



# Denver School Board Candidate Survey

September 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.

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Dear reader:

The Denver Public Schools (DPS) School Board manages a budget of over \$700 million. It has a 14,000 person staff and is responsible for educating more than 84,000 students. It is one of the largest landholders in the city and manages extensive transportation and food distribution networks. Yet, few voters even know who their school board member is - let alone what they stand for. A+ believes that understanding who the candidates are, what they stand for, and their qualifications is critical if Denver public schools is to become the best district in the nation.

The purpose of this survey is to give Denver voters clear picture of where each candidate stands on the most important issue that the board oversees: student achievement. As we have done for each election in the past two years, we summarize the survey responses in a format that allows the reader to compare candidates and make informed choices. This year, some of the candidates added explanatory responses in addition to or instead of the multiple choice answers provided. We encourage readers to read the full responses via the links listed at the end of their long answer responses.

This website will be called BoardWatch Denver, and while it is still in Beta mode, provides an array of information about the DPS school board. On the site, you will find:

- a directory of nearly every school board member vote from the past three years, current member and candidate profiles,
- links to resources about board policies, and
- information about our new project **BoardWatch**.

BoardWatch was created to improve the governance practices of the DPS Board in a way that will lead to better academic achievement for Denver's students. We want your feedback on the site, so feel free to [email us](mailto:info@aplusdenver.org) with suggestions.

[Check out the BoardWatch website here](http://www.boardwatchdenver.org)

Nine candidates are vying for four seats on the DPS School Board: District 2 (Southwest), District 3 (Central), District 4 (Northeast), and one at-large representative will be elected on November 4, 2013.

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:** include long answer responses from each candidate;

**Appendix:** and provide full text of survey questions.

**Online:** We posted the full survey responses from each candidate that completed it.

A+ Denver and its partners, EdNews Colorado and Fox31, are also hosting a series of candidate debates. Each debate will be broadcast live on DPStv Channel 22 and online.

- **District 3: Central** - September 18th, 7pm to 8pm
- **At-Large** - September 26th, 7pm to 8pm
- **District 2: Southwest** - October 2nd, 7pm to 8pm
- **District 4: Northeast** - October 9th, 7pm to 8pm

A limited number of seats are available in the studio for community members. Please [email us](mailto:info@aplusdenver.org) to add your name to the waiting list.

Thank you,

Van Schoales  
Executive Director, A+ Denver

# Section 1: Analysis

This survey is designed to help readers understand where Denver Public School Board candidates stand on pressing issues. Of note in this section is that a few candidates declined to answer certain survey questions, but instead responded in their own format. Their responses can be found at the links listed at the end of their long answer sections.

## DPS Strategy and Goals

### Agreement:

- Most candidates (6 of 9) agree that reforms are not on pace to meet students' needs.
- Four candidates agree that academic achievement goals need to be raised, and another three said goals should be raised for students below proficiency.

### Differences

- There was less agreement about the direction of current reforms and whether current leadership is moving in the right direction.
- Only one candidate, Meg Schomp, responded that current goals are about right.

### Declined to answer

- Joan Poston declined to respond to the question about the district's current academic goal of 3.5% improvement per year.

## Teaching and Learning

### Agreement

- Most candidates agree that outside evaluators should help determine what is and is not working.
- Most candidates agree that the district's literacy and math programs are not effective.

### Differences

- Right to tenure and how tenure is attained were contentious issues; only five would respond to the questions asked.
- Candidates were split on the issue of how teacher pay and employment should be determined. Four agreed that the student achievement, experience, and education should all factor in.

### Declined to answer

- Michael Kiley, Meg Schomp, and Roger Kilgore refrained from responding to two questions each.
- Four candidates, Michael Kiley, Barbara O'Brien, Meg Schomp, and Roger Kilgore declined to answer questions about teacher pay and tenure.
- Barbara O'Brien declined to answer any questions in the section.

## Accountability

### Agreement

- Candidates agreed with the statements related to strong culture of accountability 23 of 24 times.
- All agree that academic achievement be included in district and state accountability measures of schools, and that new school proposals be held to the same standards regardless of school type (charter, innovation, district-managed).
- All but one candidate agrees that ACT and remediation rates should be included in accountability measures.
- Six candidates agreed that there should not be a change in superintendent.

### Differences

- Few differences in this section.

### Declined to answer

- One candidate, Michael Kiley, chose not to respond to any of the questions in this section.

## **Interventions**

### **Agreement**

- Most candidates agree that DPS should intervene when schools are failing.
- Most candidates responded that intervention should happen after 0-2 or 3-5 years of poor performance.

### **Differences**

- Joan Poston disagreed that DPS should intervene when schools are failing.

### **Declined to answer**

- Michael Kiley and Roger Kilgore declined to answer one or both questions about intervention in failing schools.

## **School Finance**

### **Agreement**

- Most candidates support Ballot Initiative 66 (School Finance Act) Five out of the eight respondents support a tool that shows spending and school achievement.

### **Differences**

- Candidates are split over whether Innovation Schools should have full control of their budgets, staff, and programs.
- Joan Poston does not support Ballot Initiative 66.

### **Declined to answer**

- Michael Kiley declined to respond to this section of questions.

## **School Choice and Type**

### **Agreement**

- Most agreed that the district should have a combination of charter and district-managed schools.
- Most agreed that boundary schools should not get more resources than charter or Innovation Schools.
- Most said they would consider a proposal to allow a student equal access to any school in the district regardless of boundary .
- There was slight agreement about:
  - Support for Innovation status for struggling schools
  - Efficacy of the current enrollment process

### **Differences**

- There were a number of questions where candidate responses (if they responded) varied:
  - Charter access to district facilities
  - Co-location of charter and district schools
  - Use of innovation status
  - Putting more resources into boundary schools

### **Declined to answer**

- Candidates declined to answer more questions in this category than any other. With Michael Kiley, Roger Kilgore, Barbara O'Brien, and Rosario C de Baca all abstaining from one or more response.

## Section 2: Candidate Responses

4	3	2	1	?
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 1: Current DPS Strategy and Goals	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Michael Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
The district's reform efforts are on pace to meet the needs of most students	1	2	3	2	3	2	1	1	3
The district's reform efforts are moving in the right direction	1	3	3	2	4	3	1	2	4
Current leadership is moving the district in the right direction	1	3	2	2	4	3	2	2	4

**Complete the following statement:** The district's academic achievement goals in reading, writing and math forecast 3.5% improvement per year per grade, these goals:

➔ Are about right



➔ Should be raise for those students who are significantly below proficiency



➔ Need to be raised



➔ N/A



➔ Need to be lowered

4	3	2	1	?
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 2: Teaching and Learning	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Michael Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
Teachers have the right to tenure after three years of effective teaching	?	?	3	3	2	2	?	?	2
Tenure is currently too easy to obtain	?	?	2	1	3	3	?	?	3
DPS is doing an effective job recruiting, supporting, and retaining strong school leaders	1	?	2	2	3	3	1	2	3
DPS should utilize outside, objective evaluators to determine what is and is not working (e.g. programs) relative to its achievement goals	4	?	1	3	4	4	4	3	4
The district's literacy and math programs are effective	1	?	2	2	2	3	2	2	3

**Complete the following statement:** The primary factor in teacher pay and employment should be:

➔ **Student success and achievement as measured by student outcomes**



➔ **Student achievement that carries nearly equal weight as teacher experience and educational attainment**



➔ **Experience and educational attainment**



➔ **N/A**



4	3	2	1	?
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 3: Accountability	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Mike Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
I support district and state level accountability measures that require schools to show academic achievement	?	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3
ACT and college remediation scores should be included in school and district accountability measures as long as the resources to do so are available	?	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	3
All new school proposals, whether for charter, innovation or district-managed schools, should be held to the same standards	?	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4

Do you support a change in the superintendent position at DPS?

→ Yes

→ No



→N/A



4	3	2	1	?
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 4: Interventions	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Mike Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
When schools are failing most of their students, DPS must intervene more quickly and boldly	?	3	2	4	4	4	3	?	4

**Complete the following statement:** If a school performs in the bottom 5% of schools in the district, it should be phased out or replaced (with new programming, leadership and/or governance model) after receiving additional supports for::

→ 0-2 years



→ 3-5 years



→ 5-7 years

→ I don't believe schools should be phased out/replaced or closed

→ N/A



4	3	2	1	?
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 5: School Finance	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Mike Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
I support Initiative 66 (School Finance Act)	?	4	2	3	4	4	3	4	4
Innovation schools should have full control over their budgets, staffing, and programming	?	3	2	2	4	4	3	2	3
I support a tool that shows both spending at the school level and achievement gains to show taxpayers the return on investment	?	3	2	4	4	4	4	2	4

	At - Large			District 2: Southwest		District 3: Central		District 4: Northeast	
Part 6: School Type and Choice	Michael Kiley	Barbara O'Brien	Joan Poston	Rosario C de Baca	Rosemary Rodriguez	Mike Johnson	Meg Schomp	Roger Kilgore	Landri Taylor
Charters should have equal access to district facilities	?	?	2	?	4	4	2	?	3
Co-location of charters and district managed schools is a good strategy for efficiently using resources*	?	?	3	2	4	4	1	?	3
The district should support a combination of high quality charter and district managed schools	?	4	2	3	4	4	3	?	4
I support using innovation status for schools that need extra tools to improve student success	?	4	3	2	4	4	2	?	4
The current enrollment process is working as intended	?	2	3	3	3	3	1	?	3
Students should almost always attend their closest boundary school	?	2	2	2	2	2	3	?	2

We must put more resources into improving boundary schools	?	?	2	4	3	2	4	?	3
Boundary schools should get more resources per student than district, charter or innovation schools	?	?	2	3	2	1	?	?	2
I would seriously consider a proposal to allow equal opportunities for students to attend any school in the district, regardless of their closest boundary school*	?	?	3	3	3	4	?	?	3

## Section 3: Long answer

### At - Large



#### **Michael Kiley**

I am product of public schools as is my wife Donna. Both of our children are going to DPS schools. I have strong family ties in Denver. My grandmother was Lucille Campa a pioneer in dance founder of a ballet school in Denver. My great-grandfather was Enos Mills who was instrumental in the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park. My family taught me the importance of community and being involved. I have always has a passion for education and in 2009 I became involved with Skinner Middle school, when it was about to close. I am a founding member of Northwest Middle Schools NOW group which worked on the revitalization of Skinner. Through this process we got hundreds of parents involved and got the resources Skinner needed to succeed. I am also apart of the group Choose North NOW. During this process I learned first-hand how a neighborhood community can partner with teachers and leadership to greatly improve a school. I want to be a voice for the community on the school board.

#### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

My highest priority for DPS is creating quality schools in every neighborhood. These schools need to provide arts, music, sports, world languages and extra curricular activities. Another priority is creating a transparent system that is open with the community and has accountability at all levels.

#### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

The most important role a school member plays is being a voice for the community. School members should listen to the community about what is important to them in education. This involves hosting community meetings and bringing the community to the table when decisions are being made. School board members also need to make sure the resources DPS has are being used in the most effective way possible. We can't keep going to the taxpayers asking for more money if we can't show how it is being used. Funding should be going into the classroom as much as possible.

#### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

DPS has roughly 36,000 students that are English Language Learners, and has a moral and legal obligation to help the students become proficient in English. The vote in July 2012 regarding the modified Consent Decree was one example of why the board leadership must change. The President of the Board did not ensure that all members were present for the very important vote approving the previously negotiated modified consent decree. Only 4 of the 7 board members were present for the vote. The public was not invited to offer comment on the decree. Leading up to the vote, there was very little opportunity for board members to study the proposed decree, nor was there work session dedicated to the decree. As a result, in January 2013 Judge Matsch reprimanded the Superintendent for his handling of the decree, and required the school board and the administration work together on potential changes to the decree. In the end the approval of the decree was delayed by months and hurt DPS's image.

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

My son attends Edison Elementary and my daughter will attend Skinner Middle School.

#### **Comments:**

This survey didn't allow for comment on the questions above. I'm providing comment here. 4 DPS does not have traditional tenure. 5 Compensation and employment should work as it does in the private sector. A compensation package is based on experience, and continued employment is based on whether the employee performs at the expected level. 6 School and district performance should not rely solely on testing to measure performance. 7 If a change is needed the discussion needs to be with the community, school leaders, teachers and parents. 9 The current method of testing must be overhauled so it is much less disruptive to learning and results are available in a timely manner and solutions requires input from the community, the school board and administration. 10 The school board must start to scrutinize how taxpayer money is currently spent. 11. The questions above assume that there is one answer for every school in the district. Full answers to the questions at [www.kileyforkids.com](http://www.kileyforkids.com)



### **Barbara O'Brien**

I've spent my career advocating for early childhood education, stronger schools and better funding for public education. My work has included expanding Colorado's preschool program for low-income children, leading the two-year effort to pass charter school legislation in 1992-93, and helping pass Amendment 23 which stabilized funding for public schools. While serving as Colorado's Lt. Governor (2007-2011) and as president of the Colorado Children's Campaign (1990-2006), I have worked to create the next generation of education champions so that Colorado would have strong advocates as governors, legislators, superintendents and board members come and go. I know how to create effective coalitions and how to recruit unexpected allies in order to move bold education initiatives forward.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

Closing the achievement gap is one of the biggest challenges we face in Denver. I will work to guarantee that every child gets off to a good start in preschool and elementary school by giving teachers the support they need to help students meet their full potential and by providing after school and summer programs for enriched learning.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

School board members are supposed to focus on overreaching district policy and direction and not get bogged down in micromanaging individual schools and programs. As a school board member I want to continue to push for higher standards and expectations for our schools and students and continue to increase the number of great schools in every neighborhood and across the district.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

I believe that the most impactful vote on the school board last year was referring 3A and 3B to the Denver voters. This was critical in addressing the significant decrease in per pupil funding since 2009 and the continued increase in enrollment. Investing in our education system is vital in ensuring that our kids are prepared for the jobs of the 21st century and Denver continues to be a great place to live and raise a family.

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

Both of my sons are proud graduates of East High School.

### **Comments:**

I am proud to have helped create and advocate for education policies that improve public education for all children, especially children at the margins of society. Some specific accomplishments include:

- CAP4K
- Colorado Ascent
- Full-Day Kindergarten
- Amendment 23
- Tony Grampsas Youth Services Fund
- Child Health Plan
- Infant Immunization Act
- Child Care Pilot Projects
- Child Care Tax Credits
- Child Care Contribution Tax Credit
- Charter School Act
- Colorado Preschool Program
- Amendment 35

You can read more about me on my website: [barbaraobrien.com](http://barbaraobrien.com)



### **Joan Poston**

I was born in Denver and was educated in Colorado graduating from CSU with a degree in Microbiology/Medical Technology.

I am retired from the City and County of Denver where I worked as a Medical Technologist at Denver Health and Hospitals, Eastside clinic and the Denver Zoo (I worked with Klondike and Snow - polar bear cubs). I worked for DPS for 5 years as a reading and writing assistant at Bradley and Southmoor Elementary Schools. I am married and have one daughter.

I have served in the past on Denver District School Accountability Committee and various PTOs. My hobbies including bee keeping (my honeycomb placed third in August at the Denver Fair), charity work (DenverSafeHouse, Littleton Historic Inc and foster care), fantasy football, real football (go Broncos and WheatRidge Farmers) gardening, sewing, and cooking (love them desserts)

I am Colorado born and Colorado Bred and when I die I'll be Colorado dead.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

The highest priorities for education in DPS is the love of reading and critical thinking. DPS should be committed - teaching the love of education by having all children striving for the best they can be. Making a concerted effort to be there for all the kids teaching the basics as well as critical thinking skill - they will be lifetime learners

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

I believe the most important role that a school board member plays is one of representation of the hopes and dreams of the community at large. A school board member is more than a politician. They should be a ears and eyes of Denver's citizens. Listening for all the facts including the people's need to express their diversity and culture. There is time for public comment at every board meeting and a truly good school board member does not push their own agenda but listens and sees the needs of the community. I have watch DPS board members over the years split down almost party lines in how they vote. It is a split board that rarely shows any movement or compromise. There seems to be a 'special interest only' feel and there is little good will expressed with the voting. A school board member should be positive and open to all ideas. A school board member should have the qualities of a good teacher-someone that goes above and beyond the job.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

Besides starting the school year later in August (and we still have heat problems) the most important vote that the school board made was the approval of a resolution regarding personnel performance evaluation council and evaluation system made in November. This is an example of how there are special meetings where most of the decisions concerning the running of the school district takes place during the afternoons and often the details are worked on in these work sessions. Because of the less detailed minutes often there is confusion as to how decisions are made. Senate Bill 191 has mandated that changes in evaluations need to be made and DPS is trying to comply. Teacher evaluations are at a critical development point in the history of DPS. There is a method now in place in the state laws that can a teacher tenure. The evaluations that are being developed across the state to satisfy this new law are varied. Leap is still needing board input. Teachers deserve respect.

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

My daughter attended various schools and her experiences are hers to share.

### **Comments:**

I enjoy surveys but often feel that they are made to show a person's specific bias on issues without really giving a person a say in expression how they really feel. This is why I felt that I could not provide and answer on question number 3. I feel that setting goals for achievement should be done at the school level. For example if you have a school already at a 85% level setting 3.5% improvements every year is silly. I would have liked a question about the achievement gap between the minorities better. Here is a area that is in need of improvement and growth seems to be stalled that this time.

For more of my views visit my website at [joanforschoolboard.weebly.com](http://joanforschoolboard.weebly.com) Thank you Aplus for providing me with this opportunity.

Remember this is a mail-in election

VOTE

## District 2: Southwest



### **Rosario C de Baca**

Community engagement has defined Rosario C. de Baca's life. As a young woman she volunteered in health clinics and with the United Farm Workers when Cesar Chavez was organizing for the safety of workers. Rosario involved community members from Denver and Colorado and professionals throughout the country in planning disease prevention and health promotion programs and obtained funding from foundations, state and federal sources to carry them out. As an active parent, Rosario worked to bring parents and community members to meet with teachers and school administrators to find community driven solutions to our schools. She served in DPS CDM committees at Gust and West, District SIAC, Arts Council, Gifted Education Council, was appointed by the board to the DPS Citizens Committee for Bond Expenditures (CCBE), and appointed by the State Board of Education to the State Gifted Education Advisory Committee.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

Democratic decision making by parents and faculty in decisions that affect their students and schools so that we can ensure quality education for all children

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

A school board member must represent and inform the community that students and faculty are providing all the resources necessary to educate children and prepare them to succeed as adults. Transparency and support by the board member to meet the needs and concerns of all in the particular district.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

School closures were huge decisions. Civic engagement is essential and DPS should nurture this from the time. Entire communities were informed that they are not considered capable of exercising their voice in the decisions that affect the future of their children. It was devastating to tell communities their children would be displaced because their school would be closed in spite of pleas to keep their neighborhood school open. To further add insult, parents and educators did not have a voice in the design of the student's future school. How can a district believe we prepare children for responsibility or tell students we expect them to plan and choose careers and then obstruct them, their parents and teachers and deny their opportunity to save their neighborhood school? The district tells children in low-income and minority areas that their role in civic life does not matter.

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

My 5 children are graduates of DPS and they attended the following public schools: Eagleton Elementary, Gust Elementary, Horace Mann MS, Morey MS, Denver School of the Arts, West HS, George Washington IB, East HS.

### **Comments:**

I am thankful to DPS ECE to AP teachers, school security, nurses, psychologists, principals and so many caring instructional support staff who taught my 5 children. Denver is a beautiful city rightfully proud to have neighborhood libraries, parks, arts venues and a national model for integrated health care. Yet the district that hinders aspirations of students in middle and working class neighborhoods by not locating strong magnet programs equally in all quadrants of the district finds many ways to spend more on closing failing schools. Even as Denver grew and diversified, DPS diminished opportunities for students when it closed a very successful magnet at Horace Mann MS that one of my children attended. Colorado boasts the expertise and achievements of Dr. Temple Grandin, but families of special needs students lack a strong role in developing instructional programs for DPS. A Humble Thank you for this survey opportunity!



### **Rosemary Rodriguez**

From 1997 to 2002, Rosemary served as Denver's clerk and recorder. During her time at this position Rosemary fought tirelessly to create a more transparent, accessible, and equitable process for all of Denver's voters regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status. Her passion for improving Denver through democracy led to many positive changes and to the implementation of new procedures that protected every voter's right to cast a ballot. She served on Denver's city council from 2003-2007, including serving as city council president from 2005-2006. In 2006, President George W Bush nominated Rosemary to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. After a unanimous confirmation in the Senate, she served as commissioner for 2 years before returning to Colorado to act as Senator Bennet's State Director. During President Obama's 2012 campaign, Rosemary briefly served as the Political Director here in Colorado but eventually returned to Senator Bennet's office.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

Closing the achievement gap for African American and Latino students must remain our utmost priority. Given the changing landscape of our communities, this will increasingly become a problem. Raising the graduation rate among African American and Latino Students must also be at the top of our lists. We must do our best to meet our current goals.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

The most important role that a school board member plays is that of a policymaker. The policies enacted by the board must be done in a thoughtful, transparent and accountable way. It is essential that all affected parties have input in the policy-making process but this must not get in the way of progress for our kids. I'm aware that some of the decisions in the past have been unpopular and that some stakeholders feel vulnerable. Change can be hard, but we must not make it harder by being clumsy or contentious in our discussions.

Affected stakeholders should always have an opportunity to voice their concerns and proposed policies should be as clear as possible. Many of the obstacles that face our Board today are a result of policies and procedures that can sometimes get too complicated to understand or to implement. Finally, we should always make it clear what is expected from every stakeholder in the policy making process. We must not forget that our kids' education comes first.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

The biggest decision the BOE made in the 2012-13 school year was referring 3A and 3B to the voters. By requesting funds for new school construction for growing student populations and to alleviate stress and strain on existing buildings, funds for tutoring programs, expansion of early childhood education, Arts and PE support, the Board demonstrated a commitment to ALL of Denver's kids.

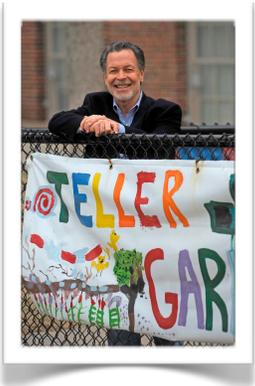
2012-13 was an important year for English Language Learners because of the fact that the Consent Decree had not been reviewed since 1999 and Board approval was important in order of the Court to take necessary action to continue important programs.

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

My son Trinidad graduated from East High School

### **Comments:**

## District 3: Central



### Mike Johnson

-As the first in my family to graduate from college, public education opened the door to opportunity for me. I am committed to ensuring that every DPS student has the same opportunity.

-In 15 years as a DPS parent, I've volunteered in about every role a parent can serve in a public school, from volunteering in the classroom, to serving as the co-chair of the governing committee of a DPS school, as a member of two principal selection committees (chair of one) and as a member of the planning committee for a new DPS school. I've served on a wide variety of district-level committees, including as co-chair of the 3A committee, as a member of the overall planning committee for both 3A&B and as a member of the Steering Committee for the 2005 ProComp ballot issue. I currently serve as co-chair of the Mill Levy Oversight Committee.

-I am one of Colorado's leading school finance lawyers, representing the State of CO and more than 20 Colorado school districts, including DPS (resigning 5/6/13).

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

- Increase college and career readiness and reducing remediation for all students.
- Offer a wide range of educational programs for students, acknowledging that every child has unique needs and talents, with additional supports for students with special needs, including ELL and special education students and students who are struggling academically.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

- Establishing policies and goals that ensure every DPS student receives a quality, well-rounded education that prepares her/him for college or career.
- Holding the superintendent and district staff accountable for carrying out board policies and implementing programs to achieve board goals by a) requiring periodic reports from the superintendent on whether district programs are meeting board goals and on how board policies are being carried out;; and b) providing direction to the superintendent and staff to assist them in complying with board policies and meeting board goals.
- Constant communication with my constituents so that their concerns and views are taken into account in setting and carrying out board policies and goals and the operation of district schools and programs.
- Making sure all district decision-making is public and transparent.
- Holding everyone in the DPS system, including board members, accountable for providing the best education possible for all Denver kids.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

Referring 3A&B to the voters and implementing the projects and programs approved by them.

- As the 2013-14 school year begins at the end of this month, the school security and safety improvements, boiler replacements and cooling solutions funded by 3B will have an immediate impact by providing classroom space that is safe and comfortable throughout the district so that students can focus on learning.
- The tutoring program and new ECE spots funded by 3A will allow us to get to work now to close the achievement gap throughout the district.
- The 3A-funded increase in arts, music, physical education and enrichment will allow us to provide a more well-rounded curriculum for significantly more DPS students.
- The new capacity funded by 3B will allow DPS to ease overcrowding in schools that are over capacity.
- The new ECE center and expansions at two others funded by 3B, paired with the 3A ECE money, will ensure that more children in Denver have access to quality ECE services.

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

Steck Elementary, Bromwell Elementary, Polaris at Ebert and Denver School of the Arts.

### **Comments:**

As a school board member, I will fight for reform that empowers students and parents through a) collaborative school-based decision making, with students, parents and educators working together, and b) giving parents the ability to choose the DPS school where their children will be most successful. I will fight for rigorous academics and a well-rounded curriculum that includes art, music, physical education and enrichment. I will make sure that everyone in the DPS system is accountable to the public and that all decision-making is transparent.



### **Meg Schomp**

I am a Denver native and DPS graduate (Moore, Byers, Smiley & East HS). My mother, Kay Schomp, served on the DPS Board from 1973-83. I graduated from CU at Boulder with a BA, majoring in Cultural Anthropology. I received a Masters of Social Work degree and Certificate in Gerontology from DU. I worked in Washington, DC for three years, as a political intern for Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, and for the Women's Campaign Fund. My professional background in social work includes working in community-based and long-term care facilities with seriously mentally ill young adults and seniors with dementia, for 18 years. Following this, I became a small business owner, opening a licensed drop-in child care center and preschool in Central Denver (Short Stop for Kids). I have been a volunteer in the classroom, as a parent leader in PTA/PTOs, CSCs, and school fundraising foundations, including DSA scholarship administration 15 years. You could say that public education is in my DNA.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

I believe our first priority should be to quality schools in every neighborhood. Regardless of the type of school, no resident of Denver should be left without a quality school that is close to where they live. Another major focus is accountability for DPS administrators, teachers, and staff. Accountability should not only apply to teachers.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

The most important role of a board member is to represent the voices of their constituents. Too often, engaging the community is an afterthought to the decisions made by DPS. Without full buy-in and support of the changes that are made in a community, we will not be able to provide the best educational experience for the students in Denver. Collaboration is another important role for any board member. By coming to the table, ready to discuss differences and work toward common goals, we will create a world class public education system in Denver. This role can be eased by DPS Board Representatives receiving timely and complete information which is consistently disseminated by DPS administration and staff to all board members. Informed decisions are made more carefully when all board members can participate in discussions and a respectful process between each other, community members and stakeholders is established and followed.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

There were many decisions made in 2012-13 by the DPS Board that I believe were important academically and financially. While the refinancing of variable high-interest rate bonds to fund our pension was a significant vote for the board (hopefully making more money available for our classrooms); and further clarifying DPS teacher renewal and Do-not-Rehire practices to deal fairly with our experienced educators, these are not the most important decisions made this last academic year.

The Modified Consent Decree (MCD) is the most important decision the board made in 2012-13, setting standards to improve services for the over 36,000 English-language learners in DPS. These standards will impact improving teacher certification in ELA (English Language Acquisition), allowing parents more involvement in placement and exiting strategies for their individual children in a timely manner, and independent oversight. This court mandated program clearly affects a large & diverse number of kids.

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

I have a 26 year-old daughter that graduated from Denver School of the Arts (a regional magnet school) in 2005. I have a 12 year-old son currently attending Denver Green School, an innovation school in my neighborhood which focuses on environmental sustainability. I also have a 12 year-old daughter currently attending DSA in video cinematography.

### **Comments:**

Several answers were left blank because this survey does not allow for nuanced responses. Specifically, there is no teacher tenure in DPS, so I would need to know if you are looking for answers focused on teacher evaluation (SB 191 & LEAP) or questions regarding the earlier ProComp program.

Furthermore, I do not believe question 7 (a change in the Superintendent's position) is appropriate for a school board candidate to determine. It is a decision that should not be made until a board member has time to fully review performance and make an informed decision. This due process is an expectation ALL district employees should have regarding their employment with DPS.

I also believe questions about the direction of the district cannot be answered in a yes or no format. I would be happy to respond to these questions in detail if the space was allowed. If available, I would welcome the opportunity to go into greater detail on those questions I left blank. Thanks for the opportunity.

## District 4: Northeast



### **Roger Kilgore**

Roger attended public schools through high school and community college, where he earned an Associate in Arts degree. He transferred to a four-year university and completed his 4-year degree and continued on to earn a Master's degree in engineering. Roger was the first in his family to attend college. While in graduate school, Roger met his wife, Sue. They live in the North Park Hill neighborhood in northeast Denver and have been married for over 30 years. Roger has over 30 years of business consulting experience in the water resources engineering field. He has been running his own business for the past 13 years.

Roger also enjoys teaching, having taught college courses and adults for the past 20 years. He and Sue are both active in the community through their church, organizing and staffing summer urban day camps for neighborhood kids, and volunteering in our schools. Roger is Co-chair of the School Improvement and Accountability Council and serves on the Bond oversight committee.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

1. Providing parents with the choice of a good school in their neighborhood. Without such a choice, the choice process is not meaningful.
2. Teaching the whole child including critical thinking, arts, music, and physical fitness. Retaining only those assessments useful to teachers and moving away from the current test-taking culture.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

A school board member sets the tone for the entire school system. To do this well, the member must listen to constituents and engage with the community in an authentic manner. The member must also be open and honest in exchanging views with board colleagues. Diversity of opinion should be welcomed and collegial respect the norm.

Within this context, the board, as a whole, sets overall policy for the district and insures that those policies are being effectively administered without micromanaging their implementation. This includes coordination with the Superintendent. Ultimately, this includes evaluating, hiring, and firing the Superintendent as circumstances dictate. The board and administration have lost credibility over the years and must earn it back to be more effective in meeting our common goal of providing a good education to all of our kids. This is the most important role a school board member plays.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

There are several decisions that have been critical. Issuance of the Call for Quality Schools and individual location/ colocation decisions without community engagement have been critically important to those communities and parents affected.

Adoption of the modified consent decree, which describes training requirements, identification processes, and procedures for opting in/opting out was important for our teachers and the 35% of our students who are English Language Learners.

Appointment of the person to fill the open District 4 seat this spring was important to the constituents of District 4 (and the entire City), but did not involve those constituents and ultimately was not a board decision, but the decision of a single person.

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

My wife and I were not blessed with children of our own. We continue to be committed to the kids from our families, friends, neighbors, and the community at large.

### **Comments:**

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

Additional comments can be found on Roger's website at: <http://www.rogerkilgore.com/actionplan.html#A+>



### **Landri Taylor**

Landri Taylor comes as a candidate for Region 4 district director with tremendous passion, an impeccable reputation and firm integrity. Prior to taking the helm as President & CEO of the Urban League of Metropolitan Denver, Landri was the Vice President of Community Affairs for Forest City Stapleton, Inc., the development company that is transforming the former Stapleton International Airport into a community of 12,000 homes and apartments, 35,000 jobs and more than 1,100 acres of parks and open space. In that position, Landri was responsible for small business development, job training and Minority-owned and Woman-owned Business Enterprise outreach. Landri was co-chair of the far northeast Denver DPS school turnaround - the largest school turnaround in the nation. Landri is an advocate for public school reform and high quality performance.

Landri received his B.A. in Biology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1974, and resides in Denver with wife, Gloria.

### **What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?**

Eliminating the achievement gap between minority and white students is #1.

#2 is "no-remediation necessary" for students graduating from DPS high schools who go on to college or career opportunities.

### **What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?**

My philosophy is that the board first serves its constituency by providing policy oversight, fiscal fiduciary oversight and an advocate for quality education. We're the bridge between effective communication with the community and staff. We hold the public trust. This public trust means that effective board leadership ensures the following:

- 1) That the right instructional materials are budgeted for to achieve classroom outcomes;
- 2) That teacher development dollars are budgeted to achieve classroom outcomes and student achievement;
- 3) That transportation plans are fully budgeted that align with student enrollment and attendance goals.

### **What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?**

The most important decision made by the DPS School Board this year was the unanimous approval of the modified consent decree to improve accountability to our ELL and Hispanic parent community. The largest majority of DPS children are Hispanic and we must address the quality of education these students receive and ensure they graduate with the skills necessary for social and economic self-sufficiency. Whether they are college bound or career bound, we must prepare all of our students for life beyond their high school diploma.

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

My children attended elementary through high school in DPS. They attended John Ameese Elementary, MLK, Jr. Middle School and Montbello High School.

### **Comments:**

## Appendix: Full Survey Questions

### Part 1: Current Denver Public Schools Strategy and Goals

2. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
The district's reform efforts are on pace to meet the needs of most students				
The district's reform efforts are moving in the right direction				
Current leadership is moving the district in the right direction				

3. Choose one answer to complete the following statement:

The district's academic achievement goals in reading, writing and math forecast 3.5% improvement per year per grade, these goals

<input type="checkbox"/>	Are about right
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need to be raised
<input type="checkbox"/>	Need to be lowered
<input type="checkbox"/>	Should be raise for those students who are significantly below proficiency

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### Part 2: Teaching and Learning

4. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
Teachers have the right to tenure after three years of effective teaching				
Tenure is currently too easy to obtain				
DPS is doing an effective job recruiting, supporting and retaining strong school leaders				
DPS should utilize outside, objective evaluators to determine what is and is not working (e.g. programs) relative to its achievement goals				
The district's literacy and math programs are effective				

5. Choose one answer to complete the following statement:

The primary factor in teacher pay and employment should be:

<input type="checkbox"/>	student success and achievement as measured by student outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/>	experience and educational attainment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student achievement that carries nearly equal weight as teacher experience and educational attainment

**Part 3: Accountability**

6. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
I support district and state level accountability measures that require schools to show academic achievement				
ACT and college remediation scores should be included in school and district accountability measures as long as the resources to do so are available				
All new school proposals, whether for charter, innovation or district-managed schools, should be held to the same standards				

7. Do you support a change in the superintendent position at DPS?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

**Part 4: Interventions**

8. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
When schools are failing most of their students, DPS must intervene more quickly and boldly				

9. If a school performs in the bottom 5% of schools in the district, it should be phased out or replaced (with new programming, leadership and/or governance model) after receiving additional supports for:

<input type="checkbox"/>	0-2 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	3-5 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	5-7 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't believe schools should be phased out/replaced or closed

**Part 5: School finance**

10. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
I support Initiative 66 (School Finance Act)				

Innovation schools should have full control over their budgets, staffing, and programming				
I support a tool that shows both spending at the school level and achievement gains to show taxpayers the return on investment at the school level				

**Part 6: School Type and Choice**

11. Rate the following on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree and 4=strongly agree.

Strongly  
Disagree

Strongly  
Agree

Charters should have equal access to district facilities				
Co-location of charters and district-managed schools is a good strategy for efficiently using resources as long as attention is paid to ensuring schools work well together and equitably share facilities				
The district should support a combination of high quality charter and district managed schools				
I support using Innovation status for schools that need extra tools to improve student success				
The current enrollment process is working as intended				
Students should almost always attend their closest boundary school				
We must put more resources into improving boundary schools				
Boundary schools should get more resources per student than district charter or innovation schools				
I would seriously consider a proposal to allow equal opportunities for students to attend any school in the district, regardless of their closest boundary school (e.g. Open some seats in all boundary schools for students living outside that neighborhood)				

**Part 7: Free Response**

- 12. What are your two highest priorities for education in DPS?
- 13. What do you believe is the most important role a school board member plays?
- 14. What was the most important vote/decision made by the DPS School Board in 2012/2013 school year? Why?
- 15. Please provide a short bio with some key information about yourself.
- 16. What schools did/do your children attend?
- 17. We welcome any comments or questions regarding this survey.