

Supplemental responses for the A+ Denver Survey (August 13, 2013)

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The survey is structured so that it greatly oversimplifies the important issues facing our Denver Public Schools. Our issues cannot be reduced to checkboxes. To address this, I am providing more comprehensive written responses, which I request you publish with the rest of the information from these surveys.

Part 1. Current Denver Public Schools Strategy and Goals.

The current top-down reforms will not meet the needs of our students because they discount the contributions of our stakeholders: teachers, parents, community members, and principals. Long-term improvements can only be achieved and sustained with collaboration allowing all to put their best ideas forward.

Part 2. Teaching and Learning.

Question 4. We do not have teacher tenure. We have non-probationary status. Teachers, and all employees of the district, should have the protections of due process to guard against arbitrary and capricious employment actions. It is in the best interests of our kids that district employees know that they are not vulnerable to the whims of administrators and can, therefore, be more autonomous in meeting student needs.

Question 5. Teacher pay and employment should be based on the effectiveness of the teacher in teaching students recognizing the many other factors and people involved in student education. Our teachers are professionals and I know of no other profession where pay and employment are reduced to a single formula. Evaluation is a complex assessment of the contribution of the individual in achieving our goals for our students and our schools.

Part 3. Accountability.

Question 6. Our goal is to achieve success for all of our students. You need to describe the accountability measures to which you are referring. I do not support accountability measures that expand the test-taking culture in our schools because they divert us from teaching the whole child.

Question 7. This is a completely inappropriate and divisive question.

Part 4. Interventions.

Questions 8 and 9. We must first ask the question as to why a school is underperforming. We, as a district, must be held accountable for our struggling schools. If we are truly engaged in supporting our schools they would not descend to the point where intervention is even relevant. We have done a poor job in this important area. We must be bold in preventing the decline of our schools rather than thinking we are being bold when we close them. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Part 6. School Choice and Type.

Question 11. These questions are not agree/disagree questions. As a school board member, I would share oversight responsibilities to insure that every school in each neighborhood is successful. Fundamentally, I believe it is the board's responsibility to insure that parents have the choice of going to a good school in their neighborhood. Most parents would prefer that their children go to school in their neighborhood because that builds community and is less stress for the child and the family. Parents would retain their option to choose a school elsewhere to meet their child's specific needs, but they would no longer be forced out of their neighborhood because they did not have a good choice near their home.

With respect to resources, we need recognize that schools are not simply a collection of students, but an organic whole. They should have the resources to meet their objectives and that will require going beyond student-based budgeting.