

# IF NOT NOW...

Transforming Aurora Public Schools from Failing to Great

2015

RISE Colorado, Together Colorado, A+ Denver, Colorado Succeeds, Colorado Children's Campaign, Urban Land Conservancy, Fax Aurora, Stapleton Foundation, Education Reform Now, Mango House, Human Hope Foundation, Ardas Family Medicine, Project Worthmore, Focus Points, ACAD, Colorado African Organization, Latinos for Education Reform

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## About the If Not Now Coalition

The If Not Now Coalition is a diverse group of nonprofits in both Aurora and around the state of Colorado that are deeply committed to supporting the Aurora Public School District's dramatic improvement of public education in Aurora.

RISE Colorado | Together Colorado | A+ Denver | Colorado Succeeds  
Colorado Children's Campaign | Urban Land Conservancy | Fax Aurora  
Stapleton Foundation | Education Reform Now | Mango House | ACAD  
Human Hope Foundation | Ardās Family Medicine | Project Worthmore  
Focus Points | Colorado African Organization | Latinos for Education Reform



### Notes:

This Coalition would like to recognize Bryan Panzano, LEE Fellow and Candidate for Master in Public Policy at The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, for his research and efforts on this report.

Special thanks to RISE Colorado and Chalkbeat Colorado for the images of Aurora students and families.

## Executive Summary

The City of Aurora has seen remarkable growth in recent years. It is home to the largest health sciences development in the Rocky Mountain region and to the fastest growing military base in the U.S. It has a thriving small business community and attracts a deeply diverse population of residents with a rich history of community support and pride. Imagine this city with a thriving school system that capitalizes on this remarkable growth and rich demographics. Aurora is at a critical juncture; it can emerge in the next few decades as one of the great Western cities. Or, it can stall and those with the highest paying jobs will commute to work but live elsewhere, taking with them the resources generated in the local community.

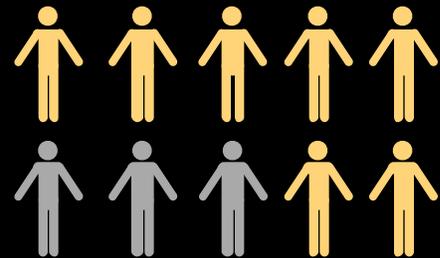
Now is the time for Aurora to take a hard look at the state of its schools. Great cities and communities require great schools. Yet, according to the Colorado Department of Education, Aurora Public Schools (APS) has been one of the worst performing school districts in the state for at least four years, and will face a loss of accreditation if it cannot improve. Even without the state intervening, it's clear the district must begin the hard work of drastically improving schools, so students can learn and thrive, and so educational and workforce pipelines can be created within the community. Aurora students should be able to access the jobs being created in the community, and earn a living wage.

By 2020 more than 70% of new jobs along the Front Range will require a degree or higher education certificate; yet, only 10% of Aurora students will receive the degree or certificate necessary for these jobs. And by all indicators these numbers are getting worse: proficiency rates across all subjects are dropping. We know it doesn't have to be this way. Aurora can create a school system where families actively choose its schools over schools in other districts. Communities across the country with similar demographics and fewer community resources have turned their school systems around. Aurora too could be an exemplar, but first, the Aurora community and the school district must forge a path to improve its schools.

For too long Aurora has been neglected in conversations about improving public education. Instead, people have focused their attention and improvement efforts on Denver Public Schools (DPS), ignoring the challenges and growing number of students on the city's margins. The attention needs to shift; behind Denver, Aurora is home to the largest number of the state's failing schools in a single district, and some of the lowest academic achievement in the metro area. For all students in Aurora, and most dramatically for low-income students of color, proficiency rates are falling. Just over half of Aurora students are graduating from high school. Less than half of high school students feel safe in school. School district staff does not feel like the district has a vision for student success.

## IN COLORADO,

**7 out of 10 jobs will require postsecondary education.**



**Only 1 out of 10 Aurora students will be qualified to fill these jobs.**



## IF NOT NOW . . .

**Change – drastic change – is imperative.**

This report calls for action in Aurora and puts forward several proven strategies for discussion. The report was organized by a coalition of community groups in Aurora and Colorado committed to supporting Aurora Public Schools. We strongly believe that our community and our schools can be great; we just need the knowledge and the will to get us there.

To transform APS into a world-class education system, we have to understand what is going on in our schools now. The data highlight the following challenges facing APS:

**CHANGING STUDENT BODY:**

APS is growing rapidly, and the student demographics are changing. Instructional practices and resources need to align to this change.

**FALLING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:**

Proficiency rates in APS are falling in reading and math - and the gap between APS and the state is widening.

Low-income students and students of color are performing worse in APS than in the rest of the state.

**SLOW ACADEMIC GROWTH:**

Growth rates for low-income students are far behind their more affluent peers - and the gap is widening over time.

**LAGGING POSTSECONDARY READINESS:**

Almost half of students in APS do not graduate high school.

For nearly all groups of students, graduation rates are behind similar districts and the rest of the state.

**LOW GRADUATION RATES:**

Almost half of students in APS do not graduate high school.

For nearly all groups of students, graduation rates are behind similar districts and the rest of the state.

**DISTRICT CLIMATE:**

District has significantly reduced suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement.

Less than half of students in APS feel safe at school.

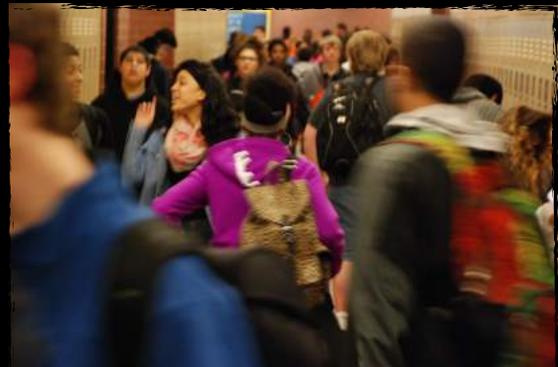
Less than half of teachers and principals trust district decision-makers.



With these challenges in mind, we recommend a series of actions to improve APS. The Coalition applauds APS for initiating work on some of the recommendations in this report. The district cannot do this hard work alone, however, and needs to catalyze community, parent, and business support for these proven ideas. In turn, the Coalition is ready to stand with and support the district as it makes the changes outlined here.

**If Not Now Coalition Recommendations:**

1. Develop a strategic plan that creates specific, bold goals for student achievement, as well as milestones, timelines, and strategies to reach them (the current plan does not include any of these).
2. Establish a series of community engagement efforts in partnership with other community entities and activists to ensure that district plans and actions are informed and supported by the community. Engagement should inform the district's strategic plan, school turnaround plans, transportation, before and after-school programming, and other community concerns.
3. Provide families with an easy-to-understand school performance framework and indicators about the quality of their schools (for example using a color, letter, or number system) and communication in the families' native language on the performance of their children.
4. Build and create new schools that are replications of the nation's best schools for serving demographically similar students (all school models, including high performing charters should be an important component of these efforts). The district needs exemplary schools and currently has none.
5. Develop schools and refine curriculum, pedagogy, programming and community engagement to effectively educate the growing population of students who need more support including English Language Learners, immigrants, refugees, and students with disabilities. Partner with community groups, and replicate the practices and supports provided in schools like those of Place Bridge Academy's Newcomer Center in Denver, CO; Columbus Global Academy in Columbus, OH; Newcomers High School in Long Island City, NY; and others.
6. Leverage both expert and community voice to ensure school turnaround planning and actions are streamlined and likely to be successful.
7. Work with the city of Aurora, Colorado and community partners to establish high-quality literacy-based full day Early Childhood programs and full day Kindergarten in all APS schools, especially those with high proportions of low-income families.
8. Organize voter support of a new bond and mill levy to fund both the growth of the Aurora student body, and the changes that require additional resources.



## Introduction

Aurora Public Schools (APS) is a school district with many assets and great potential. Its diversity of students, languages, and experience sets it apart from many other districts around the state and around the country. It has a growing student population and the development of some of the nation's greatest health science and aerospace industries within the district's borders. APS has an incredible opportunity: the chance to create a world-class school system to match the development of the city, and to build an education pipeline that can make up the city's professional workforce.

This report was written to shine light on the current outcomes of Aurora's schools. And the timing is critical: the district faces state intervention due to its chronic low-performance. The district has been on the accountability clock—the measure of how long a district or school has been classified in the two lowest performance ratings (Priority Improvement or Turnaround)—for four years, and performance continues to slip. With 18 schools on the accountability clock, after Denver Aurora has the greatest number of failing schools in a single district in all of Colorado. Without improvement after five years on the clock, the district faces state intervention and a loss of its accreditation. Because Colorado is changing its assessment system and is pausing the accountability clock, Aurora has a reprieve and additional time to develop a plan to improve.

The district's plan to improve student achievement centers around the creation of at least one, and up to three, ACTION Zones, which will create a network of schools with Innovation Status. This plan takes advantage of Colorado legislation that provides schools and districts waivers from state policies and collective bargaining agreements that can provide additional flexibility for school redesign and decision-making autonomy at the school level. With the support of Mass Insight Education, the district is convening three separate committees to lead this process. The Zone Action Committee will develop an overarching theme to guide the direction of the ACTION Zone; the Zone Design Committee will provide support to and guide school-based teams, and ensure the quality of the Innovation applications; the School Design Teams will opt-into the ACTION Zone after the other committees' work and develop the school-based innovation plans. The goal is to operate under a tight timeline, and to define the ACTION Zone and present Innovation applications to the State Board of Education in the winter or 2016.

This means the time is now to look critically at the district and school performance. There is simply too much at stake to ignore the facts about APS. To that end, we examine student achievement data, student growth data, college and career readiness data, discipline data, and climate surveys to show where APS stands and where it has room for improvement. Armed with this information, we make suggestions to help



## BY THE NUMBERS

**TOTAL STUDENTS: 41,729**

**Free and Reduced Lunch: 28,969 (69.4%)**

**English Language Learners: 16,292**

**Special Education Students: 4,417**

**Refugee Students\*: 1,220**

**Latino: 22,482**

**Black: 7,559**

**White: 7,408**

**Asian: 1,890**

**Native American: 317**

**Two+ Races: 1,826**

**Pacific Islander: 247**

\* Data accessed through Aurora Public Schools. All other data accessed through CDE.

Note: Enrollment includes PK-12

APS overcome its challenges, and adapt to the demands and needs of the growing community of Aurora.

Sometimes it's easy to forget that each one of these data points is a child who enters school with innate wonder about the world, navigating the ups and downs of growing up. But these numbers represent our kids, our neighbors, our community, and our future. Research shows a student who does not read at grade level by 3rd grade, or does not graduate from high school prepared for college or career, is unlikely to be competitive for the jobs that are being created in our community, to earn a living wage, or to be an active member of the community. The City of Aurora's future is at stake, and Aurora students deserve better. We have to be honest, critical, and do the hard work to improve Aurora's schools – we owe it to our kids and our community.

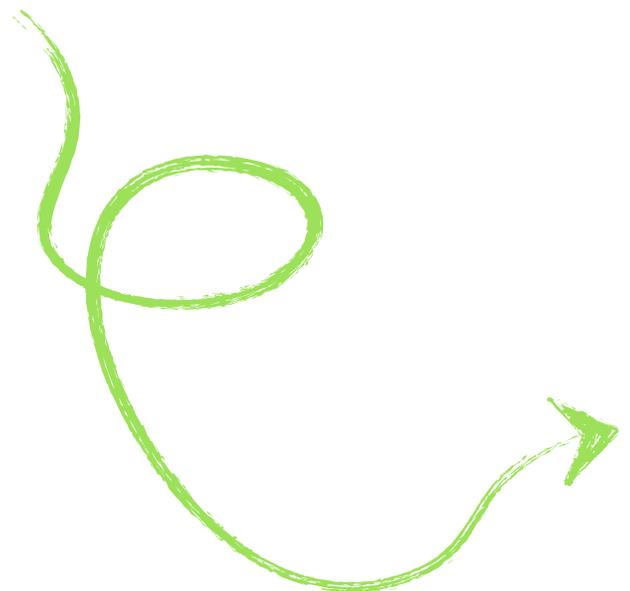
APS is not the only urban-suburban school district in the nation, or in Colorado, struggling to educate its students. Many other districts face similar challenges: the opportunity gap between low-income, students of color, and affluent, white students is growing larger; expectations are low and opportunities scarce for these students across the country. But there is hope.

"These statistics will be a wake up call to the community to think of strategies to improve academic achievement and the standard of education in Aurora. Let's think about how families and the district can work together in order to support our children's education."  
–Hedrine T., APS parent

There are school districts around the U.S. and in Colorado that are making progress. There are classrooms where all students are reaching the state's standards for college and career readiness. There are an ever-growing number of schools where low-income, Latino, African American, and English language learning students are succeeding. In fact, some of these classrooms lie just to the west in Denver Public Schools (DPS). Denver has similar demographics, faces similar resource constraints, and has experienced similar economic growth to Aurora. And, not too long ago, DPS' performance lagged as much as or more than Aurora's does today. Given these similarities, this report often relies on a comparison to Denver, showing that progress is possible, success is possible, and that there are lessons to be learned from our neighbor.

We hope to focus the attention of our community and the district on the most important issues facing APS. The facts are clear, but they are also only the beginning – APS needs the commitment and concern of all of us to improve outcomes for students. At its core, this report is about the vibrant students in APS and the possibilities the future holds for them.

**With that said, let's start with the facts.**



## Changing Demographics

From Park Lane to Murphy Creek, Aurora is home to a diverse and vibrant community, and indeed is one of the most integrated communities in the country.<sup>1</sup> A hub for health sciences, the defense industry, and development, Aurora's economy and population are booming. Families have a wealth of experiences and backgrounds; students and their families come from 131 countries, and speak more than 133 languages. Understanding the breadth of student and family demographics in Aurora can help the district tailor and align programming and resources to best support its students.

### APS is growing rapidly, and its population of students is changing.

Enrollment in APS has been steadily increasing since 2009. The district grew by nearly 13% to over 40,000 students. Alongside this overall growth, the proportion of Latino students increased from 51% to 54%, and the proportion of students receiving free and reduced lunch (FRL – a commonly used indicator of low-income families) increased from 61% to 70%. The number of ELL students increased proportionally and now number over 16,000 students.<sup>2</sup> The population of refugee students also grew by 24% from 2011-2013, making up 1,220 students.<sup>3</sup> Overall the refugee population represents a small proportion of APS students; however, there are 5 schools where refugees account for more than 10% of students.<sup>4</sup>

Despite an overall increase in enrollment, not all student subgroups grew within APS. Since 2009, the population of white students fell four percentage points from 23% to 18%, and the proportion of black students decreased from 20% to 18%.<sup>5</sup> The growth and changing demographics in APS reflect a shift in the greater population of Aurora, which itself is growing and becoming increasingly Latino: the number of all school-aged children in the city increased 14% in the first decade of the century; the Latino community grew 70% and the group now makes up nearly 30% of the Aurora community.<sup>6</sup>

The shift in the student population presents an opportunity for Aurora. Growth is consistent at about 3% per year, requiring more resources, and the district expects to continue its growth. Aurora schools are reaching capacity; APS struggled to find space for the influx of new students at its schools. To accommodate its growing population, APS built mobile classroom units on several of its campuses. These mobiles contain two classrooms that can each fit 25 students. Even with the addition of the mobile units, 38% of schools in APS were at or above 90% capacity as of 2015. Excluding the mobile units, 77% of schools were at or above 90% capacity as of 2015.<sup>7</sup>

With the growing enrollment and changing profile of a typical APS student, instruction and support systems provided to students need to follow suit. Aurora must take a hard look at the needs of its different student groups from English language learners to refugees to students with disabilities, review what is currently working-- or not working-- in the district, and ensure that the most effective practices for these diverse student populations are adopted, creating the foundation for a racially, ethnically, economically integrated community. It is critical that APS build upon success, and work with school staff and families so these statistics can be further improved.

## DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

	2009	2014
Latino	51%	54%
White	23%	18%
FRL	63%	69%
ELL	39%	39%

### PERCENT OF REFUGEE STUDENT POPULATION <sup>2</sup>

Crawford Elementary: 27%

Boston K-8: 19%

AWCPA 6-12: 14%

Aurora Central High School:  
12%

Sable Elementary: 11%

69% of students are FRL

39% of students are ELL –  
82% of ELL students speak  
Spanish

3% of students are refugees

11% of students receive  
special education services  
(SPED)

## Falling Academic Achievement

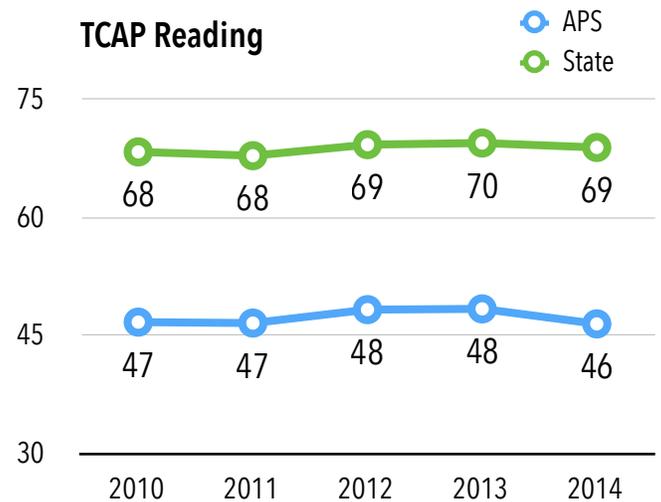
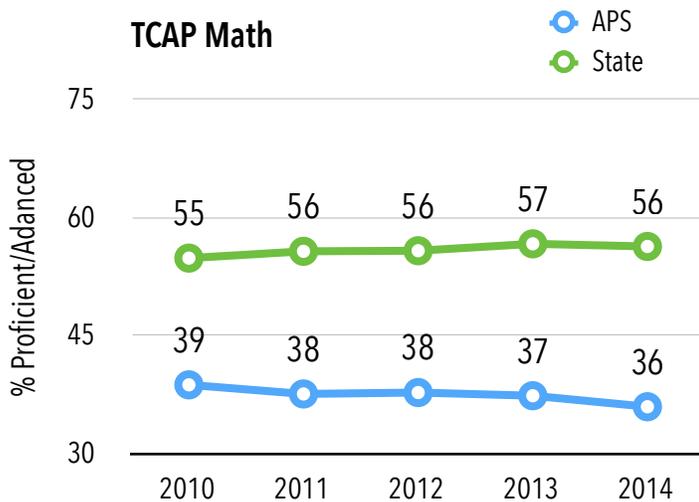
Performance on standardized tests allows us to understand how our students are performing, and we can compare their performance to other students across the district, and across the state. The results are important for families and educators alike. Families can understand how well schools are educating students. Educators can understand which programs are more or less effective at providing a high quality education to all students. Here is a look at how Aurora students are faring.

### Proficiency rates in APS are falling in reading and math - and the gap between APS and the state is widening.

APS consistently scores below state averages on Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) and Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) tests.<sup>8</sup> From 2010-2014, on average, APS proficiency rates were:

- **18 percentage points lower** than state averages in math;
- **20 percentage points lower** in writing; and,
- **22 percentage points lower** in reading across all tested grades.<sup>9</sup>

Across two separate district administrations (one from 2010-2013 and the current administration from 2013-2014) reading proficiency rates fell by a quarter of a percentage point, and math proficiency rates fell by 2.79 percentage points.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, students across the rest of the state on average either stayed the same or improved, meaning the gap between APS students and the rest of the state is getting bigger. It's not only on TCAP that Aurora students are faring worse than other Colorado students. Aurora students also score lower than the rest of the state on the ACT, an assessment of college-readiness.<sup>11</sup>



### 2015 ACT Results

	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
Aurora Public Schools Average	15.4	17.4	16.8	17.8	17
Denver Public Schools Average	17.2	18.5	18.3	18.7	18.3
Colorado Average	19.4	20	20.2	20.5	20.1
<b>ACT College Readiness Benchmark</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	

These scores show that Aurora students are not ready for success in college, as they are well below the average scores of students enrolling in many higher education institutions, and, most importantly, are well below the scores of students who complete a degree.

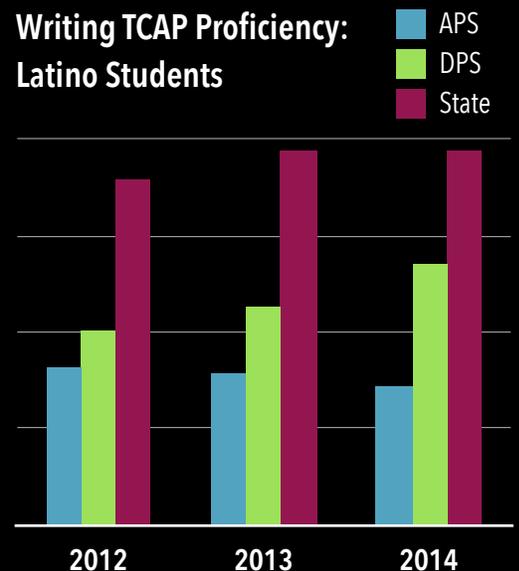
ACT Score	Description
24	Average ACT Score, Colorado Bachelor's Degree Completer
24	75% of Admitted Students at University of Colorado-Boulder score at or above
22	Average ACT Score, Colorado Associate's Degree Completer
20	75% of Admitted Students at University of Colorado-Denver score at or above
18	75% of Admitted Students at Metro State University of Denver score at or above

**Low-income and Latino students are performing worse in APS than in the rest of the state.**

It is also critical to understand how student groups are performing relative to their peers in other parts of the state. For low-income and Latino students, the gap in proficiency between APS and the rest of the state is increasing. For example, from 2010-2014, the difference between Latino students' math scores in the rest of the state and Latino students' scores in Aurora increased by 60%.<sup>12</sup>

As compared to Denver Public Schools (DPS), APS has been making slower progress with FRL students. From 2010-2014, TCAP proficiency rates among FRL students in DPS increased by 34% in writing, 11% in reading, and 17% in math. Over that same period, proficiency rates among FRL students in APS increased by 18% in writing, 3% in reading, and actually decreased by 7% in math.<sup>13</sup>

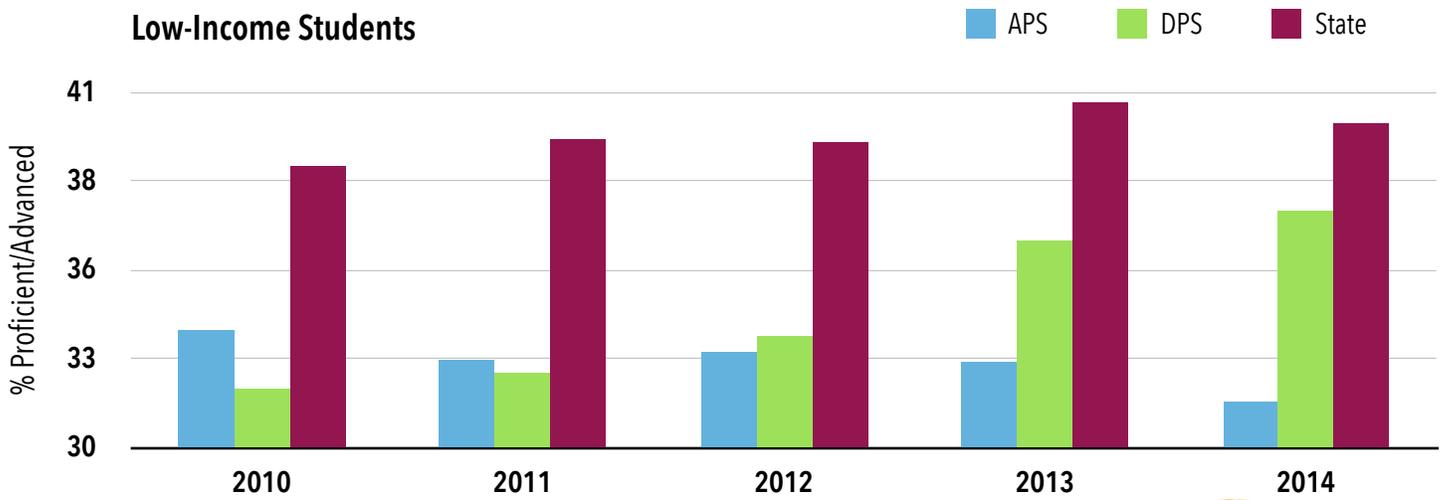
**FROM 2010-2014, PROFICIENCY RATES FOR ELLS IN DPS INCREASED BY 21% IN MATH - IN APS THEY DECREASED BY 8%.**



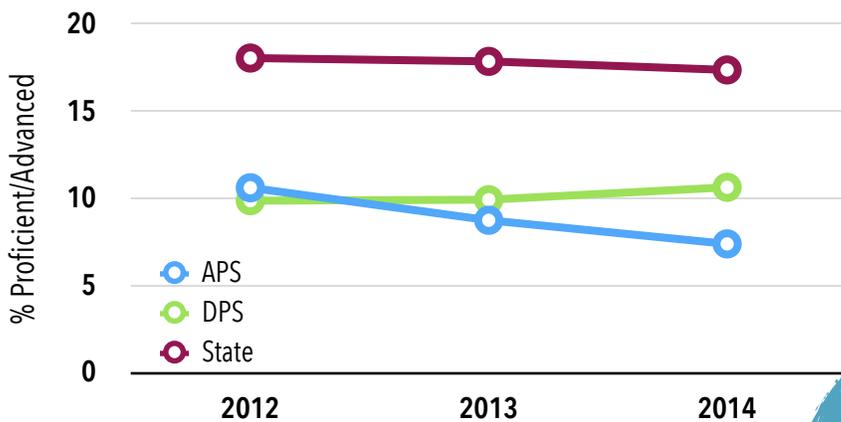
ELL students are also making slower progress in Aurora than they are in Denver. From 2010-2014, TCAP proficiency rates for ELLs in DPS increased by 46% in writing, 19% in reading, and 21% in math. In APS, proficiency rates for ELLs increased by 22% in writing, 1% in reading, and decreased by 8% in math over the same time period.<sup>14</sup>

Students in special education programs are also underperforming their peers in similar districts and across the state. In fact, proficiency rates for Aurora students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) dropped more than 3 percentage points in three years, while proficiency rates for the same group of students across the state slipped a half percentage point, and grew in Denver by three-quarters of a percentage point.

**Math TCAP 2010-2014:  
Low-Income Students**



**Proficiency Rates for Students with IEPs**



PROFICIENCY RATES FOR AURORA STUDENTS WITH INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) DROPPED MORE THAN 3 PERCENTAGE POINTS IN THREE YEARS

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LATINO STUDENTS' MATH SCORES IN THE REST OF THE STATE AND LATINO STUDENTS' SCORES IN AURORA INCREASED BY 60%

## Slow Academic Growth

Student academic growth shows how much growth a student makes relative to his or her academic peers. More specifically, the Colorado Growth Model (CGM), the state's way of calculating the extent to which students, schools, and districts are improving year over year, uses a student growth percentile (SGP) to compare each student's current achievement to students in the same grade throughout the state who had similar CSAP/TCAP scores in past years. This means we can understand how much students are learning, regardless of whether they were above, on, or below grade level the year before. We can use the median growth percentile (MGP) to summarize student growth rates by district and school.<sup>15</sup>

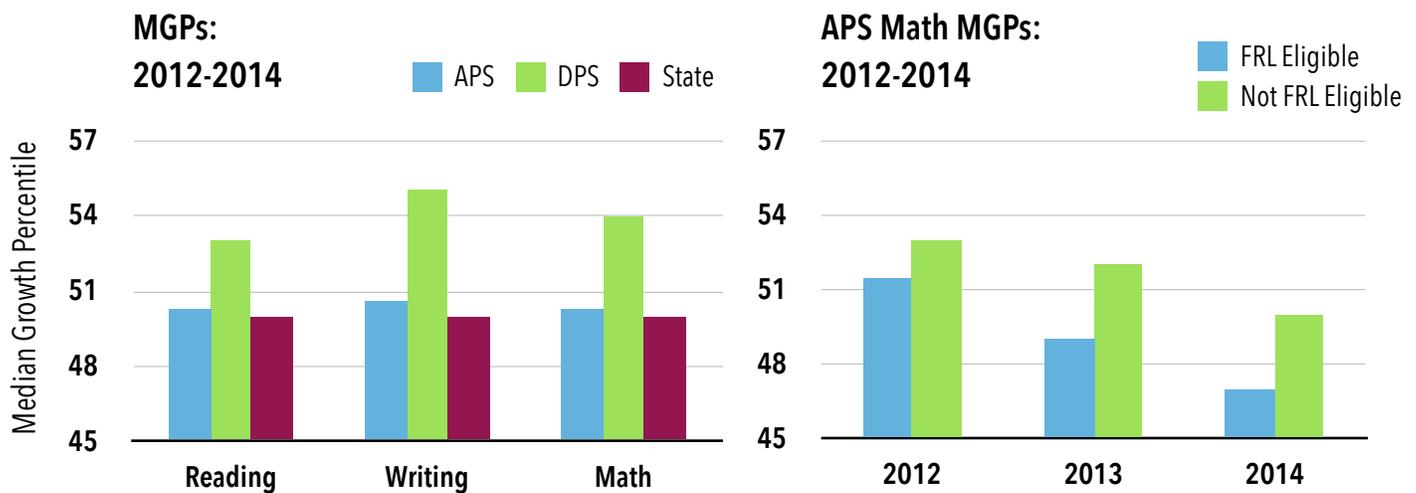
INCREASINGLY MORE STUDENTS ARE NOT BECOMING PROFICIENT OR MAINTAINING PROFICIENCY OVER TIME.

### Student growth in APS is stagnant.

Looking at growth can help us understand the extent to which schools and districts are moving students toward proficiency. On the TCAP test, MGPs in APS are near state averages, but have been stagnant for the last 3 years.<sup>16</sup> This means that students are not learning as much as their academic peers just to the west.

### Growth rates for low-income students are far behind their more affluent peers - and the gap is widening over time.

From 2012-2014, for low-income students the MGP fell from the 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile to the 47<sup>th</sup> percentile in math; the MGP fell from the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile to the 49<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading; and the MGP fell from 53<sup>rd</sup> percentile to the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile in writing.<sup>17</sup> Growth also declined for non-low income students, albeit at a slightly lower rate, leading to a decline in overall growth in the district and an increased disparity between low-income and non-low income students. Overall, this means that increasingly more students are not becoming proficient or maintaining proficiency over time.



## Low Graduation Rates

Those without a high school diploma face an uphill battle: nationally only a quarter of available jobs do not require a high school degree, and the median wage for someone without a high school degree is just over \$20,000.<sup>18</sup> And it's even more daunting in Colorado, where by 2020 74% of all jobs will require not only a high school diploma, but some sort of postsecondary education as well.<sup>19</sup>

### Almost half of students in APS don't graduate.

While graduation rates in APS are increasing, they are still far behind the state average. In 2014, the APS on-time graduation rate was 56%, compared to the state rate of 76.5% and the DPS rate of 61%. Nonetheless, graduation rates in APS have been increasing over the past 3 years. From 2012-2014, graduation rates rose by 7.87 percentage points for all students. Graduation rates have improved in APS, but there is still a long way to go.<sup>20</sup>

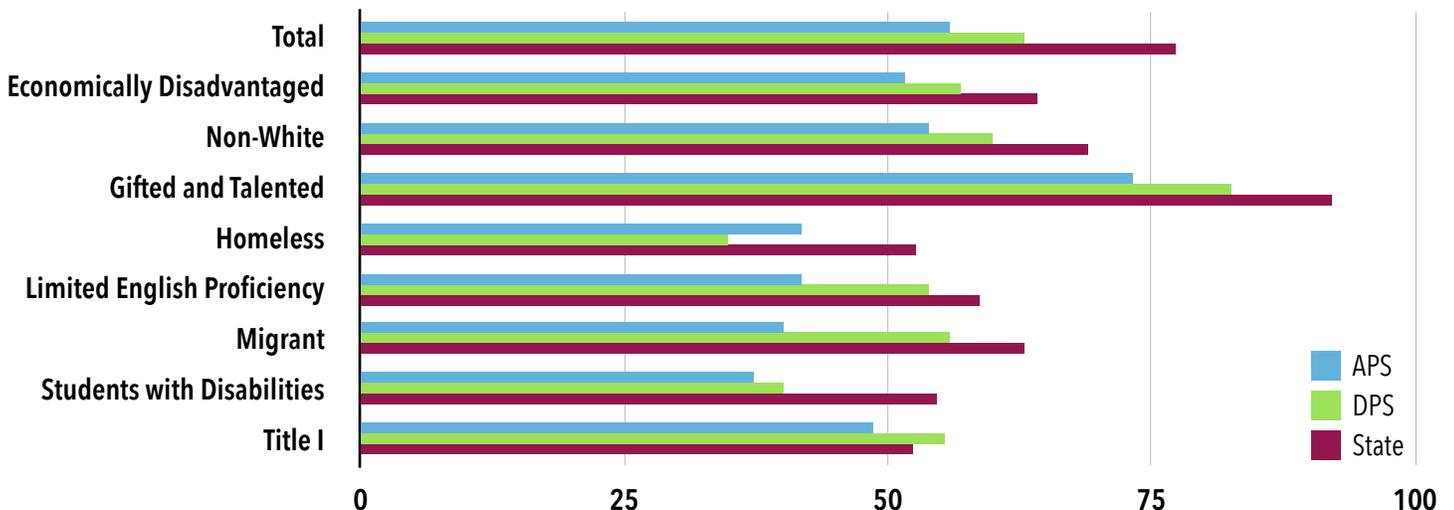
### Some student groups have even lower graduation rates.

Graduation rates in APS are also lower than state and DPS graduation rates for nearly all student subgroups. APS trailed the state and DPS in nearly every measured student subgroup, only outperforming DPS in graduating homeless students (42% of homeless students take home a diploma in Aurora, compared to 35% in Denver). But it remains clear that most students in Aurora are less likely to graduate high school than their peers in other parts of the state: in 2014, on-time APS graduation rates were 52% for economically disadvantaged students (64% in the state; 57% in DPS), 51.4% for Latino students (66.7% in the state; 58.2% in DPS); 42% for students with limited English proficiency (59% in the state; 54% in DPS); 40% for migrant students (63% in the state; 56% in DPS); and 37.2% for students with disabilities<sup>21</sup> (54.6% in the state; 40% in DPS).



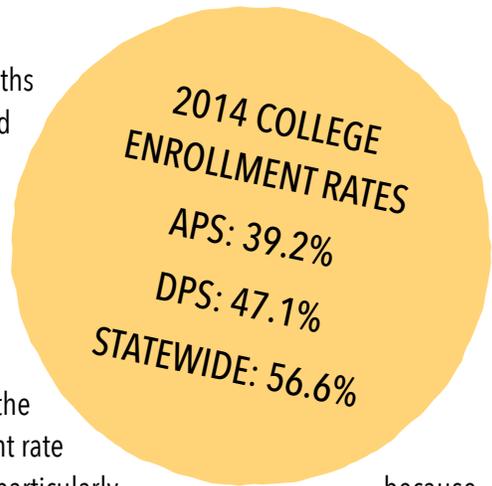
FROM 2010-2012, ONLY 3.18% OF APS GRADUATES ATTENDED A SCHOOL IN US NEWS & WORLD REPORT'S LIST OF TOP-TIER COLLEGES. THIS WAS THE 4TH LOWEST ENROLLMENT RATE AMONG DENVER METRO SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

2014 Graduation Rate by Subgroup



## Lagging College and Work Readiness

College may not be the right decision for every student— there are many different paths to success— but every student should have the right to make that decision, and should have the skills from their K-12 education to be set up for success in college or in the workforce. To measure college and workforce readiness, and assess whether students do have the option to go to college, we look at college enrollment rates, and college remediation rates.



### Less than 40% of APS graduates enroll in college.

Similar to the rest of the state, college enrollment rates in APS have decreased over the last three years, falling by 5.3% from 2012-2014 (Colorado’s overall college enrollment rate fell by 3.7% and Denver’s fell by 7.4%). This decline in college enrollment is drastic particularly because APS has lower overall college enrollment rates than DPS and the rest of the state.

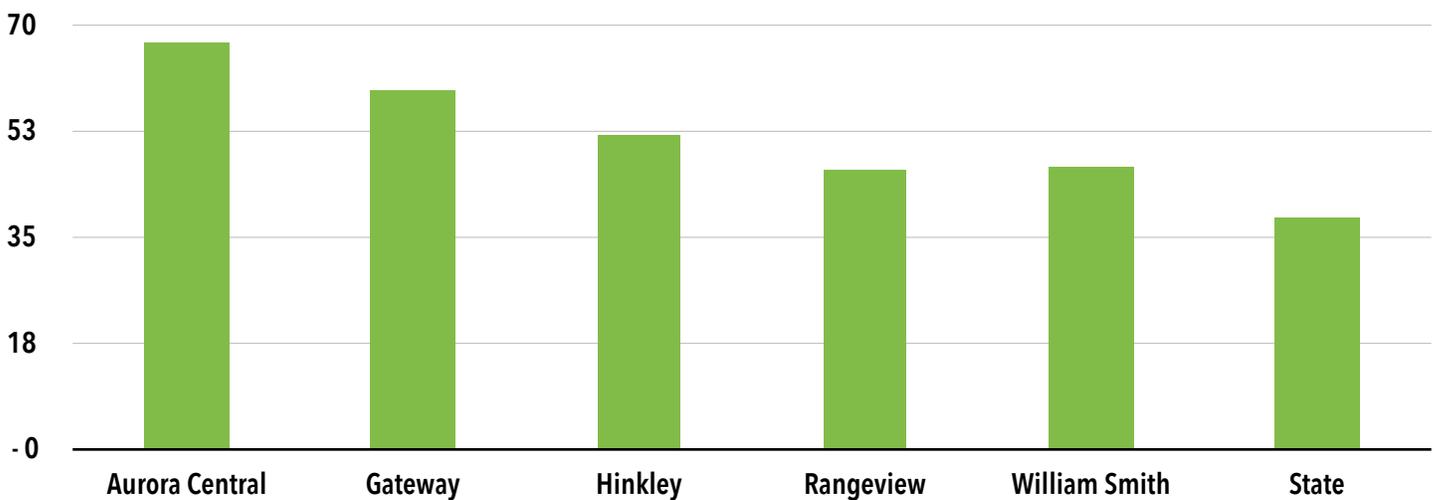
### More than half of APS graduates in public Colorado colleges need remediation.

Remediation is a burden to students and families. College becomes more costly, more time-consuming, and more frustrating when students have to take remedial courses. Remedial courses are additional, zero-credit classes in college, which students must take (and pay for) if they have not reached college-ready benchmarks— benchmarks and proficiency levels they should have reached through the K-12 system.

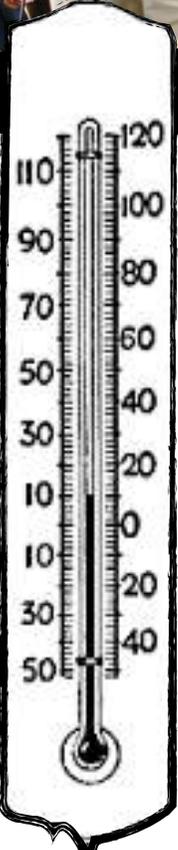
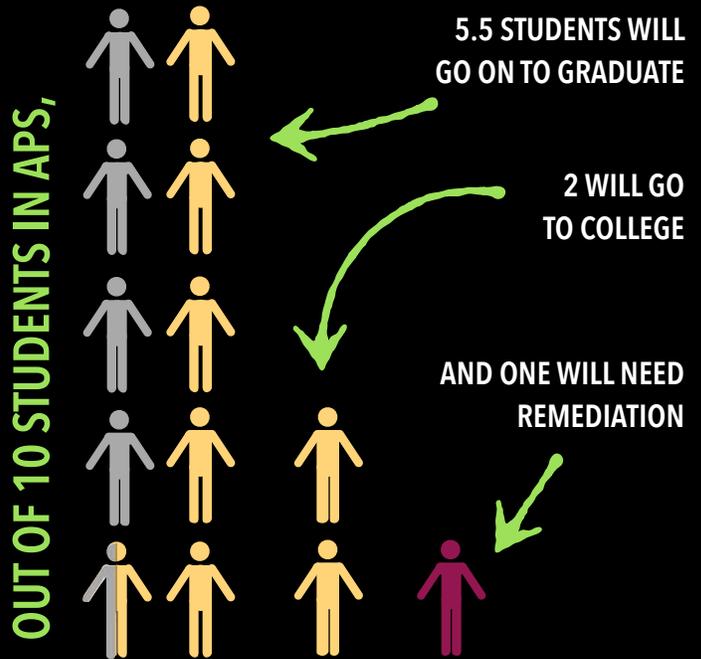
Of APS graduates who attend public college in Colorado over the last 5 years, more than half needed to take remedial courses. The average remediation rate in APS for the classes of 2009-2013 was 55%; across the state, the average remediation rate was 39% over the same time period. On a positive note, remediation rates have been decreasing over time for APS, falling by 19% over the last five years – state remediation rates fell by 13% over the same time period.<sup>22</sup>

LESS THAN HALF OF APS GRADUATES ARE ENROLLING IN COLLEGE; AND OF THOSE WHO DO GO TO COLLEGE, MORE THAN HALF NEED TO TAKE REMEDIAL COURSES.

2009-2013 Remediation Rate by High School



Again, it's critical that we understand how different groups in Aurora are succeeding in college. Unfortunately, breaking the remediation data into student subgroups paints a far more negative picture. For APS students attending public college in Colorado in 2013, the remediation rate was 66% for ELL students, 75% for SPED students, 67% for FRL students, 68.5% for black students, 49% for Latino students, and 29% for white students. Across the board, less than half of APS graduates are enrolling in college; of those who do go to college, more than half need to take remedial courses.<sup>23</sup>



### District Climate

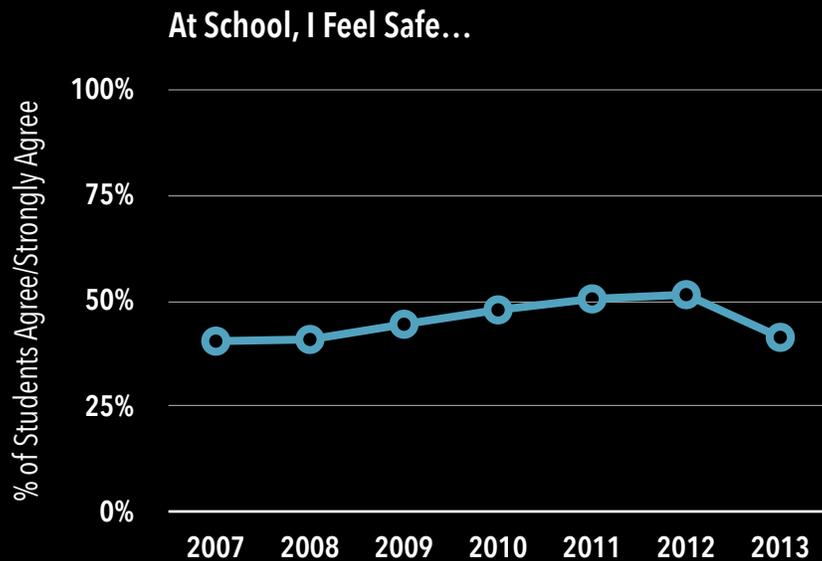
Performance data, growth data, and college readiness data are all critical in shedding light on how students are faring. But the student experience is broader than those data points. This section looks at other data sources, specifically surveys and discipline data to provide a more holistic view of the state of Aurora public schools.

Each year, APS gives a survey to measure satisfaction among students, families, and staff.<sup>24</sup> Looking at surveys of students, families, teachers, and district administrators can provide a different perspective to school performance than can test scores and measurable outcomes. This perspective sheds light on what goes on in school buildings, how engaged teachers are in teaching, and how engaged students are in learning. Though positive school cultures can encourage collaboration, high expectations, and student learning, results in Aurora show high levels of distrust. We applaud APS for tracking this data and making it public; the hard part will now be to understand and act upon this information so that these trends become positive.

#### There are additional opportunities to engage families.

Survey data from families has been overwhelmingly positive over the last 6 years, with a majority of respondents agreeing that their schools provide helpful information, welcome families, have strong leadership, and have clear assessment policies. One statement – *I have received information on opportunities offered for children in need of additional support with their learning* – went against this trend: 18% of respondents disagreed or strongly

disagreed with this statement from 2009-2014. Additionally, a new survey statement in 2014 – “the school communicates to me and my child what we need to do to prepare my child for college, career, and success in life after high school” – had 23.2% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree.<sup>25</sup>



**There is progress in discipline policies.**

Families need more information about what is going on in schools, about what support structures look like, and, importantly, what discipline systems look like. Aurora Public Schools has in the past had a high prevalence of harsh disciplinary practices including in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement. Though Aurora’s statistics remain high, they have also been recognized for tackling the issue head-on, significantly reducing these disciplinary practices, and are continuing to make headway. In the 2013-14 school year, Aurora had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest out-of-school suspension rate, 14<sup>th</sup> highest expulsion rate, and 13<sup>th</sup> highest referral rate of all districts in Colorado; however, from 2009-2013, Aurora had the 9<sup>th</sup> largest reduction in suspension rates, 3<sup>rd</sup> largest reduction in expulsions, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest reduction in referrals to law enforcement in the entire state.<sup>26</sup> Promisingly, there have been further significant reductions in all three categories in the first part of the 2014-15 school year, with a 27.8% decrease in suspension rates from the previous year, a 13.1% decrease in expulsions, and a 72.6% decrease in referrals to law enforcement.<sup>27</sup>

**“THE SCHOOL COMMUNICATES TO ME AND MY CHILD WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO PREPARE MY CHILD FOR COLLEGE, CAREER, AND SUCCESS IN LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL”**

**23.2% OF APS FAMILIES DISAGREED OR STRONGLY DISAGREED**

**“I HAVE RECEIVED INFORMATION ON OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WITH THEIR LEARNING ”**

**18% OF FAMILIES DISAGREED OR STRONGLY DISAGREED**

**“ I TRUST THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT ME IN THE DISTRICT.”**

**44.1% OF ADMINISTRATORS AND 25.3% OF TEACHERS AGREED**

**APS HAS SET A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.”**

**50.7% OF ADMINISTRATORS AND 47.1% OF TEACHERS AGREED**

**“I HAVE AT LEAST ONE ADULT IN MY SCHOOL WHERE I CAN GO WHEN I NEED HELP.”**

**56% OF STUDENTS AGREED**

ACCORDING THE 2015 TELL SURVEY, 27% OF APS TEACHERS DO NOT THINK THEIR SCHOOL IS A GOOD PLACE TO WORK AND LEARN, COMPARED TO 15% OF TEACHERS STATEWIDE.

### Less than half of students in APS feel safe at school.

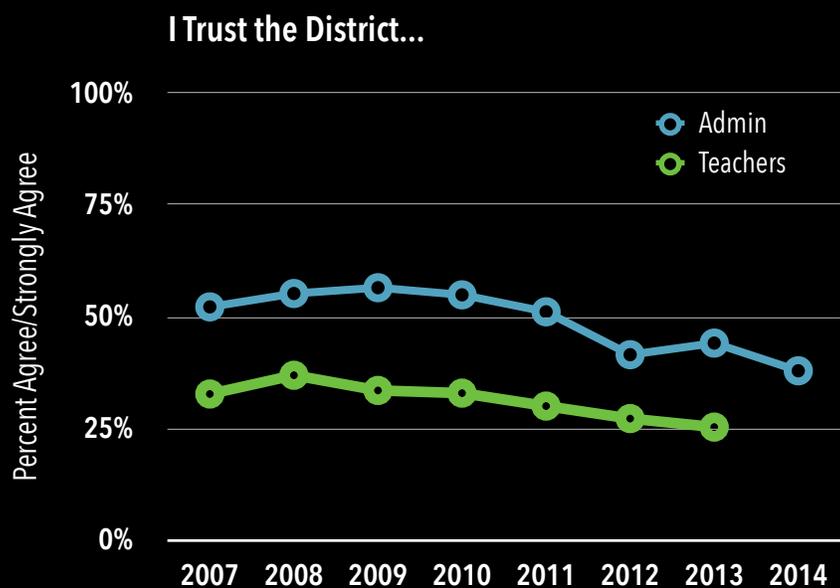
Despite this progress in discipline policies, there is still skepticism about the culture, particularly in high schools, in Aurora. Shockingly, from 2007-2013 more than half of students in Aurora reported they do not feel safe at school, and only 19% of students felt their belongings were safe at school.<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that, often, the most likely students to feel unsafe are parts of higher needs student groups, including students with disabilities.<sup>29</sup> We know that if students do not feel safe there will be little learning.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, students do not seem to feel like they have the support they need in schools. From 2007-2013, only 45.3% of high school students agreed with the statement - *I get academic/career planning help from my school counselor when I need it*, and in 2013, only 56% of students agreed that they have at least one adult in their school where they can go when they need help.<sup>31</sup>

### Less than half of teachers and principals trust district decision-makers.

Without buy-in and trust from students and faculty little can be accomplished in any organization. The research on school improvement and organizational change is clear: all parties must have an understanding of where the district is going and understand their own role in supporting the vision. In 2013, 44.1% of administrators and 25.3% of teachers agreed with the statement - *I trust the people who make decisions that affect me in the district*.<sup>32</sup> In the same year, 50.7% of administrators and 47.1% of teachers agreed that APS had set a clear direction for improving student achievement. More than 30% of teachers and principals did not understand the long-term vision of APS in 2013. Finally, only 46.5% of principals and 19.4% of teachers agreed with the statement - *I am given opportunities to influence decisions made by the district* - as of 2013.<sup>33,34</sup> A

separate survey, the TELL Survey, is given to all educators in Colorado, and shows a dramatic difference between teacher perceptions in APS compared to the rest of the state. According to the 2015 results, compared to state averages, fewer teachers in APS feel trusted, respected, or feel like their school has a shared vision of success.<sup>35</sup>

When the staff members directly responsible for teaching students do not understand the vision of their district, do not feel like they can influence the strategic plan, and do not trust the people who make decisions on their behalf, then there is a serious problem.



## Recommendations

With all of the changes coming to Aurora—a growing and diverse population, and a boon in health sciences and aerospace industries—now is the time for APS to make significant gains and rethink its existing strategies. With a growing district and increasing attention from the community, APS has a tremendous opportunity to advance student achievement. The work will be hard, and some decisions will be unpopular, but the potential payoffs are high.

Despite its many complex challenges, APS can improve student outcomes by honestly working with the community and learning from other districts. There are schools and districts around the country and in Colorado that are creating the conditions, building programs, and delivering instruction such that all students, including low-income students and English language learners, are successful. The strategies of these schools and districts are the foundation for our recommendations to APS. The context of every school and every district is different, but after considering the circumstances facing APS, we believe these strategies will work.

### 1. Develop a district’s strategic plan that clearly defines goals, strategies milestones and timelines to improve student achievement.

Research shows that a clear plan and careful measurement is an important step in building organizational capacity and strengthening community voice.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, a strategic plan sets expectations, creates metrics to gauge progress and build accountability, and communicates priorities to the community, including administrators, teachers, families, and students. APS should revise its strategic plan to not only define the vision for the district, but also focus on specifics. A revised strategic plan should include clear, measurable goals that have clear milestones and timelines to monitor and drive student achievement.

### 2. Engage all of Aurora’s communities to understand and inform the district’s challenges and plans for improvement.

We recommend Aurora Public Schools engage with the community to better understand the dreams and high expectations families, teachers, students, and community partners have for Aurora kids. Great schools are those with high expectations for all students, with a clear direction, and strong community engagement. APS must do more to engage communities in their native languages, gather feedback, and integrate community needs into school and district plans. Families and community groups, including ours, must work hand in hand with the district on school turnaround plans; APS cannot turn around a school without the support of the community being served.

Community partners can provide additional services and support needed by students and families. Partnerships with such community groups should be cultivated by the district. It’s understandable that the district cannot do everything but should make concerted efforts to build partnership with those groups that can provide crucial wrap around services to ensure basic needs are met for students’ success.

Aurora can also learn from education ecosystems where districts and schools work closely with community groups to develop and implement changes that drive positive school cultures and student achievement. Strong and authentic community

ESTA INFORMACIÓN SE DEBERÍA PODER ACESAR FÁCILMENTE DEL DISTRITO Y EN MI IDIOMA. CON ESTE REPORTE LAS FAMILIA SE PUEDEN DAR CUENTA DE COMO VAN LAS ESCUELAS. ES IMPORTANTE SABER LA TRISTE REALIDAD, Y COMO LAS COSAS NO VAN COMO MUCHOS PAPAS PIENSAN. CON SABER ESTA INFORMACIÓN ENTONCES PODEMOS TRABAJAR JUNTOS A CAMBIAR ESTAS ESTADÍSTICAS.

- PATRICIA Z.

THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE EASY TO ACCESS FROM THE DISTRICT AND AVAILABLE IN MY LANGUAGE. WITH THIS REPORT FAMILIES CAN REALIZE HOW OUR SCHOOLS ARE DOING. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THIS SAD REALITY, AND THAT THINGS AREN'T GOING AS WELL AS MANY FAMILIES THINK THEY ARE. BY BECOMING AWARE OF THIS INFORMATION WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO CHANGE THESE STATISTICS.



I AM HAVING A HARD TIME BECAUSE NEXT YEAR I HAVE TO PICK A SCHOOL WHERE MY DAUGHTER WILL START KINDERGARTEN, AND I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO ENROLL HER. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW SCHOOLS ARE EVALUATED, AND HOW TO SEE THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATIONS. I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SEE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL MY CHILD ATTENDS AND FEEL CONFIDENT THAT HER SCHOOL IS DOING GREAT.

- SHOVA D. AND KUMAR D., APS PARENTS

engagement is a proven means of supporting reforms and transformations that can significantly impact students' performance. Examples of strong education ecosystems that Aurora might learn from include include Oakland, Denver, New Orleans, Memphis, New York City and Lowell, MA. These ecosystems lead to community engagement, stronger improvement plans, and better schools.

**3. Develop a family-friendly rating system on schools using colors, numbers or letters to differentiate performance; communicate the information and quality rating to families, as well as similar reports on individual student performance in families' primary languages.**

Data exists for a reason- to inform and to inspire change. The most important consumers of student achievement data should be families. But APS needs to facilitate this: APS should use the data and the frameworks available to let families know how their schools are performing, and create feedback loops for families to give input into the direction of the school. This

enables APS to partner with families to improve the quality of education in APS. Research shows that transparency leads to efficiency, and when schools are underperforming, families are quick to raise the alarm and ask for help.<sup>37</sup>

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) provides school and district performance frameworks on a yearly basis. APS can use these frameworks or create its own to serve the needs of families in Aurora. APS already has a robust data collection and analysis team that can incorporate school climate surveys and planning reports into CDE's school performance frameworks. The infrastructure already exists to make data useful to families in APS - now it is time to use it.

**4. Build exemplar new schools - including replications of high performing schools such as charters - that quickly serve as exemplars of success within the district.**

The district's current plans to improve student achievement look at the district or network level: the current Innovation Zone approach structures committees to look at Aurora Central and its feeder schools. While the Zone Action Committee and Zone Design Committee are meeting this year, they must finalize much of their work before School Design Committees start engaging in the redesign process. The district should push for and prioritize more immediate conversations about school-level solutions and designs.

A successful school can serve as both a proof point and a beacon: if one school in APS can improve outcomes for *all* its students, then every school in APS can improve outcomes for *all* its students. The district needs schools that deploy programming, supports, and instruction that drive student achievement outcomes.

**"THE BEST WAY TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IS TO START YOUNG-BY CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP. I WANT, ONCE AND FOR ALL, TO GET SCHOOLS OUT OF THE CATCH-UP BUSINESS."**

**-ARNE DUNCAN**



Different school models, including high-quality charter schools, are an important tool that the district should use in tandem with other efforts to improve achievement across the entire district. For example, charters can help serve the growing student population in Aurora, can more easily innovate and tailor instruction to focus on immigrants, refugees, English language learners, students who are significantly behind grade level, students with disabilities, or students who are gifted and talented.

Regardless of focus, successful charters and other new schools are an opportunity for Aurora to find new ways of educating its students and replicating the success in all schools. To effectively integrate charters and other innovative school models into the district strategy there must be strong systems and structures to support collaboration and best practice sharing. Districts like Denver, New York, LA, Spring Branch and Memphis have successfully coupled charters with other school improvement strategies.

**5. Develop schools and refine curriculum, pedagogy, programming and community engagement to effectively educate the growing population of students who need more support including English language learners, immigrants, refugees, and students with disabilities.**

Demographics in APS are changing – the district has to respond to raise student achievement. With a highly mobile population of English language learners, and some students experiencing formal education for the first time, APS needs to develop special curricula and programs to address their needs. Additionally, APS needs to ensure teachers are set up for success, providing tailored professional development, systems, and models that support quality instruction with these student groups.

APS can partner with existing community organizations that work with refugee and ELL students and their families in Aurora. Many of these organizations have already developed best practices and built relationships within these populations in Aurora. Additionally, APS must ensure it is providing supports and resources for its students with intellectual or developmental disabilities so they are included, engaged, and graduate school with the skills and support, like transitional plans, they need to succeed. Again, APS should leverage the existing infrastructure and funding sources dedicated to these students to better serve its students and improve the quality of education for every child in the district.

ESPERO

QUE EL REPORTE LE AYUDE AL DISTRITO Y A LAS ESCUELAS PARA MEJORAR. COMO MADRE, ES MUY DIFÍCIL VER ESTOS NÚMEROS. CUANDO PIENSO QUE MI HIJA PUDIERA SER UNAS DE LAS QUE NO SE PUEDA GRADUAR, ME MOLESTA Y ME ENTRISTECE. A MI COMO MAMA, ESTO SI ME IMPORTA, Y YO SI ME VOY A INVOLUCRAR PARA CAMBIAR ESTAS ESTADÍSTICAS.

-DIANA C., APS PARENT

THIS REPORT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT SHOWS US WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING ON IN AURORA PUBLIC SCHOOLS. I HOPE THIS REPORT HELPS THE DISTRICT AND THE SCHOOLS TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS. AS A MOTHER OF AN APS STUDENT, IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE THESE NUMBERS. WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT MY DAUGHTER COULD BE ONE OF THE STUDENTS THAT DOESN'T GRADUATE, IT MAKES ME FEEL SAD AND UPSET. FOR ME, AS A MOM, THIS IS IMPORTANT AND I AM GOING TO GET INVOLVED TO CHANGE THESE STATISTICS.

## 6. Search out best practices and use all available tools to effectively turnaround the districts lowest performing schools.

Turning around low-performing schools is critical to change the narrative and outcomes for many of Aurora's students. APS should look to, and learn from, the failures and successes of other districts. School turnaround often leads to confusion, frustration, and a sense of alienation among community and school district employees. Even though districts want to improve underperforming schools, they frequently become the enemy of students, families, and teachers in the neighborhood. These stakeholders feel like the district is not listening to them during the turnaround process; they feel like their perspective is irrelevant to the district as it makes decisions for them. For example, the community at Montbello High School in Denver continues to struggle through these challenges five years after DPS began the school turnaround.

APS needs to examine the failures and success of this and other turnaround efforts to make the most of the opportunity to improve student achievement at Aurora Central High School, and make it a model for successful school turnaround. APS needs to communicate with

stakeholders in the neighborhood and, with their help, develop a clear plan for turnaround. APS should not reinvent the wheel on turnaround— and in fact it should look for guidance from turnaround experts that include but are not limited to Mass Insight Education, who is already working with the district on its Innovation Zone strategy. In addition to this guidance throughout the process, the plan needs to be deeply contextualized and involve the community. With leadership from the community and experts in turnaround, APS can use the strategy for Aurora Central High School as a framework for improving schools across the district.

## 7. Work with the city of Aurora, Colorado and community organizations to expand high-quality full day Early Child Programming, full day Kindergarten, and connections to adult education opportunities.

Research shows that early childhood education prepares children to enter and succeed in the classroom, decreases their risk of social-emotional mental health problems, and increases their self-sufficiency as adults.<sup>38</sup> Education during these formative years can also begin closing the educational achievement gap between low and high-income students before formal schooling begins. Effective early childhood education increases high school graduation rates, improves performance on standardized tests, and reduces both grade repetition and the number of children placed in special education.<sup>39</sup>

Currently, only 54% of Aurora's kindergarten children are enrolled in full-day programs and Aurora lags substantially behind other neighboring communities in having quality full-day ECE offerings. APS must work with the city and others to ensure that more entering students have quality full-day ECE and schools have supported high quality full-day Kindergarten programs with solid early literacy programming. APS should focus on expanding the capacity of existing early childhood centers, creating new

centers with the help of community partners. Several school districts around the country have established strong pre-K and early childhood programs to better serve their students; APS should refine these programs to best suit the context and the needs of the students in Aurora.

Additionally, Aurora should connect families with extended learning opportunities for adults, ensuring they are able to engage with the district. There is an opportunity to connect education and engagement programs for families at these early childhood centers and other district programming.

## **8. Increase funding to schools through a Bond and Mill Levy in 2016.**

As the district continues to grow and implement the changes aligned to this coalition's recommendations, the district may require additional resources. We advocate for a detailed analysis of how additional funds could be leveraged to create new schools, expand early childhood, and grow capacity. Indeed additional funds for their own sake will not drive student achievement, but when money is invested in strategic and known solutions, increasing investment in Aurora's public education system can generate huge returns. Research shows that improving public education accelerates economic growth and can promote equal opportunity over the long run.<sup>40</sup>

In this vein, APS should attempt to pass a Bond and Mill Levy in 2016 to increase funding for its schools. General Obligation Bonds fund 'hard' expenditures – like physical infrastructure costs and capital investments – renovations, roofs, windows, facility construction, remodeling, electrical, plumbing and maintenance costs; and buying land or a facility for a new school. Mill Levy Overrides fund 'soft' expenditures – like operating expenses, such as personnel – teachers, classroom assistants, reading, P.E., music, art or other subject matter specialists; textbooks and software tools. Both these funds are needed to help APS improve its schools, as they'll support both capital expenditures and improved programming.

## **Conclusion**

Aurora Public Schools can continue to slide further into mediocrity or it can pivot, illuminate the problems and set a direction informed by other districts that have made progress. Most districts with similar challenges fail to identify the core issues, set a direction based on best practice, or act with urgency necessary to succeed. APS has this opportunity with strong community support and an understanding of what is necessary to positively impact all of Aurora's students. We call on the district's leadership, board and school leaders to take on this challenge with all of us.

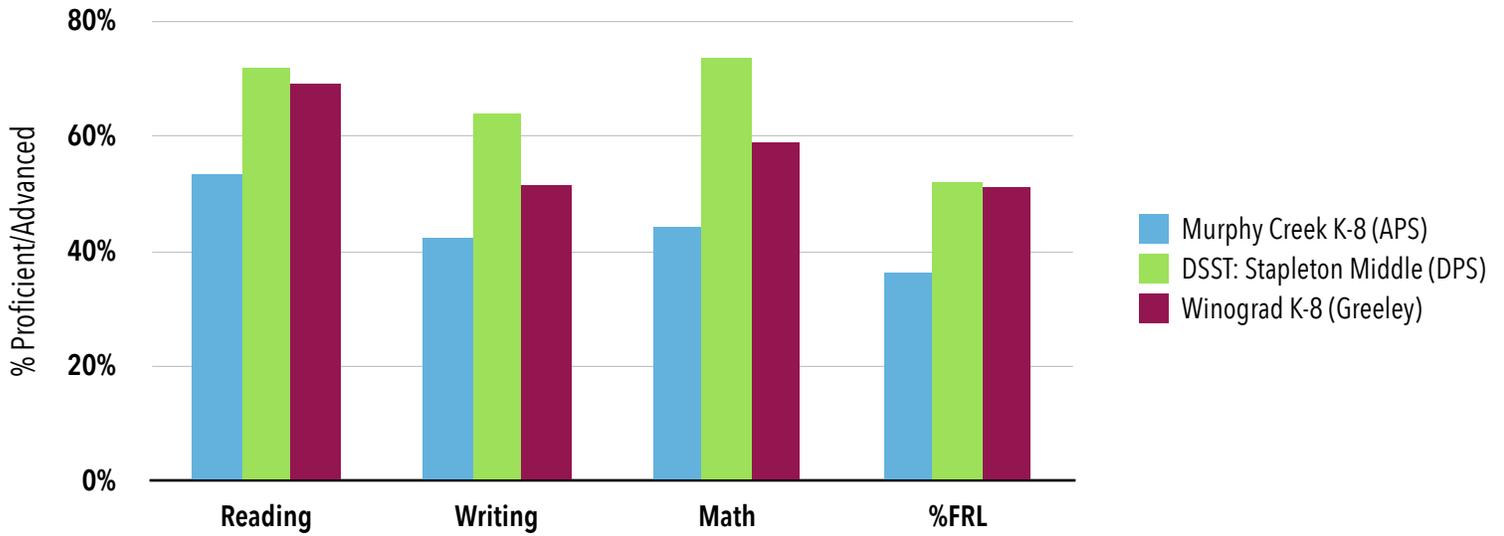
AS A FORMER APS STUDENT, AND NOW AN APS PARENT, I ASK THAT DISTRICT LEADERSHIP WORK WITH US FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY TO IMPROVE OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. I'M EXCITED BECAUSE I HOPE THAT WITH THIS REPORT, INSTEAD OF PEOPLE MOVING OUT OF THE DISTRICT, THEY WILL STAY AND HELP MAKE CHANGES BECAUSE THEY'LL REALIZE THEY HAVE MORE OF A SAY IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION THAN THEY THINK THEY DO. SEEING THESE FACTS I KNOW THERE IS ROOM FOR GROWTH & IMPROVEMENTS. TOGETHER WE'LL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

-SIPINGA F., APS PARENT

## Appendices

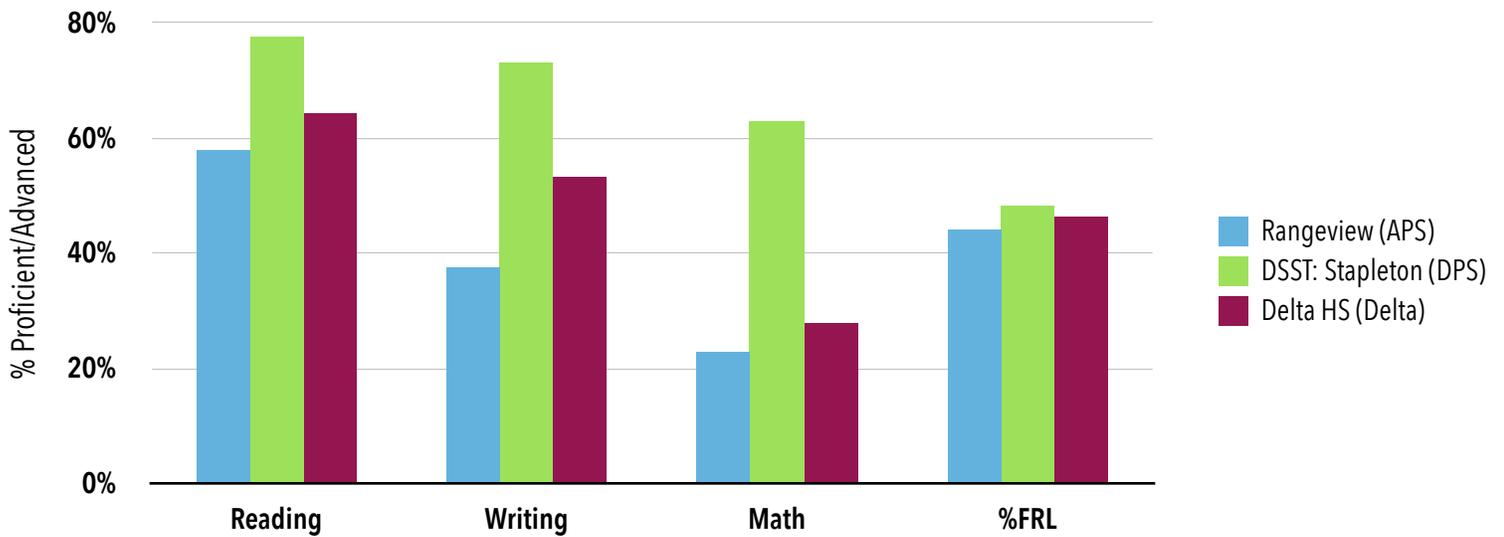
### Top Performing Middle Schools – APS, DPS, and Greeley Public Schools

#### FRL Proficiency - 2014



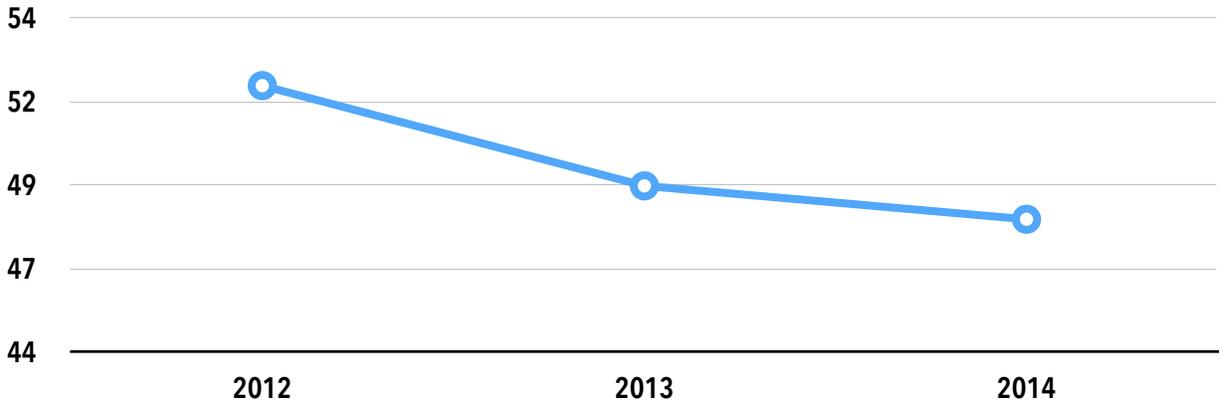
### Top Performing High Schools – APS, DPS, and Delta Public Schools

#### FRL Proficiency - 2014

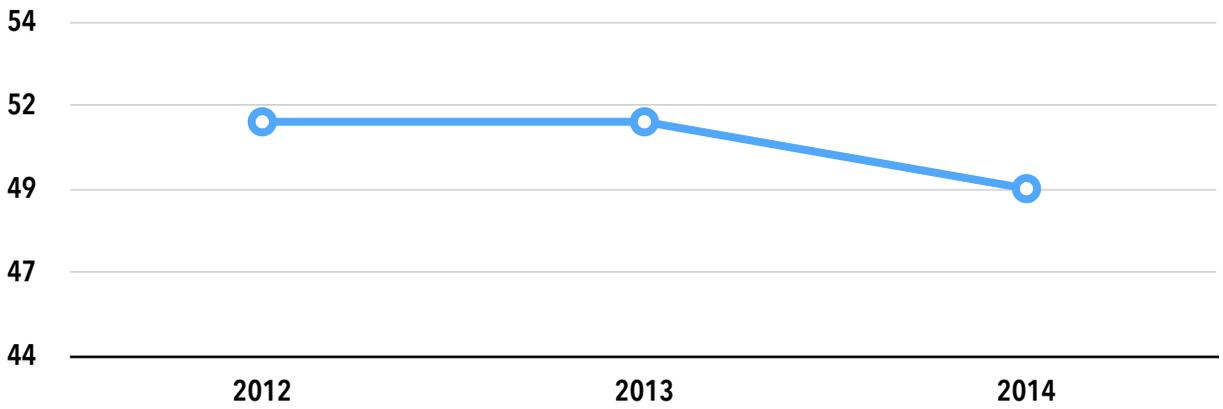


APS Median Growth Percentile

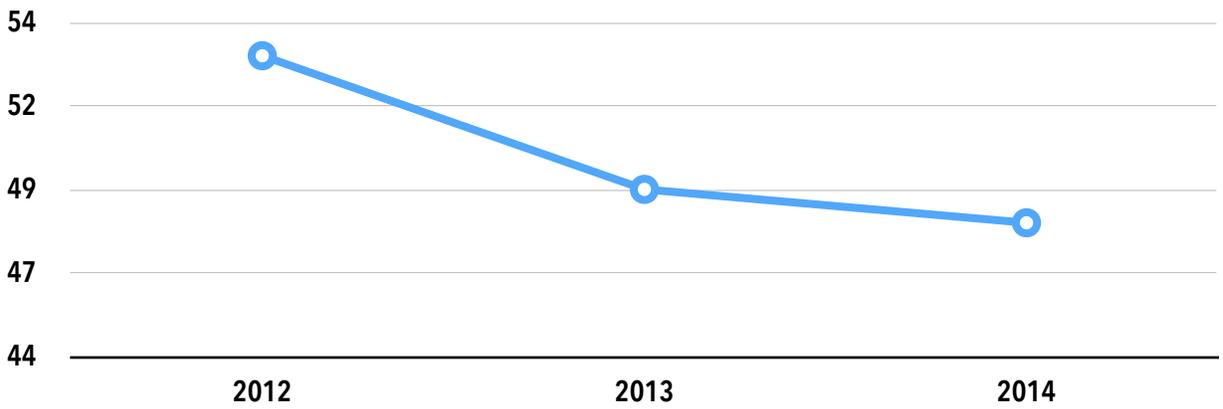
**Math**



**Reading**

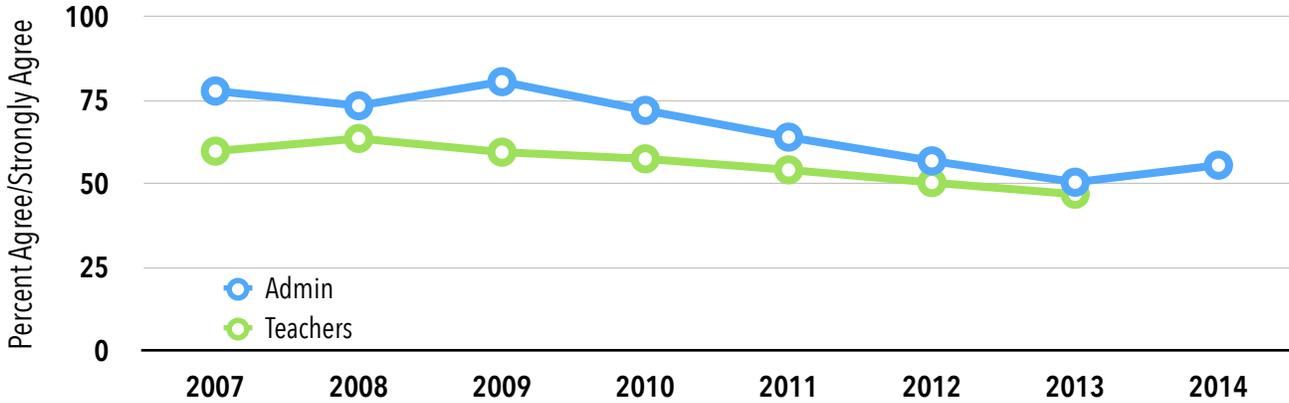


**Writing**

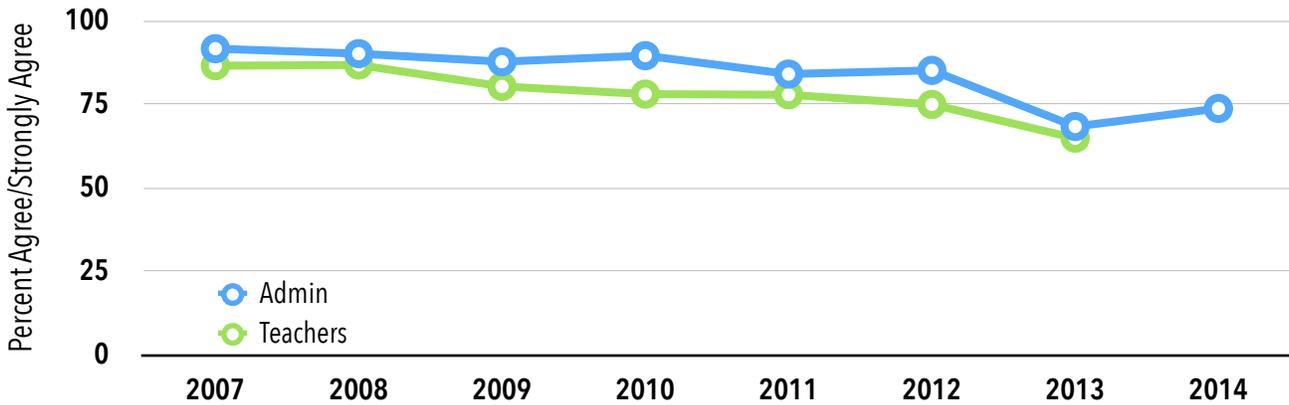


APS Teacher/Administration Climate Surveys Over-Time

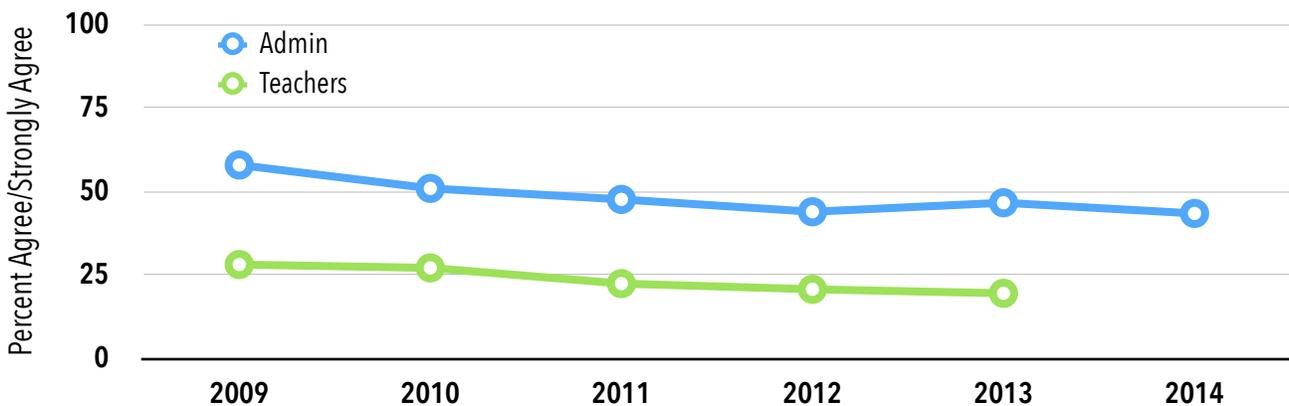
**APS Has...a Clear Direction**



**I Understand..the Vision of APS**



**I..Influence [District] Decisions**



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Nate Silver. *The Most Diverse Cities are Often The Most Segregated*. Five Thirty Eight: May 1 2015. [http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-most-diverse-cities-are-often-the-most-segregated/?ex\\_cid=upshot&nl=upshot&em\\_pos=large&emc=edit\\_up\\_20150925](http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-most-diverse-cities-are-often-the-most-segregated/?ex_cid=upshot&nl=upshot&em_pos=large&emc=edit_up_20150925)

<sup>2</sup> Colorado Department of Education. *Pupil Membership Reports*.

<sup>3</sup> Aurora Public Schools. *Refugee Reports*. 2014. <http://planning.aurorak12.org/planning-reports>

<sup>4</sup> Two of these schools, Aurora Central and Boston K-8, will be included in the district's first ACTION Zone, which will give schools Innovation Status and more flexibility around structure, programming, and governance.

<sup>5</sup> Aurora Public Schools. *District Demographic Report*. 2014. <http://assessment.aurorak12.org/research-reports/enrollment-reports/>

<sup>6</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. *School District Demographic System*. 2015. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/ed/index.asp>

<sup>7</sup> Aurora Public Schools. *APS Schools Ranked by Percent Total Capacity*. May 2015. [http://planning.aurorak12.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/106/2012/05/May112015\\_TotalCapacity.pdf](http://planning.aurorak12.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/106/2012/05/May112015_TotalCapacity.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) is Colorado's standards-based assessment designed to provide a picture of student performance to schools, districts, educators, parents and the community. The primary purpose of the assessment program is to determine the level at which Colorado students meet the Colorado Model Content Standards in the content areas assessed. The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) was based on the old Colorado Model Content Standards, which does not reflect in any way the new standards. After 16 years, CSAP has concluded its lifecycle. The Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) was designed to support school districts as they transition to the new standards. - See more at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/coassess-about#sthash.Wh6ogbdV.dpuf>

<sup>9</sup> Colorado Department of Education. *Schoolview Data Lab*. 2015. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> The median growth percentile summarizes student growth rates by district, school, grade level, or other group of interest. The median is calculated by taking the individual student growth percentiles of all the students in the group being analyzed, ordering them from lowest to highest, and identifying the middle score, the median. For more detail, visit <http://www.schoolview.org/GMFAQ.asp#Q21>.

<sup>16</sup> Colorado Department of Education. *Schoolview Data Lab*. 2015. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections and Occupational Employment Statistics programs.

<sup>19</sup> Colorado Department of Higher Education. 2014 Legislative Report on The Skills for Job Acts. January 2014. 3 [http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Legislative/Workforce/2014\\_SkillsforJob.pdf](http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Legislative/Workforce/2014_SkillsforJob.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Colorado Department of Education. *Graduation Statistics*. <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrent>

<sup>21</sup> Graduation rates for students with disabilities include students who receive certificates of completion. Certificates of completion are awarded to students who, after age 18 remain with APS and receive work experience until the age of 21. For more information on Certificates of Completion see the Department of Education: <https://answers.ed.gov/ics/support/KBAnswer.asp?questionID=632&subscribe=1>

<sup>22</sup> Colorado Department of Higher Education. *Legislative Report on Remedial Education*. 2014. <http://highered.colorado.gov/Data/Reports.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> As required by law, CDHE maintains remediation data at the school level disaggregated by subgroup. CDHE provided this information for the purpose of this report.

- <sup>24</sup> Aurora Public Schools parent, student, and staff surveys are available at <http://assessment.aurorak12.org/surveys>
- <sup>25</sup> Aurora Public Schools. *Parent Climate Survey*. 2015. <http://assessment.aurorak12.org/surveys/parent-climate-survey/>
- <sup>26</sup> Padres y Jovenes Unidos. *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Colorado School Discipline Report Card: Toward Ending the School-to-Prison-Pipeline in Colorado*. March 2015. [http://padresunidos.org/sites/www.padresunidos.org/files/media-root/ES2JT/PJU-01\\_Report2015\\_web%20v2%204\\_6\\_15.pdf](http://padresunidos.org/sites/www.padresunidos.org/files/media-root/ES2JT/PJU-01_Report2015_web%20v2%204_6_15.pdf)
- <sup>27</sup> Aurora Public Schools Division of Accountability and Research. *Discipline & Behavior Issues Executive Summary*. March 2015
- <sup>28</sup> Aurora Public Schools. *Student Climate Survey*. 2015. <http://assessment.aurorak12.org/surveys/student-climate-survey/>
- <sup>29</sup> The Arc of Aurora. *Children in Crisis: Impact of Bullying on Children with Disabilities*.
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