

2015 CANDIDATE SURVEYS

DISTRICT 5

LISA FLORES
MICHAEL KILEY

Part I: Denver Public Schools Strategies and Goals

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

	Lisa Flores	Michael Kiley II
The district's current strategic plan (the Denver Plan 2020) is the right focus for DPS to better meet the needs of most students.	4	3
I am confident that the district's current leadership can meet the goals of the Denver Plan by 2020.	3	2
I believe that Goal 2 of the Denver Plan-- that 80% of DPS third graders will be at or above grade-level in reading and writing by 2020-- will be reached.	2	2
I am certain that efforts taken by DPS will be able to double the number of students who graduate college and career-ready by 2020.	2	2

What might you change in the Denver Plan 2020? How will you hold the district accountable to meeting the goals of the Denver Plan?

Lisa Flores: The Denver Plan 2020 is a solid strategic plan and the goals are the right ones for our kids. At this stage we need to focus on implementation. DPS set a goal that by the year 2020 at least 80% of the schools should be rated high performing (blue or green on the School Performance Framework). Few people realize that DPS District 5 - from Swansea to Sun Valley and from Berkeley to Baker - has the most ground to make up toward meeting this goal. In 2015, only 38% of District 5's schools are rated green; there are no blue/distinguished schools. This is unacceptable, and, when elected, I will consider how every decision I make will improve these outcomes.

To catapult District 5 schools forward into high performing status, we must be willing to take risks and to be fearless about alternate paths to improve the educational outcomes of our children. I will make those challenging decisions, and I will ALWAYS do right by our kids.

Michael Kiley II: I applaud the broad aspirational goals that the Denver Plan embraces. My concern is that specific strategies that are not clearly identified. In my experience, the District attempts to sell controversial decisions to communities instead of treating these communities as partners in finding the right improvements to our schools.

In District 5, for instance, the District was adamant that an ECE – 8th grade middle school, Trevista, was the right school for the community, despite years of declining middle school enrollment. Then in late 2014, with little notice, the District closed the Trevista middle school. Five months later the majority school board approved an enrollment zone in the district that left the Sunnyside families without a neighborhood middle school, again over the objections of a majority of the community.

Who can argue with the goal of raising African American and Latino third grade reading and writing proficiency from 50 percent to 75 percent by 2020?

Kiley continued: However, one has to wonder how the District can reach this goal in light of the District's exceptionally high teacher turnover rate of 22 percent and principal turnover of 30 percent. How does the District recruit and retain effective teachers when it's average salary last year was \$20,000 less than Cherry Creek School District? I have serious concerns that the District has the right team and the right plan to achieve the goals within the Denver Plan.

Additional comments on DPS strategies and goals?

Flores: The Denver Plan 2020 also set as a goal that 80% of DPS 3rd graders will be at or above grade level in reading and writing. Access to quality early childhood education options is a crucial component to reaching this goal. As part of the 2012 Mill, Denver voters approved additional funding to increase the number of ECE spots available through DPS or community providers. As a member of the Mill Oversight Committee I've seen that while increased operating dollars are available, the lack of available classroom space still remains a challenge. The board must continue to work with local neighborhoods and ECE providers to directly address the lack of adequate facilities.

Part 2: Teaching, Leadership, and Learning

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

	Lisa Flores	Michael Kiley II
I support the district's recent decision to allow all schools to opt-in to, or opt-out of district provided curriculum and professional development.	4	4
DPS is doing a good job of recruiting, compensating, and supporting great teachers.	2	1
DPS is doing a good job of recruiting, compensating, and supporting great school leaders.	2	1
Teachers should be evaluated and held accountable to student outcomes.	4	2
School leaders should be evaluated and held accountable to student outcomes.	4	2
The current teacher compensation system and ProComp ensure that effective teachers work with the hardest-to-serve schools and students.	4	1
The district should mandate a common literacy and math program for all red/orange rated schools.	2	1
The district's Federal court-ordered English Language Acquisition program is improving outcomes for English language learners.	2	3
DPS should contract objective third-party evaluators to regularly review and report out on the district's performance, programs, and strategies.	4	3

**What do you believe is DPS' greatest challenge to having great teachers in every classroom?
How do you suggest the district enhance or change its approach to this challenge?**

Flores: As a community, we need to do a better job of elevating, supporting, honoring and compensating the teaching profession. We must encourage and support our strong high school students to become our valued teachers of tomorrow. In order to do so, we must provide a competitive wage that honors and respects their craft. Additionally, we must provide access to professional development programs, like Relay Graduate School of Education and Achievement Network. These programs have received high marks from principals and teachers and have proven to greatly impact educational outcomes for students.

Kiley: Reversing the District's reputation as one that does not respect the teaching profession could be the greatest challenge. Classroom teachers tell me they are bombarded with new curriculum before they have had time to master the most recent one. The District seems to be impose more and more demands on teachers without more time. This is troubling in a district serving such a large percentage of students who research suggests require the most support of our teachers: students at risk of failure due to poverty or learning a second language. Parents want continuity of teachers in their schools and parents want experienced teachers in their children's classroom.

Additional comments on teaching, leadership, and learning?

Flores: Great teachers thrive when working with great principals and other great leaders. Strong school leaders know how to inspire teachers and mentor them to be better educators; they make them feel valued, and set the tone for the entire school. The district can and must do a better job of recruiting, training, supporting, and ultimately retaining its best school principals. Strong school leaders attract and retain strong teachers. Strong teachers in the classroom, keep students interested, engaged, and learning.

Kiley: The classroom teachers I have worked with in partnership with other parents and principals in Northwest Denver regard teaching as a calling. They didn't come to teaching to make money. Of course they need to make a living. And I believe teachers who can afford to live in Denver -- where skyrocketing housing costs are out of reach for many -- have a stronger commitment to their schools. But teachers want more than a job for several years, they want a career. Teachers want and need more effective professional development tailored to their needs. Finally, there is research to suggest new teachers with mentors are more likely to stay in the profession. The pool of master teachers is shrinking as we replace veteran teachers with inexperienced teachers.

Part 3: School Management and Support

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1-4, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=agree, and 4= strongly agree.

	Lisa Flores	Michael Kiley II
All schools, whether charter, innovation, or district, should be held to the same performance standards.	4	2
The School Performance Framework (SPF) appropriately balances student growth and proficiency.	1	1
Schools that are rated orange or red on the SPF that have not made significant progress (more than 4% improvement/year) over two years should be replaced by other high performing schools.	3	1
DPS adequately engages families and community members throughout the school turnaround process.	1	1
I support Tom Boasberg as DPS superintendent.	3	3
I think the current financial transparency of the district is sufficient, and it is easy to understand the amount of funding schools have direct control over.	1	1
I believe DPS should do more to promote socio-economic integration in schools, and to reverse the growing trend of school segregation in Denver.	3	4
I support the strategy of creating enrollment zones as a way to ensure more underrepresented students have greater access to quality schools.	3	1
It should be a school's responsibility to provide information and assist families' decision-making during the school choice process at transition grades (i.e. 5th and 8th grade).	4	3
Co-location of schools is a good strategy for utilizing facilities as long as resources are shared equitably.	3	1

Are resources and staff in the district allocated correctly? Specifically, does the district have the right balance of teachers to other employees (5,245 out of 14,792)? If yes, why? If not, how should this be changed?

Flores: In terms of resource allocation, the most important thing is that kids have the resources and supports needed to be successful in the classroom. Teachers are the instructional experts and the most important determinant as to whether a student succeeds in school. Clearly, there are many people who support the work of teachers, contributing to student success all the way from preschool through to graduation. With 5,245 teachers serving 90,000 students, the teacher:student ratio is approximately one teacher for every 17 students. Of course, classrooms aren't always this size. However, it seems important to consider how many of the remaining staff are supporting students. How many serve as bus drivers, janitors, paraprofessionals, school nurses, facility maintenance, math tutors, school secretaries, language interpreters, security officers, lunch service staff, etc.? I believe we should place more staffing decisions at the school level and in the hands of great principals, who can better decide which programs and services will best support their kids. I support the district's policy of allowing schools to "opt-in" to services, the decentralization of responsibility, and principal control over the day-to-day operations of schools.

Kiley: No, too many staff and resources are devoted to central administration to the detriment of our neighborhood schools. Garden Place Elementary School in Globeville illustrates this point. Garden Place has the worst air quality of any school in the District because of its proximity to I-70 and I-25. Classroom temperatures reach 120 degrees on hot days. Only recently, thanks to a group of parents and community leaders, the District has finally taken steps to place an air filtration system in the school with funding from next year's proposed bond issue. Schools like Garden Place should have come before the new administration building at 1860 Lincoln, with an estimated cost to taxpayers of \$60 million.

Moreover, every management level in the district must meet high standards, not just principals and teachers. With this in mind, I will propose revising job descriptions of instructional superintendents who manage principals. These key managers should have a track record of success as principals just as principals should be drawn from a pool of master teachers.

If principals are to be given greater autonomy for running their schools, then it follows that more dollars should be shifted from administration to schools.

Part 4: Free Response

What is the role of a DPS Board Member?

Flores: It is important that the District 5 board representative listen to a variety of thoughts and opinions, not only those that echo his or her own experience. In addition to setting policy and holding the superintendent and administration accountable for the education of our kids, a DPS Board member should also be responsive and responsible to the community. As a District 5 constituent, I share the sentiment that I hear from so many in our community - that they haven't been heard by their representative, and in turn the board itself. District 5 needs a leader who can listen to a variety of opinions, as well as advocate for and be heard by others.

Kiley: Accountable to the community to which they serve, the Board makes policy for the District in compliance with state and federal laws. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to oversee District finances. In their capacity as elected officials, Board members also have an important role in voicing and helping reconcile the diverse voices of the districts they serve.

What will be your two primary goals as a Board member, and how will we know you are working towards these goals?

Flores: One of my priorities will be to develop and retain quality school leadership. Good schools always have strong school leadership at the helm. DPS must do a better job of recruiting, training, and ultimately supporting and retaining its best school principals. When elected, I will ask for a formal review of DPS' school leader training programs so we can determine which programs are most effective and which can be strengthened to better serve our school leaders.

Second, DPS must do more for students in need of special education and/or special need services. Children with special needs/education plans are generally integrated into the classroom, and so meeting their needs is an issue that impacts ALL children.

Many families are frustrated, isolated, underrepresented, and ignored. I have already collected a series of recommendations (many without financial cost to implement) from families who have struggled to navigate the system on behalf of their children with special needs. An immediate improvement: the Colorado Department of Education offers a "Know Your Rights" class for parents, but as I've heard from parents/guardians "no one knows about the class." DPS can and should provide better education on how to best serve special education/needs children. When elected, I plan to hit the ground running. Let's identify those quick wins, find additional financial resources, and update existing policies so that we can better serve ALL learners.

Kiley: My primary goal is to make certain principals and teachers in District 5 neighborhood schools have the resources they need to meet their student's needs. I will be transparent in identifying those needs by listening to parents and educators in collaboration with the District. Top down solutions have failed too many of our neighborhood schools for too long.

What were the one or two best decisions the DPS Board has made in the last four years? How would you work to support these policies?

Flores: Creating and adopting the Denver Plan 2020 is one of the best decisions the board has made. It offers a strategic plan and outline for making sure that all of our kids get the education they deserve and creates a culture that is kid focused. This strategic plan will guide future policy decisions. In fact, the decentralization of authority to principals is a direct result of the Denver Plan 2020 and I am hopeful that it will lead to more and better options for kids. This plan will help us hire and retain great teachers, make our schools generators of innovation, and lead to a world class public education system in our city.

Kiley: I would hope that greater autonomy for principals – if combined with sufficient resources – will enable schools to better tailor programs to the needs of the community they serve.

Decades after the City of Denver passed an ordinance to promote participation of small women and minority owned businesses in tax-funded contracting, the District is finally coming along. Reinvesting in the communities the District serves is a strategy the District should consider for closing an achievement gap with roots in economic inequality. I will be a strong advocate for the success of this effort.

What were the one or two worst decisions that the DPS Board made in the last four years? How would you work to change these policies?

Flores: The situation in District 5, at Cheltenham Elementary, with kids sitting on the floor to eat their lunch as punishment highlights the way the district is slow to respond to problems and controversy. The role of the Board of Education is to be responsive to the constituents who elect them to office. When the district decided to push back on parents, instead of immediately working to rectify the situation, the board should have demanded the district to take a more active role in working with the parents at Cheltenham.

Cheltenham is an extreme example, but there are many other day-to-day decisions that the district makes where parents and community members should be engaged with and listened to.

Kiley: Ending neighborhood school boundaries has disrupted neighborhoods. Strong neighborhood schools – a walk or bicycle ride away from home -- should be the first choice for any parent. Not only do neighborhood schools bind communities together, they support working families and reduce transportation costs and traffic congestion. Parents I speak with who send their children to specialized magnet and charter schools still want their first option to be a neighborhood school.

Strong neighborhood schools also protect businesses and the home values of older residents whose only asset in retirement is often their home.

Final thoughts?

Kiley: I look forward to working collaboratively with the Superintendent and the majority of the Board who have endorsed my opponent in hopes of gaining a 7-0 majority. While we have differences in our approaches to how to give all children a first class education, these differences are not personal; I am committed to finding common ground whenever possible. Taxpayers and parents deserve constructive debate and open discussions that, in my view, lead to better decisions that take into account diverse views.

I am honored to have the endorsement of Denver's former mayor, the Honorable Wellington E. Webb, one of the two founding fathers of A+ Denver. I'm particularly grateful for his support given that his training as an educator and that he is an alumni of Manual High School with school boundaries reaching into District 7.

ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Lisa Flores



I grew up in Denver and am a product of Denver Public Schools (DPS). I have seven family members, each of whom will become, as I am, a DPS graduate. In addition to being an East High graduate, I have worked as an advocate for Denver's children, their educational opportunities, and the numerous nonprofit organizations that support them for over 20 years. I am invested in improving the quality of education DPS provides to all children. I will work tirelessly to bring educational equity to our district to better prepare our children for the promise of their future. Our collective future depends on it.

My family experienced firsthand how a quality education, dedicated teachers, and strong school leaders can make a profound impact on an individual child, which can change the collective legacy of a community. I am the granddaughter of migrant laborers and the first in my family to graduate from college. I served as a Peace Corps volunteer and then spent nine years working for three local community-based nonprofits (Mi Casa, Girl Scouts, and Denver Inner City Parish). I also served as mayoral appointee for (now) Governor Hickenlooper during his first term as mayor. Most recently, I worked for the Gates Family Foundation

where I worked statewide to identify, support, and fund educational initiatives to do two things (1) increase access to early childhood education and (2) close the achievement gap for low-income children.

Visit her website: www.floresfordenver.com

Partnering with other parents, principals, teachers and community stakeholders to improve Skinner Middle School and North High School has confirmed my commitment to public education and fueled my passion for serving on the Board of education. I know first-hand there is no quick fix or one-size-fits-all model for making neighborhood schools the best they can be. It takes all of us rolling up our sleeves and working together to make sure all our children have the opportunity of a great education.

I'm running for school board to make sure every child in Denver gets the same opportunities as I did as a child. My education was built on a strong academic foundation enriched by music, world languages, athletics and other after school opportunities. Looking back, my parents instilled in me the importance of education. My father worked as a paramedic while he earned his PhD and my mother worked part time in a dental office while volunteering in my grade school classrooms.

I am at ease with and appreciative of different cultures thanks to my parent's diverse heritage; my mother is Latina while my father is of German descent. My grandmother Lucille Campa, was a well-known dancer and teacher of Mexican and Spanish classical dance and flamenco. Former Governor Bill Owens honored her achievements with the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts in 2000.

The Arthur L. Campa Scholarship for Latino Studies at the University of Denver is named for my maternal grandfather. The patriarch of my family, he was a renowned scholar of Southwestern culture and Chairman of the Department of Modern Language and Literature at DU from 1946 until his retirement in 1972. My mother tells me that he championed teaching second languages earlier in Denver Public Schools.

Finally, I grew up hearing stories of my paternal great-grandfather, Enos Mills, father of Rocky Mountain National Park, which no doubt influenced my love of the outdoors. My parent's incredible work ethic and their financial struggles to support the family did not stop them from giving my brother and me exposure to a broad range of educational experiences. Although most of my clothes growing up were second-hand from relatives or from non-profits, there was always money to play soccer or take piano lessons. We went several years without a car but my parents found a way to go to the symphony, art shows and Broadway productions.

Michael Kiley II



The foundation of my adult life was set in my public high school. Strong academics were complemented by extra-curricular opportunities that contributed to my career success and shaped the person I am today. Soccer gave me important life skills including teamwork and perseverance. High school friends came from all walks of life and included sons of trash collectors and corporate executives, third generation Chicanos, and recent arrivals from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala. My high school's excellent choir further reinforced the importance of a relentless pursuit of excellence. Choir also increased my comfort in front of crowds (if you can sing A cappella in front of an audience, public speaking is relatively easy).

My wife and I owe so much to the education we received from public schools. Our public school experience not only taught us the fundamental academic topics, but we developed the ability to relate and find common ground with people from varied backgrounds. Because we know how our diverse public school experience benefited us as adults, we have sent our children to DPS schools. Our seventh grade daughter Amber attends Skinner and Thomas is a third-grader at Edison where I recently finished a term as PTA president.

Finally, I'm a project manager for Kronos, a large information technology company, where I manage million dollar projects in health care. My job demands skill in finding solutions to complex problems and working constructively with a variety of people – including unhappy customers. I look forward to finding common ground with my Board colleagues that benefits all of Denver's children.

Visit his website: www.kileyforkids.com