced levels.

    b. The 2007 assessment scores show similar downward patterns in the percentage of ELLs scoring at proficient or advanced levels. The 2007 trend line, however, is less steep—possibly because students refusing services are

now counted—starting at 31.3 percent at proficient or advanced levels and dropping to an average of 20 percent at proficient or advanced levels.

Exhibit 22. ELL Reading Proficiency Rates by Grade

	2006 Assessment		2007 Assessment	
Grade	# of Els	% scored	# of Els	% scored
3	696	21.55%	1692	31.32%
4	932	9.23%	1893	18.01%
5	686	6.85%	1823	22.93%
6	499	4.81%	1387	21.12%
7	433	2.31%	1333	20.93%
8	373	2.14%	1267	17.13%
9	393	3.82%	1253	20.19%

Source: ELA-Department Document-ELA Student Achievement Data

- Mathematics achievement data on ELLs show similar downward trends as students move up the grades—

  a. The 2007 assessment scores (that include the *Parent Refusals*) reveal that almost 35 percent of third-graders score at the proficient or advanced level. Then there is a downward trend, with 24.6 percent of sixth-grade ELLs, 11.6 percent of eighth-grade ELLs, and only 5 percent of tenth-grade ELLs at the proficient or advanced level in mathematics.

  b. State scores in 2006 show that 28.4 percent of ELL third-graders were proficient or advanced in math—a number that drops dramatically to only 3.2 percent by the seventh grade—the year before the district begins to include students who have refused services.

Exhibit 23. ELL Math Proficiency Rates by Grade

	2006 Assessment		2007 Assessment	
Grade	# of ELLs	% scored	# of ELLs	% scored
3	1428	28.36%	2480	34.38%
4	1088	22.89%	2012	36.49%
5	686	15.74%	1820	28.43%
6	499	10.62%	1383	24.57%
7	433	3.23%	1335	18.09%
8	373	3.75%	1266	11.60%
9	395	2.28%	1250	8.95%
10	251	1.20%	1002	5.06%

Source: ELA-Department Document-ELA Student Achievement Data

- The district tracks longitudinal data for ELL's performance after their exit from the ELA program, but it does not include the specific ELA model in which the student participated. The ELA Department shared comparative data with the team on four types of students: students who are in their first year after exiting the program, those in their second year, those beyond two years, and native speakers of English. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine the relative effectiveness of each ELA model without the specific programmatic information.

- Parents interviewed by the team reported sometimes feeling unwelcome in schools where there are no resources to help overcome language barriers. This was the case even in schools with large percentages of Hispanic students.

J. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, GIFTED AND TALENTED, AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

It is often difficult for urban school districts to improve everything at once. The districts experiencing success in improving student achievement often sequence their reforms, beginning in the elementary grades and working up through the secondary.

Positive Findings

- The district's early childhood program serves approximately 4,000 students in 129 full-day prekindergarten classrooms and 89 half-day programs. About 80 percent of these students are low-income. (Most sites provide services to four-year-olds, although there are a number of sites serving three-year-olds.)

- A Piton Foundation survey of 700 Denver households with preschool-age children revealed that about 42 percent of families without access to a full-day pre-k program would like for their children to have that access.

- The community supported an increase in services for four-year-old students by approving a mill levy in 2003 that included programming for these students.

- The new 2008 bond included money for an early childhood center in the northeast section of town in order to improve services and reduce a long waiting list of prekindergarten students.

- The student-based budgeting system and the resolution to the pension problem will allow the district to spend nearly six million new dollars on preschool programs, creating some 1500 to 1800 new slots. The new resources also permitted the district to expand full-day kindergartens.

- The DPS early childhood program plans its professional development and its selection and distribution of materials according to a different content area theme each year.

- The early childhood department uses the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) to rate the environment of early childhood programs. Based on the results, coaches are assigned to low-rated schools.

- The district also employs six early childhood education specialists.
- The DPS prekindergarten program has taken steps to align its instructional materials with early grade levels by selecting the pre-K *Everyday Math* program. The program also specifically aligns its literacy program to prepare students for a smooth transition to kindergarten and first-grade class work.
- Full-day kindergarten classes have expanded from 72 percent of all classes last year to 90 percent this year. In 2008, the district had 229 full-day classrooms in kindergarten and only 25 half-day programs.
- DPS has implemented several measures of student progress in early elementary grades, including the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), *Evaluación del Desarrollo de Lectura* (EDL), Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS).
- Some elementary schools are "platooning" to allow for more focused instruction in math and science.
- International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are available at elementary, middle, and high school levels. In addition, DPS offers magnet programs for the highly gifted at six elementary schools and one middle school.[29]
- The district's entry criteria for gifted programs provide extra weight for ELL students and students who live in a low-income household. As a result, the number of applications rose from 900 in 2007 to 1,500 students in 2008.
- The school district has a gifted and talented program placement rate of about 11 percent, but district data suggest that the program is not equally accessible to all racial and ethnic groups. (The district uses the Ravens, some CSAP data, teacher judgment, and other variables to make decisions about gifted and talented program placement.)

Areas of Concern

- Too many elementary students are not reading or doing math at a high enough level to do well in middle or high school coursework.
- Teachers new to the early childhood program have had inadequate training on components of the curriculum and on the district's expectations.
- Some areas of town have longer waiting lists for prekindergarten programs than others.
- The district has not determined if its standards-based report cards communicate adequately to parents about student's academic needs and progress.

[29] Cory, Doull, Edison, Gust, Polaris at Ebert, and Teller Elementary Schools offer magnet programs for the highly gifted. The district also has a middle school program for the highly gifted at Morey Middle School.

- Gifted and talented programs that are not part of a magnet school often lack definition and are typically developed school-by-school. The programs have not been strong enough to create a steady and sizable pipeline of students to increase the number taking AP and advanced coursework at the secondary school level and scoring well on AP tests. (See English language learner section for discussion of gifted and talented programs for this group.)

K. SECONDARY SCHOOLS

While many urban school districts that see gains in student performance focus initially on their elementary schools, they do not ignore their middle and high schools. There is no national consensus yet on how to improve high schools, particularly in the nation's urban areas. Still, the faster-moving districts have put a number of strategies in place to ensure that students who did not learn the basic skills in elementary school do so before they graduate from high school.

Positive Findings

- The district's new budgeting system will allow it to devote an additional $2.4 million to raise per pupil base funding in the secondary schools.

- The Denver Public Schools has increased graduation requirements to reflect preparedness for college entrance and higher community expectations.[30]

- The district has standardized the content of core high school courses and has begun end-of-course testing, but the use of end-of-course exams differs from school-to-school.

- The district is making a conscious effort to increase the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school.

- The district is using the College Board's *Springboard* and *EXCELerator* programs in some schools to establish a system in the middle grades to prepare students for AP courses in high school.

- The district's high schools each have a two-week ninth-grade academy running from late July to mid-August to prepare students who are transitioning from eighth to ninth grades.[31] Parents are notified about the program in mid-April. Class sizes are restricted to approximately 15:1, with high school credit awarded at the end. Approximately 1,800 students participate. The 2007 academy was

[30] Specifically, the district increased the number of semester hours required for graduation from 30 to 40 in math and 25 to 30 in social studies as of 2011. In addition, the district reduced the number of electives from 85 to 50 semester hours, while inserting a new world languages requirement of 20 hours. The net number of semester hours required for graduating increased from 220 to 240.

[31] Ninth Grade Academies are located at Abraham Lincoln High School, Career Education Middle College, Denver Center for International Studies, Denver Online High School, Denver School of the Arts, East High School, George Washington High School, John F. Kennedy High School, Manual High School, Martin Luther King Early College, Montebello High School, North High School, South High School, Thomas Jefferson High School, and West High School.

evaluated with student and faculty surveys and used a comparison group of non-participating students to determine whether the program impacts graduation rates, overall GPA, student scores on the CSAP, course failure rates, expulsions, suspension, attendance, and dropout rates. Preliminary results show that participating students had slightly higher attendance rates, somewhat lower disciplinary rates, and lower course failure rates than did non-participating students.

- The district offers a fifth-year diploma program at Lincoln High School for students who need extra time to master high school curriculum requirements.
- The district offers International Baccalaureate diplomas at two of its high schools: George Washington High School and John F. Kennedy High School.
- The school district also uses the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination) at 10 of its high schools: Abraham Lincoln, East, George Washington, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Montebello, North, South, Thomas Jefferson, and West.
- The district has created a new department under the Chief Academic Officer, the Office of Postsecondary Pathways, to align its counselors, concurrent programs, and its programs to provide greater access to college for high school students.
- About 800 district students are enrolled in dual enrollment courses, earning high school and college credits.
- The district has also initiated a credit-recovery program in many of the high schools to assist students who were not on track to graduate.
- The district has created a scholarship fund, Denver Scholarship Fund, to enable more students to attend college.
- There are some concerns about undocumented students who cannot access these scholarships.
- The district increased its average Colorado ACT scores about three-quarters of a point (not an insignificant gain) between 2005 and 2008. (The composite score increased from 17.0 in 2005 to 17.6 in 2008, while increasing the numbers of students taking the test by about 100 students.)
- The school district purchased rights to an online career interest survey and to Colorado ACT test-preparation programming.
- Data from the district's Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs indicate that 70 percent of students participating in such programs go onto further postsecondary training programs. The district offers CTE programs in the areas of business and marketing, family and consumer science, industrial technology, engineering technology, and other fields. The program has partnerships with 14 community colleges in the region.

- CTE programs are offered at a number of district high schools, including Abraham Lincoln High School, Career Education Middle College, Contemporary Learning Academy, Denver School of the Arts, East High School, Florence Crittenton High School, George Washington High School, John F. Kennedy High School, Montebello High School, North High School, Ridgeview Academy, South High School, Thomas Jefferson High School, and West High School.

- The district also has a number of alternative schools[32] and charter schools[33] for students with special needs.

Areas of Concern

- The district's data systems lack the ability to track student course completion through high school, although the district is able to track credits for graduation.

- There are no data triggers to automatically alert principals and counselors when a student's absences, number of suspensions, and/or course failures signal a need for immediate attention and intervention. The district is now pilot-testing a program that would allow this flagging to be done.

- High school grades do not appear to equate to college readiness, and CSAP scores are not part of the district's graduation requirements.

- The number of scores below 20 on the Colorado ACT indicates that too many students are not ready for college academic work. Math scores on the Colorado ACT have shown the smallest gains since 2005.

- Low AP scores on most AP tests indicate that AP course rigor is probably not up to standard.

- The practice of who pays for a student's AP tests differs from one school to another, a fact that may prevent many students from taking the test even after taking the corresponding AP course.

- It appears that more Denver high schools offer career and technical education courses (14) than offer AP courses (13). It also appears that more high school graduates participated in a CTE course than scored 3 or above on an AP test.

- Parents indicated to the Council team that college counseling in the high schools was not strong enough.

[32] Alternative schools include Contemporary Learning Academy High School, Denver Online High School, Emerson Street School, Emily Griffith High School, Escuela Tlatelolco, Florence Crittenton, Gilliam School, Night High School, P.R.E.P. Center, and Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning.

[33] Academy of Urban Learning, Challenges Choices & Images, Colorado High School, Community Challenge, Denver School of Science and Technology, Life Skills Center, P.S. 1, Ridge View Academy, Skyland Community High School, and Southwest Early College.tt

Chapter 3. Recommendations

Based on the findings in Chapter 2, the Council's Strategic Support Team developed a series of recommendations for the Denver Public Schools designed to help accelerate student performance. These suggested next steps, like the findings in the previous chapter, are organized around 10 key features of significantly improving urban school districts: political preconditions; goals; accountability; curriculum and instruction; human capital, teacher quality, and professional development; reform press (or the ability to get reforms into the classrooms); data, assessment, and evaluation; and lowest-performing students and schools and special populations; early childhood education, gifted and talented, and elementary schools; and secondary schools. There is also an extended section on English language learners.

A. Political Preconditions

1. *Develop a robust strategic communications plan, determine clear messages to the public, and beef up the communications department staff to implement the plan.*

   Parents interviewed by the team reported that communication from the district and the schools was often weak and appeared to be strongest before bond elections. Charter proponents appear to take advantage of these complaints in order to advocate that parents leave the traditional schools. The district is striving to make revolutionary reforms but needs a real plan for letting the community know how it is progressing.

   The Council recommends that the district become more proactive in its outreach to parents. This is particularly important in a district where school choice needs to be supported with quality information.

   While the team is aware that it is often difficult to find media support for positive coverage, the district should develop more effective and convincing strategies for sharing the progress it is making and framing the challenges it faces.

   Finally, the district might consider additional strategies for informing parents about program and school options, as well as providing some customer service training at the schools on the treatment of parents when they come into the buildings. We were also surprised about how unfamiliar parents were with their parent liaisons, even though the district had worked hard to set up these positions.

B. Goals

2. *Sort out and clarify priorities among the various federal, state, and local goals—or make them consistent.*

   Schools and parents clearly receive disparate and sometimes confusing messages about the district's priorities and schools' progress under all the federal, state, and local reporting and accountability systems.

3. *Build into the Denver Plan specific, measurable goals for academic improvement.*

   The district has taken groundbreaking steps to establish a variety of concrete measures that examine individual student growth as well as school-level academic performance. School accreditation, principal evaluation, and ProComp incentives for teachers all use these measures. The Denver Plan and the SPF, however, only address overall goals rather than explicit goals for subgroups, including racial/ethnic, ELL, and special education students.

4. *Clarify which departments or staff members have responsibility for progress on each of the indicators in the SPF or Denver Plan. Establish project management teams to ensure execution of the plan.*

   Monitoring progress toward meeting district goals is clearly underway in the Denver Public Schools. The Council's team recommends, however, that a series of cross-functional teams might be set up around the clarified district goals and subgroup objectives to ensure coherent efforts to support schools as they strive to meet or exceed the goals. Such teams also build teamwork, improve communications, strengthen coordination, break down silos, and enhance planning and program implementation. Teams should have clear tasks, responsibilities, and timelines and should be held accountable for the outcomes of their work.

C. Accountability

5. *Put some senior central office staff (department heads) and instructional superintendents on performance contracts explicitly tied to attainment of districtwide priorities and goals.*

   Given that the district is enhancing its culture of accountability, the district should consider tying district instructional goals and timelines to staff job descriptions and evaluations. Evaluating central office staff on attainment of district goals would also strengthen the ability of the district's leadership to require accountability for results at the principal level. The district has developed extensive measures for school-level staff, but it does not yet include student achievement or attainment of districtwide goals in the evaluations of central office staff.

6. *Align personnel evaluation forms—particularly for principals—with the SPF document.*

   It should be immediately obvious that the personnel evaluation form directly measures the principals' contributions to reaching school and district goals.

7. *Develop a systematic method for setting school performance targets that includes major subgroups.*

In order to accelerate progress toward district goals, school targets should be based on the specific academic needs of the students at the school, and should be set for each racial/ethnic subgroup, English language learners, and students with special education designations. Doing so also helps align federal, state, and local goals and requirements.

D. Curriculum and Instruction

8. *Establish a mechanism for monitoring how well instructional time allocations in core subjects are being followed, while ensuring that quality instruction is taking place during that time.*

   As the district reviews student performance results on state tests, examine whether adequate time allotments are followed in core content areas. Ensure that administrators and teachers are aware of time allocations and the rationale for them. Monitor these allocations in the walkthrough process. Avoid making the time allocation a compliance issue, however. The quality of instruction during the allocated time should also continue to be a major focus.

9. *Ensure that students in the earliest grades have sufficient instructional time on the five core reading skills (at least an hour of the literacy block should be devoted to core reading skills.)*

10. *Continue to revise the instructional guides to provide teachers a clearer understanding of district achievement expectations.*

    - Clarify the mandatory use of curriculum guides—and clarify that textbooks support curriculum but are not the curriculum. In the curriculum guides, clarify what is required and what is flexible.

    - Use the results of the district's gap analyses to revise its curriculum guides. Ensure that the guides address statewide expectations at or above the level of rigor seen in state tests. Inform teachers when they can rely on their textbook. In addition, indicate in the curriculum guides where the textbook alone is inadequate to address specific concepts, or when the book provides insufficient practice to master the concepts and skills. Furthermore, include teaching suggestions and materials to assist teachers in filling those gaps. Incorporate this guidance into professional development for coaches and teachers, and update "look-fors" as needed.

    - Provide examples that illustrate the level of student work that the district expects of students within each unit. While students may not yet be performing at that level, teachers can move them closer to the goals when they clearly know what the expectations are.

- Build spiraled review into curriculum guides to ensure that all students have mastered standards prior to testing—particularly in math.

- Provide teachers and administrators with the purpose and contexts of items included in the "look for" documents.

11. *Modify the district's curriculum instructional planning guides in all content areas to clarify how teachers can differentiate instruction for English language learners, gifted and talented students, and students with disabilities.*

    The suggestions for ELL modifications in the current language arts instructional planning guides can serve as a model for other content areas. Similar notations for gifted and talented students and for students with disabilities would demonstrate Denver's commitment to all students, facilitate teacher planning, assist administrators in monitoring and supporting quality classroom instruction, and form a stronger foundation for ensuring student access to grade-level learning.

12. *Incorporate specific intervention strategies into instructional planning guides, particularly in reading. Indicate what triggers required interventions and when interventions are optional because the content will be revisited in future lessons.*

    Since the Council's initial report, the central office has substantially improved instructional guides, but the guides could support teachers further by taking some of the following steps:

    - Establish specific criteria, starting at earliest grades, for what will trigger an intervention in each grade and subject.

    - Clarify which intervention tools are specifically for which skill deficits and types of students. Then develop an evaluation process to determine whether to maintain, modify, or discontinue the use of the interventions based on their impact on student achievement.

13. *Seek outside funding or redeploy Title I funds to expand mandatory after-school, weekend, and summer school instruction for the lowest-performing students. (Expand the Department of Extended Learning program that has shown success in working with low-performing students.)*

    - Build activities in the 5280 program based on skill-needs, such as developing vocabulary, building reading fluency, and so on.

14. *Ensure that every child has a textbook from the first week of school and that each school allows students to take textbooks home.*

15. *Evaluate the implementation of Readers/Writers Workshop and its efficacy on student literacy achievement.*

The district's reading and writing program is the foundation for student success in all content areas. Current student performance on the state CSAP is low, and gains are modest. These results raise questions about the extent to which the district's adopted programs are being implemented. If they are being implemented well, then questions arise about the alignment and rigor of what is being taught and how well teachers understand that required rigor. The district might enlist or develop a research project to examine how the Readers and Writers Workshop is used in classrooms across the district and correlate levels of implementation with student achievement.

E. Human Capital, Teacher Quality, and Professional Development[34]

16. *Provide professional development to specialists and facilitators on the identified intervention strategies in order to better support classroom teachers.*

    It is clear from state tests results that most Denver students are not reading or doing math on grade level. Denver has identified intervention programs in mathematics, but the team did not see evidence that the programs are being consistently used. The team was concerned that specialists and facilitators may not be sufficiently well-versed in the use of the intervention strategies. Since the district has a scope and sequence document as well as good student performance data, the district is in the position to alert teachers to likely problem areas in mastering new material, given gaps in student learning. Facilitators and specialists should be given the tools they need to help teachers build in tier 2 interventions that prepare students for the new work they are encountering. In addition, they should be ready to support teachers in the use of tier 3 interventions. Finally, they should be able to alert the central office if the tiered intervention systems are adequate to meet student needs and work with central office to identify additional supports, as needed.

17. *Define priorities for centrally defined professional development and build those priorities around gaps in districtwide performance.*

    Use a cross-functional team to define the areas of greatest academic need in meeting the district goals and priorities.

    Articulate the purpose of the most-needed professional development, and study change theory, using such authors as Gene Hall and Shirley Hord[35] or Michael Fullan. The district might consider using a number of varying delivery designs, including study groups, on-site work sessions, or traditional delivery. The professional development, however, should be built around the nature and design of the district's curriculum, curriculum implementation, gaps in the curriculum, use of supplemental materials to fill gaps, the expected rigor for teaching and mastering necessary skills, intervention strategies and materials, use of assessment data, etc.

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[34] There are few urban school districts across the country that one can point to as models of effective professional development, so the Denver schools may have to be in the lead again on this issue.

[35] Hall, Gene E., & Hord, Shirley M. (2001). *Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles, and Potholes.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

All professional development should have a goal that is clear to participating teachers and staff, and the implementation and effects of the professional development on student achievement should be assessed.

Finally, limit the amount of the centrally defined professional development to a small number of clear district academic priorities.

18. *Charge the professional development team with translating district priorities, sequencing, integrating, and scheduling districtwide into a comprehensive program of professional development. Include technology, early childhood education, data analysis, ELL, special education, gifted and talented, and instructional superintendents on the team.*

    The team that plans districtwide professional development needs to build a calendar thoughtfully and involve teachers at the outset. The calendar should allow for teachers and principals to provide feedback on the nature of the program, its focus on priorities, and its utility. Try to conceive of professional development courses rather than single sessions. A one-time professional development session that is not linked to follow-up sessions or on-site plans is unlikely to have much impact on site-based practice or student achievement.

    Using the change management theory studied in the cross-functional team, determine how the district will move from its current status to its desired status, building the capacity to implement change throughout the organization, even if stages must evolve across school years. Ensure that new hires into the system are brought up to date on multiyear training programs.

    Resist the impulse to introduce new programs that are not tightly linked to district priorities. For example, if the district wants to build the use of instructional technology, ensure that it is built into the curriculum documents themselves and based on its particular capacity to teach, expand or reinforce a concept in the curriculum, rather than an add-on to the already crowded instructional day.

19. *Ensure that the district's professional development is differentiated according to teacher experience and previous training and that it clearly takes into account what teachers and principals need to know in working with each student subgroup at each grade level.*

    The district has proven its capacity to produce high quality professional development. The team heard that teachers respected the social studies professional development they received and that principals regarded their institutes as helpful. However, there is no system for ensuring that all offerings meet the same high standards. The team encourages the district to institutionalize rigorous standards for any professional development offering and also for the presenters. Take steps to ensure that presenters are highly competent in their knowledge of the material and in working with adult learners. Build in differentiation for participants based on their experience and

expertise. Indeed, these steps merely model for others what the district expects its own employees to do in their work with staff and students.

20. *Begin evaluating professional development for implementation and impact on student achievement as part of the assessment of overall professional development quality and assessment of the 150-hour court-ordered professional development program.*

    Many districts have a generic evaluation form they use at the end of professional development sessions. These forms rarely provide what professional development planners really need to know about the quality of the session and the competence of the presentation and its impact on the work of the schools. Assessment of the impact of professional development should be built into the planning process. Looking at the quality of the presentations, the perceptions of the participants, the level of implementation following participation, and the impact on student achievement should become routine over time. Work with the research department or local universities to plan an evaluation that will help the district continuously improve its ability to improve student learning. In addition, the district should examine the effectiveness and efficiency of its partnerships and interfacing with external professional development providers.

21. *Establish a process by which facilitators receive more in-depth training on how to deliver a uniform professional development program (including practice sessions).*

    Every professional development opportunity has a great deal riding on it, yet often only minimal time is allotted to preparing for it. When teachers fail to attend sessions or feel that their time has been wasted when they do attend, the intended professional development message gets lost. The Strategic Support Team has seen initiatives flounder when presenters at different sites provided differing answers to questions or were simply not prepared to provide the professional development.

22. *Phase out menu-driven professional development and replace it with more integrated and focused professional development defined around instructional reform and programs.*

23. *Develop a cohesive three-year induction and mentoring program for new teachers and new school site administrators. (See programs in the Philadelphia, Richmond, and Atlanta school districts.)*

    The district is undertaking a thoughtful process for enhancing the leadership skills for their principals. The team urges the district to meet with new principals to determine what additional mentorship and support they need to familiarize them with the instructional, managerial, and community outreach requirements in Denver.

    Teacher induction programs can be useful not only in orienting new teachers to the district but also in retaining them in the system. The district might consider convening focus groups to determine the types of support that new teachers view as the most helpful and to identify the kinds of additional support that they think might be useful.

Most districts with good induction systems focus their professional development on knowledge of the district and its systems, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, and building connections to the city and to fellow staff members. The information is presented over time rather than in a single session. Induction programs of three years or so are often judged more effective than one-year programs. In planning a new teacher induction system, consider the following concepts from the Houston Independent School District —

- New employees have varying needs when they enter the district and, as a result, require a differentiated program of induction and support.
- Just-in-time knowledge has greater usefulness to an employee. Therefore, knowledge and support should be provided when an employee is more likely to be ready to learn and able to apply the learning immediately.
- Adults learn in many different ways, so information needs to be presented using different approaches, including group learning, tutoring, reading, and online learning.
- Employee needs merit consideration with respect to what types of knowledge are presented and when. For example, payroll and benefit information should be provided before working with new teachers on the curriculum and ways to instruct students.
- Teaching and learning are complex acts, and seminars for beginning teachers need to focus on the very basic skills needed to plan and carry out classroom instruction.
- Most professional development for new teachers should focus on research-based teaching practices for obtaining higher student achievement.
- New employees, even if they are experienced, often enter new organizations and take on new assignments with some anxiety, so processes and people should be in place to anticipate and reduce these anxieties.
- Teachers go through stages of career development, and a successful program of induction and support needs to be built around those stages.
- Increasing the number of years during which induction support is provided may require additional staff and professional development for mentors.
- As teachers are retained over time, salary and benefits costs will increase, but recruitment costs will decrease.
- There is also a fiscal impact to paying and rewarding mentor teachers who provide the induction supports for new teachers.

To achieve an improved teacher induction program, consider the following steps—

- Invest in training to develop staff expertise to lead a teacher induction program.
- Identify a three-year program of knowledge, skills, and resources for new teachers, and develop the training (online, traditional, and coaching).
- Given the number of English language learners in Denver, ensure that new teachers receive support in working with ELL students while teaching curriculum content.
- Identify central office staff members who can be assigned to the new teacher program.
- Provide information and training for administrators so that their role in the induction and support of new teachers is articulated clearly
- Provide job descriptions to teachers and mentors, and provide training on accountability systems for mentors and coaches.
- Maintain a panel of principals and a constellation of staff members to ensure that the induction program is meeting their needs and to assist in crafting the message for their peers about the importance of the program.

24. *Conduct a thorough review of the HR department's recruitment and placement process to ensure that Denver is not losing the best candidates to other school districts because of late hiring or the way school assignments are done.*

25. *Streamline the online application process to ease candidates' ability to apply for a teaching post.*

26. *Conduct a thorough analysis of reasons for the teacher mobility issue, and develop a plan to address this issue.*

27. *Ensure that the principal and teacher evaluation system is aligned with the new SPF system to reward attainment of district goals.*

28. *Explore the possibility of using retired principals or teachers to handle the process of documenting, supporting, and evaluating struggling teachers in a timely fashion.*

    The process to support or remove struggling teachers diverts time principals need to spend on the school's instructional program to benefit more students. The team suggests that the district consider hiring retired principals or teachers to document, support, and evaluate struggling teachers. The retired principals would work under the supervision of the instructional superintendents or human resources.

29. *Do not grant teachers non-probationary or professional status unless that teacher is effective at improving student learning.*

The district hires over 400 teachers a year. A strong induction program to support and retain new hires is important for staff stability and for student success. For teachers who are unable to improve student achievement, it is best to follow procedures and not renew contracts after the initial three-year period.

30. *Place direct placement teachers into a substitute pool and train them as subs for days when regular teachers must attend professional development programs on district priorities.*

    DPS has a pool of certified teachers who lack a full-time assignment. It also has a need to conduct professional development on district priorities, but it does not have many days set aside for that purpose. The district also knows when professional development is scheduled for a particular group of teachers and where those teachers will be in the curriculum. These direct placement teachers can be trained on that portion of the curriculum and serve as substitutes to enable learning to continue in classrooms while the classroom teacher is attending professional development.

F. Reform Press

31. *Ensure through professional development that there is a common understanding at the school and network levels of the districtwide instructional program and implementation.*

32. *Allow reforms additional time to take root before overhauling them or doing major modifications.*

    School districts often move too quickly from one reform to the next without allowing sufficient time and support for a reform to take effect. While every reform will require some tweaking, resist the temptation to do a major overhaul.

33. *Clarify the role of facilitators and ensure they are being used for their intended purposes. Ensure that facilitator evaluations align with their job description.*

    Facilitators are a major investment by the district and are designed to ensure that reforms move into the classroom. To clarify their role, publish their job description and schedule time with principals to ensure that building leaders understand the facilitators' purpose, roles, and evaluation. Ask principals about the types of supports they need in order for their facilitators to perform their jobs well. Engage principals in resolving problems that prevent any of them from properly using their facilitators.

    It is also important for principals to explain the role of the facilitators to the teachers and to engage facilitators and teachers about how they can gain the most from having facilitators on campus. Principals also must have a way to identify when a facilitator is not a good match for the campus and have a system for replacing that facilitator.

34. *Create a pipeline for hiring and training opportunities for development of new facilitators.*

Because people are likely to change roles over time, it is vital to have a pipeline in place to develop potential facilitators from a pool of the district's best teachers. The pipeline might begin with identifying teacher leaders who receive extra training to conduct summer workshops or participate in curriculum projects.

35. *Create a feedback loop for teachers to provide input to the central office on the implementation and effectiveness of reforms at the school level.*

    Teachers themselves offer important insights into concerns about program implementation and effectiveness. It is wise to build in explicit opportunities to hear teacher feedback so that their concerns can be addressed. When changes are made due to this feedback, be sure to credit the feedback process so that teachers know that their voices were heard. If the feedback indicates misunderstandings, address the misconceptions in appropriate documents and professional development.

36. *Modify "look-fors" to include an examination of quality and rigor of student work — and engagement of students.*

37. *Ensure that principals check where teachers and students are in the curriculum guide as they make classroom visits or review lesson plans.*

    It is tempting to focus only on instructional strategies rather than on what is actually being taught during classroom visits. However, students will achieve at higher levels only when they have had an opportunity to learn the required curriculum concepts, knowledge, and skills. Teachers can expand learning beyond the curriculum objectives once the objectives have been taught. Nonetheless, if a classroom is consistently behind in the curriculum, principals need to discuss the causes and solutions with the teacher and facilitator. If the teacher has to teach below level due to serious gaps in student knowledge, then immediate interventions can be applied.

38. *Incorporate results of "look-fors" into the School Improvement Plans, professional development program, and common planning time.*

    All actions flow together in a coherent system. Conducting walk-throughs and noting "look fors" is a more powerful process when they inform actions in the classroom, school-improvement plans, site-based professional development, or facilitator support, or when they become the subject of discussion in common planning time. Principals and staff members should see improvements in classroom practices through changes in the data gathered in informal classroom observations. The final measure of all of these efforts, of course, is enhanced student achievement.

G. Data, Assessment, and Evaluation

39. *Continue moving forward on a single-access data warehouse.*

    The district is changing to a data-driven culture. Access to data is therefore fundamental. There has been, up to recently, no single access point for results from EduSoft testing and data that resides in OASIS. Having a single data warehouse will

make training on retrieving data more efficient. Student data should be available to school professional staff members 24 hours a day. These data should enable the school district to track individual students, handle student transfers from one school to another, and align districtwide information with classroom- and school-level information related to program participation, achievement levels by subject, demographic characteristics, on-track information, transportation, Individualized Education Plans (IEP), language designations, and the like. Many urban school districts across the country are building such information systems and could serve as models. Additionally, the system should serve the managerial needs of the district to monitor participation and impact of professional development, as well as enable departments such as Human Resources to track the information it needs to monitor the placement and impact of hiring, transfer, and distribution of teachers and administrators.

40. *Establish a data warehouse user group with representatives from the central office, administrative networks, and schools (heavy users and novices) to provide input on the design of the system and the reports*.

    Cross-functional teams should assist in the design of the warehouse and its reports to ensure that the system meets staff and teacher needs. Study the on-track research[36] for ideas about pushing alerts directly to administrators, in addition to reports they can access on demand.

41. *Work with curriculum directors to plan and deliver professional development on how to access, interpret, and use data to inform instructional practices.*

    Professional development for teachers regarding the use of the data system should be linked to the actual instructional decisions for the grade level and content they teach. Thus, training time on the system is immediately useful to the teachers and not merely an exercise in how to access data.

42. *Ensure the district implements and applies uniform criteria for accommodating or excluding ELL students in CSAP testing so that there is consistency across schools and comparability when examining assessment data.*

    It is vital to the integrity of a data system to ensure that accommodations and exclusions are both clear and consistently applied. The district should also have a system for resolving unforeseen situations. That system should also include a means to share the resolution with all schools for future reference.

    Professional development for both school leadership and instructional staff should ensure appropriate use of accommodations and provide a firm understanding of the purposes of such accommodations.

43. *Evaluate the relative growth vs. status weights in the SPF to ensure that they are accelerating improvement in student performance.*

[36] See studies by the Chicago Consortium.

While the team recognized the need to establish incentives for growth in student achievement, it also recognized that the primary purpose of the SPF is to accelerate improvement in student performance. Therefore, the team encourages the district to consider the relation between growth and status measures as staff members gain confidence in and capacity to improve student achievement.

44. *Clarify for the public how the SPF and SAR programs relate.*

    Accountability headlines that appear to say different things are confusing to those outside of the education system. Ensure that communication clarifies how the systems relate with each other and how they benefit students.

45. *Consolidate federal program evaluation funds and outside grant evaluation funds and send to the research unit to finance additional positions for greater capacity to conduct program evaluations.*

    The district could augment its research and evaluation staff by transferring some of the evaluation funds from external grants to the research unit. Using this strategy would enable the unit to add more people whose sole functions would involve program evaluation.

46. *Develop a three-year calendar of program evaluations, including programs for English language learners.*

    The school district evaluates few of its major programs on a regular basis for their level of implementation and their impact on student achievement, including matched cohorts over time. Without thorough evaluation, the district lacks the information it needs to refine reform efforts or judge whether its initiatives are the source of achievement gains.

47. *Build in collaboration with university research partners for program evaluation and research.*

    The district can also augment its research capacity by partnering with local universities. Ask the universities to build their research projects to align with district needs and priorities.

48. *Explore district or site-based incentive programs for students who do well on CSAP.*

    While the team is concerned with an extrinsic reward system, team members have seen the impact of higher stakes testing at the high school level. The district can poll Council members for practices they have employed to create incentives for higher achievement at the high school level. Use data to determine if there are patterns of performance that would indicate that students were not putting effort into doing well on the test. Meet with focus groups of students identified through this analysis to learn what could be done as an incentive for them to take the test seriously.

H. Lowest-Performing Students and Schools and Special Populations

49. *Use aligned incentives and interventions to support the restructuring of schools that have not made AYP for an extended period. Include in the plan a public communication component as well as support for the school after restructuring.*

50. *Involve a cross-functional team to plan ways to invigorate summer and after-school programs to bring struggling students up to grade-level expectations.*

51. *Clarify the use of federal school improvement grants and ensure that they align with district instructional priorities.*

52. *Conduct an intense analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the "CORE Matters" program, and charge a team of central office staff, instructional superintendents, and representative principals and teachers to modify the program accordingly.*

    Lowest-performing schools have room to make large gains. Examine how well the curriculum is being taught, including the level of expectations for student work. Analyze the use of interventions and their effectiveness. Determine how facilitators and specialists are interacting with school staff and how those interactions could be more efficient and effective. Talk with students and parents about common goals for student success. Then work as a team to modify current approaches. Consider extending student time with after-school, Saturday, or summer school options. Bring a sense of urgency to improving the quality of classroom work and student-produced products. Finally, re-evaluate the effectiveness of the changes.

53. *Link student progress on their Individual Literacy Plan (Colorado Basic Literacy Act) in third grade to the SPF to increase CBLA visibility and importance.*

    The State of Colorado already asks districts to link the ILP with CSAP performance and instructional interventions as part of the Colorado Department of Education's assessment program. Adding it to the SPF further unifies the various requirements schools face. It also elevates the urgency of improving reading achievement.

I. English Language Learners

54. *Ensure that the increased time allocation for English Language Development (ELD) instruction is aligned to and articulated with the Elementary Literacy Block and other literacy initiatives.*

55. *Integrate the increased ELD requirement with time allocated to instruction in other content areas to ensure that English Learners have full access to the entire content of the curriculum.*

    ELLs should not have to forgo mathematics instruction in order to fulfill the ELD time allocation. For example, expand opportunities for extended hours or provide

extended learning (Saturday, school break sessions) for ELLs to ensure that the 45 minutes of ELD is not provided at the expense of other content area instruction.

56. *Develop a joint process by which the district and the plaintiffs in the consent decree consider instructional programs and services for ELLs in addition to the criteria set out in the court order.*

    The court-ordered English Language Acquisition Program in Denver Public Schools provides a firm foundation for the instructional program for ELLs, but the court-ordered program would appear to be best implemented in schools with a relatively static ELL enrollment. Under the court order, the district offers a Transitional English Language Acquisition Program with two distinct models that are determined based on the number of ELLs in a school and the languages spoken—criteria that ensure ELLs have access to the instructional program. The staffing levels are a "floor" to ensure that, wherever ELLs are enrolled, the school provides adequate access to the curriculum. Denver's choice plan, however, does not result in the kind of stability that the court order assumes, so a joint effort could provide more innovative instructional solutions to the larger problem of weak achievement among English language learners.

57. *Provide explicit articulation between the state's required Individual Literacy Plan and the ELD requirement for ELLs.*

    DPS needs to be explicit as to how the Individual Literacy Plan applies to ELLs and what specific interventions could lead to improving ELL literacy. Further, this articulation should be set out in the curriculum guide and in any ELA program guidance so that teachers know what to focus on and principals know how to monitor the respective programs.

58. *Develop an ELA program guide or staff manual that lays out the implementation details and parameters for central office, district leadership, school leadership and teachers.*

    The ELA program defined in the court order provides leeway in many implementation areas, but in the absence of central office guidance, discretion leads to any number of interpretations at the school level, hence the variability in the ELA programs.

59. *Have the ELA department enhance its Language Allocation Guidelines with a more detailed "manual" to assist principals in the design of ELL models and assist the instructional superintendents in the supervision of such models.*

    The ELA department's professional development for instructional superintendents should include the related monitoring procedure to ensure that the ELLs receive the requisite number of ELD minutes and other content area time allocations. A key part of the department's more detailed "manual" should be a well-balanced monitoring

protocol that does not overemphasize compliance at the expense of quality instruction for English Learners.

60. *Charge the curriculum and instruction unit to develop "look fors" based on best instructional practices for English Learners.*

    The team learned that such development is already underway. The development work should also incorporate the monitoring of differentiated instruction for ELLs into the "look for" procedures.

61. *Conduct an alignment and gap analysis of the textbooks the district adopts for the ELA program.*
    The alignment and gap analysis should discover any holes in the materials and lead to district decisions about how best to plug those gaps with supplemental or other materials or training. The analysis should ensure that the ELA program and materials provide access to the district's core curriculum and do so with the same rigor as that provided to non-ELLs in the district.

62. *Require that all English language learners have a minimum of 90-120 minutes of English literacy and ELD instruction each day, starting at the earliest grades—even if the time is part of content-area instruction.*

    This should apply to students regardless of their status as ELA-E or ELA-S. The district should also clarify its minimum use of English requirements to take into account student proficiency levels, age, and grade.

63. *Design and conduct an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the various textbooks adopted for the ELA program (*Avenues, Keys to Learning *and* Shining Star*).*

    The review and evaluation of materials should be able to answer such questions as—

    - ✓ Are the materials providing support for English Language Development or for literacy in the native language?
    - ✓ What is the extent of the alignment of the materials with the core curriculum set by the district?
    - ✓ What gaps exist and how should the district support closing the gaps in the curriculum for ELLs (professional development, district-developed materials, other purchases, etc.)?

64. *Continue district efforts to strengthen the numbers and qualifications of staff serving English Learners.*

65. *Evaluate the effectiveness of the 150- hour professional development requirement under the court order and build the results into the overall professional development program of the district.*

66. *Direct the HR department to include ELL achievement in the personnel evaluation forms aligned with SPF.*

67. *Include academic achievement goals and targets for ELLs in the summary SPF.*

68. *Ensure that instructional strategies for ELLs and issues related to second language acquisition are integrated into the district's ongoing professional development offered or required in all content areas.*

69. *Develop criteria for ensuring a minimum level of quality in the professional development related to ELL instruction and ELD rather than leaving such determinations to each individual school.*

    The district's criteria should be aligned to overall improvement efforts for the achievement of ELLs, district initiatives, and linked to School Improvement Plans.

70. *In order for the district's leadership to be clear about how these students are progressing, incorporate the impact on the academic achievement explicitly into the district's program evaluations and reviews.*

    Reviews and evaluations should also include examinations of how the implementation of various programs are affecting ELLs, including a look at—

    - The inclusion of ELL needs in initiative program design and materials adoption,
    - The integration of language acquisition issues in various professional development offerings,
    - The collaboration between ELA staff and content specialists (in central office and at the school level),
    - The assignment of highly qualified teachers to carry out initiative for ELLs, and
    - The characteristics of the ELL population that may serve as barriers to successful program initiatives (e.g., mobility, extended absences, low participation rate in preschool programs, etc.).

71. *Conduct a detailed statistical analysis of ELL placement and participation in special education, gifted and talented programs, AP coursework, magnet programs, and other initiatives to make sure they are not being over- or under-identified.*

72. *Strengthen the linkages between the district's early childhood initiatives for ELLs and their participation rates in pre-K and the district's K-3 programs.*

73. *Incorporate a number of critical research questions into the ongoing work of the research department, including—*

- Why are so many parents refusing ELA services?

- What are the relative achievement rates of students who participate in varying program models and those who refuse services?

- What are the academic effects of various instructional reading and math interventions on ELL progress?

- What effect does professional development on language acquisition have on the academic attainment of ELLs?

74. *Charge the Research Department to disaggregate the district's achievement scores for ELLs to show the relative scores based on the various ELA program models.*

    This level of disaggregation could be used to better determine a course of action to improve achievement for ELLs—by program model, by school, or through systemic interventions. Monitoring systems should include a description of the level of implementation of the program model in place at the school. Similarly, the district's School Improvement Status tables should also reflect ELL enrollment data to determine school-specific improvements as well as more systemic improvements to the instructional program provided to ELLs.

75. *Charge the Curriculum and Instruction Department to identify a valid and reliable assessment of L1 literacy levels for ELLs in the secondary schools. Current L1 literacy assessments exist only for third- and fourth- grade Spanish.*

76. *Pursue with the state the possibility of moving the scheduled administration of the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) to a date later than January.*

    The district has a large number of Spanish-speaking ELLs, and the team was told by several individuals interviewed that many students return to Mexico for extended stays during the winter holidays. If this is true, then a later test administration date would ensure greater participation and might benefit ELLs who have spent the holiday period in a solely Spanish-speaking environment do better on the tests. (CELA is scored by the publisher and has a 90-day turnaround time.) The district should determine the exact nature and extent of this issue.

77. *Charge a team of administrators from the Division of Teaching and Learning (with key staff from the ELA department), the Division of Instructional Support, and the Division of Assessment and Research with ensuring that assessments and the overall process for transitioning within and exiting from ELA programs is carried out by the Instructional Services Advisory (ISA) teams with validity and consistency throughout the district.*

    The district is already bringing greater consistency to procedures for assessing student progress and to the transitioning and exiting processes for ELLs in accordance with

the court order. The district has chosen to use the CELA for placement and for evaluating the progress of the ELL's proficiency in English. In addition to CELA, the district uses DRA-II for ELLs and *Evaluacion de la Lectura* (EDL) for Spanish speakers.

The ISA teams are responsible for evaluating the assessment data and making recommendations to the ELA department for transitioning and exiting ELL students. The Council's team learned, however, that significant professional development is needed to ensure that the ISA teams know how to analyze the data and follow the rubric for other data, such as teacher judgment, to make the transitioning and exiting recommendations. The transition criteria require that students score at least at the intermediate level on the CELA. The exit criteria require that an ELL student show proficiency in all language domains as measured by the CELA and be partially proficient in CSAP. The ISA teams use additional criteria, however, to make their final recommendations. The district's team should be charged with establishing consistent and clear guidance to the ISA teams, as well as an effective monitoring system to ensure reasonable consistency.

The exit review for ELLs is currently done twice a year—in the fall and spring. The ELA department reviews every exit recommendation made by the school-based ISA Teams. In spring 2008, the ELA department reviewed more than 2,000 cases.

78. *Include the ELA department in the district's development and adoption of a data warehouse.*

    The district should transfer ELL student files to the warehouse to improve the ability to keep track of students and help in the process of making exit determinations.

79. *Incorporate into the district's strategic communications plan a component that includes outreach to parents of ELLs so that they better understand the nature of ELA programs and choice of programs, and are more familiar with parent liaisons. The work might also include additional "customer service" training for school-based staff.*

80. *Consider the possibility of setting up an ombudsman position that parents of ELLs could call to help resolve problems and concerns.*

    The court order stipulates that parents must first take their concerns to the respective principal, then to the ELA department, and finally to the appropriate instructional superintendent. Having an ombudsman at the central office might streamline that process and should be consistent with the spirit of the consent decree. If the district acted on this recommendation, it would have to establish a process by which the ombudsman could resolve or delegate resolution of concerns.

J. Early Childhood Education, Gifted and Talented, and Elementary Schools

81. *Ensure that the district's early childhood education programs are of high enough quality to encourage parents to enroll students in DPS early grades and establish parents' trust in DPS.*

    There is a great deal of competition for early childhood education. Denver Public Schools can ensure that it receives students ready for early grades by building the best possible early childhood program that attracts Denver families. Programs must provide a strong academic foundation in a positive, nurturing environment that engages students in best early childhood practices under the leadership of outstanding teachers. The district has undertaken serious evaluation efforts, and now must follow through with the steps needed to make each classroom the most attractive option for parents and students.

82. *Ensure that there is a mechanism in place to enroll in DPS programs prekindergarten students currently attending private providers.*

    For those students whose families have opted for private prekindergarten programs, establish a system to reach out to those sites to smooth the enrollment of those children into appropriate DPS schools for kindergarten and first grade. The system should begin in the spring for fall enrollment. Packets of information about what students will learn, what they need to bring with them to school, contact information, frequently asked questions, supports parents can provide, etc. should be part of the outreach program. In addition, enlist community resources in outreach campaigns aimed at providing reading resources and vocabulary development parents can use with young children.

83. *Modify the data system to allow DPS the ability to track early childhood education student achievement in subsequent years.*

    This could be done by evaluating the effectiveness of different models by assessing student achievement across differing grade levels, and incorporating results into teacher professional development programs.

84. *Define a clear districtwide gifted and talented program for schools to implement.*

    Consult with faster-moving urban districts to borrow their best practices in gifted and talented education. Then work in a cross-functional team to design a floor of expectations for every school's program. Include plans that will prepare students for entry into rigorous secondary school programs that will challenge students academically or develop their talents for enhanced secondary school activities. Plan for appropriate teacher training in the rationale underlying the program, and ensure that they know how to work with gifted students. As stated earlier, include modifications for gifted students in the curriculum guide materials for general education.

85. *Enhance the use of the Raven test for four-year-olds to build stronger pipeline of students for gifted and talented programs.*

    Districts with excellent gifted and talented programs screen all students for possible participation. They use a test that does not depend on verbal skill since students of poverty often come to school with a diminished vocabulary. This deficiency can be overcome with enriched exposure to academic vocabulary in school.

86. *Infuse gifted and talented training into general education professional development.*

    All students can benefit from the techniques and higher expectations often reserved for gifted students. The team encourages the district to infuse gifted and talented activities into the general education curriculum guide and include training on working with gifted and talented students as part of all professional development in the content areas and in professional development on differentiation. Facilitators assigned to schools should also be certified to recognize and work with gifted students. They should be able to support teachers in implementing the gifted/talented program.

87. *Collaborate with instructional superintendents and specialists to review each school's gifted and talented plans so that there is more system alignment with how these programs are executed.*

K. Secondary Schools

88. *Improve the rigor of middle school courses and build a middle school pipeline for participation in AP courses.*

    The district cannot afford to wait until high school to build in rigor and high expectations for students. The district should plan for a middle school pipeline that prepares students for more rigorous high school coursework, including clarifying district expectations with exemplars of the quality of assignments and student writing. When revamping the curriculum, curriculum writers should consider objectives that encompass and go beyond state standards to prepare for high school, the AP and the Colorado ACT in all content areas. Facilitators need to be prepared to assist teachers in moving their students up to these expectations.

    The team also urges the district not simply to set goals for improved participation in advanced courses; students taking AP courses should be expected to earn a score of 3 or better on AP exams. Consider monitoring the fidelity of AP coursework and support for students in those courses. Teachers who have higher percentages of successful students on AP exams might be tapped to conduct workshops for other teachers.

89. *Consider using common planning time for content area teachers to share strategies and to compare student work samples to curriculum guide anchor papers or exemplars.*

90. *Use benchmark tests as formative assessments, and mandate use of end-of-course tests (EOC) at the high school level as a significant portion of a student's final grade. Ensure that the EOC aligns with CSAP and the course curriculum guide.*

    Resist the temptation to regard benchmark tests as another high stakes test. Rather, allow them to be guides for teachers about how well students are mastering content and where interventions are needed. Central office can still use the results to inform refinements to curriculum documents and to tweak professional development.

    End-of-course tests help ensure a common focus across the district and can drive improvements in the level of expectations for all students. EOC tests need to include portions of the course that also appear on the CSAP. The team also reminds the district that math courses and CSAP testing are rarely in alignment. Therefore, it is up to the curriculum department to remind teachers of areas that must be reviewed each year, while staying faithful to the course content. For example, when a student is enrolled in geometry, it is appropriate to review algebraic concepts that appear within the study of geometry. It is also appropriate to include some review of probability and statistics from time to time to maintain familiarity with those areas. What the district must do, however, is ensure that the geometry course does not deteriorate into a CSAP review course.

91. *Ensure that the district's data warehouse system can track secondary students by course and grades earned in each course.*

92. *Evaluate the level of implementation and the efficacy of the SpringBoard program in DPS, and modify the implementation as needed.*

93. *Find a source to pay for AP exams so that eligible students can participate.*

    Many districts have community organizations, corporations, or even state resources to assist families. Students not only have the opportunity to earn college credit; they can see the level of work they must master to succeed at the college level.

94. *Examine the Chicago Consortium On-Track project and analyze distinct data to see if DPS data follows those results. If so, create triggers to inform principals on course grades and attendance.*

    Anchorage and Dallas school districts confirmed the Chicago Consortium research indicating a strong correlation between graduation rates and ninth-grade attendance rates and report card grades. It is likely that these factors are also linked to student success in earlier grade levels. Students who have been suspended multiple times or who are developing patterns of absences cannot access teaching and learning. Computer systems can trigger alerts for the principal and constellation staff when certain predetermined criteria occur. Again the purpose is to intervene early to address what may be going badly for students.

CHAPTER 4. SYNOPSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Denver Public Schools have made significant progress since the Council of the Great City Schools first reviewed the instructional program of the district in 2005 and 2006. In many respects, the school district now has in place many of the components that one finds in some of the nation's most rapidly improving urban school districts. The school district's leadership has clearly defined where it is going and has been working as a team to move the system in the direction of higher academic performance. It has redeployed its resources in a way that will enable it to pursue its broader vision for reform. It has also accompanied its broad goals for improvement with one of the best performance management systems we have seen. This multidimensional system is designed to better monitor performance but also to hold its people—and itself—accountable for academic results.

The school district has also made substantial progress in strengthening its core instructional program. It has put into place a common curriculum. It has augmented what was a weak and largely ineffective literacy program. It developed curriculum guides in core subjects. It detailed what needed to be taught and when. It began articulating an intervention system for students who began to slip behind during the school year. It substantially expanded professional development for principals and assistant principals. It instituted benchmark assessments and end-of-course exams at the high school level. It improved its data systems. It expanded early childhood offerings and moved to address longstanding gaps in its gifted and talented program. It also moved to overhaul its instructional program for English language learners. And it increased high school graduation requirements and Advanced Placement courses.

The results of these efforts over a few short years have been substantial gains in student achievement. Only 11 school districts in Colorado had faster reading gains than Denver had between 2005 and 2008—the period during which the Denver Plan was in effect. And only 21 districts—out of 115 statewide on which there are comprehensive data—out-paced Denver in math between 2005 and 2008. More dramatically, only two districts in the state—West Grand and Branson Reorganized—made greater gains than Denver in both reading and math in any period between 2004 and 2008. And neither of those districts has challenges that are in any way comparable to Denver's.

For all of the improvement, however, the district remains below statewide averages on most academic measures. The school district, however, has made a number of critical strategic moves, in addition to its instructional reforms, to alter that situation. The district's leadership overhauled the way it used its finances by making substantial budget cuts, merging its pension system with the state, allocating dollars to schools using a student-based budgeting system, and redeploying more funds into the classroom.

The school district, moreover, rethought how it used its human capital by putting into place a series of carrots and sticks for better performance and for taking on tough assignments. It also provided greater incentives for its early-career teachers and took the

next important steps to realize the initial promise of the groundbreaking ProComp system.

Much of the promise of Denver's reforms over the last several years, however, was how seamlessly they appear to lock together and how well the district appears to have learned from the reforms in other major urban school districts across the country. Many of the district's reforms are woven together nicely with its multilayered performance management system, but more convincing to the Council's team was how tightly woven the district's overall theory of action was. We have seen big-city school districts with some of the same reform components that Denver now uses. But we have not seen an approach that so convincingly uses a common curriculum with site-based budgeting and hiring in a way that is over-layered with such a well-articulated accountability, finance, and human capital system. We think this approach has enormous promise for Denver and important ramifications for other major urban school districts nationally.

Still, we know—and the leadership of the Denver schools knows—that considerable work and time are needed before the school district's impressive reform architecture is fully built out and the gains are accelerated and sustainable. The Council's team was convinced that this potential can be realized, but that more time was needed for the reforms to take deeper root at the school level, and a greater emphasis is needed on pulling together the school district's rather disjointed system of professional development. It was also clear to the Council's team that many of the district's initial reforms on behalf of the city's English language learners needed to be strengthened considerably before real progress was likely.

The Council of the Great City Schools has made a substantial number of recommendations and proposals to strengthen the district's academic program and help accelerate student achievement. The organization applauds the district for the progress that it has made to date, the decision to hire a new superintendent to take the reforms to the next level and to accelerate its progress. We think there is every possibility that the Denver Public Schools can be one of the nation's finest urban school districts in the years ahead.

APPENDIX A. DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL GOALS

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The following goals and objectives[37] for the Denver Public Schools are laid out in its comprehensive *Denver Plan*—

I. Our children will learn from a highly skilled faculty in every school that is empowered by robust professional development and timely assessment data.

   A. A coherent Instructional Reform Plan will set high academic expectations for all students and align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development to Colorado's defined state standards and college entrance requirements.

      1. All students will engage at every grade level in a rigorous course of study in the Denver Public Schools and, upon graduation, will exceed state performance standards in four core subject areas (literacy, math, science and social studies); be prepared to succeed in college/other post-secondary opportunities; and be critical thinkers.

      2. Students will select from compelling curricular choices that balance and complement the core curricular areas.

      3. All students will complete a rigorous course of secondary school instruction in grades six through twelve.

      4. All students and teachers will have access to appropriate classroom materials and supplies.

      5. All DPS families will have equal access to and make informed choices among a portfolio of schools—including neighborhood schools—that are aligned in their core instructional program, but unique in their ability to meet community needs and interests.

   B. Differentiated professional development opportunities for faculty members will support the Instructional Reform Plan and enhance teaching practices in all DPS classrooms.

      1. All DPS faculty members will participate in coherent, relevant, and excellent professional development opportunities.

   C. Differentiated professional development opportunities in diversity training will prepare faculty members to deal with issues of race, gender, and class.

[37] Each one of the numbered objectives below is accompanied by activities, timeframes for accomplishing the activities, and outcome measures to determine attainment of the goals and objectives.

1. All Denver Public Schools faculty members will participate in professional development opportunities in diversity training that inform the instruction of our student population.

D. A comprehensive assessment strategy will provide teachers with timely information regarding the growth of each student and allow teachers to differentiate instruction.

1. Student performance will be assessed regularly in all courses during the school year using a consistent and coherent set of classroom assessments.

2. Student performance data will be communicated to parents and students on a regular basis and in a consistent manner.

E. A best-in-class organization will recruit, hire, develop, and retain highly qualified teachers, principals, and support staff.

1. Develop a customer-focused culture within the Human Resources department emphasizing continuous improvement and customer service to principals, teachers, and other school and central employees.

2. Maximize Denver Public Schools' ability to recruit and hire the most capable teachers, principals, and other school-based staff.

3. Establish simple, efficient Human Resources processes that enable teachers, principals and central administrators to focus on the core mission of the district—advancing student achievement.

4. Engage in ongoing, collaborative conversations with labor organizations to facilitate stronger district/employee relationships.

II. Highly Trained principals and assistant principals will serve as instructional leaders of the faculty in DPS schools.

A. The Denver Public Schools will articulate a well-defined role for both the principal and assistant principal position, establishing instructional leadership as their primary professional responsibility.

1. Redefine the principal and assistant principal roles.

B. A best-in-class organization will launch a strategic effort to attract and retain the best principals and assistant principals.

1. Execute proven principal and assistant principal recruitment practices.

C. Differentiated professional development opportunities for principals and assistant principals will support the Instructional Reform Plan and enhance the ability to serve as instructional leaders.

1. All DPS principals and assistant principals will participate in coherent, relevant and excellent professional development opportunities.

III. Collaboration among the Denver community and all DPS stakeholders will support our children in a safe, orderly, and enriching environment in every school and classroom.

A. Parents/guardians will help DPS students realize success in their academic careers.

1. Establish effective communication channels between the district and parents/guardians.

2. Ensure that every parent/guardian is encouraged and empowered to engage with DPS and knows the positive impact that such involvement can have on student outcomes.

B. The community will support DPS students in their quest toward academic and personal success.

1. All DPS students will have caring adult relationships in their lives, dedicated to their academic and personal success.

2. All DPS students will have access to a wide variety of enrichment activities that complement the formal school day.

3. A comprehensive network of community partnerships will provide the academic, social, and emotional support that DPS student needs.

C. Each school will work with its community to establish an intentional school culture and positive school climate.

1. Every school community will articulate a plan for an intentional school culture.

2. The district and each school community will embrace a code of conduct that supports student learning.

3. All principals and school faculty will be fully trained in classroom management as a vehicle for academic achievement.

4. DPS will improve nutrition and physical activity in order to improve students' readiness to learn.

D. All students not subject to serious medical concerns will demonstrate excellent attendance—97 percent of eligible school days.

1. The Denver community will hold a high attendance expectation for all Denver Public School students.

2. The District will implement a uniform method to track the attendance of each student.

3. The District will use technology to heighten parent, mentor, faculty and principal awareness around student attendance patterns.

4. The District will implement a wide array of interventions at the school level to promote attendance among chronically truant students.

E. District administrators will operate DPS under a coherent, system-wide safety and security structure.

1. The district will abide by a clear and uniform policy for the discipline, suspension, and expulsion of students.

2. DPS will expand cooperation with city safety agencies.

3. All DPS administrators and staff will be aware of and understand use of the Emergency Response and Crisis Management plan.

F. District administrators will operate DPS with maximum efficiency and accountability.

1. Each department will work to develop a customer-focused culture with emphasis on continuous improvement and customer service to principals, teachers, other school and central office employees, parents/guardians, and the community.

2. All budgeted district resources will be aligned with the strategic plan goals and objectives.

3. Responsibility for all budgeted resources and related decision-making processes will be consolidated.

4. Individual schools will be held accountable for excellence in student achievement and efficient operations through a revised school improvement planning process.

5. A standing body of citizens will take stewardship of *The Denver Plan*.

APPENDIX B. ACHIEVEMENT DATA

APPENDIX B. ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Percent of Students Performing at Proficient or Advanced: CSAP Comparison Data for Denver and the State of Colorado (with and without Denver included).

CSAP Reading

	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	51.6	50.6	50.4	50.7	38.6	42.2	39.8	41.8	44.4	47.2	45.0	49.3
Non-Denver*	73.3	72.2	73.1	72.1	66.6	70.2	66.6	68.4	71.2	71.9	70.9	72.2
Colorado (CO)**	71.4	70.4	71.1	70.3	64.0	67.6	64.2	65.9	68.6	69.6	68.6	70.2
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*21.7*	*21.6*	*22.8*	*21.5*	*28.0*	*28.0*	*26.8*	*26.6*	*26.8*	*24.7*	*25.9*	*22.9*
CO - DPS Gap	*19.8*	*19.8*	*20.7*	*19.7*	*25.4*	*25.4*	*24.4*	*24.0*	*24.2*	*22.5*	*23.5*	*20.9*
	Grade 6				**Grade 7**				**Grade 8**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	38.3	44.9	44.4	48.8	36.4	39.9	40.2	45.6	36.2	40.7	37.6	45.3
Non-Denver	69.9	71.6	72.5	73.2	66.8	66.7	67.7	67.2	66.9	68.7	65.5	69.0
Colorado (CO)	67.0	69.2	70.1	71.1	64.1	64.4	65.3	65.5	64.2	66.4	63.2	67.1
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*31.6*	*26.7*	*28.0*	*24.4*	*30.4*	*26.8*	*27.5*	*21.6*	*30.6*	*28.0*	*28.0*	*23.7*
CO - DPS Gap	*28.7*	*24.3*	*25.7*	*22.3*	*27.7*	*24.5*	*25.1*	*19.9*	*28.0*	*25.7*	*25.7*	*21.7*
	Grade 9				**Grade 10**				**All Grade Levels**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	34.7	40.1	40.2	42.5	40.3	43.6	42.7	45.8	39.9	43.6	42.6	46.2
Non-Denver	68.6	68.7	68.7	68.3	67.8	69.5	71.3	67.7	68.8	69.9	69.5	69.8
Colorado (CO)	65.5	66.2	66.3	66.1	65.9	67.6	69.1	66.1	66.3	67.6	67.2	67.8
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*33.9*	*28.6*	*28.5*	*25.8*	*27.5*	*25.8*	*28.6*	*21.9*	*28.9*	*26.3*	*26.9*	*23.6*
CO - DPS Gap	*30.8*	*26.1*	*26.1*	*23.6*	*25.6*	*24.0*	*26.4*	*20.3*	*26.3*	*24.1*	*24.6*	*21.6*

*Non-Denver indicates that the results for Denver students have been removed from the state's data. This enables an unduplicated comparison between Denver Public Schools and Colorado students.

**Colorado results are the published CSAP results that include all students in the state, including students in the Denver Public Schools.

CSAP Writing

	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	33.7	29.2	32.6	30.6	29.0	26.6	26.8	30.4	34.1	35.0	34.6	37.4
Non-Denver	58.3	54.1	56.5	51.9	54.2	52.6	50.9	54.0	59.8	61.9	59.4	61.4
Colorado (CO)	56.1	52.0	54.3	50.1	51.9	50.2	48.7	51.8	57.3	59.4	57.1	59.3
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*24.6*	*24.8*	*23.8*	*21.3*	*25.2*	*26.0*	*24.1*	*23.6*	*25.6*	*26.8*	*24.7*	*24.0*
CO - DPS Gap	*22.4*	*22.8*	*21.7*	*19.5*	*22.9*	*23.6*	*21.9*	*21.3*	*23.1*	*24.4*	*22.5*	*21.9*
	Grade 6				**Grade 7**				**Grade 8**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	36.5	35.9	37.5	38.4	31.3	31.6	37.7	35.9	27.1	29.2	27.6	32.7
Non-Denver	61.7	61.1	62.2	61.6	58.6	58.4	62.3	59.7	53.7	53.5	53.1	54.7
Colorado (CO)	59.5	58.8	60.1	59.6	56.2	56.1	60.2	57.8	51.4	51.4	51.0	52.9
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*25.3*	*25.2*	*24.7*	*23.2*	*27.2*	*26.7*	*24.5*	*23.8*	*26.6*	*24.3*	*25.5*	*22.1*
CO - DPS Gap	*23.0*	*23.0*	*22.6*	*21.2*	*24.8*	*24.5*	*22.4*	*21.9*	*24.3*	*22.2*	*23.4*	*20.2*
	Grade 9				**Grade 10**				**All Grade Levels**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	24.3	27.1	26.9	27.4	27.4	29.3	27.6	28.5	30.5	30.5	31.5	32.7
Non-Denver	54.8	54.0	51.5	50.8	51.4	52.1	52.4	48.7	56.6	55.9	56.0	55.3
Colorado (CO)	52.0	51.7	49.4	48.9	49.7	50.4	50.5	47.2	54.3	53.8	53.9	53.4
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*30.5*	*26.9*	*24.5*	*23.4*	*24.0*	*22.8*	*24.8*	*20.2*	*26.1*	*25.4*	*24.5*	*22.7*
CO - DPS Gap	*27.7*	*24.6*	*22.5*	*21.4*	*22.3*	*21.1*	*22.9*	*18.7*	*23.8*	*23.2*	*22.4*	*20.7*

CSAP Mathematics

	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	45.9	45.8	45.6	46.1	43.4	46.8	50.1	48.1	40.6	44.4	44.0	47.3
Non-Denver	70.6	73.5	70.8	72.2	68.2	71.3	72.6	70.5	65.5	67.4	66.9	66.9
Colorado (CO)	68.1	70.8	68.3	69.7	65.8	69.0	70.6	68.3	63.1	65.3	64.7	65.2
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*24.7*	*27.6*	*25.2*	*26.1*	*24.8*	*24.6*	*22.5*	*22.4*	*24.8*	*23.0*	*22.9*	*19.6*
CO - DPS Gap	*22.2*	*25.0*	*22.7*	*23.6*	*22.4*	*22.2*	*20.4*	*20.3*	*22.4*	*20.9*	*20.8*	*17.9*
	Grade 6				**Grade 7**				**Grade 8**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	30.7	34.0	40.0	42.6	20.9	21.3	29.0	26.6	16.7	21.8	22.5	25.5
Non-Denver	59.0	59.1	62.0	62.8	48.1	46.9	52.5	47.9	46.5	46.9	47.9	48.9
Colorado (CO)	56.4	56.9	60.2	61.0	45.7	44.7	50.5	46.2	43.9	44.8	45.8	46.9
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*28.3*	*25.1*	*22.0*	*20.1*	*27.2*	*25.6*	*23.4*	*21.3*	*29.8*	*25.1*	*25.4*	*23.4*
CO - DPS Gap	*25.7*	*22.8*	*20.2*	*18.4*	*24.9*	*23.5*	*21.4*	*19.6*	*27.3*	*23.0*	*23.3*	*21.5*
	Grade 9				**Grade 10**				**All Grade Levels**			
	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Denver (DPS)	12.2	17.1	17.0	18.6	12.7	14.9	13.4	15.6	28.7	31.5	33.4	34.7
Non-Denver	35.3	40.2	36.8	39.6	31.1	31.8	31.9	31.6	52.8	54.4	55.0	55.0
Colorado (CO)	33.2	38.2	35.1	37.8	29.9	30.6	30.5	30.4	50.6	52.4	53.1	53.2
Non-DPS - DPS Gap	*23.1*	*23.1*	*19.8*	*21.0*	*18.4*	*16.8*	*18.5*	*16.0*	*24.2*	*22.9*	*21.5*	*20.3*
CO - DPS Gap	*21.0*	*21.1*	*18.1*	*19.2*	*17.2*	*15.6*	*17.0*	*14.8*	*22.0*	*20.9*	*19.6*	*18.6*

Percent of Students Achieving at the Proficient and Advanced Levels on CSAP Reading by Racial Subgroups, 2006-2008

		2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3 yr change		
Gr.	Ethnicity	DPS	State (non-DPS)	Gap	DPS	State (non-DPS)	Gap	DPS	State (non-DPS)	Gap	DPS	State (non-DPS)	Gap	DPS	State (non-DPS)	Gap
03	Black	45.5	59.5	14.0	43.9	57.6	13.7	45.4	61.5	16.1	43.5	58.4	15.0	(2.0)	(1.1)	0.9
	B/W gap	(31.7)	(21.2)		(35.4)	(22.5)		(33.7)	(19.8)		(34.9)	(22.2)				
03	White	77.2	80.8	3.6	79.3	80.1	0.8	79.1	81.4	2.3	78.4	80.6	2.3	1.2	(0.1)	(1.3)
	H/W gap	(34.8)	(26.0)		(38.4)	(27.0)		(39.5)	(27.0)		(37.8)	(27.0)				
03	Hispanic	42.4	54.8	12.4	40.9	53.2	12.3	39.6	54.4	14.8	40.6	53.7	13.1	(1.8)	(1.1)	0.7
04	Black	36.2	50.5	14.3	37.3	53.3	16.0	37.6	51.0	13.4	35.3	52.7	17.4	(0.9)	2.3	3.1
	B/W gap	(36.5)	(25.1)		(36.6)	(25.9)		(37.9)	(25.4)		(41.4)	(25.3)				
04	White	72.6	75.6	3.0	73.9	79.2	5.3	75.5	76.4	0.9	76.7	78.1	1.4	4.1	2.5	(1.6)
	H/W gap	(45.3)	(31.2)		(42.3)	(30.0)		(47.4)	(32.8)		(46.1)	(31.0)				
04	Hispanic	27.4	44.4	17.0	31.7	49.2	17.5	28.1	43.7	15.6	30.6	47.1	16.5	3.2	2.7	(0.5)
05	Black	45.3	56.5	11.2	46.4	58.2	11.8	40.0	54.8	14.8	47.7	57.6	9.9	2.4	1.1	(1.3)
	B/W gap	(31.5)	(23.4)		(34.5)	(22.2)		(38.5)	(25.2)		(34.2)	(23.4)				
05	White	76.8	79.9	3.0	80.9	80.3	(0.6)	78.5	80.0	1.5	81.9	81.0	(0.9)	5.0	1.1	(3.9)
	H/W gap	(43.2)	(30.3)		(44.5)	(29.3)		(43.8)	(30.3)		(42.9)	(29.1)				
05	Hispanic	33.6	49.6	15.9	36.4	51.1	14.7	34.7	49.7	15.1	38.9	51.9	12.9	5.3	2.3	(3.0)
06	Black	37.9	51.7	13.8	46.7	56.8	10.1	40.4	56.2	15.8	46.4	59.2	12.9	8.5	7.5	(1.0)
	B/W gap	(40.2)	(28.3)		(31.9)	(24.0)		(37.1)	(25.7)		(32.1)	(22.8)				
06	White	78.1	80.0	2.0	78.6	80.8	2.2	77.4	81.9	4.4	78.5	82.1	3.5	0.4	2.0	1.6
	H/W gap	(52.0)	(35.1)		(45.7)	(31.9)		(43.1)	(31.8)		(39.7)	(29.9)				
06	Hispanic	26.1	44.9	18.9	33.0	49.0	16.0	34.4	50.0	15.7	38.8	52.2	13.4	12.8	7.3	(5.5)
07	Black	34.8	47.5	12.6	38.2	50.6	12.3	39.0	50.0	11.0	39.3	52.0	12.7	4.5	4.5	0.1
	B/W gap	(36.9)	(29.2)		(36.9)	(25.7)		(36.0)	(27.6)		(38.1)	(24.0)				
07	White	71.8	76.7	4.9	75.1	76.3	1.2	75.0	77.6	2.5	77.4	76.0	(1.4)	5.6	(0.7)	(6.3)
	H/W gap	(47.0)	(35.6)		(46.3)	(33.0)		(45.9)	(33.5)		(41.4)	(30.3)				
07	Hispanic	24.7	41.1	16.4	28.9	43.3	14.4	29.1	44.1	15.0	36.0	45.7	9.7	11.3	4.6	(6.7)
08	Black	34.5	48.2	13.7	37.7	51.2	13.5	34.4	46.1	11.7	42.4	52.5	10.1	7.9	4.3	(3.6)
	B/W gap	(36.2)	(28.1)		(37.0)	(27.0)		(40.9)	(29.2)		(35.7)	(25.7)				
08	White	70.7	76.3	5.6	74.7	78.2	3.5	75.3	75.3	(0.0)	78.1	78.2	0.1	7.3	1.8	(5.5)
	H/W gap	(46.8)	(35.1)		(45.4)	(34.0)		(49.9)	(33.7)		(43.7)	(31.3)				
08	Hispanic	23.9	41.3	17.3	29.3	44.2	14.9	25.4	41.6	16.2	34.4	46.9	12.5	10.5	5.6	(4.9)
09	Black	33.0	49.9	16.9	38.5	51.6	13.2	35.8	51.7	15.9	38.4	51.8	13.4	5.4	1.9	(3.5)
	B/W gap	(37.0)	(28.0)		(34.4)	(26.4)		(37.0)	(26.5)		(35.4)	(26.3)				
09	White	70.0	77.9	7.8	72.9	78.0	5.2	72.8	78.2	5.4	73.8	78.1	4.3	3.7	0.2	(3.5)
	H/W gap	(47.7)	(35.5)		(45.8)	(33.8)		(43.5)	(33.5)		(42.6)	(33.3)				
09	Hispanic	22.3	42.3	20.0	27.1	44.2	17.1	29.3	44.7	15.4	31.2	44.8	13.6	8.9	2.5	(6.4)
10	Black	35.7	47.3	11.5	38.3	52.9	14.5	36.4	54.7	18.3	41.7	51.7	10.0	6.0	4.5	(1.5)
	B/W gap	(37.0)	(28.6)		(38.7)	(24.3)		(36.0)	(24.5)		(31.9)	(23.8)				
10	White	72.7	75.9	3.1	77.1	77.1	0.0	72.4	79.2	6.8	73.6	75.5	1.9	0.9	(0.3)	(1.2)
	H/W gap	(47.1)	(34.4)		(47.5)	(31.5)		(41.6)	(30.0)		(38.3)	(29.2)				
10	Hispanic	25.6	41.5	15.8	29.6	45.6	16.1	30.8	49.2	18.3	35.3	46.3	11.1	9.7	4.9	(4.8)
All	Black	37.7	51.4	13.7	40.8	54.0	13.2	38.5	53.2	14.7	41.7	54.5	12.8	4.0	3.0	(0.9)
	B/W gap	(36.0)	(26.4)		(35.7)	(24.7)		(37.3)	(25.5)		(35.6)	(24.2)				
All	White	73.7	77.8	4.1	76.5	78.7	2.3	75.8	78.7	2.9	77.2	78.7	1.4	3.5	0.8	(2.7)
	H/W gap	(45.5)	(32.8)		(44.3)	(31.2)		(44.4)	(31.6)		(41.6)	(30.0)				
All	Hispanic	28.2	45.0	16.8	32.1	47.5	15.4	31.4	47.2	15.7	35.6	48.6	13.0	7.4	3.6	(3.8)

Percent of Students Achieving at the Proficient and Advanced Levels on CSAP Math by Racial Subgroups, 2005-2008

		2004 - 05			2005 - 06			2006 - 07			2007 - 08			3 yr change		
Gr.	Ethnicity	DPS	State non-DPS	Gap	DPS	State non-DPS	Gap	DPS	State non-DPS	Gap	DPS	State non-DPS	Gap	DPS	State non-DPS	Gap
03	Black	37.8	52.7	14.8	38.0	54.9	16.9	36.1	53.5	17.4	36.5	54.4	17.9	(1.3)	1.7	3.1
	B/W gap	(39.4)	(26.4)		(36.3)	(26.9)		(40.0)	(26.3)		(38.3)	(26.3)				
03	White	77.2	79.0	1.8	74.3	81.8	7.4	76.1	79.8	3.7	74.7	80.7	5.9	(2.5)	1.7	4.2
	H/W gap	(39.6)	(28.0)		(35.9)	(26.8)		(38.8)	(27.9)		(36.7)	(25.8)				
03	Hispanic	37.6	51.0	13.4	38.5	54.9	16.5	37.2	51.8	14.6	38.0	54.9	16.9	0.4	3.9	3.5
04	Black	33.7	50.1	16.4	36.5	52.0	15.5	41.7	54.9	13.2	35.7	52.4	16.7	2.1	2.3	0.3
	B/W gap	(40.0)	(26.5)		(39.1)	(27.5)		(35.8)	(25.7)		(40.7)	(26.5)				
04	White	73.7	76.6	2.9	75.6	79.5	3.9	77.5	80.6	3.1	76.4	78.9	2.5	2.7	2.3	(0.4)
	H/W gap	(37.0)	(28.5)		(36.6)	(26.8)		(34.5)	(26.1)		(35.6)	(26.4)				
04	Hispanic	36.6	48.1	11.5	39.0	52.8	13.7	43.0	54.5	11.5	40.8	52.5	11.6	4.2	4.4	0.1
05	Black	33.2	46.7	13.5	36.6	49.7	13.1	31.9	48.6	16.7	39.4	48.3	8.9	6.3	1.6	(4.7)
	B/W gap	(39.8)	(27.2)		(38.7)	(25.9)		(40.5)	(26.5)		(38.0)	(27.2)				
05	White	72.9	73.8	0.9	75.2	75.6	0.3	72.4	75.1	2.6	77.4	75.5	(1.9)	4.5	1.6	(2.9)
	H/W gap	(40.7)	(28.8)		(39.0)	(27.7)		(35.7)	(27.5)		(38.2)	(28.5)				
05	Hispanic	32.2	45.0	12.8	36.3	47.8	11.6	36.7	47.6	10.9	39.2	46.9	7.8	6.9	1.9	(5.0)
06	Black	20.2	35.8	15.5	27.1	38.8	11.7	30.2	43.1	12.9	29.3	43.5	14.1	9.1	7.7	(1.4)
	B/W gap	(44.6)	(32.7)		(38.3)	(29.6)		(37.5)	(28.1)		(39.8)	(27.9)				
06	White	64.8	68.5	3.6	65.4	68.4	3.0	67.7	71.1	3.5	69.1	71.4	2.2	4.3	2.9	(1.4)
	H/W gap	(41.9)	(32.6)		(39.7)	(31.6)		(34.7)	(31.2)		(32.7)	(29.1)				
06	Hispanic	23.0	35.8	12.9	25.7	36.8	11.1	33.0	39.9	6.9	36.4	42.2	5.8	13.4	6.4	(7.0)
07	Black	15.2	25.3	10.0	12.9	24.3	11.4	21.3	30.8	9.5	16.6	27.0	10.4	1.4	1.7	0.4
	B/W gap	(34.9)	(32.0)		(41.5)	(32.0)		(37.8)	(31.2)		(37.9)	(30.0)				
07	White	50.1	57.3	7.2	54.4	56.2	1.8	59.1	62.0	2.9	54.5	57.0	2.5	4.4	(0.3)	(4.7)
	H/W gap	(37.4)	(33.1)		(41.6)	(32.0)		(38.0)	(32.7)		(34.9)	(31.4)				
07	Hispanic	12.7	24.2	11.5	12.8	24.3	11.4	21.0	29.3	8.3	19.6	25.6	6.0	6.9	1.4	(5.4)
08	Black	9.2	24.9	15.8	14.0	24.8	10.8	14.1	25.5	11.4	16.7	29.1	12.4	7.5	4.2	(3.3)
	B/W gap	(34.7)	(30.0)		(36.2)	(31.1)		(40.1)	(31.7)		(38.1)	(28.9)				
08	White	43.9	54.9	11.1	50.2	55.9	5.7	54.3	57.2	2.9	54.8	58.0	3.2	10.9	3.1	(7.8)
	H/W gap	(34.8)	(31.6)		(36.1)	(32.5)		(40.2)	(32.5)		(37.3)	(31.9)				
08	Hispanic	9.0	23.3	14.3	14.0	23.4	9.3	14.0	24.7	10.6	17.5	26.1	8.7	8.4	2.8	(5.6)
09	Black	5.8	13.6	7.8	9.4	19.1	9.7	9.2	14.2	5.0	9.0	18.5	9.5	3.2	4.9	1.7
	B/W gap	(32.3)	(29.5)		(35.2)	(29.9)		(33.9)	(31.4)		(38.1)	(30.2)				
09	White	38.1	43.0	4.9	44.6	49.0	4.4	43.1	45.6	2.6	47.1	48.7	1.6	9.0	5.7	(3.3)
	H/W gap	(33.2)	(29.7)		(36.1)	(32.0)		(33.5)	(30.8)		(36.9)	(31.1)				
09	Hispanic	4.9	13.4	8.5	8.5	17.0	8.5	9.6	14.8	5.2	10.2	17.6	7.4	5.4	4.2	(1.1)
10	Black	4.2	10.4	6.2	6.8	11.8	5.0	5.2	12.5	7.3	7.9	12.0	4.0	3.7	1.6	(2.2)
	B/W gap	(32.5)	(26.9)		(34.0)	(26.6)		(31.9)	(26.3)		(32.6)	(26.9)				
10	White	36.7	37.3	0.6	40.8	38.4	(2.4)	37.2	38.8	1.7	40.6	38.9	(1.7)	3.9	1.5	(2.4)
	H/W gap	(32.8)	(26.9)		(35.4)	(27.0)		(31.9)	(27.1)		(33.5)	(27.2)				
10	Hispanic	3.9	10.4	6.5	5.4	11.4	6.0	5.2	11.7	6.5	7.1	11.6	4.5	3.2	1.2	(2.0)
All	Black	19.7	32.6	13.0	22.1	34.3	12.2	23.0	35.1	12.1	23.5	35.5	12.0	3.9	2.9	(1.0)
	B/W gap	(37.4)	(28.0)		(37.8)	(28.1)		(38.1)	(28.1)		(38.8)	(27.7)				
All	White	57.1	60.7	3.6	59.9	62.5	2.5	61.1	63.2	2.1	62.3	63.2	0.9	5.2	2.5	(2.7)
	H/W gap	(35.6)	(28.4)		(36.0)	(28.2)		(34.7)	(28.3)		(34.8)	(27.8)				
All	Hispanic	21.4	32.2	10.8	24.0	34.3	10.3	26.4	34.9	8.6	27.5	35.4	8.0	6.0	3.2	(2.8)

APPENDIX C. ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Advanced Placement Test Results in Denver by School

School Name	Art 3D	Art 2D	Art Drawing	Biology	Calculus AB	Calculus BC	Chemistry	Comp. Science A	Economics Macro	Economics Micro	English Lang.	English Lit.	Environ. Science	Eur. History	French Language	French Literature	History of Art	US Government	Human Geography	Music Theory	Physics B	Psychology	Spanish Lang	Spanish Literature	Statistics	US History	World History	Number of Tests*	% Scoring 3 or higher
Abraham Lincoln HS					5							26		49							28		33	19		21		181	24.3
Denver Arts			1	10	9						36	18	1	63	1	1				1						27	23	191	50.8
East High School	9		8	48	24	46	16	11			144	142		51	10			26	57	13	19	65	66		43	129	40	967	51.9
George Washington HS				19		37	7		1		58	17		9	7			2			6	4	10			13		190	20.0
John F Kennedy HS						10	12					20		15									16	1		10		84	46.4
Montbello High School	3	3	8	26	9		17				62	46						49	27				25			33	25	333	7.5
North High School					14	2	7				18	27		11								21	30			53		183	16.9
South High School			6	15	13		12		9	9		8		24			10	16					17			37		176	29.5
Thomas Jefferson HS				6	18		4				44	7						46					6			44	13	188	31.9
West HS							13																20	23				56	28.6
TOTAL	**12**	**3**	**23**	**124**	**92**	**95**	**88**	**11**	**10**	**9**	**362**	**311**	**1**	**222**	**18**	**1**	**10**	**139**	**84**	**14**	**53**	**90**	**223**	**43**	**43**	**367**	**101**	**2549**	

*Tests taken do not include counts for subscore grades and thus may not match district totals and the proportion of students scoring a 3 or higher.
Darker boxes indicate that 90-100% of students taking that AP test scored 3 or higher.
Lightly-shaded boxes indicate that 0% of students taking that test scored 3 or higher.

APPENDIX D. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

APPENDIX D. INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

- Michael Bennet, Superintendent
- Amy Friedman, Director of Academic Operations
- Brad Jupp, Senior Academic Policy Advisor
- David Suppes, Chief Strategy Officer
- Maureen Sanders, Director of Leadership Development
- Cheryl Caldwell, Director Early Childhood Education
- Robert Good Ed.D, Director of Assessment
- Susana Cordova, Executive Director of Language, Literacy and Cultural Studies
- Excier Rodriguez, Director of English Language Acquisition Program
- Elena A. Sodano, Program Manager, English Language Acquisition Program
- Cathy Martin, Director Math and Science
- Betty Johnson, Smith Elementary Principal
- Merida Fraguada, Marrama Elementary Principal (?)
- Peter Sherman, Valdez Elementary Principal
- Wendy Lanier, Henry Middle School Principal
- Sylvia Bookhardt, Rishel Middle School Principal
- Kristin Waters, Bruce Randolph Secondary Principal (6-12)
- Antonio Esquibel, Abraham Lincoln High School (9-12)
- Donna Middlebrooks, Executive Director, A+ Denver
- James Mejia, CEO, Denver Preschool Program, former President/COO, Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, former Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, and former Denver School Board Member
- Mark Furmanich, Research Director, Colorado Children's Campaign
- Nancy Zuecher, JVA Consulting and consultant to A+ Denver
- Ann Bye Rowe, Co-chair, A+ Denver, and Chair, Colorado Children's Campaign Citizens for Denver Schools
- Sari Levi, Education Program Associate, Piton Foundation
- Theresa Peña, School Board Member
- Michelle Moss, School Board Member
- Bruce Hoyt, School Board Member
- Tracy Dorland, Instructional Superintendent Elementary Network #3
- Joe Sandoval, Instructional Superintendent Alternative Education
- Laurie Grosselfinger, Instructional Superintendent K-8 Network
- Antwan Wilson, Instructional Superintendent High School Network
- Robert Woodson, Instructional Superintendent Elementary Network # 2
- Maria Iams, Elementary Humanities Instructional Specialist (Coaches)
- Brenda Wray, Elementary Math/Science Instructional Specialist
- Kent Epperson, Assessment Instructional Specialist
- Nancy Connor, Title I Director
- Cheryl Karstaedt, Executive Director, Division of Student Services
- Sharon Hurst, Director of Special Education
- Barbara Neyrinck, Manager, Gifted and Talented Education
- Rebeca Blocker, Director of Gifted and Talented Education

- Scott Springer, Executive Director, Post-Secondary Pathways
- Kim Usetta, Denver Teachers Association President
- Judy Morr, CTE Program Manager
- Dr. Ginger Maloney, University of Denver
- Dr. Sandra Haynes, Metropolitan State College of Denver
- Cindy Gutierrez, University of Colorado Denver
- Laurie Bourg, Facilitator, Smith Elementary—Humanities
- Michael Roth, Facilitator, Dora Moore K-8—Math
- Elizabeth Douma, Facilitator, Hill Middle School—Humanities
- Erin Mack, Facilitator, Kunsmiller Middle School—Humanities
- Virginia Newton, Facilitator, Smiley Middle School—Humanities
- Kevin Simmering, Knapp Elementary Teacher
- Bonnie Staak, Ellis Elementary Teacher
- Courtney Waring, Asbury Elementary Teacher
- Julie Chapman, Asbury Elementary Teacher
- Amy Hempe, Abraham Lincoln High School Teacher
- Richard García, Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition
- Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People
- Pam/Ricardo Martinez, Padres Unidos
- Marsha Gonzalez, District School Improvement Accountability Committee
- Erika Reyes, Hispanic Chamber Education Foundation
- Lori Mack, Denver Workforce Development, Youth Services
- Mari Dorschner, Denver County PTA President
- Kristy Esbenshad, Goodwill Industries
- Pensal McCrae, Ethnic College Counseling Center
- Stephanie Hoy, Colorado Assets for Youth
- Jody Todd, Parent, Montclair
- Wendell Smith, Parent, Smiley NE Academy (Black Parent Alliance)
- Bryce Rodgers, Parent, Barney Ford (Black Parent Alliance)
- Marlene DeLaRosa, Parent Empowerment Council, DCIS, East
- Cindy Daisley, Parent, North PTA
- Derek Hawkins, Parent, Waller School
- Norma Salas, Parent, Rishel Middle School
- Andrea Gordon, Parent, GW/Slavens School
- Dominick Casados, Parent, Force Elementary
- Marta Portillo, Parent, Edison Elementary and May Middle Schools

APPENDIX E. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

APPENDIX E. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Notebook Furnished to the Team

- Office of New Schools PowerPoint
- Principal Performance Compensation, January 9, 2008
- Office of New Schools, Overview
- Mitchell, N. and Morson, B. "DPS School closure plan gets good marks early on", *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, Monday October 1, 2007.
- Editorial Board. "School closure plan on target" *The Denver Post*, Monday, October 1, 2008.
- *Rocky Mountain News* editorial, "Fewer, better schools." October 2, 2008.
- Denver Public Schools Five-Year Goals, Draft August 7, 2008
- Board of Education Meeting Agenda, June 19, 2008
- Board of Education Meeting Agenda, June 26, 2008
- Board of Education Special Meeting Agenda, August 21, 2008
- Report of the A+ Denver Finances and Facilities Sub-Committee, July 27, 2007
- A+ Denver Facilities & Finance Subcommittee Report on ProComp, August 2008
- School Improvement/Title I Schoolwide Planning Process: Handbook and Forms, February 2007
- Three Common Expectations, dated 7/29/2008
- Principal's Institute Agendas: August 6, 2007' September 24, 2007; October 15, 2007; November 5, 2007; December 16, 2007; January 9, 2008; February 4, 2008; April 7, 2008; and June 2-4, 2008
- Parent Guide to Standards-Based Reporting, Grade3 and Grade 7
- Mathematics in Denver Public Schools
- Look Fors in ECE-5 Mathematics
- Best Practices in Kindergarten Mathematics
- Best Practices in Grades 1-5 Mathematics
- The University of Chicago School Mathematics Project (overview of *Everyday Mathematics)*
- Mathematics in DPS Elementary Schools: Three Tier/RTI Model
- Third Grade Time Frame: *Everyday Mathematics* (Third Edition) 2008-2009
- Look Fors in Grades 6-8 Mathematics
- Best Practices in Grades 6-8 Mathematics
- Overview of *Connected Mathematics Project* (CMP)
- Mathematics in DPS Middle Schools: Three Tier/RTI Model
- Look Fors in Grades 9-12 Mathematics
- Best Practices in Grades 9-12 Mathematics
- Basic Facts about *Discovering Mathematics*
- Mathematics in DPS High Schools: Three Tier/RTI Model
- Mathematics Planning (Guide): Third Grade
- Fifth Grade Science Planning Guide
- Benchmark Assessment: Reading Grade 3, Test 3 2008
- Benchmark Assessment: Writing Grade 3, Test 3 2008

- Benchmark Assessment: Mathematics Grade 3, Test 3 2008
- Denver Public Schools "What is Career and Technology Education?" Pamphlet
- VE135 Enrollment Text File Summary
- Choice of Career Studies 2008-2009, Middle College of Denver
- Traditional Choice Application Information, School Year 2008-2009
- Enrollment Guide: Denver public Schools, 2008-2009
- Go to DPS, Go to College, 2008-2009
- Elementary Schools Capping List, August 19, 2008
- "Core Matters": Collaborative Opportunities for Responsive Education Launch
- Data and School Improvement Administrators Job Description
- Colorado ACT Performance, September 5, 2008
- 2088 School AP Test Summary
- 2008 District AP Test Summary
- Special Education Students by School and Ethnicity, December Counts 2007
- Count of Gifted and Talented Students by School, September 5, 2008
- Count of Gifted and talented Students by School by Gender, September 5, 2008
- Denver Public Schools School-Based Administrator Evaluation Handbook
- Professional Development Plan for Administrators (form)
- School-Based Administrator's Mid Year Evaluation (form)
- Self Evaluation, School-Based Administrator (form)
- End-of-Year Evaluation, School-Based Administrator (form)
- Improvement Plan—School Administrator (form)
- Agreement and Partnership between School District No. 1 in the City and County of Denver, State of Colorado and Denver Classroom Teachers Association, September 1, 2005 – August 31, 2008
- Professional Evaluation Handbook for Teacher, Student Services Professionals, Student Services Professionals—Itinerant, Curriculum Specialists, and Evaluators, Denver Public Schools 2008, Article 10 (Teacher Evaluation)
- Classroom Teacher Comprehensive Professional Evaluation Form
- Denver Public Schools 2008-2009 School Program Offerings
- Editorial, Détente in Denver, *Rocky Mountain News*, Thursday, December 6, 2007
- Editorial, A swelling movement, *Rocky Mountain News*, January 19, 2008
- Editorial, Teachers union missed a chance, *The Denver Post*, January 24, 2008
- Mitchell, N., Two DPS schools gain freedom in hiring, *Rocky Mountain News*, Wednesday, February 13, 2008
- Editorial, MLK's heirs?, *Rocky Mountain News*, January 24, 2008
- Meyer, J., Education-Bill Signing Educates, *The Denver Post*, Thursday, May 29
- Supplemental Service Providers, 2007-2008
- Supplemental Service Providers by Number of Students Served, 2007-2008
- Literacy Program Curriculum Materials and Rationale
- District SAR Summary by School – Elementary
- School Improvement Status 2002-2008
- AYP Status of SES Schools 2006-2007 through 2008-2009
- Literacy Instructional Planning Guide, Grade 3
- School Performance Framework 2008 Reports
- School Performance Framework 2008 Reports, Network HS

Other Materials Reviewed

- Colorado Department of Education Mathematics Fact Sheet
- Colorado Department of Education Mathematics Assessment Framework, Grade 3
- Denver Public Schools School Performance Framework (handout at workshop)
- Denver Public Schools Post Secondary Planning Guidelines, Revised My CAP (8-8-08)
- SPF Rating and Indicator Summary Report, September 10, 2008
- 2008 Highly Gifted and Talented Identification Matrix
- Count of Gifted and Talented Students by School
  - Number and Percentage by ELL Status
  - Number and Percentage by Ethnicity
  - Number and Percentage by Gender
- Mile High Parents Campaign Launches in Denver Schools
- ELA Program Overview PowerPoint
- Order of the U.S. District Court, Denver Public Schools, ELA Program June 16, 1999
- ELA Department WebPages—
  - Instructional Advisory Team Description and Team Training PowerPoint
  - Differences Between Three Options on Parent Permission Form (ELA-S, ELA-E, and PPF3)
  - ELA Program Schools—ELA School Designations
  - ELA Zone Schools (http://ela.dpsk12.org, accessed 1/19/2009)
- Language Allocation Tables for Elementary and for Secondary ELA Programs
- Data Tables--
  - ELA Program Participation by School
  - ELA Program Participation by Race and Gender
  - Overall CELA Data (6/30/2008)
  - Languages by School Type
  - ELL Count by School disaggregated by 'Spanish' and 'Other Languages' (6/30/2008)
  - Elementary Services (ELA-S, ELA-E, and Mainstream) by CELA level (6/30/2008) by School
  - Three year (2005-06, 2006-07, 2008-09) CSAP data for 4^{th}, 8^{th}, and 10^{th} graders by ELA program
- ELA Program Student Achievement Data Summary (prepared by the ELA Department)
- Pearson Longman Shining Star Series Description and Pacing Chart
- Keys to Learning Series Description
- DPS Shining Star and Keys to Learning Text Adoption PowerPoint
- Hampton-Brown Avenues correlated to Open Court Reading
- DPS Department of Planning and Analysis—Comparison of Student membership by Grade Level 2007-2008 and 2008-09
- ELA Program (Court Order) Chapter 5, Exiting From the Program. Section II Progress Toward Instruction in English.
- 06-07 Title III Accountability Report
- Elementary Services by CELA Level, Data as of 6/30/2008 for spring semester

- Denver Expands Preschool Options, *The Piton Perspective*, Summer 2008
- Ready for Kindergarten
- *Opening the World of Learning: A Comprehensive Early Literacy Program*, Program Guide, Pearson Early Learning
- *Opening the World of Learning: Evaluating Language and Literacy in Four-Year-Olds*, Pearson Early Learning
- Qualistar Rating Status, June 30, 2008
- Spring CBLA Outcomes
- Time for Professional Development at the Building Level Per the DCTA Agreement
- Denver Public Schools 2008-2009 Amended School Year Calendar
- Annual Review—IEP Completion
- Indicator 9: Percent of Districts with Disproportionate Representation of Racial and Ethnic Groups in Special Education
- Palaich, R. and Kramer-Wine, J., Evaluation of the Ritchie Program for School Leaders, September 10, 2008
- An Action Plan to Create a 21st Century School system. Working Draft—September 14, 2008
- A Vision for a 21st Century School District. Superintendent Michael Bennet and the Denver School Board.

APPENDIX F. STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

APPENDIX F. STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

Michael Casserly

Michael Casserly is the Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of 66 of the nation's largest urban public school districts—including Newark's. Dr. Casserly has been with the organization for 28 years, 13 of them as Executive Director. Before heading the group, he was the organization's chief lobbyist on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and served as the Council's director of research. Dr. Casserly has led major reforms in federal education laws, has garnered significant aid for urban schools across the country, has spurred major gains in urban school achievement and management, and has advocated for urban school leadership in the standards movement. He led the organization in holding the nation's first summit of urban school superintendents and big-city mayors. He has a Ph.D. degree from the University of Maryland and a B.A. degree from Villanova University.

Muffet Garber

Muffet Garber recently retired as the Associate Superintendent for the prekindergarten through Grade 12 Curriculum in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School District. She was responsible for overseeing support services for academics in over 150 schools. Departments under her supervision included pre-k, elementary, middle and high school, English as a Second Language, Exceptional Children, Professional Development, Talent Development, Grants and Athletics. She selected and implemented the roll out of a comprehensive reading plan resulting in continued academic gains. She rewrote and re-aligned their nationally-recognized Pre-K program to meet national standards. Her career in Charlotte Mecklenburg began in 1977 as an elementary teacher, and then as an elementary assistant principal and principal. As principal of Elizabeth Traditional Elementary, the school was recognized each year for making state goals at the highest level. She also served as a regional superintendent for 32 schools. Mrs. Garber has two Master's Degrees in Reading, Curriculum and Instruction, Supervision and Instruction from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Ricki-Price Baugh

Ricki Price-Baugh is the Director of Academic Achievement of the Council of the Great City Schools. Formerly, she was the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Professional Development and Alternative Certification in the Houston Independent School District. There, she led strategic planning and the design, implementation, and evaluation of the district's curriculum and instructional initiatives in eight content areas and was responsible for professional development for teachers and administrators, alternate routes into teaching, and new teacher induction. During her 35 years with the Houston schools, Dr. Price-Baugh served as a teacher, department chair, software resource coordinator, project manager, and director of curriculum services. Her major accomplishments included a districtwide effort to define precise district expectations for

students at every grade level and to ensure that there was a clear progression of concepts and skills across grade levels. The new curriculum included suggestions for instruction, explicit information about where each adopted textbook needed to be supplemented to meet standards, how to assess student learning, a system of model lessons that demonstrated how a teacher might approach the teaching of difficult concepts, and a series of benchmark tests in the four core content areas. The district made substantial increases in student achievement scores, while narrowing the achievement gap across subgroups. Dr. Price-Baugh has a doctoral degree from Baylor University, a master's degree in Spanish literature from the University of Maryland, and a B. A. (*magna cum laude*) from Tulane University.

Gabriela Uro

Gabriela Uro is the Manager for English Language Learner Policy and Research and formerly was the Manager for Intergovernmental Relations for the Council of the Great City Schools. As part of the legislative team, she works on legislative matters relevant to ELLs, both with Congress and the Administration. She also works with the Council's Research and the Strategic Support Teams on projects pertaining to ELL issues. Prior to joining the Council, Ms. Uro served as the policy advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Director of the Office of Bilingual Education (now English Acquisition) in the U.S. Department of Education. She brought 13 years of education policy and budget experience to the U.S. Department of Education and was part of the Department's team for the 1994 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization and the subsequent implementation teams for Title VII, Title I and the Regional Assistance Centers. Ms. Uro received an M.P.A. degree from Columbia University with a specialization in education policy and a B.A. degree from the University of California, Irvine (*magma cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa).

Joanne Urrutia

Joanne H. Urrutia is the Administrative Director for the Division of Bilingual Education and World Languages, Miami-Dade County Public Schools. She is a native of Puerto Rico where she completed her undergraduate work at the University of Puerto Rico. In 1972 she began her teaching career in New York City, teaching in a college preparatory program for City University of New York. In 1975, she moved to Miami, Florida, where she has come up through the ranks from a high school teacher to her present position. She has a Masters Degree from Florida International University and a Doctorate from NOVA Southeastern University. Dr. Urrutia has many years of experience and expertise in the implementation of bilingual programs including those that address the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) students and their families, and programs that provide native speakers of English the opportunity to study world languages. She began her involvement with bilingual education in 1989 as project manager of a software development project for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Under her leadership the infusion of technology into the ESOL instruction has become an integral part of Miami-Dade's program. Presently, Dr. Urrutia has overall responsibilities for all instructional programs for LEP students, dual-language programs, and foreign language instruction district wide.

She has been instrumental in the expansion of the International Studies (IS) program which offers programs in cooperation with the governments of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Dr. Urrutia has used her expertise and experience to assist school districts around the nation in grant writing, evaluation, and implementation of bilingual programs. She has also assisted the departments of education in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Puerto Rico and has been a volunteer member of Florida Association of Volunteer Agencies for Caribbean Action (FAVACA).

APPENDIX G. ABOUT THE COUNCIL

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Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 67 of the nation's largest urban public school districts. Its Board of Directors is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and one School Board member from each member city. An Executive Committee of 24 individuals, equally divided in number between Superintendents and School Board members, provides regular oversight of the 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public education and assist its members in the improvement of leadership and instruction. The Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management. The group convenes two major conferences each year; conducts studies on urban school conditions and trends; and operates ongoing networks of senior school district managers with responsibilities in areas such as federal programs, operations, finance, personnel, communications, research, and technology. The Council was founded in 1956 and incorporated in 1961, and has its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

History of Strategic Support Teams Conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005
	Legal Services	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
	Communications	2008
Birmingham		
	Organizational Structure	2007
	Operations	2008
Boston		
	Special Education	2009
Broward County (FL)		
	Information Technology	2000
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
Christina (DE)		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
Cleveland		

	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000
	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Safety and Security	2008
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Information Technology	2007
	Food Services	2007
Dallas		
	Procurement	2007
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002
	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002

	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Food Services	2007
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Facilities	2008
	Finance and Budget	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Procurement	2008
Greensboro		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
Hillsborough County (FLA)		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
Indianapolis		
	Transportation	2007
Jackson (MS)		
	Bond Referendum	2006
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002
	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Program Implementation	2007
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005

	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
Memphis		
	Information Technology	2007
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Alternative Education	2007
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Food Services	2009
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
New York City		
	Special Education	2008
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004

	Finance	2008
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Human Resources	2007
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
	Special Education	2008
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
Seattle		
	Human Resources	2008
	Budget and Finance	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Bilingual Education	2008
	Transportation	2008
	Facilities	2008

	Procurement	2008
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007