



# Denver School Board Candidate Survey

February 2013

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The mission of A+ Denver is to harness the power of Denver's civic leadership to build public will and advocate for reforms necessary to dramatically increase student achievement in Denver.

Dear Denver Community Members:

Denver's public education challenges are daunting. More than half of DPS graduates are not prepared for college and 41% do not graduate from high school. Denver's seven-member school board plays a critical role in determining the direction of the school district.

Nate Easley, school board member for District 4 (NE Denver), resigned his position in January when he became the executive director of the Denver Scholarship Foundation. A new board member must be appointed before March 18, 2013. A total of four seats, including Nate's, will be decided in the November elections.

The purpose of this survey is to present a clear picture of where each candidate stands on key issues. As we did during the school board campaign of 2011, A+ Denver asked candidates (remarkably, 25 of them) to respond to a 31-question survey about their values and priorities.

Eighteen of the 25 candidates responded, but the Denver School Board narrowed the field to nine candidates on Feb. 4.<sup>1</sup> This report captures the views of those nine. They are:

- Sean Bradley, former staffer for CO. House Democrats and the Colorado League of Charter Schools
- Fred Franko, former board member, Great Education Colorado
- Taggart Hansen, attorney, CH2M Hill
- MiDian Holmes, Chair, Stand for Children - Denver
- Antwan Jefferson, education instructor, CU-Denver
- Vernon Jones Jr., administrator, Manual High School
- Lisa Roy, Executive Director, Timothy and Bernadette Marquez Foundation
- Mary Sam, retired teacher, DPS
- Landri Taylor, CEO, Denver Urban League

We have not graded or rated the candidates. Instead, we have made every effort to present candidates' responses as they were given. In the following pages we,

[Section 1:](#) present a summary of where candidates agreed or disagreed on the issues;

[Section 2:](#) display the individual responses on the importance of current issues;

[Section 3:](#) give a snapshot of each candidate, their priorities, and backgrounds;

[Appendix:](#) and provide full text of survey questions.

[Online:](#) We posted the full survey responses from each candidate that completed it.

Please consider attending the community forum for the candidates, to be held on Wednesday, Feb. 20, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Smiley Middle School - 2540 Holly Street. A week later, on Feb. 27, DPS will hold another board meeting to narrow the list to one.

We are encouraged by so many people with such strong credentials and passions interested in this vacancy. We are also pleased that there appears to be much more agreement than disagreement about where DPS should go and how the district can get there.

Thank you,

Van Schoales  
Executive Director, A+ Denver

<sup>1</sup>Read the survey responses from all 18 candidates who completed it, [here](#).

# Section 1: Analysis

This survey is designed to help the public understand where Denver Public School Board candidates stand on improving schools. The level of agreement among this group of candidates is greater than we have seen in the past, but some significant differences arise around key areas as you will see below.

## Differences

We begin by pointing out several differences. The widest range of answers related to:

- the pace of Denver's reform efforts (questions #1 and #4),
- turnaround plans in far northeast Denver (#5),
- whether to make teacher performance ratings public (#8),
- how to determine teacher pay (#7 and #10),
- if the district should fund charter schools (#13),
- and assist charters "when they seek to locate in neighborhoods where academic performance is low" (#14).

## Agreement

There are also a number of issues where most candidates share a similar view, saying they either agree (a score of 4) or strongly agree (a score of 5) with the following statements. One candidate chose not to respond to some of these statements, cutting our totals below from 9 to 8.

### State of DPS

- **7 of 8** - The district's interventions in low-performing schools and the development of more high-quality traditional and charter schools (e.g. Cory and McMeen Elementary Schools, STRIVE, Denver School of the Arts, Denver School of Science and Technology, etc.) are important strategies for improving the quality of Denver's public education system.
- **7 of 8** - Support the modified consent decree, the revised plan to serve the district's ELL students, that was recently agreed to by the Congress of Hispanic Educators, DPS, and the U.S. Department of Justice, and if appointed I will support the full implementation of the plan.

### School Choice

- **8 of 9** - Turnaround interventions for struggling schools as well as the creation/establishment of charters and other new schools are BOTH important strategies to improving student success.
- **8 of 9** - DPS should actively support school choice for Denver families, giving them the opportunity to choose the best schools for their children.

### Accountability and interventions for failing schools

- **9 of 9** - I support district and state level accountability measures that require schools to show academic growth.
- Only one candidate disagrees with the notion that after a school is rated either Accredited on Priority Watch or Accredited on Probation for three years in a row, dramatic change is needed (#18 and #19).

### School Finance

- **7 of 8** - DPS education spending should be more transparent and have "return on investment" measures so that parents and voters have a clearer understanding of where taxpayer money is spent and what brings the biggest return on public education investments.
- **7 of 8** - Innovation schools, like charter schools, should be accountable for results, and their innovation status should continue only if they demonstrate good progress.
- On the issue of funding, most agree that the majority of the education dollar should go directly to the schools (questions #21 and #22).

### **Candidate Pool Priorities**

As a group, the 9 candidates indicated that, in order for DPS to raise student achievement, their highest priorities centered on the following ideas:

- 2 candidates ranked quality teachers as a top priority,
- 5 placed principals in their top three priorities,
- and 4 included quality curriculum.

The only trend at the bottom of the priority list:

- 5 placed district support for teachers and principals in their bottom 3 priorities.

Given 12 options for overall improvement in the school district, the candidates listed these were their top five priorities, again in order of importance:

1. Ensure that the high school degree is aligned with college readiness
2. Provide better support for Denver's teachers
3. Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
4. Expand number of new high-performing district and charter schools
5. Increase K-12 funding.



## Section 2: Candidate Responses

Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Abbreviated Questions*	Sean Bradley	Fred Franko	Taggart Hansen	Midian Holmes	Antwan Jefferson	Vernon Jones, Jr.	Lisa Roy	Mary Sam	Landri Taylor
1. DPS reform efforts are not at pace to meet needs of students	2	4	3	3	2	4	3	5	2
2. DPS is moving in right direction with current leadership	4	?	5	4	4	4	4	1	5
3. DPS interventions in low performing schools are important	5	?	4	5	4	4	5	1	5
4. Reforms are too few and too slow	3	4	3	2	2	5	3	1	5
5. I support turnaround plan in FNE	4	?	4	5	2	3	5	1	5
6. I support modified consent decree to serve ELL students	5	?	5	5	4	4	5	1	5
7. Teacher employment, performance, & pay should include achievement data	5	?	4	4	2	4	4	1	5
8. Teacher performance data should be public	4	?	2	3	4	1	4	1	3
9. DPS should recruit best teachers regardless of origin	5	4	5	5	3	5	5	1	5
10. Teacher pay based primarily on experience	2	?	2	2	4	1	3	3	1
11. Turnarounds and new charters are important strategies	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	1	5
12. Charters should receive equal bond/mill funding to all schools	5	?	3	5	4	3	3	1	3

13. DPS should welcome charters; allow them to use district facilities and co-locate	5	?	4	5	2	3	5	1	3
14. DPS should support school choice	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	3	5
15. I support accountability measures including school growth	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5
16. Schools with lowest SPF ratings should receive extra funding/ flexibility for 2 years	4	?	3	4	3	3	5	3	5
17. Schools with lowest SPF ratings should receive extra funding for 4 to 6 years	1	?	2	1	3	4	3	2	1
18. After 3 years in a row of lowest SPF ratings, schools should be replaced	4	?	3	4	3	5	4	1	4
19. DPS should support high-quality schools regardless of type	5	4	5	5	2	3	5	1	5
20. DPS must have more funding go directly to schools	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	1	3
21. DPS funding should follow the student	5	?	4	4	3	5	5	3	4
22. DPS spending should be transparent	5	?	5	5	2	5	5	5	4
23. Innovation schools should control nearly all finances	4	5	4	4	2	5	4	1	4
24. Innovation schools should be accountable for results	5	?	4	5	2	5	5	5	5

**\* The full questions as they were presented to candidates can be found at the end of this report.**

## Section 3: Snapshots of the Candidates

We have not edited the following commentary from candidates in anyway. They were each asked to submit a bio and answer three short questions with a final question where they could leave any comments. As previously mentioned, the full text of each candidate's response can be found here.



### **Sean Bradley**

Sean Eugene Bradley is the National Director of Legislative Affairs for the American Federation for Children (AFC). AFC is a national education reform group, based in Washington D.C. Prior to working for AFC, Sean was the Director of Governmental Affairs at the Colorado League of Charter Schools. He has worked on education issues for over 10 years.

He has worked for two Members of the United States Congress in Washington DC as well as in Texas. Before moving to Colorado, Sean served as the Legislative and District Director for Texas State Representative Ruth Jones McClendon of San Antonio. He was worked in the Colorado State Capitol for Former House Speaker Andrew Romanoff of Denver.

Sean has as Bachelors of Science in Education and Political Science from Stephen F. Austin State University and a Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado at Denver. He is married to Voletha Bradley and they have one son Ayden. He and Voletha are expecting their second child in May 2013.

### **District's role in school management (candidates selected from one of 4 options):**

It is the district's role to give schools autonomy, leaving almost all decisions about budget, staffing, curriculum, academic and athletic programs to schools.

### **Role of a school board member:**

The primary role of a DPS Board Member is to educate the students in Denver and work to ensure that all students are college ready without remediation. I believe that parents choose schools for three reasons: 1. Safety. Is my child in a learning enviornment that is safe and he/she has the ability to learn. 2. Convience. Is this school walking distance from my home or can I drop him /her off on the way to work. Is this a neighborhood school that is convient for me. 3. Academic performance. Is this a high quality school in my neighborhood. Will my child have access to the best high quality education in Denver.

### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

I have a two year old son and a son due in May 2013.

### **Comments:**

Thanks for the work that A Plus Denver does to ensure their is a balanced approach to how we advocate for our students in Denver.

### **Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality principals
	Quality teachers
	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Effective ELL programs
	Community involvement
	District support for principals and teachers

## Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Ensure that the high school degree is aligned with college readiness
	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
	Expand number of new high-performing district and charter schools
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future
	Reduce class size
	Increase online education options and other learning technology



### **Fred Franko**

I care deeply and passionately about learning and education for our children and youth. I've been involved in education and learning in some capacity in Denver and Colorado for over 15 years, as a parent, volunteer, and in a professional capacity. I've lived in Park Hill for over 18 years, and have two children attending DPS schools (from kindergarten to high school). Professionally, I've worked for or consulted with organizations involved with early childhood, afterschool, K-12, higher education and health care. I have unique experiences and understanding of the learning pipeline from preschool to postsecondary education.

### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

No answer.

### **Role of a school board member:**

I approach this role with an open mind in the search for what is best for our children and youth. There are no simple or single solutions or answers to the complex issues.

### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

Park Hill Elementary  
Hill School of Arts & Sciences  
East High School

### **Comments:**

Given the complexity of the issues, I have responded to the questions that contain one idea that can be reasonably answered with a Likert scale. Other questions require more nuanced discussion. I do not approach this responsibility from an ideological point of view, but rather prefer to hear all sides of a discussion and make a reasoned decision based on the best interests of our children.

7: These are good ideas, but I would want to understand the specifics before weighing in.

7, 8, 10: We are only beginning to understand the myriad factors that go into explaining what leads to student success (e.g., quality preschool, quality school leadership and teachers, availability of tutoring, afterschool and summer programming, etc.), therefore we must be thoughtful.

13: There are at least three separate elements contained in this statement.

16, 17 & 18: Part of my responsibility as a board member, if selected, will be to be open to all ideas and discussion. I can't commit to specific policies without more information and community input.

### Priorities for Improving Student Achievement

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	No response
	No response
	No response
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	No response
	No response
	No response

### Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	No response
	No response
	No response
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	No response
	No response
	No response

#### Taggart Hansen



I am a passionate advocate for educational equity, where every student is provided the opportunity to excel. A product of the Denver Public Schools (East '89), I taught sixth grade in California, where I learned the importance of creating a community of shared vision and partnerships amongst teachers, parents and administrators around the unifying goal of educating and empowering children. I graduated from Miami University (Ohio) and earned my JD at Yale Law School. I currently am Chief Counsel for Labor and Employment at a Colorado based engineering and construction firm, and live in northeast Denver with my family.

#### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

4. There should be a mix of district-managed schools and autonomous schools.

#### **Role of a school board member:**

The role of the Board is to set the direction of the district on education goals and hold the district accountable for meeting those goals and ensuring every child is provided equal access to high quality schools.

#### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

Daughter attends the Denver School of Science & Technology in Stapleton.

#### **Comments:**

The issues identified in this survey are not black and white, agree or disagree with matters, but rather complex topics facing the DPS. Ensuring equal access to a high quality education, and a safe and secure environment, to all school age children in the DPS is multifaceted and complicated, thus requiring a nuanced and reasoned approach (e.g., one that factors in the views of many stakeholders). Recognizing such nuance, each of the following comments correspond with the question listed:

1. Until every student is afforded equal access to high performing schools, there should always be urgency on the pace of reform.
3. District intervention is but one possible strategy in addressing low performing schools. I fully agree that the development of more high quality traditional and charter schools is a necessity for improving the DPS educational system.

4. Every day a child attends an underperforming school is one day too long.
6. It is the Board's obligation to hold the District accountable for meeting the intent and spirit of any MDC. Language should never be an obstacle to a child having access to and attaining a high quality education.
8. While I support the general concept, how such data is used, released, and explained is important in making a decision to release such information.
16. The details of what "dramatic intervention" looks like matter in answering a question like this. The DPS has a responsibility to ensure every school is on the path toward becoming a high quality school. Intervention is appropriate for underperforming schools that are failing the students they are meant to serve.
18. I support the concept, but whether a strategy for any particular school should include a phase-out or restart with a new model has to be based on the circumstances at hand for that school.
25. There probably needs to be more autonomy on some levels, but more district oversight on others.
26. All the areas listed are linked. Too often we want to focus on one area as being the cause for the lack of student achievement, when changes and focus on enhancement in all the areas is critical to creating and sustaining improvement.

### Priorities for Improving Student Achievement

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	District support for principals and teachers
	Quality teachers
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
	Quality principals
	Community involvement

### Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Expand number of new high-performing and charter schools
	Provide better support for Denver's teachers
	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Increase on-line education options and other learning technology
	Reduce class size
	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future

#### **MiDian Holmes**



MiDian is a native of Denver, Colorado and grew up in the diverse communities of Park Hill, Montbello, Commerce City and Thornton. MiDian is a proud graduate of Montbello High School and attended the University of Denver where she studied the Business Administration curriculum. MiDian has forged a brilliant career path using her expertise in communication and business operations. Empowered by positive development in her community, MiDian is a sought-after and experienced activist who continues to win over the populace with her creative message, effervescent personality and exceptional interaction. With MiDian's passion to witness enhancement in the public, she steps up to become an integral resource for the community. MiDian is grounded in her relationship with the Lord and uses His guidance to impact the lives of others.

#### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

4. There should be a mix of district-managed schools and autonomous schools.

**Role of a school board member:**

Without any political or arbitrary influence, a DPS board member should make decisions that are best fit for the quality education of the students in the community. Additionally, a board member should exhaust support and accountability to the school leaders and teachers and should be a voice for the parents in the community that have concern and/or celebration towards the schools that their children attend.

**School(s) your children attend(ed):**

I am the proud mother of 3 school-aged children that attend both traditional and public charter school models in DPS. I also graduated from Montbello High School (class of 1998).

**Comments:**

Thank you for such a tremendous interest in this process and for the opportunity to exhaust my perspective to you and your team. I enjoyed taking the survey and only wish that I had the opportunity to provide an elaborate response to your questions.

**Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
	Effective literacy and math programs
	Effective ELL programs
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	District support for principals and teachers
	Community involvement

**Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Expand number of new high-performing district and charter schools
	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
	Ensure that high school degree is aligned with college readiness
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Revise collective bargaining agreements so that schools/principals have more authority to hire and fire
	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future
	Reduce class size





### **Antwan Jefferson**

Antwan is an educator interested in supporting the education of all students by challenging the practices that do harm to students, their families, and their communities. He is a critic of schooling and a champion of education, supporting high quality, neighborhood schools that are responsive to the communities they serve, including experienced teachers, equitable funding structures, mutual accountability practices (district, schools, families, students), adequate resources, and on-going educator and community development. He feels capable of supporting these efforts through educator training, community engagement, and participating on the Denver Public Schools Board of Education.

Antwan is the husband of one wife, owner of one home, parent of two children, and driver of a 12-year old car.

### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

No answer

### **Role of a school board member:**

Become familiar with (and responsive to) the needs of "all students" by soliciting the input of the families and communities of students in addition to the "needs" indicated through traditional school measures.

### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

Soar - GVR

### **Comments:**

I have read the comments from previous board members (2012 report) indicating the significant limitations of this Likert style survey. In the case of this survey, those limitations emerge substantially in compounded questions, such as "Innovation schools, like charter schools, should be accountable for results, and their innovation status should continue only if they demonstrate good progress." It is preferable to develop a survey that allows the actual voice of the candidates to emerge, as this survey device prohibits such substantial input, although that is the presumable intent of the instrument.

### **Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Community involvement
	Quality teachers
	Quality principals
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Effective literacy and math programs
	District support for principals and teachers
	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance

### **Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Ensure that high school degree is aligned with college readiness
	Reduce class size
	Increase K-12 funding
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future
	Change school finance formula and law





**Vernon Jones, Jr.**

I am the son, nephew of DPS teachers. I am the husband of a pre-school teacher and father of four amazing scholars within DPS. I serve on the leadership team of Manual. I believe in what we can do as a community. All of our schools can be great because of the power of the many not the few. I am optimistic about the future of DPS if we can courageously and collaboratively confront the challenges that need to be overcome so that we stop celebrating gradualism when greater gains are needed. This is not the social issue of our time; it remains a social injustice that has yet to be righted.

**District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

3. It is the district's role to give schools autonomy, leaving almost all decisions about budget, staffing, curriculum, academic and athletic programs to schools.

**Role of a school board member:**

I believe that school boards are put in place to keep our district in alignment with our expressed mission, vision, and core values. We are there to evaluate the efforts of the superintendent to lead district staff in implementing practices that keep us true to our mission, help us achieve our vision, and do not violate our values. We are champions of those things and are not put in place to run the district, rather we are in place to ensure that it is being run well for the good of all students and families served by our district.

**School(s) your children attend(ed):**

My children attend Marrama Elementary, Omar D. Blair Charter School, and starting in July 2013, Manual High School!

**Comments:**

I feel like the survey is a good start but does not allow for true disclosure on positions. For example, when it comes to the Court order I believe that it shouldn't take a court decision to drive us to do the right thing. Embedded in our district's values is Students First; that means all students, and how ever they enter our schools, whatever language they speak, we have to serve them well. No court order needs to tell us that. I believe our values demand us to deliver and not violate the trust placed in us by parents and guardians.

**Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality principals
	Quality teachers
	District support for principals and teachers
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
	Effective literacy and math programs

**Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Increase K-12 funding
	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
	Ensure that high school degree is aligned with college readiness
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Reward and hold educators responsible for student results
	Redesign teacher evaluation and pay to retain the most effective teachers
	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future

### **Lisa Roy**



Lisa is currently the Executive Director of the Timothy and Bernadette Marquez Foundation, focusing on education, health and human services. She worked with the Center for the Study of Social Policy as a Senior Associate, supporting the Child Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School (CHAPSS) agenda for the Annie E. Casey Making Connections sites. Before that she was the Early Childhood Program Officer for the Piton Foundation. She was one of the first Program Officers hired with the Daniels Fund with a focus on Early Childhood, K-12 Education, and Youth Development for Colorado and for all of their funding areas with Native American tribes in the state of Utah. Her direct service experience was as a Head Start Administrator and as a Director of early childhood programs for the Clayton Foundation (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) and Catholic Charities (Operation Jumpstart). Lisa has an M.A. in Counseling Psychology and Counselor Education. She is the proud mother of James, Amanda and Jason Roy, and grandmother to Jacob Roy.

### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

4. There should be a mix of district-managed schools and autonomous schools.

### **Role of a school board member:**

Governance is the most important role a school board member should play. Our goal is to assist the district with major decisions that impact the goal of student success related to defining expectations around the mission, using data to make decisions on budgets and policies, and ultimately putting the needs of students first. The business of a school district - to ensure that it is producing a world class educated populous and it is the school board that is to support those efforts at every level.

### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

My three children are grown but went to Ashley, Mitchell Montessori and Traditional, Gilpin, Garden Place Academy, P.S. 1, Hamilton, Cole, Rocky Mountain Expeditionary, DSST, Lifeskills within DPS. They also attended Denver Academy, Grandview High School, Rolling Hills Elementary and Falcon Creek Middle schools.

### **Comments:**

It is hard to prioritize these issues because they are all important. Like any major undertaking, it is important to fix infrastructure issues first, laying the groundwork for all enhancements. Along with this, one must have a blueprint for what the end result will be - success for students regardless of what zip code they live in.

### **Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Community involvement
	Quality teachers
	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	District support for principals and teachers
	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	Effective literacy and math programs

### Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Ensure that high school degree is aligned with college readiness
	Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
	Reward and hold educators responsible for student results
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Increase K-12 funding
	Reduce class size
	Increase on-line education options and other learning technology

#### **Mary Sam**

Teacher, DPS, 41 years. Montbello resident, 31 years. Master's degree in Education. Mother of one son, 25, who is a product of DPS.

#### **District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

1. It is the district's role to manage most aspects of schools, including budget, staffing, curriculum, student requirements, length of day and year and program decisions in a way that centralizes most control at the district level.

#### **Role of a school board member:**

Listen to the community's vision of what is wanted in its schools. Find the educational experts to put that vision in place, focusing specific resources where they are needed.

#### **School(s) your children attend(ed):**

Oakland Elem. Marrama Elem. Kunsmiller. Place. Montbello HS.

#### **Comments:**

None.

### Priorities for Improving Student Achievement

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
	Quality teachers
	Quality principals
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	Effective literacy and math programs
	Effective ELL programs

### Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Provide better support for Denver's teachers
	Reduce class size
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	

**Landri Taylor<sup>2</sup>**

I'm a parent, grandparent and CEO of the Denver Urban League. I advocate for high expectations and measurable goals that reflect my belief that our kids are #1.

**District's role in school management (select one of 4 answers):**

3. It is the district's role to give schools autonomy, leaving almost all decisions about budget, staffing, curriculum, academic and athletic programs to schools.

**Role of a school board member:**

Insure that policies are aligned with student achievement.

**School(s) your children attend(ed):**

John Amesse Elementary

Hill Middle

MLK, Jr. Middle

Montbello High

**Comments:**

Great list of questions!

**Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Quality curriculum meeting high standards
	Quality teachers
	Quality principals
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Community involvement
	District ensuring schools are accountable for performance
	District support for principals and teachers

**Priorities for K-12 Education in Denver**

<b>Top 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Expand number of new high-performing district and charter schools
	Increase K-12 Funding
	Provide better support for Denver's teachers
<b>Bottom 3 Ranked Priorities</b>	Increase online education options and other learning technology
	Redesign teacher evaluation and pay to retain the most effective teachers
	Reform/revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future

<sup>2</sup> Landri Taylor is currently an A+ Denver board member.

# Appendix: Full text of survey questions

## DPS School Board Candidate Survey – February 2013

Rank the degree to which they agree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 5 represents “strongly agree.”

### State of Denver Public Schools

1. Denver Public Schools' reform efforts at present are not on pace to meet the needs of Denver's students.
2. DPS is moving in the right direction with the district's current leadership.
3. The district's interventions in low-performing schools and the development of more high-quality traditional and charter schools (e.g. Cory and McMeen Elementary Schools, STRIVE, Denver School of the Arts, Denver School of Science and Technology, etc.) are important strategies for improving the quality of Denver's public education system.
4. The reforms so far are too few and moving far too slowly if we expect students now entering kindergarten to leave elementary school at grade level and prepared for middle and high school.
5. I support the turnaround plan in the far northeast Denver neighborhood that includes the phasing out of the old Montbello High, Rachel Noel Middle, and several elementary schools, and the opening of several new smaller schools.
6. I support the modified consent decree, the revised plan to serve the district's ELL students, that was recently agreed to by the Congress of Hispanic Educators, DPS, and the U.S. Department of Justice, and if appointed I will support the full implementation of the plan.

### Teaching and Learning

7. In determining teacher employment, performance, and pay, student achievement (growth test scores, college and career preparation) should play a significant factor (roughly 50%).
8. Denver teacher performance ratings as measured by growth and impact on student learning should be available to the public. This information might include the average growth scores for teachers in grades 3-10, or AP test pass rates for a high school teacher.
9. DPS should recruit and retain the best teachers whether they come from CU Boulder, Metro State, The New Teacher Project, Teach for America, or other comparable programs.
10. Teacher pay should be based primarily upon years of experience and educational attainment.

### School Choice

11. Turnaround interventions for struggling schools as well as the creation/ establishment of charters and other new schools are BOTH important strategies to improving student success.
12. Denver charter schools should receive bond and mill levy funding equal to other public schools (including funding for facilities).
13. DPS should welcome and assist high-quality charter developers with resources (e.g. community investment funds and facilities) when they seek to locate in neighborhoods where academic performance is low. They should include allowing high-quality charters to operate in one of the district's recently closed facilities, or to co-locate in one of its underutilized facilities. Such new options deserve support even if it means nearby schools might lose enrollment.
14. DPS should actively support school choice for Denver families, giving them the opportunity to choose the best schools for their children.

### Accountability and interventions for failing schools

15. I support district and state level accountability measures that require schools to show academic growth.
16. Schools rated Accredited on Priority Watch or Accredited on Probation should receive additional funds and flexibility for TWO years to help foster progress; by then, if there is no substantial progress, dramatic intervention is appropriate.
17. Schools rated Accredited on Priority Watch or Accredited on Probation should receive additional funds and flexibility for FOUR to SIX years to help foster progress.

18. After a school has been rated either Accredited on Priority Watch or Accredited on Probation for three years in a row, I support a replacement strategy that might include a phase-out and/or a restart with a new operator and/or model.
19. DPS should support high-quality public schools (as determined by Denver's School Performance Framework) in every neighborhood, regardless of whether the school is managed by DPS or is a public charter school.

### **School Finance**

20. DPS must have more funding, but the most critical funding issue for K-12 public schools in Denver is to find a way for funds to go directly to schools.
21. The DPS school finance system needs to be redesigned so that 70% or more of funding follows students to their school of choice, or to programs based upon their needs. Funding should also be weighed to particular needs such as poverty.
22. DPS education spending should be more transparent and have "return on investment" measures so that parents and voters have a clearer understanding of where taxpayer money is spent and what brings the biggest return on public education investments.
23. Innovation schools should have control over nearly all of their finances and be able to choose the programs and professional development that meets the needs of their students.
24. Innovation schools, like charter schools, should be accountable for results, and their innovation status should continue only if they demonstrate good progress.

### **School Governance**

25. Check the position below—of the four options—that most closely reflects your own.
  1. It is the district's role to manage most aspects of schools, including budget, staffing, curriculum, student requirements, length of day and year and program decisions in a way that centralizes most control at the district level.
  2. It is the district's role to leave some decisions to school leaders but manage more than half of decisions regarding curriculum, school day, programs and staffing at the district level.
  3. It is the district's role to give schools autonomy, leaving almost all decisions about budget, staffing, curriculum, academic and athletic programs to schools.
  4. There should be a mix of district-managed schools and autonomous schools.

### **Priorities for Improving Student Achievement**

26. What do you believe are most important for DPS to raise student achievement? Rate in order of importance, with one being the highest; two, the second highest, etc.
  - quality curriculum
  - meeting high standards
  - quality teachers
  - quality principals
  - district support for principals and teachers
  - effective literacy and math programs
  - effective ELL programs
  - community involvement
  - district ensuring schools are accountable for performance

### **Priorities for K-12 Education in our city**

27. Drag and rate in order of importance. Do not drag and rate any item(s) you do not consider important.
  - Redesign teacher evaluation and pay to retain the most effective teachers
  - Increase K-12 funding
  - Provide better support for Denver's teachers
  - Expand number of new high-performing district and charter schools
  - Increase the level of accountability and intervention for low-performing schools
  - Increase on-line education options and other learning technology
  - Revise collective bargaining agreements so that schools/principals have more authority to hire and fire
  - Change school finance formula and law
  - Ensure that the high school degree is aligned with college readiness



- Reward and hold educators responsible for student results
- Reduce class size
- Reform/ revise pension system so that it is sustainable into the future

- 28.** What do you believe is the most important role a school board member should play in ensuring all students in Denver's Public Schools receive the education they need and deserve?
- 29.** Short bio—In 100 words or less, please provide some key information about yourself you wish voters to know. Our final report will include this brief bio that you provide. If you would like to email us a photo, we will do our best to include that in the report with your bio. Thank you.
- 30.** If you have children who do or did attend schools in the Denver metro area, please list those schools.
- 31.** We welcome any comments or questions you have about this survey: