

Denver Community and Denver Public Schools Pact **2023–2024**

Our Mission:

Together we will join arms, and through mutual respect and intense collaboration, change the course of the Denver Public Schools. We collectively share that at times we have neglected to give children what they need to thrive, and this has also affected entire communities and neighborhoods. The unheard voices of our staff and teachers is no longer acceptable. Those who work most closely and daily with our children will be heard and will resonate through every Denver community. We will honor each family living inside the boundaries of our city and welcome them into our schools with open arms. We apologize that our system, like others nationally, has “held back” and created unfair practices and roadblocks for children and families. We pledge to provide an educational system that allows access, opportunities, and freedom from stereotyping, branding, and institutional bias and racism. Our model will be the first in the country to promise this change and follow through on that pledge. We plan to see changes immediately and will bring the children of Denver into full focus through our combined efforts. During this process we will be completely transparent and will communicate progress made as well as when we fall short of stated goals.

History:

In June of 2023, Coach Steve Finesilver reached out to our district leadership. He expressed the need for change in five areas that would benefit the education process within the Denver Public Schools. In August, a meeting took place with Ms. MiDian Holmes, Coach Finesilver, a member of our Board of Education, and the Superintendent’s designee. Other meetings followed, and the needs and desires of many who care deeply about the education of our youth were shared. To their credit, the Denver Public Schools leadership listened and provided feedback.

Our Essential Values:

Identity and Purpose: Children must be supported as they carve their identities and find their purpose. There is nothing more enlightening than a child who proudly “wears their name.” This solidifies the belief that they are trusted and valued at home and at school. Youth are then quite comfortable establishing their own plan and choosing where they truly “fit.” We will acknowledge the rich heritage of each child’s and family’s background. Celebrations, customs, and cultures will be appreciated and spoken about freely and openly by the children. Our large community will honor and respect similarities as well as differences.

Respect and Civility: The culture throughout our school system will be one of mutual respect. This includes respect between all stakeholders. We will encourage positive language and model appropriate acts of civility and kindness. To reinforce this behavior, school and district leaders, faculty, and all staff will be held to the highest standard as they integrate this among our school communities. Nothing shows compassion more than a soft tone and a welcoming atmosphere. We will reach out and extend our resources to the families who reside in our neighborhoods and invite parents and community members into our schools to meet their needs and wants. The non-educational needs of our children will be addressed as well, with the understanding that the school can be a resource for food, housing, medical, and financial challenges.

Persistence and Resilience: We will instill the values of hard work and determination and encourage our children to adopt a solid work ethic. Children need to learn to put forth effort even in adverse situations. We will celebrate children who are steady and attentive and who show resilience and the ability to overcome obstacles. We must set the bar high and support our youth to meet goals and chase dreams. Many have succeeded simply because they had the ability and desire to work solidly and to endure. We will invite former students into our building to share stories of their own successes and short-term failures. We all fail and so do our children, but failure is not permanent. We will teach our children to use failure as a springboard to greater success and will highlight and model this resilience throughout our district and celebrate the many success stories.

Voice: Our children must be heard. Our families, staff, faculty, and school community have opinions, beliefs, and suggestions which must be honored, not ignored or silenced. We will solicit open dialogue with constituents through in-person meetings and forums. Those with questions, concerns, comments, praise, and criticism will be allowed to speak. Our large family will receive timely responses and answers from those with information. We have a large school and community circle, and open communication is paramount to the success of our youth. We will grant access and respond to the needs and concerns of our loyal staff and teachers. Our collective voices can and will shape our future success.

Loyalty: As this pact comes to fruition, loyalty will blossom and grow. As we unite, it will become clear that we all have the same goals and a shared common vision. We will remain dedicated and loyal to our children and their families and ask for loyalty to flow between all constituents. Our youth will feel supported in a “village” mentality and will thrive when their chosen community invests deeply in their bright and shining futures.

2023–2024

Action Plan We will come together to embrace and endorse the following changes immediately:

- 1. Honoring Excellence**—Celebrations of excellence in every Denver Public School and facility. We will honor excellence, dedication, resilience, and the ability to overcome adversity. Each building will establish a system of reward for students, staff, parents, and community members. A large Denver non-profit is interested in pairing up with our men and women in uniform (Denver’s police, firefighters, and sheriffs) to recognize and fund events that highlight the excellence that exists in every neighborhood within the boundaries of Denver.
- 2. County Compensation**—We will work diligently to enhance compensation for our faculty and staff. We acknowledge that our dedicated workers often struggle to provide for their needs and the needs of their loved ones. Budget will be scrutinized to provide extra pay each year, along with loyalty rewards for those who have been the most dedicated through many years of service. *Please see recent press release for details
- 3. Support**—A strong support system must be in place to honor the voices of those who are within our system. It is reasonable that questions, requests, concerns, and corrections be addressed within forty-eight hours. It is no longer acceptable to fail to communicate when an individual or a group is seeking a response. A complaint or concern will be addressed, and the nature of the resolution recorded by staff. We will have a team of volunteers screened by the DPS who will, when needed, assist with this important communication.

We will provide exit interviews for those who leave our team. We have failed to retain staff and teachers at an alarming rate. There will be four or five locations provided on a rotating basis, in each geographic area of Denver, staffed by volunteers (current or retired educators) for teachers to have personal interaction. Assistance with the challenges faced by all teachers will be available for several hours during weekdays. We envision that we will staff “Teacher Academies” on Mondays through Thursdays from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. After-hours hotlines will be available for staff and faculty, with trained professionals to assist and support our valuable personnel. Our staff and teachers will no longer be isolated without support and assistance.

4. Hiring—We will revise our hiring practices to streamline the process and become more userfriendly. Volunteers will be trained to answer questions by phone and expedite the hiring, interviewing, and screening processes. We will actively recruit (and document our efforts), from other cities, especially within the college and university system. We will work actively to recruit applicants who move into our city, especially those who have come to Denver from other countries. We will support each candidate with translators and specialists, as needed, to eliminate the roadblocks and obstacles which have become the norm.

5. Equity—Equity will become a way of life within our system. No longer will we react to a problem or situation and suddenly provide training or communication related to equity, fairness, or access within our schools. We will live equity as central to the mission of educating children and the fair treatment of those within our system. We will dedicate our efforts to assist our early learners with every resource available to address identified deficiencies early. There is nothing more important in our evolution than to provide any resource available (regardless of cost) to assist children who need the educational foundation that has been overlooked for far too long. Any child, from every neighborhood, will be assisted and supported both inside and outside of the school itself, and outside of school hours when necessary. We will change our way of thinking and look upon our youth as our most valuable and cherished entity.

It is understood that this will require tremendous financial support and many hours with volunteers and specialists. We will not compromise as we have in the past and allow any child to just fall through the cracks. We will now commit together to redesign our system to aid and support every child, regardless of circumstance, with abundant resources and opportunities for success.

6. School of Choice—School of choice will be scrutinized. A child who “chooses into” a particular school does not have true choice if the selected school is not viable. If a child is given this choice, then the district will provide safe transportation and resources for the parents to support that option. School of choice will be set up to provide opportunities, not hardships or obstacles.

7. Alumni—We will embrace our alumni base, apologize for our past transgressions, and ask for their help. There are thousands of DPS faithful willing to be part of the change we must see. If their trust is earned, they will provide financial resources, emotional support, and unlimited volunteers. In turn, we will be transparent in conveying our needs and how we plan to utilize their assistance. We will also make requests within our business community. They too have been waiting to be involved in supporting the youth in Denver.

8. Cultural Relevance and Curriculum—Our curriculum specialists will make our offerings, at each level, culturally relevant and timely. Secondary school learners will not be in front of the screens, without deep learning, for long periods of time. We will dedicate our efforts to the education of the whole child and recognize that we must “reset” to meet the challenges of education during these times. We will agree to have input from parents and community resources as we revitalize our outdated and well-worn curriculum. Our promise to accomplish this during the pandemic has not been delivered.

In addition, we support the following:

- Honors and celebrations at each DPS facility.
- Teacher-focused support centers and resources.
- Higher pay for individual employees under a specified financial threshold.
- A more vibrant curriculum that reflects recent events, advances in technology, and a promise to be inclusive of all learners from every culture.
- The need for our students to flourish within their school setting, including vast recreation, community service, and enrichment opportunities.
- Humanity leaves for all employees.
- Identification of educational needs in the early grades, with resources and support for each family and every child. Personnel in each building who monitor and maintain services as students advance in school. City-wide commitment to serve all.
- A “welcome team” in ten geographic areas throughout our district dedicated to reaching out to new families who have recently (in the past twelve months) located to Denver. Volunteers will be available with translators as needed to assist with building school-family relationships.
- Alumni and business partners throughout Denver. We will ask our loyal alumni and business community to embrace and enhance numerous educational opportunities.
- Open communication relative to the exciting changes, challenges, failures, and many successes as we move forward.

I agree with this pact and promise to lend my support and join with others to carry out its stated intentions and goals, for the betterment of our learning environment and the wellbeing of our students and staff.



SIGN ONLINE HERE!

[Signature]

[Print Name]

