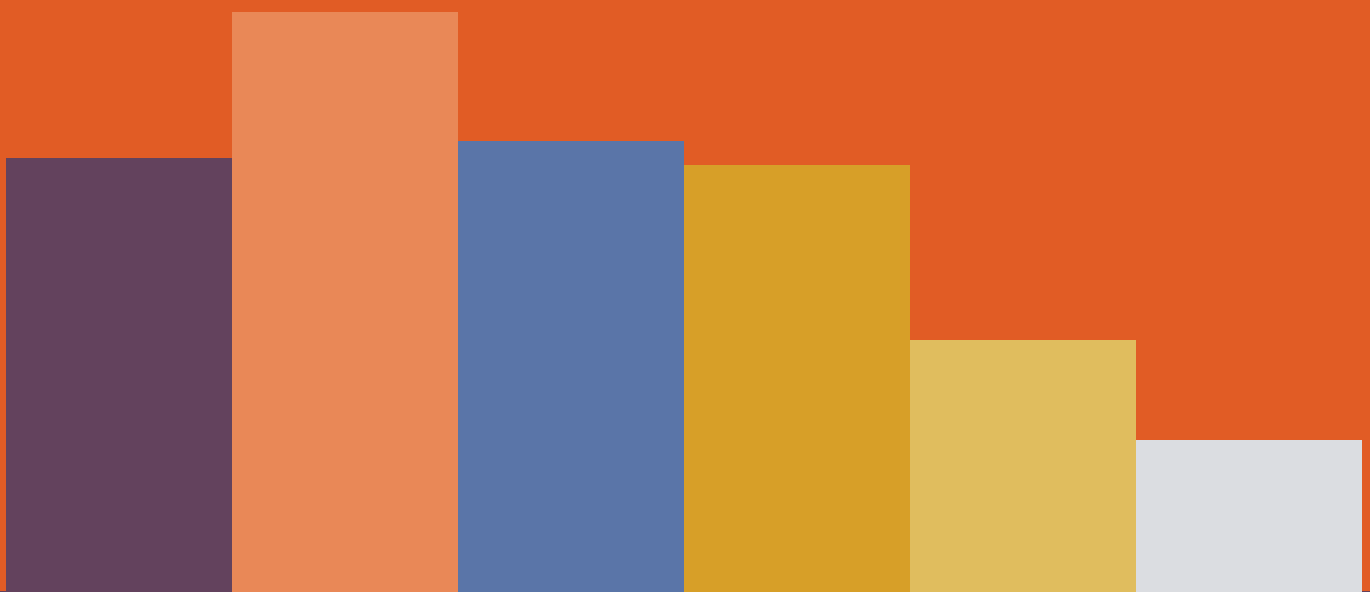


Start with the Facts

Strengthening Denver Public Schools' Education Pipeline



A+ Denver

The mission of A+ Denver is to harness the power of Denver's civic leadership to build public will and advocate for the changes necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in public education in Denver. We are an independent, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization working to bring the power of Denver's citizens to the effort of school reform. A+ Denver members include community and business leaders; parents; and representatives from local foundations and universities.

303.725.1151
www.aplusdenver.org

Colorado Children's Campaign

The Colorado Children's Campaign is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research and advocacy organization focused on improving the quality of and expanding access to child health, K-12 and early childhood learning and development and works to improve the state's ability to respond to children's needs appropriately through fiscal reforms.

303.620.4529
www.coloradokids.org

Metro Organizations for People

Metro Organizations for People (MOP) was founded in 1979 with the mission of empowering ordinary people to strengthen and transform their communities through community organizing. MOP trains volunteer community leaders, through a membership base of congregations and schools, to re-weave the web of relationships in community so that they can effectively work together across race, class and language barriers to rediscover a common good leading to a higher quality of life for our families, children and neighbors. MOP is an affiliate of the PICO National Network.

303.399.2425
www.mopdenver.org

Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
DPS Education Pipeline	6
Enrollment	8
Student Achievement	10
Student Academic Growth	15
Graduation Rates	16
College and Work Readiness	17
Benefits of a More Effective Pipeline	18
Recommendations	19
Endnotes	20

Introduction

Evaluating student achievement in Denver

Public Schools (DPS) starts with taking a hard look at where performance stands.

In this report, we examine key transition points across the education pipeline, from preschool through college. We gauge student progress – or lack of progress. And we identify challenges. That way, we can direct attention toward promising strategies that will allow all DPS students the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.

We hope that you will read this report not only with the system in mind but also, more importantly, with a focus on what is really at stake – the future of our young students and our state. As revealing as we believe the data to be, they do not reflect the concern and the commitment that will be needed to use this information to better serve our kids. Where the data show progress, let's celebrate; where they point out disturbing trends, let's get to work.

Amid the sometimes shrill debates, recall the words of Daniel Patrick Moynihan: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." The hard numbers provided here may seem cold. The young lives they represent are alive and full of possibilities. This report is about their future.



Everyone is
entitled to his own
opinion, but not his
own facts.”

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN

Executive Summary

Measuring academic success as students

progress from preschool through high school and into college provides important information about the quality of the DPS education system.

This report uses the latest data available to look at key transition points for DPS students from 2005 to 2011 to identify:

- **Outcomes and trends** in academic achievement and growth as students move from preschool through K-12 and into college; and
- **Potential barriers** to success.

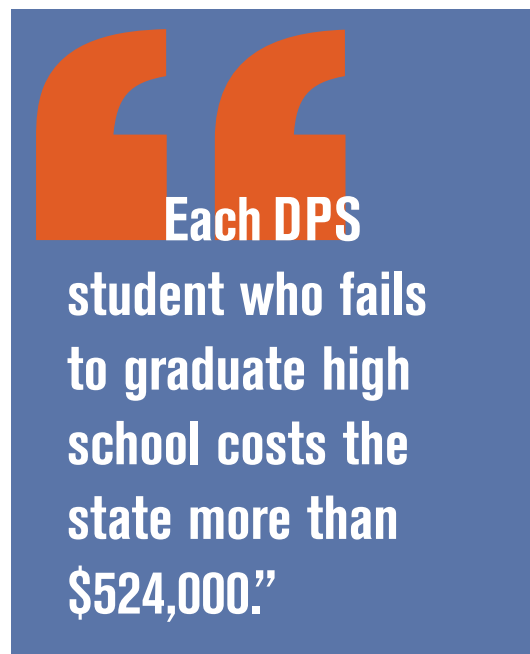
DPS has much to be proud of. Across all grades and subjects, the district is making significant gains in improving academic achievement, especially among lower-income students, who are the primary focus of this report. Indeed, very few, if any, Colorado school districts have consistently made this level of progress. That said, DPS student outcomes for each grade and in each subject area remain below state averages. Primary findings include:

- **Enrollment in DPS schools:** Enrollment in DPS schools is up. Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of Denver K-12 students attending DPS schools increased from 76 percent (63,380 students) to 81 percent (69,375 students). Despite this increase, compared to other large school districts in the state, DPS has the highest number of students choosing to enroll elsewhere.
- **Preschool and kindergarten:** Data indicate that lower-income Denver children participating in preschool programs catch up with their higher-income peers in terms of language and literacy; cognition; and physical, social, and emotional development by the end of the preschool year.

“DPS is making significant gains in improving academic achievement, [but] student outcomes remain below state averages.”

- Elementary school:** Between 2005 and 2011, DPS 4th graders overall made progress in each subject area. Despite this progress, higher-income DPS students improved faster than their lower-income peers, widening the achievement gap. For example, in reading, the gap increased from 35 percentage points in 2005 to 43 points in 2011.
- Middle school:** Among DPS students, 8th graders made the greatest overall improvement in the percentage scoring proficient or advanced between 2005 and 2011. Both higher- and lower-income DPS students improved faster than students statewide in all subjects, especially in math. And in 2011, the achievement gap that is evident in DPS elementary school reading is slightly smaller in middle school.
- High school:** Since 2005, the percentage of DPS 10th graders scoring proficient or advanced has increased in all subjects for both higher- and lower-income students, outpacing gains in state averages. But proficiency levels drop across all subjects between middle and high school for both higher- and lower-income students.
- High school graduation:** DPS on-time graduation rates have increased slightly, from 46.4 percent in 2009 to 51.8 percent in 2010, while annual high school dropout rates have decreased substantially, falling from 11.1 percent in 2006 to 6.4 percent in 2010.
- Transition to postsecondary:** ACT composite scores have improved from 15.4 in 2005 to 17.6 in 2011, outpacing growth at the state level. The number and percentage of DPS students going to college have significantly improved, but the number and percentage requiring remediation in college also have increased.

Creating a stronger education pipeline would substantially benefit both students and all other citizens of Colorado. Each DPS student who fails to graduate high school costs the state more than \$524,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower income from taxes and increased expenses for social services, such as health care and criminal justice. Do the math. The class of 2010 lost 2,326 students between 9th grade and graduation day. Cost: more than \$1.2 billion.



Each DPS
student who fails
to graduate high
school costs the
state more than
\$524,000.”

DPS Education Pipeline: Encouraging trends, but more improvement needed

Measuring academic achievement and progress as students transition from preschool

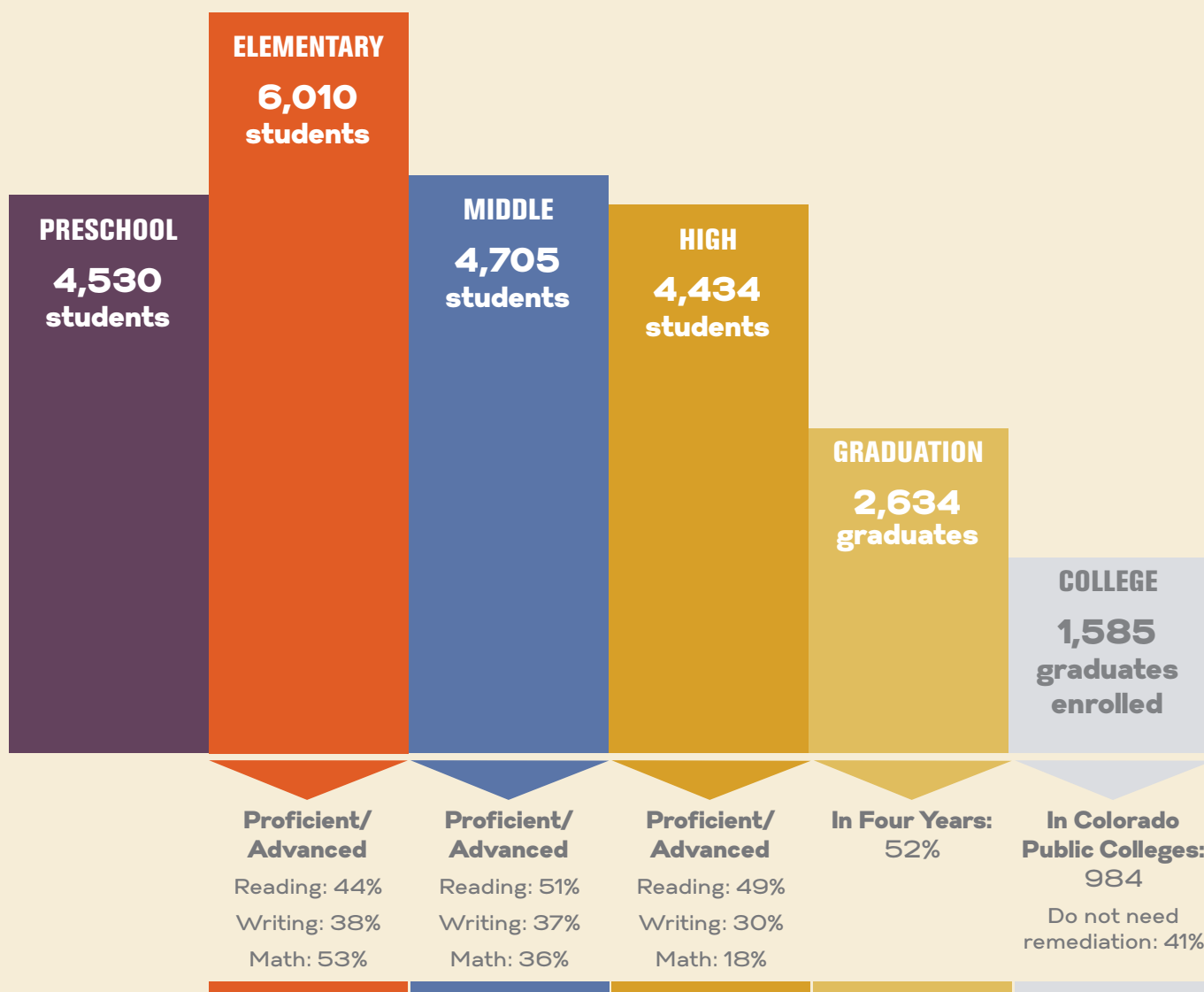
through high school and beyond provides policymakers, education advocates, educators, parents, and students a way to assess the education system.

School and student achievement data are more meaningful when they can be compared across the entire education pipeline and across districts and the state, rather than analyzing only isolated segments in one district alone. Colorado's common, statewide assessment tools allow performance and progress to be measured and compared at key transition points to better highlight:

- **Outcomes and trends** in academic achievement and growth as students move from preschool through K-12 and into college;
- **Potential barriers** to success; and
- **Strategies and possible solutions** to help reduce barriers.

For this report, the first stage or transition point is preschool. Fourth, 8th, and 10th grades are key transition points from elementary to middle to high school. ACT scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment and remediation rates shed light on the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

DPS Enrollment and Proficiency

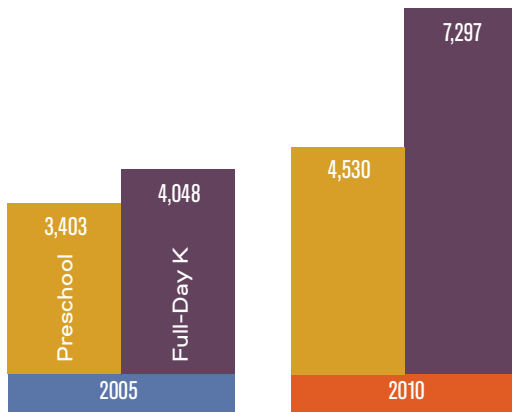


Note: The elementary bar represents 4th grade students only, the middle bar 8th grade students, and the high bar 10th grade students.

Sources: Colorado Department of Education 2010 Pupil Membership for DPS by Grade; 2011 Colorado Student Assessment Program District and School Disaggregated Summary Data; Class of 2010 Graduation Data; 2010 College Enrollment Data National Student Clearinghouse, 2005–10; and Colorado Commission on Higher Education, 2010 Legislative Report on Remedial Education.

Enrollment: More Denver students attending DPS schools, but many choosing other districts

Number of Children (3 to 5 Years Old) Attending DPS Preschool and Full-Day Kindergarten



Source: Colorado Department of Education, Pupil Membership by Grade, 2005–10.

More students are enrolling in DPS schools, in terms of both absolute numbers and the percentage of the total Denver child population.

- Preschool enrollment in DPS schools increased 30 percentage points from 2005 to 2010, rising from 3,403 to 4,530 students.
- The number of children attending full-day kindergarten increased 80 percentage points, rising from 4,048 to 7,297 students.

In part, this trend reflects the state's commitment to create a P–20 education system,¹ changes in how the state funds preschool and kindergarten programs,² and the creation of the Denver Preschool Program in 2006.³

Enrollment trends also are positive in the K–12 portion of the pipeline.

- Between 2000 and 2010, Denver's total population of school-age children grew 1 percentage point (1,264 children), but at the same time, DPS K–12 student enrollment rose 6 percentage points (5,995 children), according to the U.S. Census.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the number of school-age children living in Denver but not attending DPS declined from 20,607 to 15,876.
- Put another way, the percentage of Denver students choosing to enroll in DPS schools increased from 76 percent to 81 percent.

An analysis by *Education News Colorado* notes that statewide, nearly one in 10 students attends a school outside his or her home district. National online programs, growth of public charter schools, and private school enrollment contribute to this trend.

While out-of-district enrollment is not unique to Denver, **some trends bear watching when comparing DPS performance to that of other large counties in Colorado:**

- Across the state, DPS has the highest number of students choosing to enroll in an outside district, and that number has increased slightly over the past six years.
- Other districts, such as Littleton, Mapleton, and Adams 12 Five Star, have large numbers of other-district students choosing to enroll in their schools.⁴

- In 2010, 4,317 outsiders chose to enroll in DPS; 7,732 Denver students chose to enroll elsewhere.
- In 2010, the majority of Denver students who chose an out-of-district school enrolled in Jefferson County (2,536 students), followed by Douglas County (1,156), Aurora (828), Littleton 6 (776), and the Charter School Institute (555).⁵
- With the exception of Aurora, these districts tend to be less diverse and have higher average family incomes, higher rates of proficiency on state tests, higher ACT composite scores, and higher graduation rates.

Number of Students “Choicing In or Out” of DPS and Select Districts, 2010

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT 2010	STUDENTS “CHOICING IN”	STUDENTS “CHOICING OUT”	NET GAIN OR LOSS
Denver	69,375	4,317	7,732	(3,415)
Aurora	38,605	2,912	3,218	(306)
Douglas	61,465	3,407	2,603	804
Jefferson	85,938	5,411	3,424	1,987
Littleton 6	15,733	2,846	790	2,056

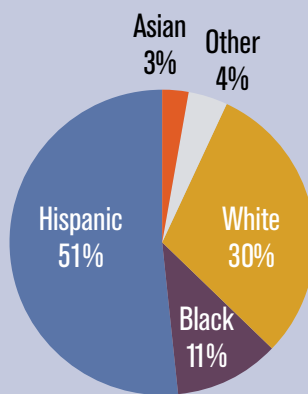
Source: Colorado Department of Education, Pupil Membership, *Students Attending Public Schools Not in Parent’s District of Residence, 2010*.

Denver Child Population: Large, Diverse, and Lower Income

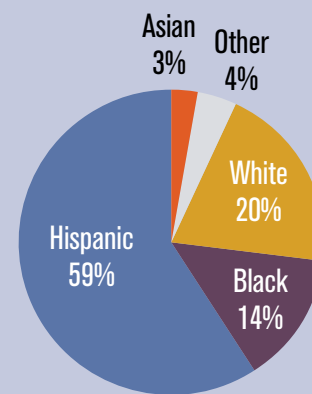
Improving the education system now to better prepare Denver students for college, careers, and citizenship is vital to the county’s future. According to U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, in 2010, nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of Denver’s total population was children under the age of 18 – children who are now or will soon be in the education pipeline. And that population is increasingly diverse and largely lower income. In 2010:

- Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers made up 9 percent of the total population, and children between 5 and 17 years of age made up 14 percent of Denver’s total population.
- More than two-thirds (69 percent) of Denver’s total child population (birth to 17 years) were minority. Similarly, the majority of students (5 to 17 years) enrolled in DPS in 2010 were minority – primarily Hispanic and black.
- More than 70 percent of DPS students qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program, a widely used indicator of poverty.

Denver City and County Child Population, Birth to 17, 2010



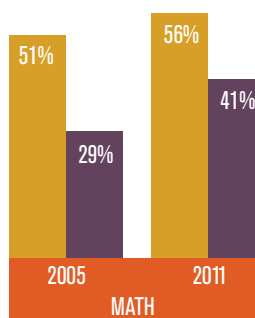
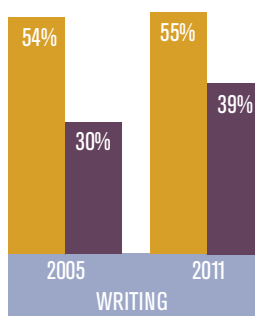
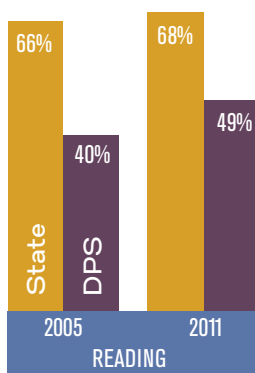
DPS Student Enrollment, 2010



Sources: Denver city and county data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Child Population by Ethnicity, 2010. DPS data are from the Colorado Department of Education, 2010 Pupil Membership by District, Race/Ethnicity, and Percent Minority, www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rv2010pmlinks.htm.

Student Achievement: Increasing across grades and subjects, but gaps widening

Average Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on CSAP



Source: Colorado Department of Education annual Colorado Student Assessment Program District and School Disaggregated Data by Free/Reduced Meals Eligibility Status.

DPS has much to be proud of. The district's students have made steady progress across all grade levels and subject areas on Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests over the last six years, especially lower-income students (defined in this report as students who qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program).

- Among all students, scores improved an average of:
 - 1.3 percentage points a year in reading.
 - 1.5 percentage points a year in writing.
 - 2.0 percentage points a year in math.
- The gains DPS has made since 2005 have been substantial relative to most other Colorado school districts.
- Nevertheless, DPS reading, writing, and math scores remain below state averages, and achievement gaps between higher- and lower-income students have widened.

In most subjects and grades, **DPS students are outgaining the state average but falling short of the district's own goals.** And higher-income students are outgaining their lower-income peers.

Average Increase in Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on CSAP, 2005-11

	READING			WRITING			MATH		
	STATE	DPS	DPS GOAL	STATE	DPS	DPS GOAL	STATE	DPS	DPS GOAL
Elementary									
Lower income	0.7%	0.8%	3.5%	1.0%	1.5%	3.5%	1.3%	1.7%	3.5%
Higher income	0.7%	2.2%	3.5%	1.2%	2.8%	3.5%	1.2%	2.5%	3.5%
Middle									
Lower income	1.5%	2.7%	3.5%	1.0%	1.5%	3.5%	1.8%	3.0%	3.5%
Higher income	0.5%	3.5%	3.5%	1.0%	3.3%	3.5%	1.7%	4.8%	3.5%
High									
Lower income	1.0%	2.0%	3.5%	0.0%	0.5%	3.5%	0.7%	1.0%	3.5%
Higher income	0.2%	2.3%	3.5%	0.2%	2.0%	3.5%	0.8%	2.2%	3.5%
All Students	0.3%	1.3%	3.5%	0.2%	1.5%	3.5%	0.8%	2.0%	3.5%

Note: The average for all students takes into account that there are more lower-income than higher-income DPS students.

Source: Colorado Department of Education. Calculations by A+ Denver and Colorado Children's Campaign.

Preschool and Kindergarten

Longitudinal research consistently finds that quality early childhood education has long-lasting benefits for a child's social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. Ongoing assessment of very young children's progress as they move from preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten to 1st grade is important for identifying gaps in achievement early, but only preschoolers in certain state and federal programs are required to participate. Otherwise, the assessments are voluntary.

Because not all Denver Preschool Program preschoolers are required to take preschool assessments, **only limited conclusions can be drawn**, including:

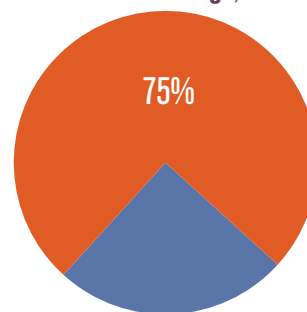
- According to Colorado's statewide Results Matter assessment program,⁶ lower-income students in the Colorado Preschool Program who start out behind catch up to their tuition-paying peers, reducing the achievement gap.⁷
- According to an independent Denver Preschool Program assessment, children in both DPS and community-based Denver Preschool Program sites made significant progress in their academic and social-emotional development.⁸ (Again, this evaluation included only children from families who agreed to participate – not all preschool children.)

Assessing Program Quality

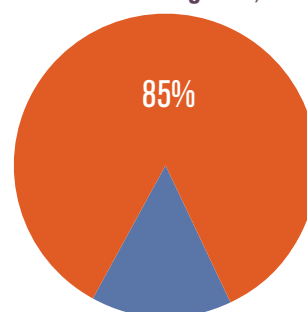
In addition to measures of student progress, Colorado's statewide Qualistar Rating™ system objectively measures the quality of early childhood programs. Programs earn points for components such as learning environment, training and education of staff, and family partnerships. Scores range from provisional to 4-star rating.⁹ According to a 2010 evaluation, **the majority of Denver Preschool Program classrooms and students received the highest rankings:**

- 75 percent of Denver Preschool Program preschool classrooms were 3- or 4-star rated.
- 85 percent of Denver Preschool Program students were enrolled in 3- and 4-star programs.
- In 2010, 96 percent of classrooms that completed the Qualistar re-rating process either improved or maintained their rating.¹⁰

Percentage of Denver Preschool Program Classrooms with 3- or 4-Star Ratings, 2010



Percentage of Denver Preschool Program Students in 3- or 4-Star Programs, 2010



Source: Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. *An Evaluation of the Denver Preschool Program: 2009-10. Full Evaluation Report, Part I.* (2010), http://dpp.org/_blog/Media_Room/post/Results_of_DPP%27s_2010_Evaluation_Now_Available/.

ELEMENTARY
6,010
students

**Proficient/
Advanced**

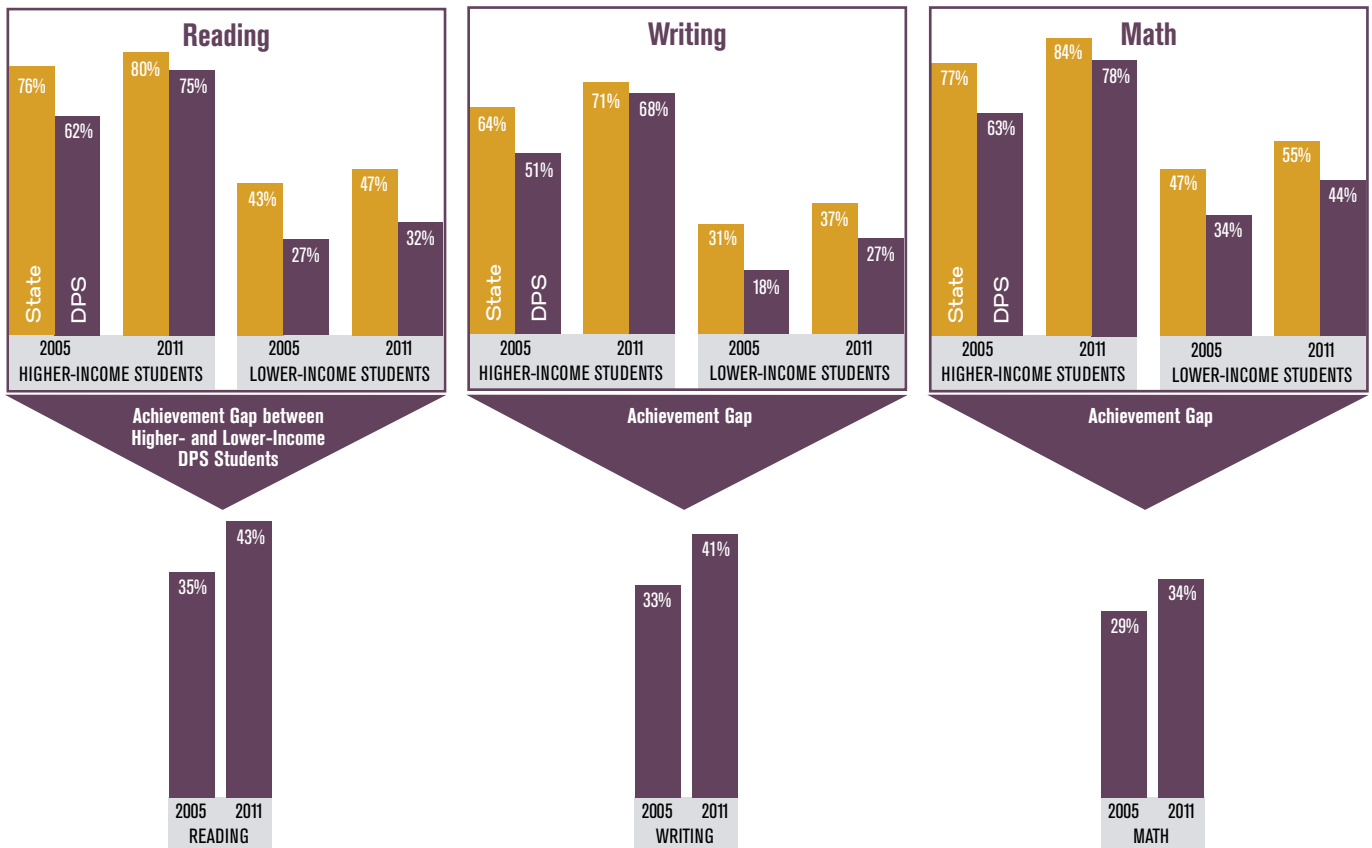
Reading: 44%
Writing: 38%
Math: 53%

Elementary School

Between 2005 and 2011, DPS 4th graders overall made progress in each subject area on CSAP tests.

- On average, lower-income DPS students improved:
 - Less than 1 percentage point a year in reading, matching state gains; and
 - Nearly 2 percentage points a year in writing and math, outpacing state gains in both subjects.
- Despite this progress, higher-income DPS students improved faster than their lower-income peers, widening the achievement gap. For example, in reading, the gap increased from 35 percentage points in 2005 to 43 points in 2011.

Percentage of 4th Graders Scoring Proficient or Advanced on CSAP



Source: Colorado Department of Education.

Middle School

Among all DPS students, 8th graders made the greatest overall improvement in the percentage scoring proficient or advanced on state tests between 2005 and 2011.

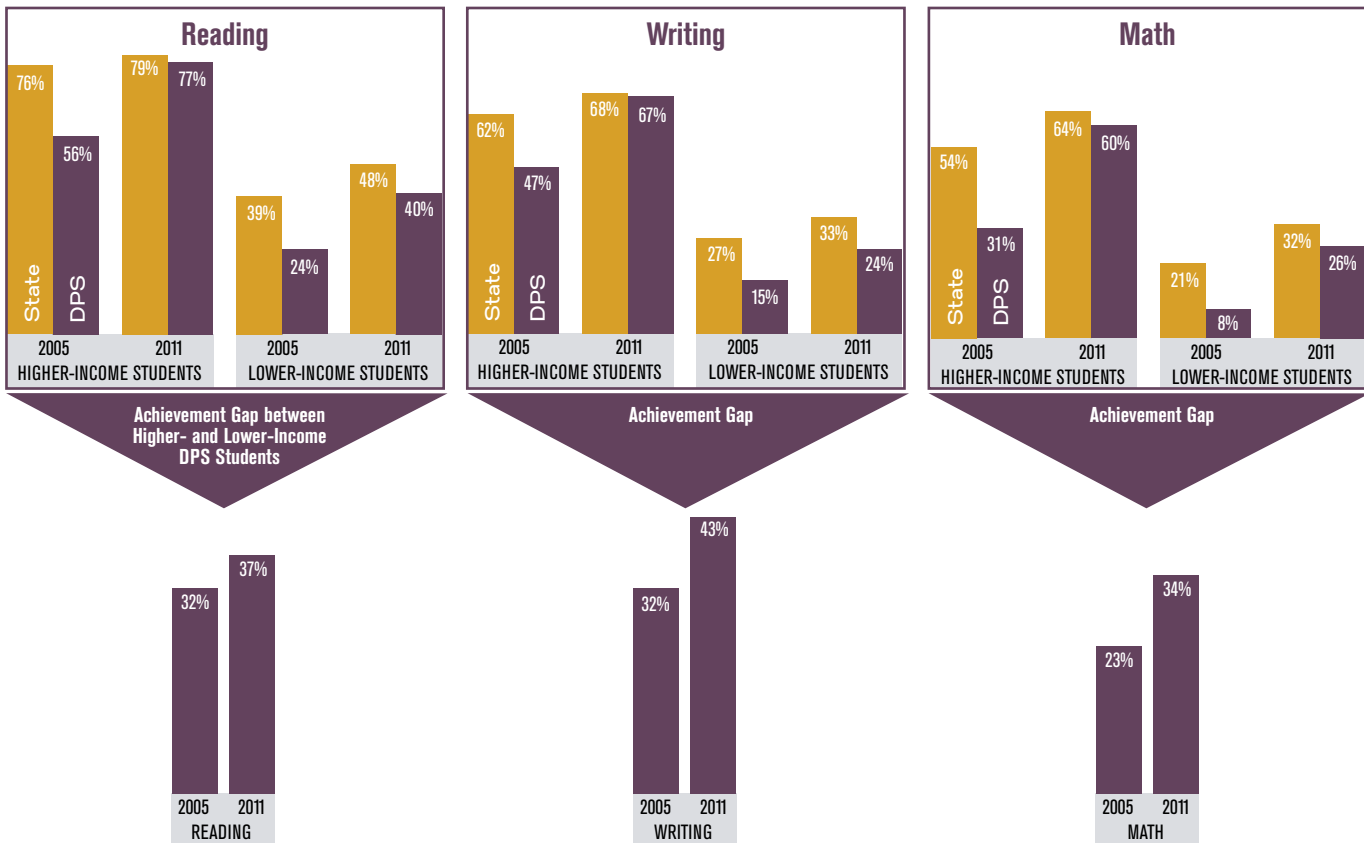
- Both higher- and lower-income DPS students improved faster than students statewide in all subjects, especially in math. On average, lower-income DPS students improved:
 - 2.7 percentage points a year in reading;
 - 1.5 percentage points a year in writing; and
 - 3.0 percentage points a year in math.
- In 2011, the achievement gap is slightly narrower in middle school reading than in elementary reading but remains about the same in writing and math.
- And within middle school, achievement gaps are increasing in all subjects over time.

MIDDLE
4,705
students

**Proficient/
Advanced**

Reading: 51%
Writing: 37%
Math: 36%

Percentage of 8th Graders Scoring Proficient or Advanced on CSAP



Source: Colorado Department of Education.

HIGH
4,434
students

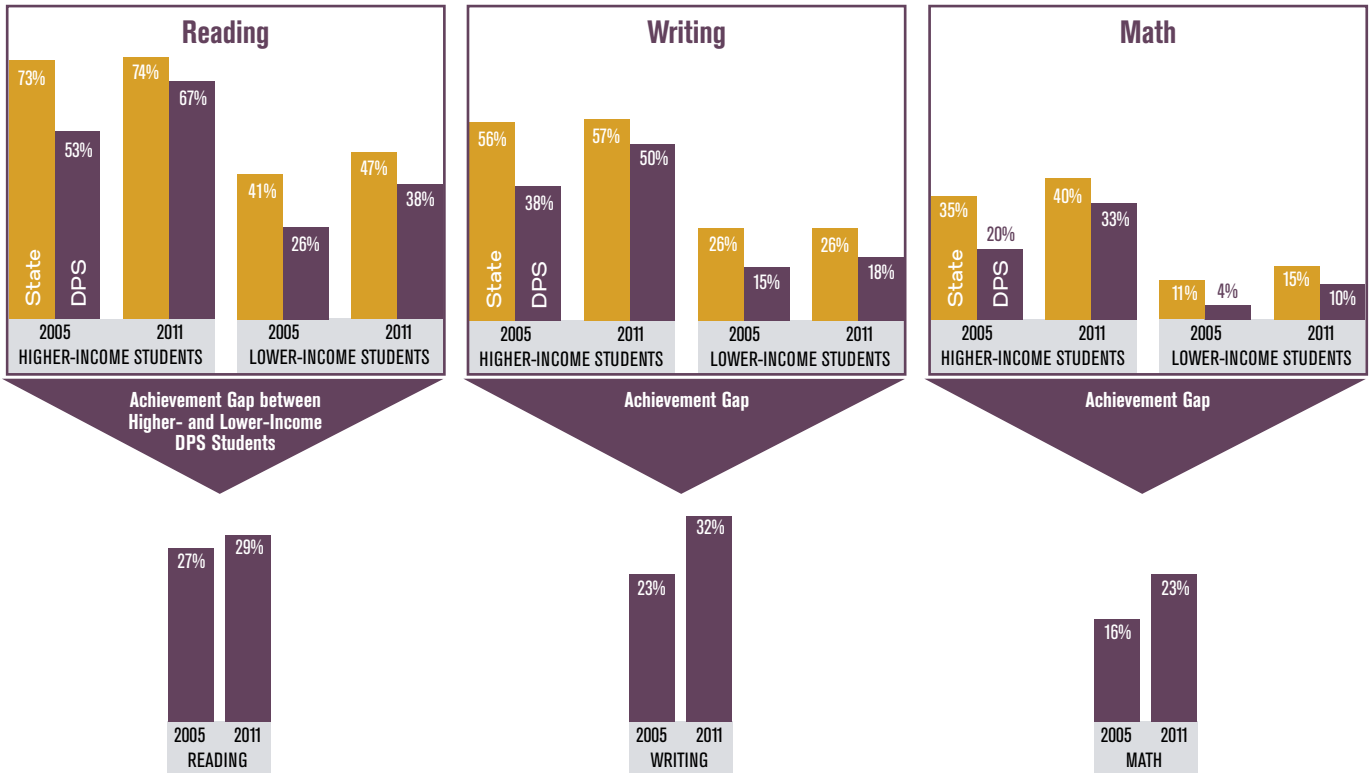
**Proficient/
Advanced**
Reading: 49%
Writing: 30%
Math: 18%

High School

Since 2005, the percentage of DPS 10th graders scoring proficient or advanced on state tests has increased in all subjects for both higher- and lower-income students, outpacing gains in state averages.

- On average, lower-income DPS students improved:
 - 2 percentage points a year in reading;
 - .5 percentage points a year in writing; and
 - 1 percentage point a year in math.
- But proficiency levels drop across all subjects between middle and high school for both higher- and lower-income students.
- Fewer than half of all Colorado students are proficient or advanced in math – a trend that has held steady since 2005. Despite recent gains, the situation is even worse in DPS, especially for lower-income students.

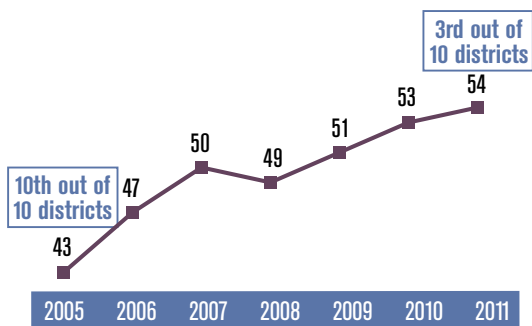
Percentage of 10th Graders Scoring Proficient or Advanced on CSAP



Source: Colorado Department of Education.

Student Academic Growth: DPS outpacing other large Colorado districts

DPS Median Math Growth Score and Rank Compared to Other Large Colorado Districts



Source: DPS.

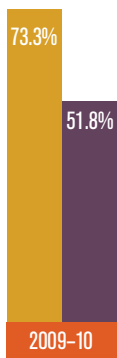
Colorado Growth Model measures provide another way of determining student performance.¹¹ The Growth Model uses longitudinal CSAP scores to measure the academic progress and growth of individual students, rather than groups of students, as they move from 3rd to 10th grade; that is, instead of comparing one year's 4th grade class to another year's class, this system shows how this year's 4th graders do once they move on to higher grades (grades 5, 6, 7, etc.). Growth data are critical to determining whether a student, school, or district is making progress when compared to the performance of other students who started with similar test scores.

Growth data show that DPS is improving faster than other Colorado districts:

- Since 2005, DPS has moved from being a district in which students were losing ground relative to all other students across the state to one in which students are gaining ground.
- When compared to other large school districts in Colorado, DPS has made substantial improvements in median math, reading, and writing growth. In 2005, Denver was the worst of Colorado's large school districts for median student growth in each subject. By 2010, DPS was among the best. Very few, if any, Colorado school districts have consistently made this level of improvement.¹²

Graduation Rates: Improving, but almost half of DPS students still not earning a diploma in four years

State and DPS Graduation Rates



Source: Colorado Department of Education Graduation Rate Data, 2009-10.

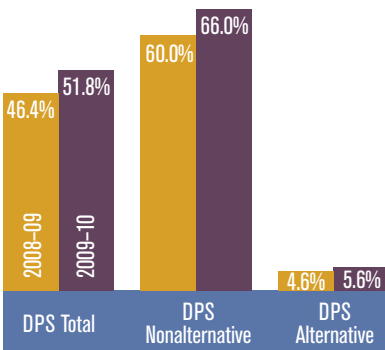
Before 2010, state graduation data included students who took longer than four years to earn a high school diploma. According to those data:

- Graduation rates for both the state and DPS have remained relatively stable since 2005.
- But over the same period, the number of DPS students earning a diploma has steadily increased because overall enrollment has grown and DPS has implemented a variety of alternative school options and credit recovery programs, so more DPS students are earning a high school diploma.

In 2010, to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act, **the state changed how it calculates the graduation rate to include only students who graduate from high school four years after entering 9th grade** (also referred to as “on-time” graduates).

- Based on the new calculation, DPS graduation rates improved from 2009 to 2010.

DPS Graduation Rates (4-Year, “On-Time”)



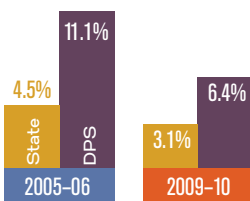
Source: Colorado Department of Education Graduation Rate Data, 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Dropout Rates Decline

Over the past six years, annual dropout rates for both DPS and the state have steadily decreased:

- The dropout rate in DPS fell from 11.1 percent (3,626 students) in 2006 to 6.4 percent (2,326 students) in 2010.
- In other words, 1,300 fewer students dropped out of DPS in 2010 than in 2005.¹³

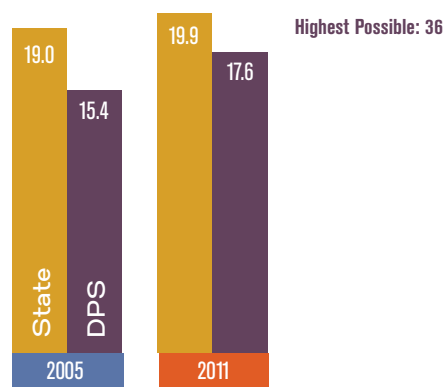
Annual State and DPS Dropout Rates



Source: Colorado Department of Education Dropout Rates, 2005-10.

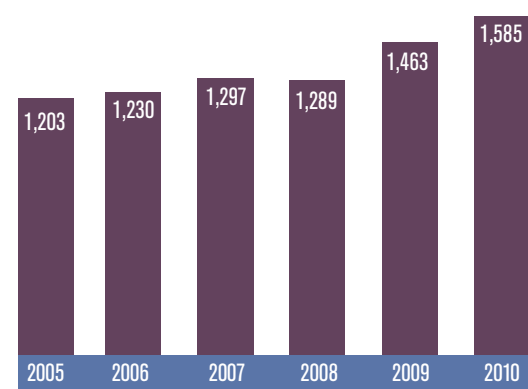
College and Work Readiness: College enrollment up, but college and work readiness results mixed

Composite ACT Scores



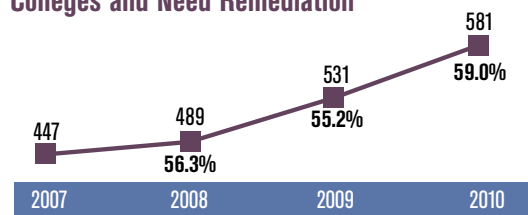
Source: Colorado Department of Education, Colorado ACT Results, 2005-11.

Number of DPS Graduates Enrolling in College



Source: National Student Clearinghouse, 2005-10.

Number of DPS Graduates Who Attend Colorado Colleges and Need Remediation



Source: Colorado Commission on Higher Education 2010 Remediation Report.

Helping more students earn a high school diploma is important, but they must graduate with the knowledge and skills that are essential for success in college and the workplace.¹⁴ **By 2020, 70 percent of jobs in Colorado will require a career certificate or degree, but only 41 percent of adults in the state currently have these qualifications.**¹⁵ And far too few DPS students have the preparation they need to close this skills gap.

On indicators of college and work readiness, DPS results are mixed:

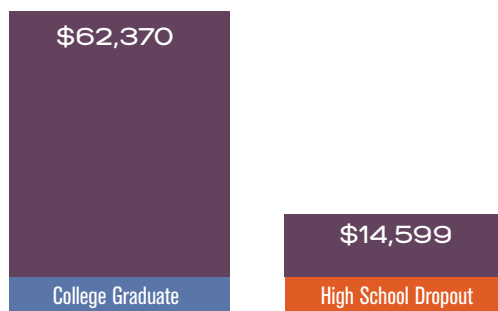
- Scores on the ACT (administered in 11th grade) are considered a good indicator of whether students are ready for college. While the increase from 2005 to 2011 may appear small, DPS has made substantial progress.
- The number of DPS graduates going to colleges nationwide has improved substantially, rising from 1,203 from the class of 2005 to 1,585 from the class of 2010.
- Two-thirds of DPS graduates from the class of 2010 enrolled in Colorado colleges, up from 45 percent in 2006.¹⁶
- But as more students have enrolled in Colorado colleges, the percentage of DPS students requiring at least one remediation course also has increased, rising from 46.4 percent in 2006 to 59.0 percent in 2010.
- College enrollment of DPS graduates varies widely when disaggregated by ethnicity/race. Between 2002 and 2007, 71 percent of white, 63 percent of black, and 39 percent of Hispanic DPS graduates, on average, enrolled in college within 12 months of graduating from high school.¹⁷
- College success rates also vary for lower- and higher-income students. Among 2002 DPS high school graduates, only one of 10 lower-income students earned a college degree within six years compared to three of 10 higher-income students.

Benefits of a More Effective Pipeline: Substantial for students and Colorado

Research shows that a good education not only leads to higher

earnings over one's lifetime but also offers protection against unemployment.

Average Annual Earnings, 2011



Source: Belfield and Levine (2011), p. 7, <http://childrens-voices.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/COLORADO-REPORT-BELFIELD-LEVIN-MAY-15-2011-FINAL.pdf>.

A college graduate's average annual earnings are four times higher (\$62,370) than those of a high school dropout (\$14,599). Adults with a bachelor's degree or higher are also much less likely to be unemployed and much more likely to have a pension plan and private health insurance than adults who dropped out of high school.

Therefore, according to a 2011 study, each DPS student who fails to graduate high school costs the state more than \$524,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower income from taxes and increased expenses for social services, such as health care and criminal justice.¹⁸ Do the math. The class of 2010 lost 2,326 students between 9th grade and graduation day. Cost: more than \$1.2 billion.

With this startling statistic in mind, this report gives a snapshot of student progress across the DPS education pipeline, highlighting both accomplishments and areas needing improvement. Primary findings include:

1. **DPS has made significant progress** in improving reading, math, and writing performance on state tests across all sections of the pipeline – especially among lower-income students. And since 2005, DPS has consistently outperformed most other large Colorado districts in improving student growth.
2. Despite impressive gains, **DPS student performance remains far below the state average** in almost every subject at every grade.
3. **Young children attending DPS make progress** in preschool and elementary school, but **performance falls off in high school**.
4. **College enrollment is improving, but far too many DPS students still do not go to college**, much less earn a degree. And many who do go to college are not prepared and need remediation.

Recommendations

While this report highlights both

encouraging trends and discouraging gaps, it tells only part of the overall story. Filling in all of the education pipeline data – and then both reporting the data annually and doing deeper dives on select topics – will shed light on what is and is not working among the district’s various improvement efforts.

While DPS has made progress on most indicators, this report does not provide insight into what is driving this positive change. The district's instructional program? The ProComp teacher employment agreement? New schools? The school performance framework? All of them? Something else? More information is needed to know which strategies are proving to be most successful and how they can be modified to accelerate ever greater improvement. The following recommendations are aimed at helping policymakers, education advocates, educators, parents, and students better understand the progress of DPS students:

- **The performance of all students in the Denver Preschool Program should be tracked** using a common statewide tool like the Results Matter program.
- **When the state or district reports on student performance, student achievement scores and student growth scores should be given equal weight** so that the public and policymakers understand the complete story on student outcomes. These achievement and growth scores must also be disaggregated by income, gender, and ethnicity/race.
- **Attention must be paid** not only to increasing the number of DPS students who graduate high school but also **to ensuring that all graduates have the knowledge and skills required to succeed** in college, certificate programs, the military, and work.
- **DPS college enrollment, remediation, and success rates for all colleges** (not just Colorado public higher education institutions) **should be tracked** by the district and the state each year.
- **Each DPS high school should report the school’s on-time graduation, college enrollment, and remediation rates** on its website and provide parents with this information. DPS also should develop a new metric to clearly indicate how many DPS high school students are college and career ready.
- **The city of Denver and/or DPS should issue an annual report on the state of the DPS education pipeline** to ensure that the right data are being collected to develop and refine policies that will support improved student achievement and to monitor the quality of students’ education as well as their progress over time.

In addition, A+ Denver and our partners will develop additional briefs in the coming months on a number of topics, including preschool achievement, turnaround schools, high schools, and DPS’ strategic plan.

With this more complete picture of performance from preschool through college, we can work together to identify strategies that will allow all DPS students the opportunity to reach their full academic potential. Denver’s children deserve no less.

Endnotes

- 1 Senate Bill 08-212 created the Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K). Under this law, the state is charged with improving academic standards, better preparing students for postsecondary education and the workforce, and better connecting all levels of education in Colorado. Full assessments of the act cannot be made until the first cohort of Colorado students who started the system after the reforms graduate high school in the mid-2020s.
- 2 *Colorado Preschool Program 2009 Legislative Report* (2009), www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/download/CPPDocs/2009_Legislative_Report.pdf. Prior to the 2008-09 budget year, districts could defray part of the costs for full-day kindergarten by using Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) monies or mill-levy overrides to fund the second half of a kindergarten day. Under House Bill 08-1388, funding for full-day kindergarten and the CPP was separated, and both programs are funded under the Colorado School Finance Act, which allowed districts to expand full-day kindergarten.
- 3 In 2006, Denver voters expanded the city's prekindergarten services and created the Denver Preschool Program, an independent, nonprofit organization. One-twelfth of 1 percent of sales tax revenues go to the Denver Preschool Program to help families pay tuition costs so that their children may attend any Denver preschool. Only children in their last year of preschool before kindergarten are eligible for the program.
- 4 Mitchell, N., "More Students Choosing Out of District," *Education News Colorado*, (January 18, 2011), www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/01/18/1291-more-students-choicing-out-of-district.
- 5 Colorado Department of Education. *Students Attending Public Schools Not in Parent's District of Residence* (2010).
- 6 Colorado Department of Education. *Results Matter* (2011), www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/index.htm. Results Matter uses common measures developed by the national Early Childhood Outcomes Center and the U.S. Department of Education. It measures the achievement and progress of very young children participating in public, private, or community-based preschool programs and describes child progress across specific developmental and educational domains as well as through global outcomes. It is not entirely free. Results Matter subsidizes the cost of the program, but districts or programs participating in the assessment are required to pay a portion of the cost. According to the Colorado Department of Education, approximately 5,000 DPS children are assessed through Results Matter.
- 7 Colorado Department of Education. *Colorado Preschool Program 2011 Legislative Report* (2011), www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/download/CPPDocs/2011_CPP_Legislative_Report.pdf.
- 8 Denver Preschool Program Evaluation Project. Denver, CO: Clayton Learning Center (2010), www.claytonearlylearning.org/denver-preschool-program.php.
- 9 Qualistar Colorado. "What Is the Qualistar Rating™" (2011), www.qualistar.org/what-is-the-qualistar-rating.html.
- 10 Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. *An Evaluation of the Denver Preschool Program: 2009-10. Full Evaluation Report, Part I* (2010), http://dpp.org/_blog/Media_Room/post/Results_of_DPP%27s_2010_Evaluation_Now_Available/.
- 11 The Colorado Growth Model was established under House Bill 04-1433, and the methodology currently used for calculating growth was refined under House Bill 07-1048. See www.schoolview.org/GMFAQ.asp#Q29 or www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/res_eval/FinalLongitudinalGrowthTAPReport.pdf for more information.
- 12 William Bonk, personal communication. Colorado Department of Education (August 23, 2011).
- 13 Colorado Department of Education. "Dropout Statistics by District." www.cde.state.co.us/index_stats.htm. Methods for measuring dropout and graduation rates changed in 2007.
- 14 Colorado Department of Education (2009), www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/PWRadoptedddescription63009.pdf.
- 15 Complete College America, www.completecollege.org/docs/Colorado.pdf.
- 16 DPS, the Denver Scholarship Foundation, The Piton Foundation, and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. *Graduates of Denver Public Schools: College Access and Success* (2009).
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Belfield, C.R., and Levine, H.M. "The Fiscal and Social Burden of Inadequate Education in Colorado" (2011), <http://childrens-voices.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/COLORADO-REPORT-BELFIELD-LEVIN-MAY-15-2011-FINAL.pdf>.

