

Denver Public Schools District Leadership & Board Members,

We are a coalition of community organizations that represent a wide variety of interests and perspectives in Denver. On some issues, we are very aligned and on others, we are in very different places. We believe Denver is at a unique moment in time to revisit important conversations around school quality.

We have come together because we are aligned on one thing: that Denver Public Schools should launch a community process to examine how we measure school quality in order to have a more comprehensive view of how we are preparing our students for life. We believe that we need to have clear and consistent signals to families and educators about school quality for all learners, and we believe it is time for Denver Public Schools to open a community dialogue on this critical issue.

For the past ten years, Denver Public Schools has led the country in transparent data about school performance. The School Performance Framework, while debated by many, was one of the first multiple measures tool to be utilized by a large school district. It includes state and local assessment information, student and parent surveys alongside college/career readiness information. However, in recent years, a variety of intersecting challenges have impeded the ability for the School Performance Framework to deliver on the clear signals to educators and families that are needed.

For a variety of reasons, there have been important reflections about the School Performance Framework (SPF). From constant internal revisions to a lack of public feedback in the tool itself, the past few years have seen swings in results and support. There are serious concerns about the extent to which the SPF has become the “be all, end all” for conversations about quality and equity in the system. This reduces the ability for discussions about school quality to be clear and focused, complicating families, students, administrators, and teachers’ abilities to make meaningful use of the information. The SPF has struggled to signal real whole child indicators and induce creative school models. Potentially most consequentially, families and communities have not been brought to the design table in the past few years to substantively inform the SPF and DPS measures of school quality. All of these issues together leave room for cynicism, doubt and uneven agreement in how DPS currently measures school quality with negative implications for much of how DPS tries to tackle inequalities in the system. Yet it is very critical that we have measurement tools and resources so that families and communities can have real information about school quality.

**We believe there is an opportunity for your leadership to take us to the next chapter in building a shared vision for how schools serve students, families and communities.**

First, we are asking you to use the information that you collected from the Superintendent search to reflect on what our community sees as quality. This may require additional targeted conversations during Susana’s entry plan. This can open up meaningful discussions about what school quality means to Denver families now and in the future along with how it should be measured and communicated. We feel like we are at a unique moment in time to use this feedback to show families and communities DPS can be responsive.

Second, we ask you to assemble a working group of community members and other experts to work to address the community feedback you've received to assess where we stand in monitoring school quality. This group will be charged with hearing and incorporating community perspectives, seeing where we DPS tools stand compared to the feedback, considering new possibilities, and making implementable recommendations to DPS on how the next generation of school quality measurement is conducted.

Lastly, we ask you to charge an existing or new district group to monitor and advise efforts on school quality measurement for over the long-term. This independent and representative group should work with DPS staff and the board to consider all potential adjustments and changes to policy and practice. Its membership should refresh periodically to maintain an ongoing and current perspective. This is critical to ensure school quality conversations live close to the community - not far away at the state level.

While we do not know what the exact technical composition of new ways to measure school quality will look like, we believe that these efforts can restore trust, generate better measures of quality, and keep co-created solutions and oversight close to the families and students of Denver. Most importantly, we believe it can create a collective vision for how we address the deep inequities in our school system.

The School Performance Framework, despite its shortcomings, has helped foster a culture in Denver where families ask important questions about school quality and the district makes decisions with public facing tools. We believe the time has come to build what is next for our collective future. It is our aspiration that these efforts yield a more expanded way of understanding how students are prepared for life and that the communities of Denver will have a direct role in showing us the way.

With respect,

Community Voice in School Quality Coalition

*\*Note: If groups are interested in joining our coalition please e-mail: [dom@faithbridgeco.org](mailto:dom@faithbridgeco.org)*



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