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INTRODUCTION

On July 17, 2018, the Denver Public Schools (DPS) Superintendent, Tom Boasberg, announced that he would be stepping down as District Superintendent after a decade in the position. News of his departure catalyzed the DPS Board to launch a local, regional, and national search for the most qualified candidate to lead the District and continue the Board’s progress toward its Strategic Plan, the Denver Plan 2020.

As part of the search process, the Board developed a community engagement strategy so they could hear directly from the community about the issues community members believe are most crucial, in order to inform the Board’s search for a new Superintendent. As part of this engagement strategy, the Board sought to gather community input about the characteristics, qualities, and competencies the next Superintendent should possess. Furthermore, the Board sought community input regarding the current state of DPS as well as the collective input of community members as to their hopes for the District, its students, and the community at large.

Throughout the community engagement process, the Board demonstrated their commitment to engage with residents across Denver to listen carefully to the issues, concerns, and recommendations raised by members of the community. The Board primarily sought out community voices through the creation of Large Regional Community Forums, small stakeholder meetings, and a District-wide digital community survey.

In early September 2018, the Board contracted with Dimension Strategies and Latino Decisions to design, facilitate, and conduct its Superintendent Search Community Engagement Strategy.

WHO WE ARE

DIMENSION STRATEGIES

Dimension Strategies advises organizations and cultivates stakeholder engagement strategies from the ground up, while focusing on communities, grassroots outreach, and digital contacts through the use of data-driven decisions to offer clients the most informed choices. We do this by equipping our clients with a deep understanding of Denver’s residents and the issues they care about, including education and community engagement. Our decades of experience working with diverse local, regional, and national communities - as well as our partnership with the nationally-recognized Latino Decisions research group - have given us acute insight into one of the country’s fastest growing cities, as well as a particular insight into Denver’s diverse communities.

The partners of Dimension Strategies use their experience, expertise, and research to assist their clients in finding successful methods to strategically plan, based on their critical mission and values and through identifying the most optimal way forward with that plan.

LATINO DECISIONS

Latino Decisions provides its clients with accurate, independent data to facilitate critical decisions and is nationally recognized as the leader in Latino political opinion research. Founded by professors of political science, Dr. Gary M. Segura and Dr. Matt Barreto, its team leverages a unique combination of analytical expertise and cultural competencies that are unparalleled in the industry. Latino Decisions is comprised exclusively of credentialed research scientists with established publication records, rigorous methodological training, and experience with large-scale collaborative research projects.
Katherine Archuleta  
Dimension Strategies

Katherine began her career as a schoolteacher in Denver and worked in local government for Denver Mayors Federico Peña and John Hickenlooper. She worked for the Departments of Transportation and Energy in the Clinton administration and was Chief of Staff to Labor Secretary Hilda Solis during the first two years of the Obama Administration. Additionally, Katherine joined Obama’s 2012 campaign as the National Political Director and was appointed by President Barack Obama as the first Latina to lead the US Office of Personnel Management. Accumulating nearly 20 years in public service - along with leadership roles in the nonprofit sectors in both Colorado and New Mexico - Ms. Archuleta has been recognized both locally and nationally for her dedication to supporting the role of Latinos and women in public and private sector leadership roles.

Currently, Katherine serves as a Trustee to the University of Denver and the Swanee Hunt Foundation, Board Chair of Colorado’s Latino Leadership Institute, and Board member of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority.

Dr. Gabriel R. Sanchez  
Latino Decisions

Dr. Gabriel Sanchez is a Principal at Latino Decisions and serves as Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of New Mexico. Additionally, he serves as Executive Director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy and Co-Director of the Institute of Policy, Evaluation and Applied Research (IPEAR) at the University of New Mexico. He has directed numerous research initiatives focused on New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona, and often serves as an expert policy advisor to the New Mexico state legislature.

Tony Massaro  
Dimension Strategies

Tony has over 30 years of experience in environmental and progressive politics – providing strategic advice and coordinating advocacy efforts at the local, state, and national levels. From 2005 until 2011, Tony served as the Senior Vice President of Political Affairs and Public Education of the League of Conservation Voters (LCV). There, he built the data department and oversaw the integration of digital communication and social media into electoral, advocacy, and accountability campaigns, thus, modernizing the organization. Tony built a field infrastructure in key states using diverse and inclusive practices and broadened the organization’s strategic community engagement strategies. Today, Tony develops programs for our clients that rely on analytics to measure impact and effectiveness.

Prior to his work at LCV, Tony was the Executive Director of Colorado Conservation Voters and the Director of Environmental Affairs in the Denver Mayor’s Office. Tony was previously on the board of the Latina Initiative.
THE PROCESS

In preparation for the Superintendent Search Community Engagement Strategy, Dimension Strategies set as its goal:

*To design and implement a community engagement plan that is inclusive in all respects and is regarded as highly valuable - by the Board - to the process of selecting a new Superintendent.*

In addition, Dimension Strategies committed to designing a transparent, inclusive process that was of high value to parents, teachers, advocates, and community leaders.

Beginning on September 11, 2018, Dimension Strategies initiated its engagement strategy. On October 25, 2018, the firm’s work was completed with the submission of its report, simultaneously to the Board and the general public. It is important to point out, in the interest of full transparency, that the Board requested for Dimension Strategies to issue the report to both the Board and the community at the same time, so that the Board did not have any ability to preview or comment on the firm’s findings.

From September 11, 2018 to October 12, 2018, Dimension Strategies, along with Latino Decisions, completed the following:

1. Conducted nine Large Regional Community Forums in which individuals - including parents, students, advocates, and community leaders - discussed issues they identified as being most important for consideration by the Board in the Superintendent selection process. The Board chose the dates, times, and locations and was responsible for all community forum logistics, as well as outreach for forum attendance and participation. These nine forums were held at:
   - Denver School of the Arts
   - George Washington High School
   - Thomas Jefferson High School
   - Evie Garrett Dennis Campus
   - Montbello Recreation Center
   - Hiawatha Davis Recreation Center
   - South High School
   - West High School
   - North High School

   At these forums, Dimension Strategies collected both qualitative and quantitative data through a variety of methods, including table discussions and survey participation.

   At every community forum, Dimension Strategies facilitators worked with participants in small groups to encourage them to voice their recommendations to the Board. Participants identified specific issues in the context of discussing key themes, some of which had been previously selected by Dimension Strategies after interviews with Board members and community leaders. These key themes were intentionally broad and were introduced, primarily, to stimulate conversation among participants. Dimension Strategies facilitators produced written records of the participants’ conversations as they were being conducted; however, all feedback was recorded anonymously. Those records were summarized overnight and posted to the District Supersearch website ([https://supersearch.dpsk12.org/survey-results/](https://supersearch.dpsk12.org/survey-results/)) by noon the following day, so that attendees and the general public could view what had been discussed at each Large Regional Community Forum site.

   During these forums, the District provided child-care, a light meal, and interpreters for attendees who spoke a language other than English.

2. Conducted real-time surveys with Large Regional Community Forum attendees to identify the issues of greatest importance as well as characteristics, qualities, and competencies participants most desired to see in the next district Superintendent. Using smartphones and tablets, Community Forum attendees were asked to respond to a survey designed by Dimension Strategies/Latino Decisions in order to supplement the qualitative data - gathered through the Large Community Forum small group discussions - with supporting quantitative data.

   The results of these In-Forum surveys were also made available the next day on the District Supersearch website, alongside the discussion summaries.
The District took on the responsibility of all outreach for the survey and distributed it through various modes and methods, which included weekly newsletters to teachers and internal/external District community members, social media - including Twitter and Facebook, external stakeholders, and finally, each Board member distributed the information to their individual constituency lists. The General Community Survey was live for two weeks. It was translated by the District from English to Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic.

These meetings were comprised of participants from a variety of stakeholder groups, such as District employees, non-profits, faith-based groups, youth, parents, and education advocacy stakeholders. Some of these groups were identified by the Board as individuals, groups, and organizations whose insight would be valuable to the Superintendent selection process. Some of these meetings were held in response to the Board’s willingness to engage with anyone who invited them to a stakeholder meeting.

It is important to note that Dimension Strategies did not facilitate, participate, or attend any of these stakeholders meetings, but agreed with the Board that the information provided during these meetings represented an important part of the Community Engagement Strategy and should, consequently, be included in the final report. Therefore, the analysis presented in this report is limited because of the more informal nature of gatherings. However, the ideas and concerns expressed in these meetings are significant and worthy of consideration by the Board.

In summary, Dimension Strategies and Latino Decisions applied their resources to prepare the following detailed report for the public, as well as the Board, in order to provide an in-depth analysis of all qualitative and quantitative data that was gathered from the Large Regional Community Forums, the In-Forum Surveys, and the Community Survey.

Finally, we acknowledge - with appreciation - the support we received from Denver Public Schools personnel in providing all logistics for the Large Regional Community Forums. We would like to acknowledge the community-based facilitators, who assisted us at the Large Community Forums, were committed to engaging the participants in the Forum discussions, and recorded the views expressed as accurately as possible. We also thank JoyLab for its assistance with the production of the In-Forum survey process and for ensuring that the Large Regional Community Forums data was prepared and posted to the District website the next day, following each forum, thus, guaranteeing the availability of the reports in a timely manner for all who wished to see them.
LARGE REGIONAL COMMUNITY FORUMS: KEY FINDINGS

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The small group discussions conducted during the Large Regional Community Forums were an invaluable component of the Superintendent Search Community Engagement Strategy due to their ability to (1) provide a rich understanding of the issues and concerns facing the District, (2) recognize the priorities community members most want the incoming leader to understand, and (3) identify the characteristics, experience, and skills that community members most wish to see in the next Superintendent.

As described earlier, participants were asked to quickly identify their top three issues for discussion using a survey they accessed on their smart phones, or supplemental tablets - which were provided. Interestingly, participants at every forum identified the same top three issues for discussion in their small groups as:

• Prioritization of Issues Facing the District,
• Experience with Diverse Communities, and
• Teaching and Administrative Experience.

The forum discussions were lively and active, and facilitators encouraged every person to participate.

While the participants were encouraged to share freely on each of these topics during their table discussions, several key themes emerged across all forums regarding the top three issues. Additionally, In-Forum Surveys and the General Community Survey later expanded upon and verified those themes. In a separate section of this report, the summaries of each forum discussion provide greater detail in regards to key themes, location by location, and the analysis of both surveys provides quantitative data to support the forum discussion summaries. Furthermore, notes from each of the nine meetings also expand on the information provided below and are accessible through https://supersearch.dpsk12.org.

The themes we identified through our qualitative data provide valuable insight, which the Board is able to reference as they review candidates and conduct interviews. As the Board contemplates its steps in identifying and interviewing candidates, and moves towards the selection of its final Superintendent candidate, these themes will be important in setting expectations for candidate qualities and experience.
Key Themes: Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

- The next Superintendent must demonstrate tangible strategies for closing the achievement and opportunity gaps. They must understand the rich diversity of the District and know, in particular, how to develop strategies and programs in support of racial/ethnic minorities, students meeting free and reduced lunch (FRL) guidelines, and special needs students.

- A new leader should be familiar with the District as part of a rapidly growing city impacted by issues such as gentrification and affordable housing. Furthermore, they should have experience engaging with community members around similar issues and seek to collaborate with community stakeholders to find solutions.

- Insufficient funding has negatively impacted class sizes and has contributed to the lack of necessary resources for schools. The new leader must not only understand these issues but demonstrate a plan to address the issues of equitable funding formulas that recognize that individual schools serve different and diverse communities with varying needs.

- The new District leader must value teachers and work to address low teacher salaries, high teacher turnover, and low teacher morale. The community strongly values hiring more teachers of color and providing tools and resources to increase culturally relevant curriculum.

- The mental and emotional health of students must be a priority focus for the Superintendent. Resources for SROs should be reevaluated in favor of providing more culturally-sensitive programs, mental health therapists, social workers, and trauma-informed interventions.

- Families who are English Language Learners (ELL) are particularly interested in the District providing more expansive resources for immigrants and their families. Because several schools have an underlying issue of being unable to communicate effectively with refugee, immigrant, and non-English speaking families, these parents find it much more difficult to support their children and participate in their child's educational plans.

- Community members expressed an interest in having additional programs designed to prepare students for college or technical institutions, as part of an equitable approach to program needs and funding. Many participants brought up the perceived disparity in school funding for programs like these, and flagged this as a critical issue to be addressed by the new District leader.

- Dissatisfaction with the current method of school performance evaluation (SPF) has caused families, teachers, and students to feel defeated. The new Superintendent must review this process to determine its effectiveness and its impact on teacher, parent, and student morale.

- While the issues surrounding traditional vs. charter schools were raised by some participants, most spoke about the need for every child to have access to a great school in their own neighborhood. The next Superintendent should direct an unbiased approach to improve both models.

- Finally, community members expressed frustration at nearly every meeting about communication in regard to the community and the District’s approach to community engagement. Participants asked for greater communication, greater transparency and that community input be taken into account and valued in District decisions. The Superintendent search was used, by many participants, as an example of the distrust that exists between the Board and the community. Some believe that the decision has already been made and has been influenced by the departing Superintendent. Some felt that the District would “ask for input,” but not actually listen to the comments and sentiments, and not follow-up to communicate with the community about how their priorities informed Board decision-making. Some felt that the process was too fast and should be slowed down to encourage more applicants and give more consideration to the process.
Key Themes: Experience with Diverse Communities

- Participants placed a high value on the importance of having a Superintendent with demonstrable experience with diverse communities - preferably communities similar to those in Denver. They should have experience with urban populations as well as prior experience with a diverse district that is roughly the size of Denver.

- The new District leader must have the experience necessary to understand and advocate for all levels of diversity, including populations such as single parents, same-gender families, families with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, different family compositions, different religious backgrounds, immigrant and undocumented students, non-English speaking families, etc.

- A high priority was placed on the next District leader committing to hiring more teachers who look like the District’s students. They must demonstrate commitment and experience pertaining to how the District can recruit, retain, and promote minority teachers and staff as well as engage in issues/topics that are culturally sensitive and relevant.

- Some participants strongly voiced the need for the new Superintendent to address the institutional racism that has existed and still exists within the District. They seek a District leader who can assure that minority students are not treated unfairly and that lead by example with practices and programs that will rid the District of this history.

- Many participants spoke to the need for curriculum and programs that create cultural awareness among all District employees and that are culturally responsive. The new District leader should possess cultural competence and exhibit authentic cultural leadership.

- Being responsive to community needs, understanding that different communities have different educational needs, and possessing a willingness to give the community a “seat at the table” were highly valued by many participants. They want a Superintendent who is open-minded, collaborative, empathetic, engaging, willing to listen and learn, has good interpersonal skills, and is emotionally intelligent.

- A few participants emphasized the need for the next District leader to be diverse and bilingual and have a track record of empathy and lived experience in communities of color.

- The participants strongly urged that the Board seek a candidate who understands the value of equitable distribution of resources, including nurses, social-emotional counselors, libraries, interpreters, etc.

- Many participants believe that the next Superintendent must live in the District and must send their children to District schools.
Key Themes: Teaching and Administrative Experience

- Many participants want the next Superintendent to possess experience with a large metropolitan school district that is similar to Denver in terms of size and diversity. They should demonstrate the ability to build a strong, highly-qualified, diverse team and know how to delegate to the team. They want a leader who has experience as a teacher and as an administrator.

- Many want a District leader who can engage both neighborhood school and charter school leaders and hold both accountable to and for success.

- For many, teaching experience is non-negotiable. They insist that a new District leader must have classroom experience, so as to understand the demands placed on teachers.

- However, for a few, past classroom teaching experience is not a must. They were open to having a Superintendent who has worked with children and families in another capacity.

- Many, though, were not supportive of a District leader with solely a business background, explaining that a corporate background was not enough to direct the educational needs of the District.

- For many, it was important that a new Superintendent understands teacher burnout, can focus on retention strategies, is empathetic to the emotional experiences of teachers, and can understand the impact of the strategies they ask teachers to implement.

- For many - including students who attended the Large Regional Community Forums - mutual respect between students and the next Superintendent is critical. They want the new leader to be willing to engage with the students and be willing to be in the classroom. Students vocalized their desire for an opportunity to discuss their views and a few said they would like to see the references from the finalists’ students.

- Other qualities that some participants voiced included: commitment to continual learning and growth, high value on innovation, experience with budgets and funding, and an eye for distributing resources to those schools most in need.

- Some participants seek a Superintendent who understand the holistic approach to education - educating the whole child by engaging various learning styles as well as reviewing curriculum and its reform.

- A few voiced their concern for the selection of someone who is already an administrator in the District, while a few others identified current administrators who they believe should be the District’s choice.

Open Mic / Key Themes

The Open Mic was made available at every Large Regional Community Forum. While the Open Mic presented the opportunity for adult stakeholders to share their input, most importantly, Open Mic allowed students a platform to share their opinions and unique perspective. Below are some topics brought up exclusively by students throughout the Large Regional Community Forum Open Mics.

- “The most important people in the system are the students and the teachers.”

- “You can’t teach without a teacher.”

- “We want a Superintendent who values inclusion.”

- “We want a Superintendent who is willing to sit across from students, teachers, and community and value their input.”

- “The District must involve “student voices” in the selection process.”

- “When we finalize candidates, [it’s imperative] that student board members interview candidates. We have a better sense of who is the right leader for our schools.”

- “The Superintendent needs to genuinely care about the community and its students and have a passion for his/her job.”

- The Superintendent should improve every school in the District so that “each school in every neighborhood is a school where parents want to send their kids.”
Several participants voiced their preference for a Superintendent who has a track record of engaging diverse populations and who exhibits cultural competence. Some present said they want a Superintendent who is already familiar with the diverse needs of the Denver community and who has previously worked in a diverse urban community.

Many participants emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who recruits diverse teachers and administrators who “look like” the district’s diverse student body. Several participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who is inclusive and supportive of diverse communities and will shift the district’s culture to reflect this spirit of inclusion. “The Superintendent should be able to attract, retain, support, and nurture a diverse staff.”

Some participants said they are looking for a Superintendent who will listen to and engage the community while demonstrating a willingness to build trust by being attentive to the needs of such a diverse community. “The Superintendent must commit to listening to the community but also must have the power to respond to the community’s needs.”

A few participants said they need a Superintendent who will be aware of the segregation throughout the district and come up with a plan to address it. “School segregation is just as bad now as it was before bussing. They need to address this and be savvy to deal with it.”

Some participants expressed that the Superintendent should commit to creating equitable environments for every student, adding that funding and resources should be equitable across the district. Some said these resources should include trauma-informed counselors, more language programs, and budget transparency.
Teaching and Administrative Experience

Most participants stressed the importance of having a Superintendent who has experience as both a teacher and an administrator so that they can understand and connect with teachers while also being equipped with the skills necessary to lead a large district. “I would like a teacher, but they need to be good at running a business - someone with strong administrative skills who makes a commitment and is part of the learning experience.”

Some said it is important for the Superintendent to know how to build a strong, diverse team. A few said it is important that the Superintendent does not run the district like a business. “Someone with strictly business knowledge should not be in education.”

Some said it is important for the Superintendent to listen to and engage the input of community members as they craft their vision for the district. A few said it would be nice if the Superintendent had kids in DPS.
Many participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who will ensure that every child in DPS has access to a great education, no matter where they live. “Every child should have access to a great school! We need to make DPS a place where teachers and students want to come.”

Some participants added that creating an equitable system for all will require the Superintendent to re-evaluate the choice system so every community has a quality neighborhood school. This would mean that students would not have to travel across town in order to have access to a quality education or settle for a low-resourced school if they do not have the means to access a school across town. “Choice is more of a problem than a solution. It creates segregation and fails schools that are less attractive. Equity-based budgeting would be great to see.”

Some participants advocated for a Superintendent who will address and create a plan to fix the achievement gap. They expressed concern over the “false measures of academic achievement and opportunity gaps among race, ethnicity, income level, and special needs children.”

A few expressed the importance of a Superintendent who will pay teachers and administrators more and improve teacher retention. Others expressed the importance of re-allocating the budget so it also covers important services for students, such as special needs programs.

Several present stressed the importance of a Superintendent who listens to the community and engages their ideas as well as someone who is familiar with Denver’s diverse landscape and prioritizes inclusion for all. “The candidate should have a history of proven abilities engaging a similar demographic.”

Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. The following excerpts and observations were shared during this forum’s open mic.

One individual said the personality of the Superintendent needs to be one that can diffuse angst and engage a variety of people. “We need someone who will work for ALL students.”

Some addressed the high levels of teacher turnover. “The most important people in the system are the students and the teachers. It’s important to support and invest in them. You can’t teach without a teacher.”

Several participants critiqued the timeline set for selection of the Superintendent. There was a strong sentiment that DPS had created a “false sense of urgency” for such a crucial decision that will have a direct impact on so many people in the community for years to come. Some said they want the deadline for choosing a Superintendent to be extended.

Some participants read aloud input they had solicited from students. They covered themes such as the quality of the curriculum, learning that is disconnected from what students will need in the future, the importance of school safety, and the stressful focus on grades. A few recommended greater funding for trauma-informed services. “There should be no such thing as an underserved school.”

An individual said a student should prioritize collaboration between students, teachers, and parents.
FORUM 2
GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Experience with Diverse Communities

Some participants said they would prefer a Superintendent who has lived in the community and is already familiar with Denver and the diversity of the district. A few also expressed their desire for the Superintendent to live in the district and send their kids to public schools. “They need skin in the game.”

Many participants said they want a Superintendent who takes time to understand the priorities of each community, as well as their unique educational needs, and who values collaboration over competition. “We need someone who has experience engaging with different communities and who can bridge different linguistic and cultural backgrounds while attracting others who respect that.”

Additionally, many emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who prioritizes diversity across the district, specifically through recruiting, retaining, and promoting minority teachers. “We need people with different backgrounds to be teachers. We need to attract teachers who look like the community they teach. Additionally, the curriculum needs to be more diverse and culturally relevant.”

Some voiced their preference for a Superintendent who is a person of color. Others acknowledged their preference for a bilingual Superintendent. “If all other things are equal, choose the more diverse candidate. The last five Superintendents have been white males. There is a talented pool of diverse candidates out there. We are overdue.”
Several participants agreed that the incoming Superintendent must have previous experience as a teacher in the classroom. “I feel teachers have been disrespected in the district and I want someone who respects the teaching profession. The Superintendent needs to understand what it is like to have over 30 children in one classroom and be familiar with all the variables that come with that.”

Some expressed their desire for a leader who is a good listener, a good communicator, and who is dedicated not only to closing the achievement gap, but also to taking care of the “whole child.” “Teaching experience is important; however, the Superintendent’s philosophy and vision for the district is most imperative.”

While many were also excited about the Superintendent having past administrative experience, several participants were adamant that the district should not be run like a business. “I want someone who isn’t looking at public education as a business because it’s not serving everyone right now, and it should serve everyone.”

Some participants voiced their desire for a Superintendent who has previously worked in a large, urban district with similar demographics to that of Denver. For example, having experience with low-income and high-risk populations would be helpful background experience, according to a few participants.

A few present advocated for mental health support in schools, and expressed their hope that the incoming Superintendent will address those needs. “DSA had a suicide last weekend. We should not expect teachers to solve mental health issues because they may not have the skills or time, so we need mental health professionals in schools.”

Some said it is important for the Superintendent to have experience with a range of diverse communities and specifically, know how to engage and meet the needs of special education students.

A few noted their concerns with the timeline of the Superintendent search process and recommended extending the timeline. “Don’t rush the search. Adjust the timeline to get the right person.”
## Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

Some participants expressed that in order to have a solid connection with stakeholders, the new Superintendent must be a Denver resident. Some said that the most effective leader will be one who is engaged in the community and knowledgeable about priority issues.

A few added that it’s important the Superintendent does not have conflicts of interest, especially with entities that have financed Board elections and charter schools. Participants advocated for financial transparency. “We want a transformer, not a reformer.”

Some participants said they want a Superintendent who ensures there are quality neighborhood schools across the district, citing that there are too many school closures in the area and that the opportunities for students are limited. “School choice is not a solution to failing schools. Low-income families have difficulty accessing choice schools. Their first choice should be the ability to walk to quality neighborhood schools.”

Some said that it is important for a Superintendent to focus on the desegregation of public schools while also making a proactive effort to close the opportunity gap. In order to close this gap, a few suggested implementing higher salaries for teachers so they feel more valued and can continue teaching in the district.

“The Superintendent needs to be an educator who has been in a classroom, understands educational philosophy, developmentally appropriate teaching, and is transparent.”

## Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. The following excerpts and observations were shared during this forum’s open mic.

Some participants emphasized that the Superintendent must value immigrants and must continue to welcome immigrants as teachers and students. “We want a Superintendent who values inclusion.”

Some emphasized the importance of the Superintendent having prior experience as an educator in public schools.

Participants stressed that they do not want a Superintendent who uses a corporate approach to managing the school district but rather, values transparency and brings students, teachers, and parents together. “We need a collaborator, not a competitor.”

Several individuals voiced their desire for a Superintendent who is willing to sit across from students, teachers, and community members and value their input rather than cater to outside entities.

Some individuals, who identified themselves as DCTA representatives, stated that they want to be included in the process for selecting the next Superintendent.

A few individuals expressed concern in regards to the timeline for selecting the next Superintendent, saying it is too fast and has created a “false sense of urgency.”

Some present said they want a Superintendent who will address the positive and negative impacts of school choice. “Strategies that are happening at public charter schools need to be shared so we are not competing for students.”
Most participants discussed the pressing need for a Superintendent who has experience working with a wide range of diverse communities, which must encompass various socioeconomic statuses, languages, and learning abilities, to name a few. Many expressed a desire for this leader to have experience with another urban, inner city population that is similar to Denver. A few said they also want the Superintendent to have experience with rural districts. “Denver is diverse, so it’s important to understand the landscape.”

Some present advocated for a leader who understands restorative justice and is willing to critically examine practices which alienate or unfairly target minority students. More specifically, participants said they want someone who understands black, brown, indigenous, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Many participants said they want a Superintendent who will be more responsive to the needs of non-English speaking students. Some suggested putting a greater emphasis on English Language Learning and incorporating more programs for students and families. “People have said, ‘You’re here. Speak English.’ That shouldn’t be tolerated.”

“Schools should be welcoming if we are Muslim, refugee, immigrant, or Latino. We want to be accepted.”

Some participants stressed the importance of bringing on a Superintendent who prioritizes the hiring and retention of teachers and administrators of color and others who are able to mirror the diversity comprising the student population. Some advocated for a Superintendent who is a person of color. “The next Superintendent must look at everyone in every school - look at their staff - and see if they have diverse teachers, people in the schools that look like the children in those schools.”
Experience with Diverse Communities Continued

Some present said it is important for the incoming Superintendent to interact with the community and genuinely seek to understand the needs of such a diverse district while exercising empathy along the way. A few added that the Superintendent must understand the opportunity gap and actively seek to close the gap and hold schools, administrators, and the Board accountable for ongoing gaps. “This person needs to engage the community in an authentic manner, rather than leading from the top down. They need to be able to adapt to the communities.”

Teaching and Administrative Experience

Many participants felt strongly that the incoming Superintendent must have prior experience in the classroom and several were adamant that the school district cannot be run by someone from the business world. “Education is not a business and you cannot run it like a business.” A few were open to a Superintendent with prior experience in the business world but whose primary experience comes from the classroom.

Some present emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who has had substantial experience as an educator - especially in urban classrooms - so that they are able to emotionally connect to both students and teachers and have an informed perspective in regards to issues facing educators.

“The leader should truly understand the walk of the teacher and honor and respect them. We’re losing talent because our teachers are underpaid, which connects to a national trend of people leaving the teaching profession.”

Some participants said the Superintendent must send their own kids to DPS schools, as an indicator that they are invested in the success of the district.

A few participants emphasized the importance of hiring someone with a track record of turning around a failed system and who is committed to working collaboratively to find more money for the schools that need it most. Some noted the importance of a leader who has experience in traditional schools, rather than charter schools, and who does not have ties to DFER.

Ultimately, most participants agreed that the incoming Superintendent must be someone who puts the needs of students and teachers first and fights for the needs of students. “They must come in and engage students and show that they want to make it better.”
Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

Some participants expressed their strong desire for a Superintendent who will prioritize the emotional and mental health of students, specifically by committing to the aggressive hiring of social workers and therapists to relieve the stress and pressure students face, particularly in regards to suicide and school shootings. “We have more police officers in our school than counselors.”

Some emphasized the significance of a Superintendent who prioritizes the “whole child” by providing more funding and training to support students. More specifically, a few present advocated for the Superintendent to focus on hiring more teachers of color to occupy leadership roles so they can better represent and connect with the diverse body of students in their schools.

Additionally, some participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who has a plan to implement inclusivity and diversity initiatives, especially when it comes to providing resources for immigrants and non-English speaking families.

Some advocated for “personalized learning” plans to meet students where they are rather than relying on test results to inform school performance. “I’m worried that the high income students will bring test scores up and we’ll miss or mask a gap that continues to exist. We need to address the opportunity and achievement gap.”

Furthermore, some present said they would like to see quality schools in every neighborhood that are equitable for all students—regardless of whether they attend traditional or charter schools. “Every student should graduate high school with a basic education that allows them to get a job, join the military, and access college.”

Finally, some participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who can engage a diverse group of stakeholders and community members while effectively communicating in a transparent manner regarding important issues affecting the district. “Trust and truth are high priorities. You cannot succeed if you don’t tell the truth and gain the people’s trust.”

Open Mic Feedback

Some present emphasized the importance of considering community feedback throughout the selection process and stressed the need for transparency throughout the process. “There’s a big rush to replace the Superintendent. The district ran well without a Superintendent when he was on sabbatical and we can do it again.”

A representative from the Student Board of Education urged decision makers to involve “student voice” in the selection process, especially since students know firsthand what issues are contributing to the opportunity gap. “When we finalize candidates, [it’s imperative] that student board members interview candidates. We have a better sense of who is the right leader for our schools.”

Some said that former experience as an educator in public schools is a non-negotiable requirement for the incoming Superintendent.

Some stressed the importance of a leader who will prioritize the inclusion and representation of students, parents, and teachers in the decisions that affect the community and district.

Participants voiced their strong preference for a Superintendent who commits to high-quality neighborhood schools that are accessible to all students and staffed by qualified, licensed teachers in every classroom. “The district is not successful unless every child is successful and has a well-rounded education.”

“The Superintendent must value collaboration over competition and restorative justice over punishment.”

Many present expressed a strong desire for the Board to be transparent and effectively communicate the anticipated Superintendent selection timeline as well as how the community can be involved in each phase for the duration of the selection process.
Overall, a majority of the community indicated a strong preference for a “culturally authentic” leader who has demonstrated substantial experience with an understanding of a wide range of diverse communities, including - but not limited to - single-parent families, same-sex parents, families with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, families of color, and students with a diversity of learning styles.

Furthermore, many participants at this forum expressed the importance of a Superintendent who prioritizes the hiring of teachers of color who can better engage “culturally sensitive” topics and better represent a diverse body of students. Community members also advocated for increasing the salary of teachers so they are able to stay in the district, in spite of the increased cost of living.

“We need teachers who look like us, understand our heritage, will celebrate with us, connect with us.”

Several present emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who is willing to listen to the many voices of the community and engage diversity within the community by taking a collaborative, “hands on” approach to leadership and exhibiting a willingness to “roll up his/her sleeves and get involved.”

Some said that in order to engage the community most effectively, the Superintendent must know Denver’s community history, as well as understand the impact institutionalized racism has had and continues to have within the district.

Additionally, some community members emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who can distinguish between equity and equality and who is committed to “untangling” issues which impede equity, such as “the issue of why teachers of color are leaving so fast.”

Some community members said the incoming Superintendent must have a plan for addressing the district’s achievement gap and for distributing resources equitably across the district rather than penalizing underperforming schools that need additional resources the most.
Teaching and Administrative Experience

Most participants agreed that the incoming Superintendent must have substantial prior experience both in the classroom and as an administrator so they are adequately acquainted with the diverse needs of both teachers and students and are prepared to meet those needs. “Their vision and voice will be better received if it comes from a place of experience.”

Some present said they also want a Superintendent who has prior experience working within a large, urban district with a diverse student population. Additionally, some commented that it is important for the Superintendent to adopt a mindset of continual growth and learning and to choose a solid team who will fill gaps in regards to prior knowledge and experience.

A few stressed the importance of a Superintendent who lives in the district and sends their own child to a DPS school in order to demonstrate their own investment in the community and commitment to the district’s success. “What kind of message does it send if you don’t think DPS is good enough for your own children?”

Some emphasized that the Superintendent must be passionate about education and able to effectively understand and address the issues students and teachers face across the district, including, but not limited to, teacher burnout and vacancies, discrimination and racism, and depression among students.

“We need support at school, especially with challenges like depression. We need to feel a connection with our teachers.”

Furthermore, a few participants insisted that the Superintendent must be committed to recruiting and retaining teachers of color and that they must understand the history of institutionalized racism within DPS.

Finally, a few participants were adamant that the Superintendent commits to including the community in district plans and is willing to meet with and engage community members moving forward. A few even suggested the Superintendent should plan to spend time in classrooms throughout the district in order to connect with both students and teachers.
Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

In regards to prioritizing the issues facing the district, participants indicated three major areas which demand the Superintendent’s focus: (a) addressing the achievement gap, (b) creating equitable systems and distribution of resources, (c) prioritizing community voices and involvement.

Many community members expressed a strong preference for a Superintendent who will “work with the community rather than for them.” They said that the Superintendent must be willing to communicate with the community “at all levels” - including students and teachers - in an authentic manner to unite divide communities.

Additionally, several participants said that the Superintendent must prioritize closing the achievement gap, especially for students of color, by addressing teacher shortages, providing funding and supplemental resources to the schools that need the most assistance, and by re-evaluating metrics for school performance so that underperforming schools are neither punished nor alienated.

Some participants expressed the desire for trauma-informed interventions within the district which prioritize the social and emotional well-being of students while meeting the needs of the “whole child.”

Furthermore, some community members said that the lack of resources for schools has led to an inequitable system and has increased the achievement gap by leaving behind smaller, low-income schools.

“My college opportunities are going down because I don’t have access to the classes I need to take.”

“Our teacher has six classes. She can’t keep up with the teaching loads.”

Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. The following excerpts and observations were shared during this forum’s open mic.

Students represented a little over a fourth of forum participants, and many voiced their preference for a Superintendent who actively engages with students. “The Superintendent needs to genuinely care about the community and its students and have a passion for their job.”

One student urged the incoming Superintendent to examine the underlying cause of frequent teacher turnover throughout the district and simultaneously examine and reallocate the budget so it will accommodate teachers who are limited by their income.

A student expressed their desire for the Superintendent to focus on improving every school in the district so that “each school in every neighborhood is a school where parents want to send their kids.”

A few participants voiced their preference for a Superintendent who knows how to navigate trauma in schools and can lead in an environment where trauma is prevalent.

One participant stressed the importance of a leader who demonstrates a commitment to diversity by recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color.

One participant identified institutional racism as the most significant factor affecting DPS and said that unless a Superintendent addresses it head-on, the district will not succeed.
Most participants said it is imperative for an incoming Superintendent to have substantial prior experience working with a wide range of people from diverse backgrounds - including people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with different learning abilities, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with non-traditional family types, and refugee communities, to name some examples.

Additionally, some participants said it is important for the incoming Superintendent’s work history to demonstrate a track record of them working with, hiring, and managing diverse communities as well as implementing programs to help diverse, underrepresented communities. “It is extremely important for them to have proven experience engaging various diverse communities.”

Several said they would like for the Superintendent to be a person of color, so they can better understand the experiences of students of color. A few added that they want the Superintendent to be bilingual so they can better engage community members whose primary language is one other than English.

A few participants strongly advocated for a Superintendent who will prioritize the hiring of teachers and staff of color. “Our children need to be able to see people who look like them, speak like them, and understand their culture. It’s important we see diversity in staff, teachers, food nutrition service workers, teacher assistants, - everyone everywhere.”

Many participants strongly emphasized the significance of hiring someone who is willing to listen to and learn about the needs and priorities outlined by the diverse DPS community. Participants said they want a leader who will give community members “a seat at the table” and collaborate when it comes to important discussions and decisions. Suggestions to promote this atmosphere included creating a “listening tour” for candidates to hear community voices during the Superintendent selection process and also, conducting more community forums once the Superintendent is in place.
Experience with Diverse Communities Continued

Several participants addressed the choice system and said they need a Superintendent who acknowledges and works to repair the inequities created by the choice system. “These school models put a band-aid on a larger wound. The choice system only works for those able to use it. It does not solve the lack of wrap-around services or lack of equity.”

A few expressed the desire for a Superintendent who will introduce more mental health resources to schools to better equip students for success. “Kids are bringing more social-emotional problems into the classroom.”

Teaching and Administrative Experience

Most participants said the Superintendent must have experience as a teacher in the classroom so they can better understand the demands placed on teachers as well as understand the struggles and complexities of the student experience.

Many present advocated for a Superintendent who will be visible to the community and involved in the schools. Some recommended the Superintendent visit schools and interact with the students and teachers on a regular basis. “Let the kids see you. Serve lunch, ride the bus - it’s the little things you can do that make a huge impact.”

Many emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will choose a team of highly qualified people who each have different specialties that help meet the needs of the district. Many participants added that the Superintendent must already have proven experience managing a large system as well as the ability to delegate to team members effectively.

Some present said they want a Superintendent who is, first and foremost, an educator who puts teachers and students first. A few added that the Superintendent should value “collaboration over competition” and should not be primarily a “business person.” “We are losing the human aspect because of how the district is run like a business. Do not plunder our education interests for business interests.”

Some participants said they want a “transformer” who will fight for equity in every school and allocate the budget accordingly so that those with fewer resources are adequately equipped for success. “Our schools in the far northeast are very poor compared to other schools. That’s an equity issue. For me, equity is ensuring that every school is getting their met needs. A Superintendent needs to understand our issues and make a change.”

Some participants preferred for the Superintendent to have prior experience managing a budget, while other said those skills could be learned on the job. A few advocated for a Superintendent who empowers schools to be autonomous over their budgets.
Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

Many participants stressed the need for equity across the district so that every student can experience best practices in teaching and learning and each community within the district can thrive. Some participants named school choice as one example of an inequitable system that does not support students district-wide, especially because low-income families and those with transportation issues do not actually have the privilege of choice. “Choice only works for those who can afford it.”

Several participants advocated for a Superintendent who is devoted to policies and efforts which prioritize the restoration of quality neighborhood schools throughout the district that are adequately equipped with supportive resources. Some said they want a Superintendent who will audit the budget thoroughly and put more money towards neighborhood schools. “Bring back neighborhood schools. I believe very heavily in being able to walk to school. They are splitting communities where our children can go to school.”

Some participants advocated for a Superintendent who will incorporate more wrap-around services for students. More specifically, they advocated for mental health services and the incorporation of multicultural education and curriculum. “We need educators who care for kids - not just about their education - and can be emotionally available and supportive.”

A few indicated a preference for social-emotional support in schools as opposed to more school resource officers who may be contributing to the “preschool to prison pipeline.”

Some participants said they want a Superintendent who will put an end to co-location. A few said that prioritizing smaller class sizes is also important so that teachers can better connect with their students. “Putting five schools within one building is not okay.”

Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. The following excerpts and observations were shared during this forum’s open mic.

Some individuals were agitated by the length of the search process and demanded for the timeline to be extended. A few cited Jeffco’s timeline of seven months to choose a Superintendent and Douglas County’s year-and-a-half process of choosing an African American representative.

Some present argued that the Superintendent search process has been “district-led” rather than community driven, adding that the Board has failed to engage the community’s needs. For example, the “community manifesto” was not addressed in the forum unless community members brought it up.

Participants added that the community should be involved in the vetting, interviewing, and selection process of the candidates. “I do not believe the Board has the experience to conduct this process.”

A few stressed the importance of student involvement in the process and bemoaned the absence of students at the forum. A few expressed concern over what is happening within DPS and said some students continue to be failed by the system. They stated that addressing these failures is of utmost importance.

An individual asked whether or not the community will continue to be engaged in discussions and decisions in the future and asked for clarification regarding what engagement between the Superintendent, School Board, and community will look like moving forward.
FORUM 6
HIAWATHA RECREATION CENTER

Emergent Themes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience with Diverse Communities</th>
<th>28%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Administrative Experience</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS</td>
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Those surveyed could choose between:
- Teaching and Administrative Experience Content
- Experience With Diverse Communities Content
- Budget, Policy, and Administrative Skills Content
- Experience Using Data Content
- Ability to Engage Multiple Stakeholders
- Prioritization of Issues Facing Denver Public Schools

*Due to technological failure, the specific demographics of this community forum were, regrettably, not captured

Experience with Diverse Communities

Most participants expressed their desire for a Superintendent who has substantial personal experience with diversity and a proven track record of positively engaging with several diverse communities. Several indicated their preference for a person of color in the role of Superintendent. “There is a difference between empathy and lived experience and you can’t trade one for another. Students of color need leaders who look like them and are relatable.”

Several present said they want a Superintendent who is able to connect with students from all walks of life who embody all types of diversity, including family composition, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, various learning styles, religion, race/ethnicity, and immigrant or undocumented status, to name a few.

Several participants advocated for a leader who is comfortable communicating with such a diverse community because of substantial previous engagement. “Diversity must seep into every aspect of the Superintendent’s life.”

Some said they want a Superintendent who will build a strong, diverse team with a variety of experiences and abilities and who will also commit to hiring and retaining a diverse talent pool throughout the district.

A few participants were adamant that the Superintendent must live in the district and send their kids to DPS in order to demonstrate their personal investment in the success of the district.

September 25th, 2018 — 22 participants
Most participants agreed that having prior experience in the classroom is imperative for an incoming Superintendent, adding that they must know how to manage kids and understand the needs and complexities of such a diverse school district. “The Superintendent needs to be able to implement what they are asking the teachers to do.”

While most participants agreed that administrative experience would also be helpful, a few said gaps in administrative experience could be filled by a knowledgeable and experienced leadership team. Some said they prefer the Superintendent to have more education than corporate experience. “They must know about budgets, policies, and politics, but cannot be a corporate leader only.”

Some said they want a Superintendent who is able to relate to the experiences of students - particularly black and brown students, low-income students, and historically marginalized and oppressed communities - and who is committed to ensuring the culture of these students is reflected in the classroom. “If students can see themselves reflected in books, in teachers, in leadership, then their success rates are going to be a lot higher than the status quo.”

Many said it is important for them to have a Superintendent who prioritizes the needs of teachers and tackles issues such as teacher burnout, isolation, overbearing workloads, and inadequate resources.
Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

Several participants said they want a Superintendent who will focus on closing the achievement gap, specifically by reassessing the school performance framework and bringing more resources into schools with high populations of free and reduced lunch students and students of color. “We have to define school achievement. Let’s talk about all of the other indicators rather than just one indicator. The performance of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds is woeful.”

Many present said the Superintendent needs to focus on making the school choice system “equitable for all.” “Equity does not mean equal. Funding needs to prioritize equity. That means more resources and more teachers, especially where we have more students who are on free and reduced lunch.”

Some participants added that the “choice” system has led to a segregated district, especially when low-income families cannot arrange transportation out of their neighborhood to attend a “choice” school. “We have parents getting up at 3:30am to get their kids to school by 7:00am.”

Some present emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will diversify faculty and staff by hiring people who “look more like the students they are teaching” so students have relatable role models and can better connect with teachers and administrators. A few also pushed for smaller classroom sizes and the hiring of more teachers so students can maintain continuity in classrooms.

Some participants expressed their desire for a Superintendent who will implement a plan to take care of the “whole child” and equip schools with the resources to ensure students succeed. For example, some suggested bolstering arts and humanities programs, increasing mental health programs and accessibility, and creating more bilingual education programs. “A sup who doesn’t invest in the arts and humanities is not someone I want to see sitting in that chair.”

Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. At this forum, although an open mic was offered, there were no participants who provided concluding feedback.
Most participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who prioritizes diversity and inclusion and who has prior experience engaging a wide range of diverse communities. Participants added that the Superintendent’s past success should not be measured by test scores alone. “Did the community feel supported by this person? Did they feel understood and listened to? Were the programs they created successful and sustainable?”

Many participants said it is important that the Superintendent prioritizes the hiring of diverse faculty and staff so that students are adequately represented and better able to identify with and connect to their teachers.

Additionally, several participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who exhibits cultural awareness and is committed to creating an environment of cultural sensitivity within schools. A few said this shift should impact curriculum, since some cultures are not reflected in textbooks. “We are a global society and to be able to understand, accept, and work with all walks of life is important. Whoever comes into the Superintendent role will need to do that.”

Several participants urged the new Superintendent to consider immigrant, refugee, and non-English speaking families and equip each school with interpreter services to help bridge the gaps for non-English speaking families. “We don’t receive textbooks in our language. Parents need help.”

Some participants said that in spite of all of the diversity in Denver - socioeconomic, race, family composition - kids are getting left behind because they do not feel like they “fit in.”

A few participants stressed the importance of a Superintendent who will examine the ways in which students are being left behind when considering the ramifications of school choice. “School choice sounds great in theory, but a lot of people do not have access to it due to transportation issues and other complications.”

September 26th, 2018 — 57 participants
Experience with Diverse Communities Continued

A few participants insisted that the Superintendent should be a person of color while others agreed that - regardless of race - minimally, the Superintendent must demonstrate an awareness of the systemic, generational concerns that accompany minority communities and must be fiercely dedicated to advocating for minority communities.

A few said they want the incoming Superintendent to involve the community in conversations regarding what is happening in the district. “The Superintendent needs to listen to diverse perspectives and hire diverse leaders. They should hold forums and be frank about the answers and the discussion.”

Teaching and Administrative Experience

Most participants agreed that it is imperative for the Superintendent to have previous experience as a classroom educator so they understand the challenges educators face and are able to empathize with teachers and students. Some present said they would prefer a Superintendent who was in the classroom for “an extended period of time.”

Many participants said they would prefer the Superintendent to have administrative experience as well, specifically, past experience working in a large, urban district. Some said prior experience managing a large budget is highly important. “The Superintendent needs to have experience running a large institution and a great track record of success. For example, how were the people who worked for them affected by decisions?”

Some emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will take a collaborative approach and engage the community in “authentic conversation.” A few suggested that the Superintendent should host community meetings that promote open dialogue in order to “take the pulse” of stakeholders in the room. “It’s a red flag if someone says they have all the answers. To understand the problem, you need to have experience with the issues. We need a Superintendent who listens and can turn problems into solutions.”
Several participants voiced their concerns with the district’s inability to effectively communicate with refugee, immigrant, and non-English speaking families. Some suggested allocating funding for translation services so parents and families can call their child’s school and ask questions, have the ability to understand and engage content at school meetings, and communicate with their child’s teacher at conferences.

“As parents, we don’t speak or read English well, so when there is a problem, we don’t understand and can’t help our child. When there is a school meeting, they don’t ask if we need translators. When our kids get a low grade, the teacher talks to us, but we don’t understand.”

Many present discussed the importance of a Superintendent who will re-evaluate the choice system and focus more attention on bringing high-quality schools to every neighborhood. Some brought up the obstacles created by lack of transportation and said school choice is only available to those with the resources to commute to their school of choice. A few brought up how the choice system contributes to segregation in the district.

“The choice system is only benefitting the few, not the whole. We need a balance of quality neighborhood options that do not lead to segregation in the neighborhoods. For example, out of 60 kids, only four went to the neighborhood middle school. The Superintendent needs to look at this system so it doesn’t create more problems or push kids out of the neighborhood.”

Many participants emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will distribute school resources equitably and address the disparity between schools. “Right now, smaller schools do not have course offerings in DPS because they are so small. For example, Lincoln is co-located with three separate schools, so they do not have the same elective choices as students at South and East.”

Some suggested re-allocating the budget so that more money flows into classrooms and into teacher paychecks rather than going into “bloated administration” at the building level. A few advocated for greater budget transparency.

Some participants emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will prioritize the implementation of college readiness and apprentice programs to equip students with real-world skills and prepare them for life beyond high school.
Most participants said that cultivating diverse representation among educators is an “urgent” issue that the Superintendent must understand and address. Participants emphasized the importance of hiring teachers and principals who can better relate to the students they serve. “Students need to see teachers that look like them.”

Several present said it is imperative that the Superintendent has had prior experience and success working in a similar community as DPS - a large district with a wide range of diversity. “The Superintendent must be culturally responsive to all races and cultures. They should care about all the residents in the community and have a proven track record of being surrounded by a diversity of ideas.”

Most participants expressed that they do not like school choice because it does not work for every student, and want a Superintendent who has a plan of action to break down barriers and deconstruct “a dominant white culture of success.” “Neighborhood schools are not good for those who cannot choice out.”

Most participants expressed their high regard for a leader who has previously demonstrated effective communication with parents and families and has a robust understanding of different types of diversity within one community. For example, participants emphasized the importance of acknowledging non-traditional family structures, LGBTQ+ individuals, different races, and different learning styles.
Some participants said that a Superintendent must have experience as both an educator and administrator, emphasizing the significance of time spent in the classroom. “There is definitely an advantage to being a teacher and knowing what families are going through.”

Some present said that while they are not tied to the Superintendent having previous classroom experience, they do want the Superintendent to have had experience with students and families in some capacity. A few expressed openness to a leader who has had past experience in the private sector but who is fiercely dedicated to DPS and is not a reformer or someone affiliated directly with charter schools or like organizations.

“The Superintendent must be committed to all the schools and must know what it takes to support a teacher in the classroom. They must also understand principals.”

Some expressed the desire for a Superintendent who has a proven track record of reducing overhead and increasing resources for schools as well as a commitment to every student—not only those who test well. “The new Superintendent must have the mindset that there are no failing schools—only failures when the administration and Board have failed the school.”

Some participants agreed that engagement and transparency with the community is vital and that the Superintendent must actively engage parents, teachers, and students. Participants also said they want a Superintendent who will understand the complexities of running a large school district and who is not afraid to hold schools and their leadership accountable, especially when it comes to creating a plan to engage both neighborhood and charter schools.
Prioritization of Issues Facing DPS

Most participants said the Superintendent must focus on closing the achievement gap and examining the factors that create gaps throughout the district. Specifically, those present emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who will commit to re-evaluating the school performance framework, especially in regards to the color-coding of schools and the resources allocated accordingly. “Our school went from red status to green in a year but still remains the worst school in the area. We still need resources even when the school turns around.”

Some present strongly advocated for a Superintendent who will focus on creating more equitable resources and services for all schools, not just for those that are hitting benchmarks for success. Some emphasized the need for the inclusion of social-emotional programs to assist students who have experienced trauma and need additional mental health support.

Most present discussed their distrust of the choice system, saying that it further divides communities and is contributing to segregation across the district. They expressed a strong desire for a Superintendent who will vigorously address the issue of neighborhood school closures while also working diligently to raise the teacher retention rate. “Teachers feel defeated and it all comes down to test scores no matter what they do. Our students need experienced teachers.”

Some participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing college readiness programs and other courses to prepare students for “real life” after high school, such as consumer classes, financial planning, and home economics. A few also recommended implementing mentoring programs for students.

A few participants said they notice significant inequity in regards to ELL programs and want a Superintendent who will focus on providing adequate resources for ELL students and their families. Others noted the ways in which institutionalized racism is embedded into DPS and - at times - agitated by gentrification across the district, and implored the Superintendent to acknowledge and address these issues.

A few said that the incoming Superintendent must be willing to address tax policy as well as the ways in which under-enrollment impacts the budget. “We need more strategies to get schools the resources they need.”

Open Mic Feedback

At each forum, participants were given the opportunity to provide concluding feedback in regards to topics not covered under the umbrella of the three emergent themes. The following excerpts and observations were shared during this forum’s open mic.

An individual expressed frustration and concern over the interim Superintendent selection process and directly appealed to the Board members for transparency and accountability in the process moving forward. “The interim Superintendent selected, Ron Cabrera, was fired from another school district. This is the third person the Board has hired and the Board is not doing their due diligence.”

Two individuals expressed their endorsement for a specific individual, Susana Cordova, for the Superintendent position. One said he would be “remiss” if he did not voice his support.
A few participants agreed that the Superintendent must prioritize the recruitment of people of color from “every background” to fill classrooms and administrator roles in order to better represent the district’s diverse student population. “It’s important that our students see themselves in our educators and are represented by staff.”

Several participants said the Superintendent must be able to understand and identify with several communities - not just those similar to their own - and must have previously demonstrated success working with diverse populations. Participants emphasized that past experience in an urban district would be especially helpful. Additionally, participants said the Superintendent must recognize that diversity includes a variety of factors - such as family makeup, socioeconomic differences, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and race/ethnicity, to name a few.

Some said they would prefer for the Superintendent to be a person of color and a few said they would like for them to be bilingual, in order to better reflect the community. Others said the Superintendent must have previous experience with diverse communities and must demonstrate a commitment to authentically listening to the needs of the community, but that their race is not as important. “The new Superintendent doesn’t have to be a person of color to understand diversity and have sensitivity to a diverse population.”

A few said that the incoming Superintendent must prioritize cultural competencies in the classrooms while holding teachers and administrators accountable to the highest standards of success.

A few said having a Superintendent who is committed to creating equity throughout the district is imperative, especially in regards to the equitable distribution of resources. A few advocated for the inclusion of resources which “support the whole child,” such as more trauma-informed resources, psychologists, and gifted/talented professionals.
Teaching and Administrative Experience

Most participants agreed that the Superintendent needs a combination of both classroom teaching experience and administration experience so they are better able to empathize with the experiences of students and teachers. A few said they would prefer for the Superintendent to have 5-10 years of classroom experience. A few others said they are not tied to past classroom experience, but would like the Superintendent to be someone who has spent a significant amount of time working with children and families.

Some present said they would like a Superintendent who prioritizes visibility and accessibility and engages both with the community and also with the schools. A few suggested the Superintendent regularly volunteer in schools “undercover” in order to interact with students and teachers and learn about their needs in an informal manner, rather than as a “publicity stunt.”

Some acknowledged the importance of a Superintendent who chooses a strong team of experts and is equipped with strong listening skills and people skills. Participants added that it is important for the Superintendent to know how to delegate responsibilities.

A few said that prior experience running a district or institution similar to Denver is important for an incoming Superintendent to already have under their belt. Some said the Superintendent must be able to acknowledge the positive and negative impacts of charter schools on the district and is committing to working towards successful school models.
Most participants expressed the importance of a Superintendent who will address the inequity of resources across the district as well as understand the challenges each community is facing. A few mentioned the importance of re-allocating the budget so each school can fund its teachers while also having access to equitable resources. “Every child deserves an impeccable education. Black and brown communities are without resources.”

A few present said the Superintendent needs to acknowledge that the schools have become increasingly segregated and then work to re-integrate schools. “We need to get back to diverse settings for schools because children thrive more in an integrated setting.”

Many participants said they want a Superintendent who exercises transparency with the community and is committed to more direct communication that is solution-oriented rather than conflict avoidant. “I want a Superintendent who will come in and fix problems - not hide them.”

Some participants said they want the incoming Superintendent to have a prior understanding of the community landscape as well as the challenges faced by DPS families. According to many present, some of those challenges are in regards to the inequities created by school choice, particularly in regards to transportation barriers which keep several families from accessing their school of choice. “School choice is not equitable right now. Is ‘choice’ actually a choice if you can’t get your kids to the school?”

Some brought up concerns in regards to the closure of neighborhood schools and the high percentage of charter schools in the district and emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who ensures there are quality schools in every neighborhood. “The amount of traditional neighborhood school closures is alarming. Montbello has been ‘repurposed.’ We don’t have any choices in my neighborhood.”

A few expressed the desire for a Superintendent who prioritizes technical and college prep programs in schools in order to equip students for success beyond high school. Additionally, a few participants said schools must focus on “whole child support” by offering more challenging classes to support a variety of learning abilities, spending more money on mental health resources rather than SROs, and implementing restorative justice practices in schools.
Our research process began with a series of community events that allowed our team to collect the voices of members of the Denver community who participated in a series of nine meetings focused on identifying the most important characteristics the future leader of Denver Public Schools should have, as well as their prioritization of the issues that leader should prioritize when considering the school district. This data was collected through a brief survey administered through smart-phones of participants to allow the most user-friendly approach to collect voices from the community. The survey was administered following a focus group discussion facilitated by our team that allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected.

Below is a list of each meeting.

9-11-18  – Forum 1 Denver School of the Arts  – 63 Participants
9-12-18  – Forum 2 George Washington  – 6 Participants
9-13-18  – Forum 3 Thomas Jefferson  – 17 Participants
9-18-18  – Forum 4 Evie Garret Dennis Campus  – 93 Participants
9-22-18  – Forum 5 Montbello Recreation Center  – 17 Participants
9-25-18  – Forum 6 Hiawattha Davis Jr Recreation Center  – 22 Participants
9-26-18  – Forum 7 South High School  – 28 Participants
9-27-18  – Forum 8 West High School  – 6 Participants
9-29-18  – Forum 9 North High School  – 9 Participants

Overall we had 239 participants across the nine separate meetings that took place from 9/11/18 to 9/29/18. Given that each of these meetings was held in different areas of Denver, we collected demographic information of participants to help assess whether responses to the content of our survey varied in any meaningful ways from meeting to meeting. We present the demographic profile of each meeting to give some perspective on who we touched through this process and have cut the data by meeting to assess areas where there is consensus across the city regarding what they want in their next school Superintendent, and where we see important variation.
**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

The community forum surveys included some demographic information from participants of the community forums to allow our team to track the gender, race/ethnicity, and type of constituent each participant was in relation to the Denver Public School System. As reflected in the tables below, we heard primarily from parents across these forums, as 54.0% of all participants indicated that their primary engagement with DPS was as a parent. The forum participants were mostly female. In regard to race and ethnicity, 49.1% of participants were White, compared to 15.2% African American, 15.0% Hispanic, 6.2% Native American/American Indian, and 5.5% Asian American. The remaining 9.0% chose to identify as “other” on this question.

![Table 1A: Demographic Profile of Participants Across all Meetings – Community Forum Surveys](image)

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS - MAIN FINDINGS**

**Closing the Academic Achievement and Opportunity Gap is a Top Priority to Denver Residents**

One of the major themes that emerged from the survey data collected during the community meetings across the city was the high importance the public has in ensuring the next Superintendent prioritizes closing the “academic achievement and opportunity gap here in Denver based on race, ethnicity and income level”. As reflected in figure 2A below, when asked to rate the importance of this issue alongside others on a scale of 1-10, closing the achievement and opportunity gap was scored the highest (mean of 9.1) relative to other issues we surveyed. Although this was identified as highly important across all meetings, with no group scoring closing the achievement gap lower than 8.6, meeting 9 at North High School was particularly high on this dimension with a mean of 9.6.

![Figure 2A: Chart showing closing the academic achievement and opportunity gap](image)

When we followed up with participants and asked them to prioritize what was “their most important issue when considering who the next Superintendent should be”, closing the academic achievement gap was rated the most important by 44.9% of all participants across meetings, again higher than any other issue (see figure 2B on the next page). In fact, there is a significant 21% gap between closing the achievement and opportunity gap and the next highest priority, “implementing a budget process that gives transparent and open opportunity for community input”, which was rated as the most important issue by 21.9% of respondents.
Demand for a Leader Who Promotes Diversity and a Positive Climate Across the District

The survey also asked respondents to rate a number of personal qualities they would like to see in their next education leader in the district on a scale of 1-10, as well as asking respondents to identify the importance they place on several professional experiences candidates for the Superintendent position may have. The highest rated of these qualities was a “leader who has the ability to ensure that all students in our district, regardless of their skill level, will have a positive experience in our schools”, with a mean of 9 across all groups on the 1-10 scale.

The survey also reveals that there is high support across the city of Denver for a leader who has a commitment to diversity and inclusion. For example, the second highest rated quality was a “leader who has demonstrated experience increasing the diversity of the staff of the organizations they have led” (mean of 8.5), when we aggregated the results across all groups. The importance of diversity to the public is reinforced by nearly all participants indicating that it is important that “our next leader has a high value for diversity, equity and inclusion and has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that Denver’s teachers and school leadership reflect the demographics of our community”. In fact, 85% of all participants indicated that this was very important to them. There was also consensus across all participants that the next leader of Denver’s Public Schools has “experience leading school districts with student bodies that are similar to Denver in their demographic profile.”

The community therefore supports a leader who not only supports diversity and inclusion, but who will create a leadership team and overall staff whose demographics will reflect the rich diversity of the City of Denver.
The Public Wants a Leader Who Has Both Teaching and Administrative Experience

The survey had multiple items to help provide insights on the professional background the next Superintendent should have. The data suggests that the next Superintendent should have a balanced professional background with both teaching and administrative experience. When asked to rank how important having “a leader who has experienced in education as both a teacher and administrator” is on a scale from 1-10, the overall mean was 8.2 which is higher than several other qualities we tested in the survey. The importance of this leadership quality was consistent across the city, with a mean of 7.4 in meeting 7 and a high of 8.9 in meeting 5, as seen in figure 3A.

When asked to make a distinction of which of these two types of experiences was more important for education leadership, while most of the participants chose the response that both are equal (58%), there was a preference for teaching over administrative experience (26.7% vs. 15.3%). The final item asked respondents if they agreed with the statement, “it is impossible for someone to be a great school district Superintendent if they have not had deep experience in the classroom”. As depicted in figures 3B and 3C, approximately 72% of participants agreed (37% strongly). Taken collectively, the survey makes clear that the next Superintendent should have a teaching background to complement their administrative experience.
Not all Qualities or Priorities Were Defined as Important to the Public

The high levels of support for many of the items surveyed could give the impression that the public is supportive of all qualities and issues they were asked to evaluate. However, there were a number of items that did not generate as much importance or support across participants of the nine meetings. Given the discussions of expansion of schooling options for parents and their children across traditional neighborhood schools, and innovation and charter schools that are not directly tied to neighborhoods, the survey included this issue alongside others. When compared to these other issues or priorities, ensuring parents and children have choice across these options was not scored as highly by participants with a mean of 7 on the scale of 1-10 survey item. In fact, participants at the George Washington forum had a mean of only 5.6, the lowest mean score for any issue in any of the nine meetings (see figure 4A).

When we pushed respondents to choose which was the “most important issue when considering who the next Superintendent should be”, only 12.3% of all respondents selected ensuring that parents and their children have the ability to make choices on their school of choice across Denver’s traditional neighborhood schools, innovation and charter schools. Therefore, when considered alongside other issues the next leader of the district could tackle, this was not a high priority for Denver’s residents who attended these meetings.

Finally, a Superintendent who is themselves bilingual was not rated as a high priority across participants of these community meetings. Only 8.3% of participants identified “ensuring that every child living in Denver has access to early childhood education programs” as the most important issue the next leader should tackle, the lowest across the five priority areas respondents were asked to prioritize. This is consistent with the relatively low value (mean of 6.6 on 1-10 scale) participants placed on having an “education leader we choose as our next Superintendent here in Denver that is bilingual so that they can communicate effectively with our non-English speaking students and their families” (see figure 4B). While it is important to note that these numbers do not indicate that bilingualism is not important to Denver’s community, when put alongside other characteristics of an education leader and priorities for that leader to tackle in the district and bilingualism are not as salient to the public.
INTRODUCTION

Dimension Strategies and Latino Decisions conducted a survey of the general public from September 28, 2018 to October 12, 2018 regarding the Superintendent search and the District's prioritization of issues. DPS was responsible for promoting this survey to all stakeholders and the broader community. As a result, nearly 3,000 people completed the survey.

Dimension Strategies engaged Latino Decisions to help create the survey tool and analyze the data. It is important to note that this is a survey, not a poll. This means that none of the data is weighted to reflect the DPS student population, parent population, or the population of Denver as a whole. All of the data comes solely from the 2,977 individuals who completed the survey. The large pool of respondents allows us to examine the data from a variety of perspectives.

The topics for the survey originated from a couple of sources. The values statement from the School Board comprised the initial outline of issues covered by the survey. Furthermore, several issues were discussed at half a dozen community forums, and we relied partially on those conversations to inform the survey content.

The Community Forum Surveys and the General Community Survey can be distinguished from one another by a couple of key differences. First, the Community Forum Surveys were only available to participants of the nine community forums, which were hosted by Dimension Strategies, whereas the General Community Survey was a city-wide survey that was open to all interested community participants. Furthermore, the phrasing of some questions was altered for the General Community Survey based on input we received at the community forums. Additionally, a couple of questions were dropped from the survey for the same reason. Finally, we added some questions to the General Community Survey because, outside of the community forums, we could accommodate a longer, more in-depth survey due to the removal of time constraints.

Therefore, the following data and analyses represent the views, opinions, and priorities expressed by the community as well as the meaning community members attributed to key questions and prevailing themes.

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODS STATEMENT

Our research process began with a series of nine community forums, which were focused on identifying the most important characteristics of the future leader of Denver Public Schools as well as determining which issues the incoming leader should prioritize. Our team captured the voices of Denver community members across nine community forums through two methods: a focus group discussion and a brief survey. This survey was administered through participant smart-phones and supplementary tablets (provided) to allow the most user-friendly approach to collecting input from the community. The survey was administered following a focus group discussion facilitated by our team that allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected.
Below is a list of each forum, along with the number of individuals who participated in the table discussions as well as those who responded to the community forum survey.

9-11-18  – **Forum 1 Denver School of the Arts** – 79 Participants (28 Surveys)

9-12-18  – **Forum 2 George Washington High School** – 101 Participants (53 Surveys)

9-13-18  – **Forum 3 Thomas Jefferson High School** – 34 Participants (15 Surveys)

9-18-18  – **Forum 4 Evie Garrett Dennis Campus** – 153 Participants (59 Surveys)

9-22-18  – **Forum 5 Montbello Recreation Center** – 22 Participants (20 Surveys)

9-25-18  – **Forum 6 Hiawatha Davis Jr. Recreation Center** – 22 Participants (20 Surveys)

9-26-18  – **Forum 7 South High School** – 57 Participants (39 Surveys)

9-27-18  – **Forum 8 West High School** – 16 Participants (16 Surveys)

9-29-18  – **Forum 9 North High School** – 17 Participants (13 Surveys)

Overall, there were 501 participants in total and 263 survey respondents across nine separate forums, which took place between September 11th and September 29th, 2018. Given that each community forum was held in a different area of Denver, we collected the demographic information of participants to help assess whether responses to the content of our survey varied in any meaningful ways from forum to forum.

Throughout our report, we present the demographic profile of each community forum to offer context regarding which community members were involved in this process. Additionally, we cut the data by forum to assess areas in which there is consensus across the city regarding what participants want in their next school Superintendent, and also to note areas in which we see important variation.

**GENERAL COMMUNITY SURVEY**

The community forum surveys were followed up by a wider survey that extended across the city of Denver to provide a larger number of city residents the opportunity to submit their input about the next Superintendent of DPS. This survey, which was administered to the general public between September 28th and October 12th, 2018, resulted in 2,977 completed surveys. The large sample size of the general community survey allows for a more extensive analysis of variation in respondent attitudes across the key demographic factors we included in the survey. Similar to the community forum data, we present the demographics of the survey sample in order to provide some context for the overall survey. Additionally, we include data across key demographics in order to better assess where there is consensus across the city as well as where responses show important variation, regarding whether or not respondents feel as though the District is on the right track.
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF COMMUNITY MEETING PARTICIPANTS

The community forum surveys included some demographic information from participants of the community forums to allow our team to track the gender, race/ethnicity, and type of constituent each participant was in relation to the Denver Public School System. As reflected in figure 1A, we heard primarily from parents across these forums, as 54.0% of all participants indicated that their primary engagement with DPS was as a parent. The forum participants were mostly female. In regard to race and ethnicity, 49.1% of participants were White, compared to 15.2% African American, 15.0% Hispanic, 6.2% Native American/American Indian, and 5.5% Asian American. The remaining 9.0% chose to identify as “other” on this question.

Overall, the participants of the city-wide general community survey were similar to the demographics of the participants from the community forums. They demographic trends from the city-wide survey can be found in figure 1B below. Similar to the community forum surveys, the participants of the general community survey were largely female (76%), and roughly half of the survey respondents were parents or guardians of children in DPS. Furthermore, 28% were educators, and an equal percentage of students and school administrators participated in the survey. In regard to race and ethnicity, 64% of respondents were White, compared to 16% Hispanic, 7% Black/African American, and 3% Asian American. Only 1% of the sample was Native American/American Indian and 7% reported that they were of mixed-race.

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Figure 1A

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Figure 1B
SUMMARY OF RESULTS
MAIN FINDINGS FROM BOTH SURVEYS

The results from both the community forum surveys as well as the larger general community survey are synthesized in the following section. We have organized this discussion around major themes that emerged across both sets of results and have noted, when appropriate, where there was consistency across both surveys. Furthermore, we have drawn from the demographic questions to identify interesting sources of variation based on the demographic factors from which they emerged. Finally, a full set of topline results for the general community survey are included in the appendix of the report, along with cross-tabulations for each survey question, per survey, across the key demographic factors identified.

Is Denver Public Schools Heading in the Right Track or Wrong Direction?

One of the survey questions asked respondents to provide their assessment of whether the district is headed in the right or wrong direction. Responses to this question provide the incoming Superintendent with valuable input as to whether they should pursue reform or maintain the programming already in place. Additionally, survey data for this question provides the new leader with valuable information about the segments of their constituency who hold different perspectives about the state of the District.

As reflected in figure 2A below, the District is viewed positively across the community, as 63% of respondents chose “right track” on this question. However, more than a third (37%) of general survey participants feel that DPS is headed in the “wrong direction.” In this survey, we highlight areas in which attitudes vary significantly regarding both the issues community members want DPS to prioritize and the skills and the values community members want the incoming Superintendent to possess.

When we explore differences in how respondents view the state of the District, we see that there are some important distinctions across demographics. For example, educators were more likely to report that DPS is headed in the “wrong direction” than school administrators, who were the most positive in their assessment of the District than any other constituency group (see figure 2A). In regard to other demographic factors, Native Americans/American Indians have a much higher perception that the District is heading in the “wrong direction” (65%) than any other racial and ethnic group, and Spanish speakers are much more positive about the state of the District. More specifically, 86% of respondents who took the survey in Spanish indicated that they think the District is headed in the right direction.

Closing the Academic Achievement and Opportunity Gap is a Top Priority to Participants of the Community Forums

One of the major themes that emerged from the survey data collected across all nine community forums was ensuring the incoming Superintendent prioritizes closing the “achievement and opportunity gap in Denver based on race, ethnicity, and income level.” As reflected in figure 3A below, when asked to rate the importance of this issue alongside others on a scale of 1-10, participants scored “closing the achievement and opportunity gap” as the highest (mean of 9.1), relative to other issues surveyed. Although this issue was identified as “highly important” across all forums – with no group scoring “closing the achievement gap” lower than 8.6 – the final forum, which took place at North High School, rated the highest on this topic, with a mean of 9.6.
When we followed up with participants and asked them to prioritize “their most important issue when considering who the next Superintendent should be,” we discovered that “closing the academic achievement gap” was rated the most important by 44.9% of all participants across all nine forums. Once again, this issue was ranked higher than any other issue (see figure 3B). In fact, there is a significant 21% gap between “closing the academic achievement and opportunity gap” and the next highest priority, “implementing a district budgeting process that gives transparent and open opportunity for community input that prioritizes investment of resources on teacher salaries and direct service to students,” which was rated as the “most important” issue by 21.9% of respondents.

In summary, given that participants were highly consistent in (1) assigning importance to addressing the achievement and opportunity gap, (2) scoring this issue highest when asked to rate it on a scale, and (3) rating this issue as the highest priority when urged to prioritize issues, it is clear that addressing the achievement and opportunity gap should be a key consideration when evaluating Superintendent candidates.

**Demand for a Leader Who Promotes Diversity and a Positive Climate Across the District**

The survey also asked respondents from the community forums to rank which personal qualities and experiences they would like their next Superintendent to embody and additionally, asked respondents to identify which professional experiences are most important for Superintendent candidates to possess. The highest rated of these qualities was a “leader who has the ability to ensure that all students in our district, regardless of their skill level, will have a positive experience in our schools,” with a mean of 9 across all groups, on the 1-10 scale.

Both surveys also reveal high support across the city of Denver for a leader who is committed to diversity and inclusion. In fact, the second highest-rated quality of a Superintendent – according to community forum survey respondents – was a “leader who has demonstrated experience increasing the diversity of the staff of the organizations they have led” (mean of 8.5), when we aggregated the results across all groups.

The importance of diversity to the public is reinforced by nearly all participants of the community forum surveys, who indicated how important it is that “our next leader has a high value for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that Denver’s teachers and school leadership reflect the demographics of our community.” In fact, 85% of all participants to the community forum survey indicated that this issue was very important to them.

Participants in the general community-wide survey indicated an even stronger value for diversity and inclusion. For example, 93% of respondents believe that it is “important” that “our next leader has a high value for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that Denver’s teachers and school leadership reflect the demographics of our community,” with 68% noting it is “very important.”
The Public Wants a Leader Who Has Both Teaching and Administrative Experience

Both surveys include helpful feedback and insight as to the professional background community members believe the next Superintendent should have. The data suggests that the next Superintendent should have a balanced professional background, which includes both teaching and administrative experience. When community forum respondents were asked to rank how important it is to have a “Superintendent who has experience in schools or supporting schools as both an administrator and a teacher,” the overall mean was 8.2, on a scale from 1-10. Thus, this issue ranked higher than several other experiences we tested in the survey. The importance of this leadership quality was consistent across the city, with a mean of 7.4 in the seventh community forum and a high ranking of 8.9 in forum 5. This issue ranked even higher on the general community survey, with a mean of 8.75 (see figure 5A below).

When asked to distinguish between which of these two types of experience is more important for the next Superintendent to have, most of the community forum participants indicated that both experiences are equally important (58%), but beyond that response, there was a preference for teaching over administrative experience (26.7% vs. 15.3%), as indicated in figure 5B.

Finally, when asked to identify which of seven different experiences and skill-sets best define a strong Superintendent, 17% of the general community survey chose “experience leading school districts with student bodies that are similar to Denver in their demographic profile.” More specifically, 98% of community forum survey participants and 92% of the larger city-wide survey participants believe this experience is important for the next Superintendent to have.

When we examine the responses to this question by race, we see that all racial and ethnic minority communities have higher percentages in the “very important” category: 63% for Anglo respondents, 90% for African Americans, 82% for Hispanic respondents, and 74% for Asian Americans (see figure 4A below).

When asked to distinguish between which of these two types of experience is more important for the next Superintendent to have, most of the community forum participants indicated that both experiences are equally important (58%), but beyond that response, there was a preference for teaching over administrative experience (26.7% vs. 15.3%), as indicated in figure 5B.

Therefore, the community supports a leader who is not only committed to diversity and inclusion, but who will also create a leadership team and support an overall staff – including teaching staff – whose demographics will reflect the rich diversity of the City of Denver.
The larger city-wide public survey included similar results, as 60% of respondents elected that both experiences are equally important, and others indicated that teaching experience is preferable to administrative experience (24% compared to 16%). The most interesting variation on this item was based on the relationship the respondent had to the school district. As reflected in figure 6A below, while teaching experience was viewed as more important, overall, by 24% of respondents, this percentage was higher for educators (37%) and students (34%). Similarly, while administrative experience was viewed as more important, overall, by 16% of respondents, this percentage was higher for administrators (31%).

Finally, in response to a survey question asking respondents if they agree with the statement, “it is impossible for someone to be a great school district Superintendent if they have not had deep experience in the classroom as a teacher prior to beginning an administrative career,” participants provided additional feedback regarding the preferred balance between teaching and administrative experience. As depicted in figure 6C below, approximately 72% of community forum survey participants agreed with the statement (37% strongly), and 74% of general community survey participants agreed (41% strongly). Therefore, according to collective data across both surveys, community participants make clear that the next Superintendent should have a teaching background to complement their administrative experience.

The general community survey asked respondents to identify which of seven different experiences and skill-sets were most important for the next Superintendent to possess. The most commonly identified category was “experience as both a teacher and an administrator,” as 33% of respondents chose this as their first or second priority. More specifically, 39% of educators chose this as their top priority (see figure 6B).

Not all Qualities or Priorities Were Defined as Important to the Public

Since the survey results indicated high levels of support for many of the items surveyed, one could assume that the public was supportive of all qualities and issues they were asked to evaluate. However, a number of items on the survey did not rank high on levels of importance or generate as much support from the community based on the nine community forum surveys and the general community survey.

Due to ongoing discussion about (1) expanding schooling options across traditional neighborhood schools, (2) innovation throughout the District, and (3) charter schools not directly tied to neighborhoods, we included these topics in our survey. However, when compared to other issues and priorities, ensuring that parents and children have choice across these options was not scored as
highly by participants, with a mean of 7 on a scale of 1-10 on the community forum survey. Additionally, participants at the George Washington High School forum ranked this issue with a mean of only 5.6, the lowest mean score for any issue at any of the nine forums. Moreover, this topic was not salient to participants of the general community survey either, registering a mean of 6.6 on the same 1-10 scale (see figure 7A).

When we asked community forum survey respondents to choose the “most important issue when considering who the next Superintendent should be,” only 12.3% of all respondents selected “ensuring that parents and their children have the ability to make choices on their school of choice across Denver’s traditional neighborhood schools, innovation, and charter schools.” In the larger city-wide survey, participants place even less value on this issue, with only 4% of those respondents identifying “choice across school options” as their top first or second priority. Interestingly enough – given the movement toward increasing options beyond neighborhood schools in the city – salience for increased choice did not vary by whether respondents felt the District was moving in the “right” or “wrong” direction. Therefore, when considered alongside other issues the next Superintendent should tackle, this issue was not a high priority for the residents of Denver who participated in the study.

Finally, having a Superintendent who is bilingual was not rated as a high priority across the community forum surveys. Participants in the community forum surveys assigned relatively low importance to this issue (mean of 6.6 on 1-10 scale), and participants from the general community survey assigned even lower importance to the issue of having “someone who is bilingual so that they can communicate effectively and relate to the experiences with our non-English speaking students and their families,” with a mean of 5.49, on a scale of 1-10. The mean on this issue was only slightly higher among Spanish-speaking respondents to the general community survey (6.88 on a scale of 1-10). While it is important to note that these numbers do not indicate that bilingualism is not important to Denver’s community, when compared to other characteristics community members want to see in the incoming Superintendent, as well as priorities for that leader to tackle in the district, bilingualism is not as salient to the public, as seen in figure 7B.
BOARD COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

In addition to the analysis completed for the Large Regional Community Forums, our report also includes an analysis of two additional community meetings, which were held at Abraham Lincoln High School and John F. Kennedy High School. These meetings had a different methodology and were not conducted or facilitated by Dimensions Strategies. They were, however, facilitated and recorded by School Board member Angela Cobian and District personnel.

JOHN F. KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL FORUM

The community forum held at John F. Kennedy High School involved a discussion guided by three questions:
• What does the future of the DPS look like to you?
• What initiatives/projects would you like the next Superintendent to start/stop/continue?
• What qualities, experiences and characteristics do you think make a great Superintendent?

The following content represents the views, opinions, and priorities expressed by the community as well as the meaning community members attributed to each of the three guiding questions.

What does the future of DPS look like to you?

Some participants said they believe the future of DPS looks bright. One participant expressed concern about the future of DPS. Another participant said that all the growth and increasing income inequality have put DPS and Denver at a crossroads.

Many people discussed charter schools and traditional neighborhood schools. Some participants expressed a preference for school choice. Some said they want a choice between charter schools and traditional schools but want to make sure there are equitable resources for both. Some participants expressed concern that neighborhood schools are getting short changed in favor of charter schools and said it is important that the reform movement is stopped. A few said they want more options for families. Some participants voiced a desire for every single school to succeed and every student to have access to a positive learning environment.

Many participants said they want more community engagement and more parent involvement. They added that they want to see more input from parents, the community, and political leaders.

What initiatives/projects would you like the next Superintendent to start/stop/continue?

Start

Many people said it is imperative for the Superintendent to focus more on the issue of restorative justice. Participants added that more support is needed in the schools and throughout the district, particularly for students of color.

Many participants said they would like to see more transparency from the incoming Superintendent - especially in regards to the school performance framework. A few said they also want the incoming Superintendent to exhibit greater transparency in regards to money and resources.

Many participants advocated for a Superintendent who prioritizes community engagement, parental involvement, and communication between the school principal and parents. Participants expressed their desire for authentic, genuine community engagement as well as a genuine, transparent process of engagement.

Some participants advocated for a Superintendent who invests in teachers and is attentive to their needs. They said they want a leader who will focus on teachers and prioritize instruction.
A few participants expressed the importance of a Superintendent who prioritizes support for ESL students and their families and provides better translation services. A few participants spoke to the need for better education for students with special needs.

Stop
Many participants stressed the importance of ceasing to use the SPF system. They said they want the testing stopped, because it creates stress for students and results in the closure of schools based on data. They concluded that SPF does not take into account the needs of the students. Some participants said they want DPS to stop putting multiple schools in one building with different expectations, leadership, student populations, and ages. A few said they do not believe charter schools respect the rights of teachers and therefore, DPS should stop adding more charter schools.

Continue
A few participants said it is important that DPS continue to support vulnerable students, ELLs, homeless students, foster students, and immigrant students. A few participants advocated for a Superintendent who places an emphasis on caring for the whole child.

A few participants expressed their preference for a Superintendent who will invest heavily in successful IB programs so that more students can participate and are able to enter college with more credits. A few present said it is important for a Superintendent to require culturally relevant teaching and to evaluate teachers on it.

What qualities, experiences and characteristics do you think make a great Superintendent?

Many participants said the new Superintendent should be an educator. Many expressed a specific preference for an educator with classroom experience. Some present said the Superintendent’s experience should be in the K-12 setting, either as a principal, administrator, or teacher. A few people expressed a preference for a new Superintendent who is not a business person.

Several people expressed the importance of having a Superintendent who is bilingual or experienced with bilingual populations. Some people said it is important for the Superintendent to be a person of color. A few said it is important for the Superintendent to have experience with diverse communities and students - adding that they should understand Denver and its diversity and possess a strong value for inclusion.
ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL FORUM

The community forum held at Abraham Lincoln High School involved a discussion guided by three questions:

• What does the future of the DPS look like to you?
• What initiatives/projects would you like the next Superintendent to start/stop/continue?
• What qualities, experiences and characteristics do you think make a great Superintendent?

The following content represents the views, opinions, and priorities expressed by the community as well as the meaning community members attributed to each of the three guiding questions.

What does the future of DPS look like to you?

Several participants voiced a vision for DPS in which equity exists between all schools in the district. Some participants mentioned specific inequities between schools in Southeast Denver and referenced schools in other parts of the city with fewer resources. Some present mentioned specific examples of inequitable resources - such as the lack of air conditioning or adequate heating. A few participants said that the goal should be an equitable system in which every school is well-resourced, each school is equipped with a library, all teachers are licensed, and schools have wrap-around services such as counselors, ESL resources, and after school programs. Participants also acknowledged the opportunity gap as well as the ways in which inequitable school resources widen that gap.

Several participants spoke up in regards to the issues of school choice and neighborhood schools. Some voiced their support for a policy which gives parents and families the ability to choose whichever school they deem best for their children. Others voiced a preference for investing in neighborhood schools rather than building up charter schools. One person called schools “the crown jewel of the neighborhood.”

Several participants focused their comments on teachers. Participants said they want teachers to be well paid and for the administration to focus on teacher retention. There were some participants who expressed their perceived need for the district to hire more teachers who look like the student population, and who specifically advocated for more bilingual teachers.

Finally, several participants expressed their desire for the schools to be safe. They emphasized the importance of employing more counselors to deal with the mental health needs of students. Participants also stressed the importance of reducing bullying. Furthermore, participants expressed a desire for DPS to protect immigrant students. Finally, some present advocated for restorative justice that is fair for all students.

What initiatives/projects would you like the next Superintendent to start/stop/continue?

It is important to note that most participants did not have a clear sense of what initiatives and projects DPS was currently undertaking. Therefore, the following comments represent the ideas and opinions of participants about practices they would like DPS to implement, or continue implementing, and which practices they want to see changed by DPS.

Start

Many participants voiced their concern over the overwhelming presence of SROs in schools and expressed their desire for DPS to instead, put those financial resources towards the presence of more mental health counselors in schools. Some participants said that DPS puts $8 million into school security and expressed their preference for that budget to be reduced and some of it reallocated towards the hiring of school counselors.

Several participants expressed the importance of implementing bias training for DPS staff, particularly teachers. Some participants also stated that since there are not enough teachers who look like the student population, it is especially important for the current teachers to receive training about implicit bias.

Several participants expressed the belief that DPS should prioritize community engagement. Participants said they want DPS to listen to parents and
others in the community and communicate back to them on how community feedback is informing the actions of DPS. Some present said they also want DPS to figure out how to increase parent involvement.

Stop Many participants said they want DPS to stop spending money on school security because it results in the criminalization of students. They said a better alternative would be to invest more money in mental health counselors. A few participants raised concerns over the “school to prison pipeline,” adding that more police officers in schools contributes to that dynamic.

Many participants said it is important for DPS to stop under-resourcing schools. This issue was mentioned by several participants at different points during the meeting. Some present advocated for increasing the funding at all schools, while others shared the sentiment that certain schools in the district already had enough funding. Participants agreed that under-resourcing leads to poor building conditions.

Some participants expressed their desire for DPS to stop marketing school choice during the enrollment period. Some present said they would like DPS to set up the system in a way that does not enable parents to “rig” the school choice system.

Several participants said it is important for DPS to stop high stakes testing, since the negative consequences of doing so include the closure of schools. One person added, “We have done a great job of evaluating students and not preparing them.”

Continue Several participants expressed their desire for DPS to continue the school choice portfolio. Some said DPS should modify school choice rather than getting rid of it.

Some participants said it is important to them that DPS supports immigrant students and equally important for that support to continue.

What qualities, experiences and characteristics do you think make a great Superintendent?

Many participants said it is important that the new Superintendent be a person of color. Some said it is important for the Superintendent to be someone who reflects the student population. Many expressed a preference for the new Superintendent to be bilingual. Some thought the new Superintendent should have experience in a large urban school district similar to Denver. A few thought the new Superintendent should be from Denver and a few thought the Superintendent should come from outside of Denver. A few people thought the Superintendent should be a product of DPS.

Many participants expressed the importance of having a Superintendent who is an educator. Of those participants, several specified that the Superintendent should have been a teacher or have had classroom experience. Some people said it is important for the Superintendent to have had administrative experience. Some people thought the Superintendent should be an educator rather than from the business community.

Several people expressed the importance of a new Superintendent who will authentically engage the community and be open to community voice. Participants added that the Superintendent should regularly follow up and update the community on actions taken as a result of community input.

Many people expressed their desire for a Superintendent who has personal integrity and who listens to community members.

There was no open mic at this community forum.
**Demographic Overview**

Between August 10th and October 11th, 2018, the Denver Public Schools Board of Education conducted 55 community meetings to allow the Denver community at-large to share their input about the next Superintendent. Community stakeholder groups included non-profit organizations, churches, business organizations, employee groups and parent and student representatives, representing diversity in gender, race, and in their relationship to Denver Public Schools. During the community meetings, various themes emerged, some of which related directly to the Superintendent search, and some which addressed questions, concerns, and opinions that were not directly related to the Superintendent search.

The following report provides a summary of the views, opinions, and priorities expressed by the community, pertaining both to the emergent themes regarding the Superintendent search as well as questions that arose during the community discussion.

**Participants by Meeting Type**

![Bar chart showing the number of participants by meeting type]

**Number of Meetings by Type**

![Bar chart showing the number of meetings by type]
Board Small Stakeholder Meetings

Key Themes

School Board members and Administration Leaders conducted 55 separate meetings throughout the District to engage community leaders, students, parents, teachers, and administrators in discussions about the selection of the next Superintendent. Specifically, these discussions sought to understand participants’ views of the current state of the District, their view of the District’s future, and expectations for and qualities needed by the next Superintendent.

In total, 1,177 individuals attended these meetings, held between August 7 and October 10, 2018. Group sizes ranged from more than 150 individuals to only one participant. All meetings were held outside of District offices and were recorded by DPS staff through note-taking and all were facilitated by at least one Board member. More than one Board member attended many of the meetings.

Similar to the forums facilitated by Dimension Strategies, key themes emerged from the conversations at each meeting. These themes, as well as the summaries of the meetings, can assist the Board in identifying candidates for the next District Superintendent. In particular, the themes can provide insight into the participants’ expectations of considerations that should be made during the selection process.

Non-Profit Organizations

Key Themes

Board members met with the members of 15 non-profit organizations to seek their input to the Superintendent selection process. The following themes emerged from those conversations:

- A majority of the participants urged that the next Superintendent place a priority on implementing social-emotional programs to support the daily trauma, homelessness, and lower socioeconomic extremes many students face every day. They recommended to the Board that commitments must be made to provide more teacher training on trauma-informed interventions, and more social workers and psychologists in the schools. They stressed that more SROs in the schools is neither the most adequate nor thoughtful response to these needs.

- Most of the organizations’ representatives named the need for the new District leader to have demonstrated experience in engaging community in timely, complete, and transparent ways. Some recommended that the Board directly engage the community in the candidate selection through Meet the Candidates forums.

- Most of the participants raised the importance of creating equity by providing school resources to schools most in need. They pointed out that closing the achievement gap is reliant on getting needed resources to students who are in jeopardy of failure. They disagreed with across-the-board funding policies that do not recognize the individual needs of schools. Some expressed concern that these types of funding policies hurt schools and students who are most impacted by poverty.

- Many identified the critical nature of having a new District leader who has a vision for the District and can demonstrate leadership in working with their own diverse team, educators, and the community. They also called for a leader who has proven experience working with communities of color and is able to inspire a team. They must demonstrate an understanding of Denver’s history and its community landscape, including the impact of segregation and other race-related issues that continue to be prevalent in the District. Some recommended that the Superintendent possess second language skills.

- Many of the participants discussed the need for increased teacher salaries to inspire those who are currently in the District and to encourage more teachers to choose to work in DPS. They emphasized the need to attract more teachers of color so that the students have teachers who look like them. Additionally, many of the participants are concerned by the high level of teacher and administrator burnout within the District and identified it as an issue the new Superintendent will need to address.

- A few of the non-profit participants raised the issue of the failure of SPF to recognize student and school aptitudes. They believe that the SPF is an inaccurate and confusing tool that the new Superintendent must review.

- Because not every student seeks to enter university, a few participants recommended that the next District leader support more programs to prepare students for other real-life journeys.
**District Staff**

Key Themes

Because the 11 employee groups that participated in the conversations with the Board were diverse, identifying overarching themes was difficult. However, some emerged, especially as they related to the characteristics that participants seek in a new District leader.

- Many of the employee groups want a new District leader who has had experience managing a school district that is similar in size to Denver. They seek someone who can work with and value diverse leaders, educators, staff, parents, and students.
- Many identified the importance of a Superintendent who can bridge the achievement gap and will work to minimize the impacts of societal barriers. They stressed the urgency the next Superintendent must have in addressing the achievement gap. This will require that the final candidate have a background in education and be able to create a shared vision for the District, which includes using equity as the standard for decision-making when resources are being considered. Many also want the final candidate to understand the importance of community engagement.
- Many of the groups identified the need for the next Superintendent to work closely with all District employee divisions in the decisions that affect those employees and the staff, families, and students with whom they work. They want a District leader who is supportive and builds relationships with the District employees.
- A few of the participants mentioned the importance of the new Superintendent reviewing retention and wage issues as well valuing the work their colleagues provide to the District and its students. Communicating with all employees in a timely and valued manner was important to them.

**Parent Organizations**

Key Themes

Six Parent Organizations participated in the Board Small Stakeholder Meetings. Although they expressed specific interest in the needs for their own children, a set of themes emerged that reflected the concerns they shared together.

- Most stressed the importance of a new Superintendent who will prioritize including parents and community members in the decision-making that affects their children. Parents wish to be involved with the District leadership and its staff in visible and authentic ways. They want a Superintendent who can engage in conversations with parents even when the conversations are difficult.
- Most parents, specifically non-English speaking parents, want the next Superintendent to appreciate the diversity of the District. New immigrant parents want resources that can help their children learn. For example, many want translation services and resources for parents and family members. Many of the parents want the next Superintendent to understand the diversity of the District as well as the many cultures students bring to the classroom, and provide the resources needed to support and celebrate this diversity.
- Some of the parents discussed the need to invest in the training of teachers and principals. In particular, parents of special needs students emphasized the need for more training to meet the needs of special education students, and to better understand the implementation of laws affecting/supports required for SPED students. They pointed out that reductions in SPED staff make this type of teacher and principal training even more important, because educational professionals have been too heavily reliant on discipline and informal suspensions.
- Some of the parents emphasized that the next Superintendent must be committed to the equitable funding of schools and student needs.
- A few of the parents seek a Superintendent who has experience in the classroom and is politically savvy.

**Teacher/Principal Forums**

Key Themes

The themes that five Teacher/Principal Forums generated will be informative to the Board as they consider the relationship the new Superintendent must build with the educators in the District.

- Most participants at the teacher/principal forums are looking for a District leader who can bring a fresh, innovative, and creative outlook to the District. They want the next District leader to
value having many voices at the table, to invite collaboration, and lead as a change agent.

- Most participants believe that the next District leader must have an education background with classroom experience and be willing to come into a learning environment and understand the challenges educators face daily. The new Superintendent must demonstrate experience in building a strong team and coalitions, and a willingness to listen to them. They seek a new District leader who has experience in an urban school district similar to Denver.

- Some participants voiced their concern about the use of SPF and are seeking a District leader who will not use this framework to shape the whole education experience.

- PAYROLL, Pro-Comp, and low compensation were raised by some of the participants as important issues that the new District leader will have to address.

**Youth Organizations**

**Key Themes**

Board members engaged five youth organizations to hear student suggestions for consideration in the selection of the new Superintendent. The following themes emerged from those conversations:

- Most of the participants seek a District leader who will listen carefully to youth voices as they share student concerns about vulnerable populations, including students of color, SPED students, and LGBTQ+ students. They expressed that the new Superintendent must have a sense of urgency to direct and implement more policies to close the achievement gap and to protect students against bullying.

- Many youth are looking for a new Superintendent who has demonstrated an understanding of the priority issues facing Denver and has knowledge of its diverse neighborhoods. Building a strong team that shares the important value of community engagement and community building is important to many of the participants. They want a new District leader who will listen to and work with the community to resolve concerns and who shares a desire to see change happen to help move the District forward. The new District leader must be transparent and collaborative.

- Most of the youth seek a Superintendent who stands firmly behind the model of students first, in which the students’ voices are not only heard, but also considered in decision-making and policy creation. It was crucial to participants that any new leader have an understanding that each student is unique and needs a pathway to success that may be different from the traditional model.

- Many of the youth advocated for the student involvement in the search for a new Superintendent.
Charter Management Organizations Within DPS
Key Themes

Five groups representing Charter Management Organizations met with Board members. The following themes emerged from those conversations:

• Many of the participants expressed that the new District leader must have management experience and demonstrate both political savvy and cultural competency. They seek someone who can build and retain a leadership team that works toward the same goals all the time and is held accountable by the Superintendent.

• Understanding of Denver, its diversity, and its community needs was of high value to many of the participants. They also seek a new Superintendent who believes in fairness, provides a clear vision, and weighs decisions against multiple models. They want the new District leader to build a collaborative bridge to unite the community.

• Some participants identified the importance of a new Superintendent who listens to all contingencies from charter and traditional schools, and is able to act in the best interests of the students.

• A few of the participants believe that the new Superintendent must show a commitment to programs that support students who are struggling with their own emotions and the emotions of other students.

District Advisory Councils, Business Community, and Faith-Based Organizations

The Board met with three District Advisory Councils, two Business Community Groups, and two Faith-Based Organizations. Due the small number of each of these types of meetings, it was not possible to pull themes from the qualitative data. The reader is referred to the individual summary notes, below, from each of these meetings.

Name of Organization: Project VOYCE
Number of attendees: 10
Board Member(s) Present: Jennifer Bacon
Date: August 7, 2018

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

The youth leaders of Project VOYCE expressed a strong preference for a new district leader that has a personal connection to the Denver community, understands the needs of people of color, and stands firmly behind the model of “student first.”

To show a positive connection to the Denver community, participants suggested the Superintendent should live in Denver, be educated through DPS, and raise their children in DPS. In addition, they should understand the priority issues facing Denver communities, see the value in neighborhood schools, and demonstrate an openness to listening to and working with the community to resolve concerns.

To understand the needs of people of color, participants implied that both experience and personal attributes are important. For example, while a candidate of color is desired, Project VOYCE also expressed the importance of a Superintendent who is bilingual, possibly a first-generation high school student, has experience with diversity and inclusion, and specifically “stands up for youth of color.”

Furthermore, Project VOYCE expressed their belief that the next district leader should be committed to a “student first” model in which the students’ voice is not only heard, but considered in decision-making and policy creation.

Participants also discussed other areas of concern, including the role and engagement of students and community members in the Superintendent search. Participants suggested that both stakeholder groups - as well as parents - should be informed of the search timing and process, and engaged throughout the entire process from conception to hire. More specifically, the youth leaders requested that a student be appointed to the search committee to provide direct feedback to the Board and other pertinent district leaders.
The questions posed by FACE, which addressed and were answered by a Board member, included questions regarding DPS’ plan for the upcoming school year, how DPS plans to engage families, the issues facing DPS, how DPS is dealing with gentrification, and how DPS will protect students and capture the student voice. Some questions also pertained to the Superintendent search process. Some participants addressed the question of how the community can help and asked the Board which qualities and characteristics they would like to see in the next Superintendent. The Board members in attendance addressed all questions and outlined all known plans for the coming year.

The Safety and Security staff said that above all else, they want a Superintendent who is supportive. Specifically, they would prefer a Superintendent who will continue to support the relationship between the division and the district, especially as it relates to the division’s current success and challenges.

Another topic that came up was school choice and charter schools. It was conveyed, “the Board of Education feels strongly that ‘choice’ - as a fundamental belief - offers access, and that all students should have access to all schools.” Therefore, the Board is hoping to continue ‘choice,’ with a new Superintendent. Additionally, it was also mentioned by the Board member that subsidies for educators will continue to help with home ownership, given the adverse effects of gentrification and the high cost of living.

Overall, the Safety and Security Command Staff viewed DPS favorably, acknowledging that current support of the division has changed how safety officers and law enforcement officers are viewed in schools. Someone brought up that in the past, principals did not want Denver Police (DPD) in front of their schools. However, at this time, Safety and Security officers and DPD are working in unison to connect with students and help reduce the “school to prison pipeline.” To maintain momentum, some recommended that DPS continue to view Safety and Security as educators, provide safety in schools, work with DPS communities to create welcoming school environments, and recruit quality people for the division.

The biggest challenge discussed was in regards to retention and wages. Participants revealed that approval of Ballot Issue 73 would bring significant funding to education, and would allow DPS to further invest in its employees and retain talent.

In regards to what is working well, Food Services Staff participants emphasized their appreciation for the support and acknowledgment they receive from the current Superintendent as it relates to visiting, knowing staff names, and being willing to serve lunch.

While participants at this stakeholders meeting did not highlight any specific areas of improvement for their own division, they did express concern about the low graduation rate and enrollment decline, the way that DPS is measured against other districts, and the Board’s decision process for opening and closing schools.

In addition to desiring a Superintendent who will continue to support and acknowledge the efforts of the Food Services staff, these participants expressed their preference for a Superintendent who will bridge the learning gap, address societal
barriers, have prior experience managing a similar-sized district with a unique community landscape, have the ability to “think outside the box,” and work with varied nationalities and learning styles. Some mentioned that the Superintendent should be someone who has a background in education.

**Name of Organization:** KIPP Charter Network Board of Directors  
**Number of attendees:** 20  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Jennifer Bacon and Happy Haynes  
**Date:** August 24, 2018

Many of the questions that the KIPP Charter Network addressed to the Board were focused on the Superintendent search process as well as the qualities the Board is looking for in the next district leader. KIPP’s line of questioning can best be discerned by the following sample of questions:

- Are you considering candidates who are charter friendly?
- Is there a preference for someone local?
- What is your philosophy around choosing a new Superintendent?
- Do you have minimum requirements for a new Superintendent?
- Who makes the final decision?

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

The KIPP Board of Directors also took time to convey what they believe are necessary qualifications for the next district leader. Some said it is imperative for a Superintendent to have the ability to build and retain a leadership team. More specifically, participants advocated for a team that is working in unison towards the same goals at all times - and which is led by a district leader who is capable of holding team members accountable. One participant recommended a minimum commitment of three years for all senior leadership staff hires, after first referencing how the chief-of-staff position turned over four times in a five-year span.

Participants also expressed the importance of hiring a Superintendent who possesses management experience, political savvy, and cultural competency. Furthermore, stakeholders stressed that the district needs a leader who can understand community needs while being practical and results-oriented. Participants advocated for a Superintendent who will “roll out large initiatives...serve every student and partner,...and ensure that the left hand is talking to the right hand.”

Furthermore, KIPP believes the next Superintendent must be an innovator who is anchored by outcomes, can lead efficiently and equitably, understands the demographics of Denver and its effect on the entire education community (e.g., students, parents, teachers, administrators), and places high expectations on all students, regardless of where they are from.

Lastly, KIPP expressed that the next leader “must appreciate charters.”

**Name of Organization:** NAACP  
**Number of attendees:** 2  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Carrie Olson and Lisa Flores  
**Date:** August 27, 2018

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

The NAACP said that students of color are falling to succeed within DPS’ system and that the needs of African American students are not being met or addressed in regards to increased mental health issues, lack of emotional support for daily trauma, homelessness, and lower socioeconomic extremes.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

The NAACP addressed hope in terms of the leadership within the Board and DPS leadership staff. They stressed the need for DPS to put measures in place that will pull African American students forward and enforce accountability at all levels - especially when similar populations of students are not succeeding at vast levels. The NAACP suggested that for their expectations to be fulfilled, the district and the Board must hire more teachers of color, work with low-income families, rethink the practice of color-coding schools (Green, Blue, Yellow, Red) so kids can have hope in themselves and their schools. The NAACP strongly recommended that the District implement cultural understanding across the district so administrators and educators can understand how students of color learn best.
Others expressed that it is important for students be able to do more than “just read and write,” and stressed the urgency of providing students with opportunities to learn the trades.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Some said that in order to engage the community, a Superintendent must be willing to listen respectfully to community concerns, even if there is disagreement or opposition.

Additionally, community members emphasized the importance of a Superintendent who has a positive connection to Denver because they raise their children in DPS. Community members said they would also like to see a Superintendent who understands the importance of saving traditional neighborhood schools that have long legacies instead of closing them or changing them to charters.

Members of the NAACP also felt that a Superintendent should be a person who exhibits openness that “embraces culture and understands we are all different.” In doing so, they would naturally work to level the playing field as it pertains to “equity v. equality.”

Members of the NAACP brought issues of concern to the Board’s attention as well. One issue of concern was the lack of parent engagement in “low income, non-white schools.” Another point of concern for NAACP participants was the belief that if a traditional school is failing, it must become a competitive charter school rather than fixing the issues. Participants also brought up the need for educators to be trained beyond classroom management, citing an example of an incident in which students were placed in the hallway because teachers “can’t deal with behavior.”

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

According to DCTA, their biggest hope is to “make DPS schools great again” by supporting the whole child, setting teachers up for success, committing to equality in special education, and restructuring processes that do not add value, and ultimately, finding ways to benefit students.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Collectively, DCTA is looking for a Superintendent who is new to the district and can offer a fresh outlook and perspective as an educator. They are seeking someone who values the community stakeholders’ voice and is willing to listen and to collaborate. They said they would also like a Superintendent who sees themselves as a servant leader rather than a leader who is there to be served.

The DCTA participants said they also anticipate a leader who understands Denver and its history, in addition to DPS, and cares about the entire district.
as a whole. They also expect the Superintendent to demonstrate investment and care by sending their own children to DPS.

DCTA said it is important to have a leader who is a person of color and who is politically savvy. They value someone who is fiscally responsible, a stern negotiator, and who can increase financial resources for the district. They want someone who will take a “hands-on” approach. Likewise, they expressed the importance of a leader who has an education background, is willing to come into the learning environment, understands teachers, and is willing to give them autonomy. DCTA voiced strong support for someone who can work with teachers, who can come to schools, and who will be hands on with the faculty in schools.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

A major theme that emerged throughout the discussion was the importance of consistency and transparency. The members of the District Accountability Committee believe that continuity is important and believe a new Superintendent must bring a new, fresh perspective and possess the ability to bridge old success with new success instead of go along with the vision set forth by the Board. Participants recommended that the next district leader work with the Board and other community stakeholders to successfully move the district forward even if it means placing the district in a “turnaround mode.”

The committee expressed interest in an analytical thought leader who can think systemically and figure out why things are the way they are. They said they want someone who can meet stakeholders in the middle and determine the root causes of disparities by looking at the data and asking, “Is the path we are on doing what we want it to do or are there unintended consequences?” Committee members said communication with stakeholders is also highly important. Specifically, participants voiced support for an action-driven leader who can “pivot, once they have the information from the community,” and will engage the principal and school communities prior to making decisions. For instance, one committee member noted that they find it “disconcerting to be invited to a meeting where decisions have already been made.”

Participants suggested that engaging all stakeholders would break down the “us v. them” mentality and naturally foster a more inclusive and collaborative spirit and shared value for equity. Furthermore, they believe that DPS needs a leader who has experience as a teacher in K-12 education, has managed a large, diverse district, and has a deep appreciation for the complexities of leading this type of district. Participants said the Superintendent should also have “skin in the game” by living in the district and raising their children in DPS. They also suggested that the new Superintendent be visible more often - not just during celebratory occasions or when things are not working.

The committee also shared concerns regarding the search timeline and transparency. Participants expressed concerns that there is not enough time allocated to the process to secure the right district leader and fear that the district will recruit what one member called, “a disloyal leader” who is willing to leave their school in the middle of the year for Denver. In regards to transparency, participants voiced their suspicion that the Board already has a local candidate in mind and may not invite the community to meet with candidates before one is selected.

What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

Although the DPS Transportation staff believes they work hard and take extra measures to put students first, they feel the district does not value their efforts. They said this is because the Superintendent has never engaged them directly and they are not invited to take an active role in district decisions.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

The transportation staff expressed concerns in regards to national security and expressed a desire for DPS to provide bus driver defense training (e.g. active shooter training) for student protection purposes. Also, participants said they hope both
DPS and the new Superintendent will be more transparent and open to discussing changes before they are final or implemented. If change is imminent, participants suggested that divisions be asked to “digest and adjust in way that best serves students” rather than be tasked with implementing a large amount of continuous change. DPS Transportation staff believe it is important for district leaders to understand that what affects one school affects all schools. Thus, proper communication and transparency were flagged as critical.

In addition, Transportation staff said they want to be more involved in district division collaboration through attendance at meetings that involve changes at the district level. For example, Transportation feels strongly that their division leader should have a voice at the table when decisions are made regarding whether to open or close schools for snow days, since drivers are also responsible for student safety.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Transportation staff said they are looking for a Superintendent who is well versed in the issues that DPS and the larger Denver community face together. For example, they said Denver’s high rate of growth impacts decisions for new schools. Participants also brought up the difficulties of finding the time and person power needed to open a new school, the challenges brought on by Denver’s rate of growth, and how more difficulties can arise when expectations do not align with problems on the ground.

Transportation staff said they seek a Superintendent who has knowledge of each operating division at DPS. Furthermore, they desire a Superintendent who visits divisions and makes an effort to learn firsthand what division staff do.

La Raza brought up some unfavorable issues that they believe are hindering the success of DPS. Some of these issues include teacher burnout and low wages for teaching staff, the lack of opportunities for children to succeed, and an increase in mental health needs, which have included an increase in student suicide attempts. To help combat these factors, La Raza suggested that DPS implement policies to support bully prevention. They also recommended introducing comprehensive sex education and increasing the number of mental health workers in schools.
What is your hope for DPS in the future?

La Raza’s hope for the future is that DPS will see higher graduation rates (95%) for Latinos and provide sufficient compensation and resources for teachers so they can create the best learning environment for students. The participants spoke about the effects of low teacher pay and said the shortage of educational resources in schools with high Latino enrollment are hindering the success of the students. They said they want teachers who look like the children in the classroom and have invested in the communities by living in the same neighborhoods that their students live in.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

La Raza has high expectations that the next Superintendent will know and understand Denver’s history and community landscape (i.e., the effects of gentrification, family makeup, etc.). Preferably, La Raza would like to see a Denver native - “home-grown talent” - who has a deep connection to the community and the ability to motivate and inspire youth. Ideally, they would have an academic background and be a well-rounded thinker who takes a holistic approach and values arts, social skills, and the 3 Rs.

Participants said they would also like to see the Superintendent engage students in public service, high education, trade learning, and in community and cultural learning. Some suggested that early learning would give students the knowledge and understanding they need to take more pride in their learning journeys, culture, and communities.

Name of Organization: Equity Roundtable
Number of attendees: 23
Board Member(s) Present: Jen Bacon, Carrie Olson, Happy Haynes, and Anne Rowe
Date: August 30, 2018

What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

Most of the discussion about the current state of DPS focused on low progress and students not having a fair start because they are behind due to segregation in schools and race-related issues.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

The Equity Roundtable is hopeful that DPS will build a new structure that puts students first, commits to equity, rebuilds trust, and is collaborative. Furthermore, participants said they want a Superintendent who is opposed to working in silos. The Roundtable hopes the entire district will realign to “move as one city, one district.” Once this movement is established, they believe quality education will resume, neighborhoods will be strengthened and the community will united and more open to investing their time and talents to ensure the district succeeds.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Participants said their biggest hope for DPS is that the district will work toward closing the opportunity gap and hire a district leader with prior Superintendent experience. Some expressed their desire for a Superintendent who will demonstrate openness, the willingness to learn and listen, and a transparent and collaborative nature. They also said they want a leader who has experience with diversity and inclusion, possesses excellent communication skills, has the ability to generate public trust, and has a proven track record of leading teams and moving the needle forward.

Participants said they prefer that the Superintendent live in Denver, be invested in DPS, and understand the Denver landscape as it relates to equity and opportunity. They added that the candidate should have an education background, vision, political savvy, and a proven ability to “get what the community needs” by engaging all school and community stakeholders.

The Roundtable does not expect a Superintendent to fix everything but does want them to build on current successes, be open-minded, be able to foster successful teamwork among teachers, and address the top priorities agreed upon by all community stakeholders that embrace the gifts and talents of every student.

Participants shared concerns about the search process as it relates to community engagement, trust and transparency. More specifically, the Roundtable suggested the Board engage the community more and allow more voices of influence to screen the candidates and take part in the selection of the new district leader.
What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

Three themes emerged as Together Colorado shared their view of DPS’ current state: the expansion of “Whole Child,” the need for greater family and community engagement, especially in regards to district decisions, and support for teachers and administrators.

Participants emphasized the importance of Whole Child, a program that engages students and helps teachers understand what interests students. They said DPS has shown positive support for the program but they strongly urged DPS to expand the program.

Together Colorado advocated for greater consistency and transparency in order to increase quality engagement. Additionally, they said they think the broader community sometimes gets left out because there’s more of a focus on engaging parents.

In addition, participants said “many teachers are overstressed and fearful of retribution if they speak up.” Therefore, teachers feel unsupported and seek a culture shift that values constructive feedback.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

Together Colorado said their biggest hopes for the future of DPS include cultivating a supportive environment for equity and diversity, closing the achievement gap, and focusing on safety.

In terms of equity and diversity, participants stressed the importance of the representation of teachers of color. Additionally, they advocated for the inclusion of more Spanish-speaking teachers and creating pathways for DACA recipients to become paraprofessionals and teachers. Together Colorado believes that the lack of equity and understanding of diversity hinders pathways for students, access to quality schools in the neighborhood, family engagement, distribution of resources, and holistic learning options that keep students engaged in learning.

According to Together Colorado, in order to close the achievement gap, DPS must be willing to prioritize equity in schools by changing their practice of using testing to measure student and school aptitude. They also brought up safety issues and said the district should train administrators on safety and de-escalation strategies and continue the practice of policing schools that DPS has identified as more “at risk.”

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

The most important qualities that Together Colorado expects from the next Superintendent are (1) a demonstrated ability to manage equity, diversity and inclusion, (2) successful experience in building accountability, and (3) a commitment to family and community engagement.

Together Colorado believes that equity, diversity, and inclusion are important factors in closing the achievement gap. They said they would like to see DPS show its commitment to these principles by selecting a leader of color who best represents the largest percentage of students – students of color.

Participants said accountability should expand beyond performance to include budget management (i.e. spending, allocation, and reduction), hiring practices, and auditing, to name a few. They expressed the shared belief that administrator salaries should be reduced to support “more funds [being] sent directly to schools.” In addition, participants stated that each school should be held to similar standards and operate under the same rules for teacher license requirements, budgets, and staffing hires.

Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the management of family and community engagement and specifically noted deficiencies in the feedback loop. They said that too often, feedback is requested but not followed by a decision, so families and community members do not feel like they are being heard or taken seriously. Some suggested that DPS offer some sort of response so that people at least know they were heard, even if the result is different than what the community wants. Overall, participants indicated that this gesture would positively impact community trust.
**Name of Organization:** Colorado Youth for Change  
(Colorado Youth)  
**Number of attendees:** 12  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Barbara O’Brien  
**Date:** September 4, 2018

**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

Colorado Youth was asked what they believe is working well in DPS and what needs improvement. As it relates to what is working, participants stated that pathways schools are a real asset and are critical to DPS success. Furthermore, they expressed a positive response in regards to the various options students have to engage in secondary education.

As for what needs improvement, Colorado Youth said it would be helpful if the pathways schools’ schedules had some flexibility to accommodate working youth. In addition, they advocated for methods to re-engage youth after long periods of absences. Because youth require a more restorative and welcoming response. They went on to describe the current system, in which there is a fair amount of paperwork required and schools have the option turn students away, based on past history. Furthermore, they said the primary reason youth leave school is because they need to work. Therefore, participants suggested paid internships, as they help to keep youth in school while allowing them to earn money.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

Colorado Youth participants said they hope the new district leader will give priority attention to three areas in which the district is lacking, from their perspective. These areas include:

- Far Northeast: Maintain a strong sense of community/identity while improving school performance.
- Southeast Denver: Quickly changing demographics are resulting in large achievement gaps.
- Southwest Denver: Lincoln is failing, and the community is struggling because they feel isolated.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Colorado Youth said they are looking for an honest leader who is also an educator with proven ability to close the achievement gap. They added that they want a leader who can hire a strong team to support community building, someone who is experienced with change management, and an administrator who can successfully position students for postsecondary education. Participants also suggested that the next district leader should lead with a sense of urgency, build on current success, and be able to connect with other large political entities in Denver so they can move the needle forward.

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**Name of Organization:** A+ Colorado  
**Number of attendees:** 20  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Anne Rowe and Carrie Olson  
**Date:** September 5, 2018

**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

Equity and inequity were prevalent themes for many of the members of A+ Colorado. It was clear that students, specifically, want a learning environment that offers more social-emotional support, which they felt to be lacking in certain schools. Teachers said they would like to see leadership programs continue at DPS. Parents praised the streamlined process of “choice.”

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Many members of A+ Colorado emphasized the importance of a leader with experience in education, whose words are backed by “evidence of success and strong positive outcomes.” They also expressed their desire for a visionary and innovative leader with a proven ability to manage challenging situations. They would like a Superintendent who is not afraid to take risks, has emotional intelligence, and has the ability to recover if they fail.

A+ Colorado participants said seek a leader who has a vision and can demonstrate that their leadership has produced positive outcomes when working with educators, their team, and the community. The Superintendent must be able to lead and inspire.
Name of Organization: Colorado Latino Forum  
Number of attendees: 12  
Board Member(s) Present: Lisa Flores and Anne Rowe  
Date: September 5, 2018

Much of the discussion focused on the search process. The Colorado Latino Forum posed questions regarding the process for gathering and disseminating community feedback, incorporating feedback into the hiring decision, bringing the Latino voice into the candidate decision, and ensuring there is no bias or “slant” towards hiring a reformer. The participants urged a public forum be held for the three finalists and suggested a public process which will enable the community to provide the finalists with input. They said this would ensure the process is not guided by bias towards a particular viewpoint.

Other areas of discussion addressed the hiring of Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (HYA) to lead the national search and brought up allegations surrounding the firm’s president and his past leadership experience as a Superintendent.

Additionally, participants expressed concerns with charter schools pertaining to school reform, closures, and student displacement. They expressed that these obstacles have led to “fundamental distrust” between students, educators, and the DPS administration.

Name of Organization: Young African American Latinx Leaders (YAALL) and Student Board of Education (SBOE)  
Number of attendees: 70  
Board Member(s) Present: Anne Rowe and Carrie Olson  
Date: September 5, 2018

**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

YAALL and SBOE addressed the high concern pertaining to the decline of student engagement that has resulted in student voices not being heard. Participants suggested that leaders must listen more to students, especially vulnerable populations such as students of color, special ed, and queer students. They also expressed a desire to direct more equitable funding to at-risk student populations and implement more policies to protect these groups.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

Overall, students expressed their desire for a district leader who genuinely cares for students and their families, is a leader who is visible and present in the school and community, and is a role model (preferably a person of color or a person who has experienced struggle and overcome it). Students want the assurance that their voices matter and that their opinions are taken into consideration when selecting the next Superintendent. Lastly, students expressed their shared desire to see change happen, to move the district forward, and to have an active role in that change/process.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

According to YAALL and SBOE, the ideal Superintendent would have a teaching/educator background and be a person of color. This individual will be able to understand students, teachers, and the adversity faced by a majority of students in the district. Furthermore, this leader will be able to inspire and motivate students because students are able to relate to them. This would be especially true if the Superintendent was a former teacher who “knows the struggle...and worked their way to the top,” as expressed by one student. Participants would prefer this person to care more about mental health and closing the achievement gap because they see themselves in the students and understand what it will take to close the “school to prison pipeline” and bring all students to grade level as a priority.

Participants voiced a strong preference for the next district leader to serve the DPS community “holistically,” rather than focusing only on the highest achieving or most profitable schools/students. They stressed the importance of a district leader who understands the difference between “equity versus equality.” They said this can be achieved by getting to know the community and having being invested in the priority issues facing Denver. It was also suggested the leader live in Denver and send their children to DPS.

Lastly, participants stressed the importance of selecting a leader who is transparent and collaborative. YAALL and SBOE said they want a Superintendent who is willing to engage all stakeholders and will be more visible in schools and the community, fighting on behalf of the students and supporting the whole child to ensure every child succeeds.
**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

School counselors request that DPS continue to provide communication that speaks to who DPS is and aligns with its priority goals. In addition, they expressed their desire for the district continue with the Strengthening Neighborhood Schools Community Initiatives, to improve existing schools and equity.

Participants requested that DPS stop high stakes testing, which they said lessens the students' love of learning. They also suggested the district should stop opening more charter schools.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

The counselors expressed hope that DPS will increase transparency and cross-collaborations and use resources within the district more efficiently. Specifically, they requested more training [specific training areas were undisclosed] to ensure equity of knowledge. Additionally, they would like the district to increase transportation for students in school choice process.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Participants said they want a leader who is relatable, a fierce student advocate, and who understands and respects counselors and the need to increase the counselor-to-student ratio. They also mentioned the need for someone who understands that measuring schools should not occur through high stakes testing.

Finally, they said the Superintendent should have experience as a teaching educator working for an urban district, believe in the whole child approach, and be a local candidate who values diversity.

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**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

The discussion was framed in a Q&A format in which DaVita asked the Board questions about the qualities they seek in the next DPS Superintendent. Questions included:

- Is your ideal candidate someone who has been a Superintendent before or someone non-traditional?
- We hear about the unique funding needs of Colorado. Are you looking for someone influential in politics vs. capabilities?
- Are you looking for someone who will operationally continue the plans in place or someone who is a visionary?
- What are the most important things to teachers?

Finally, DaVita recommended that DPS consider alternatives to college and suggested workforce development beginning in middle schools, in light of the college enrollment/retention decline.

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**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Participants said they believe DPS needs to make more of an effort to build relationships with family members and Asian community members, and that the district should be more inclusive and open-minded to “other.” Specifically, they said they would like to see more support for Vietnamese parents and family members, including English classes and...
computer classes so they are equipped to better support their children's learning. Furthermore, they would like for the Superintendent to make sure that families who have recently immigrated get support in the school - especially translation services - so that they can all work for their children to be successful.

Finally, the community asked a few questions about the search process which pertained to the timeline, requirements, and the number of applications received to date.

**Name of Organization:** Shorter AME Social Justice Committee  
**Number of attendees:** 20  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Jennifer Bacon and Angela Cobian  
**Date:** September 9, 2018

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

Shorter AME is looking for a leader who can address a multitude of issues and priority areas. Specifically, they are seeking someone who can address teacher recruitment, retention, and evaluation practices. Shorter AME said that hiring more teachers of color will improve the student experience.

Participants expressed their desire for a leader who will provide more checks and balances for principals/school leaders and ensure that more school leaders are trained educators. They also said the district leader should be excited about vocational/skills programming and advocated for traditional/neighborhood schools as the preferred choice.

Participants expressed a preference for a Superintendent who can garner excitement about learning, increase literacy efforts, teach students to learn - not how to take a test, improve teacher training and professional development, and cease the practice of eliminating libraries from schools. Finally, participants said DPS should consider removing police from schools.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Shorter AME said that most of all, they want a Superintendent who values equity and equitable resources for all schools, in all neighborhoods.

As for competencies, participants said they expect the next district leader to be a K-12 educator with classroom experience who believes students are the number one priority. They also desire a Superintendent who has excellent listening skills, is observant, prides themself on “global thinking,” and possesses innovative, entrepreneurial experience.

**Name of Organization:** Extended Leadership 1  
**Number of attendees:** 75  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Anne Rowe and Carrie Olson  
**Date:** September 10, 2018

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

The Extended Leadership team is hopeful that DPS will consider the tension between charter and neighborhood schools and come up with a plan to impact every student and every neighborhood equally. Ultimately, they want a leader who will embrace every child and help them succeed inside and outside of the classroom.

In addition, participants implied that DPS works in silos and expressed their desire for a bridge that connects each aspect of DPS in order to avoid fragmented or duplicated work efforts. Additionally, participants stressed the importance of DPS its administration’s diversity to be more of a reflection of its student body. Likewise, they said it is important for the district to make a commitment to teachers so they can attract more good teachers.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Participants said they want a thought leader who can create a shared vision and inspire collaboration and action. Furthermore, they advocated for someone with a proven ability to inspire leadership, reduce turnover, and look at past research holistically with the goal of moving the district forward. They said it would be helpful if this person currently works for the district, but at minimum, the incoming Superintendent must have experience with GAPs, working with students of color, and must understand equity.

Participants said this leader should be able to hit the ground running, have experience with prioritization and conflict management, demonstrate a commitment to community engagement, and believe in serving the whole child and all students.
**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

The BEST/LAUNCH Fellows believe that there is a unified language and shared core value within DPS. Despite this, NE and FNE communities feel like there is a pattern, in the district, of decisions being made with little regard for the community engagement process.

Participants said the district must do a lot of work to reassure the community that their voices are valid. They added that the tension between fiscal responsibility and student experience is shared by many schools, which leads to equity issues. These priority issues include supporting educators of color, closing the achievement gap, and developing structures to ensure that equity can be measured in clear and transparent ways.

The Fellows stressed that there are highly passionate individuals who want to bring critical issues to community forums.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

The BEST/LAUNCH Fellows believe DPS should continue shared ownership to increase impact and provide a better experience for every student/family. They said it is so important for people who are impacted by decisions to be part of the decision-making process. Therefore, they stressed the significance of a Superintendent who values community engagement, follows through, and is genuinely authentic. They advocated for a better understanding of diversity in the district so that performance measurements and evaluations are culturally relevant and reflective of the student populations.

Additionally, participants said DPS does not balance innovation and accountability well. They added that within the district, there are significant differences between schools, campus quality, resources, and curriculum. Participants said that while innovative thinking has led to some success, many aspects of the district are failing. Therefore, DPS needs a new frame of reference for vision and success. Participants said it is imperative for the district to improve equity measurements and address issues of inequity across lines of race. In doing so, they will essentially equip school and district leaders with a deeper understanding and the skill set to build up school and district culture, performance measurements, and evaluation.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

BEST/LAUNCH Fellows said they desire an incoming Superintendent who is compassionate, personable, approachable, innovative, and accountable. This leader should have demonstrated success with building trust, engaging the community, and building a solid team, according to participants. Furthermore, the leader must be willing to acknowledge historical action that has adversely affected the district and find a way to build again – corroboratively.

The group also discussed the former and current search process. BEST/LAUNCH Fellows were curious as to why the Board elected to hire a search firm and engage a different process for the 2018 search. The Board provided an explanation and also gave an update on the search timeline.

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**Name of Organization:** DPS Asian Education Advisory Council Meeting  
**Number of attendees:** 7  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Anne Rowe  
**Date:** September 12, 2018

Overall, the Asian Education Advisory Council is looking for a Superintendent who will support all populations, including Asian Americans. The Advisory Council expressed great concern with the district’s lack of support for Asian students, as demonstrated by the lack of Asian administrators and the failure of the district to support Asian American events important to its community. Participants noted that in ten years, the current Superintendent attended the Asian Education Scholarship Luncheon only once - despite it being the biggest fundraiser event to support students in the Asian community.

Some participants expressed that, oftentimes, Asians are not asked to apply for leadership positions because they are typically less vocal than their counterparts. The Council said they would like to see an advocate for Asian Americans in the central office and in the community, so that more Asian staff can be recruited and promoted to leadership positions.
While the Council believes the district has done a good job bridging the gap between parents and educators with home visits - a process they would like to see continued - they still feel Asians are often a forgotten population. They suggested that Asian Americans should have a history month and DPS should consider offering a program about Asian heritage to satisfy the American history elective. “We’d like an opportunity to sit with the Superintendent and just have time to talk outside of the building (similar to this meeting tonight).” Participants stated that oftentimes, Asian teachers, staff, and parents are afraid to ask for things, so they go to other districts. They want a leader who will advocate for all kids, not just fix things for one population in the district.

**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

Facilities expressed that DPS has done a good job with including their division in decisions and allowing them to engage in conversations. However, they fear that a new Superintendent might disrupt the flow and place them on the outside again. They believe improvements in pay equity, promotions, and opportunities need to continue.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

As for their hope for the future, participants said they would like their division to regain control of their work in the school. Currently, principals have more autonomy over facility/operation decisions. They would also like to see improved collaboration between academics and facilities to best support the design of future school buildings. Some suggested that DPS should be the district that others look to as a model.

Finally, participants expressed their belief that career paths are just as important as college paths, so DPS should also focus on life skills classes, such as swimming, home-economics, and technology education.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Overall, Facilities expressed their desire for a district leader who is inclusive, flexible, personable, and transparent. They also emphasized the importance of a leader who is open to hearing all voices, can make adjustments as needed, and remain agile even if an aspect of their vision does not come into fruition.

Participants also asked questions about the search timeline and what they can expect from the search process.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

New Hope addressed several issues that they believe are priority issues for the next Superintendent. They said they are looking for a Superintendent who can increase effectiveness in regards to bridging achievement gaps and would like transparency so they can better understand how the district is assessing and responding to the achievement gap. Participants also advocated for a Superintendent who is willing to evaluate all research, whether it shows success or not, to decide what makes sense for all students. Furthermore, participants would the Superintendent to examine the choice system and assess what it would take to have the best performing schools in all neighborhoods.

Participants expressed their belief that many issues can be resolved by making changes, such as hiring more teachers of color and administrators who are passionate about education, engaging the business communities, and providing higher salaries and/or incentives for teachers.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

First and foremost, New Hope believes DPS requires a visionary leader with proven ability as a change agent. Some implied that DPS must be willing to change because students of this generation have different issues than the prior generation.
Participants said since the issues are not the same as they were, they cannot be addressed using old methodology. Likewise, the administration and teachers cannot continue to lead as they did previously. They stressed the importance of everyone evolving to meet students where they are today. New Hope made a similar assertion about DPS’ large budget – saying that distribution of resources cannot continue in the same vein and must be redistributed and adjusted, according to today’s needs.

Fundamentally, New Hope believes strongly that the next district leader should have education experience, knowledge of curriculum and school operations, and a background working with parents, students, and the community.

Additionally, they expressed their desire for a strong leader with strong character and conviction and the willingness to be in the community. Participants said while the Superintendent does not need to be a Denver native, they should have experience and knowledge of where DPS has been as well as a hopeful vision for the future of the district.

Finally, they asserted that the next leader must have cultural sensitivity as well as experience with diversity and inclusion.

What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

Overall, Strive Prep is passionate about charter schools. They value having an option and feel that the charter schools have more challenging academic offerings and better opportunities (outside of sports). Therefore, they believe choice should be a priority issue for the next Superintendent.

When asked what Strive believes is working well, they said successful programs include free and reduced meals for students - especially amidst cost of living deficiencies, challenging learning opportunities (i.e. honors, AP), and college preparation through charter schools. They also said prep for technical schools and training for other skills outside of college are also important for charter schools to consider.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

Strive’s hope for the future of DPS is that the school board will select a Superintendent who reflects the experience and culture of the people. They advocated for a leader with experience in the field, interest in being involved at the school level, and with a personal passion for reaching students and connecting with community.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Participants expressed their belief that the next district leader should be bilingual, have a minimum of 5-10 years’ experience working in schools, and should value the student voice.

Name of Organization: Colorado Youth for a Change (YOUTH)
Number of attendees: 10
Board Member(s) Present: Anne Rowe
Date: September 13, 2018

What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

The discussion opened with a conversation about “a path to success.” Several students mentioned that they transferred to different schools because they felt they couldn’t be successful at their original school. The participants stressed that increasing options for success is the ultimate goal of public education. Participants support schools that have a family-community vibe and are more supportive of individual student needs, because it makes their learning experience more personalized.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

YOUTH stressed the need to increase models of success and to hire a Superintendent that sees the value in project-based learning as a method of reaching and engaging a higher number of students.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Most said they desire a “relatable” leader. YOUTH stressed the importance of looking for a leader who has “experienced some of the things that DPS students face.” They said they want a Superintendent who understands that each
student is unique and needs a pathway to success that may differ from the traditional model. The group felt strongly that focusing on testing as a main measure of success is detrimental and not effective in capturing the progress and growth of many students. In all, this group advocated for personalized learning and an environment that focuses on the whole student, rather than just the classroom student.

Participants said it is also important for participants said it is also important for the district leader be bilingual, have a background in public education, and possess the courage to make tough decisions – even if they differ from the Board.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

CHE said they are hopeful that DPS will create equitable access to quality education for all students, which includes hiring licensed teachers – not paraprofessionals – and principals who are more supportive of students and what is best for them.

Participants said they are hopeful that soon, DPS will focus less on testing and instead, find a new method to gauge a student’s value and learning ability.

CHE also addressed the need for teachers to be incentivized so they feel valued and will stay in the district. In addition, they expressed their desire for the incoming Superintendent to be prepared to deal with the needs of families who experience crisis. They also advocated for more social-emotional counselors in schools who can deal with high levels of trauma.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

CRE said they want a visionary leader with diversity experience. Without this experience, participants felt the leader would not understand the inequities and adversity that both DPS and Denver face. Participants emphasized the importance of understanding the Latino community in Denver. They added that the lack of experience/understanding of the Denver Latino community might hinder collaboration, transparency, and student engagement. Furthermore, they believe the district leader should demonstrate their investment in DPS by living in Denver and sending their children to DPS Schools.

Su Teatro desires an analytical thinker who can look at the district and education holistically, and concentrate on promoting equity, closing the achievement gap, distributing resources adequately, and addressing staffing and support needs. They seek a Superintendent who brings a global perspective and creates opportunities for students...
of color by providing mentors, role models, and more targeted learning opportunities, such as social studies and ethnic studies. They hope that the district will see parents and community members as part of the education journey and therefore, prioritize and include them.

They want a Superintendent who values the community as a partner and will endeavor to have a strong understanding of the community they are serving.

They would also like a strategic leader who can approach problem solving from a systems perspective and can shift from the norm – as needed – while also balancing Denver’s new history with the old history.

In addition, participants advocated for a diverse candidate, because they would be more amenable to supporting diverse students, understanding that student support extends beyond the classroom to involve the entire student’s family.

Name of Organization: Education Compact
Number of attendees: 25
Board Member(s) Present: Happy Haynes
Date: September 20, 2018

The question and answer format focused mostly on the Board’s plan for the next Superintendent. This discussion is best illustrated by the following sample of questions from the Education Compact, who was addressing the Board:

• Will you name a candidate for interim?
• Are you considering candidate outside the K-12 system?
• What percentage of work vs. show are you looking for in a Superintendent?

Name of Organization: FACE University Community Meeting
Number of attendees: 25
Board Member(s) Present: Happy Haynes, Lisa Flores, and Jennifer Bacon
Date: September 22, 2018

What do you believe is the current state of DPS?

Some FACE participants believe that the district is headed in the right direction but there are many issues that do and will continue to weigh it down. For instance, participants believe neighborhood schools should be improved to allow more kids the option of choosing their home schools. They added that the school district is growing and in their opinion, the 20/20 goals have a long way to go.

FACE said they appreciated DPS’ response to the school shooting at Cole but are concerned about the increased need for social-emotional support. They believe more needs to be done to increase safety and mental health support in all schools.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

Some of FACE University’s hopes for DPS’ future included DPS taking a bigger, more visible stance on issues that affect students and teachers, improving neighborhood schools, creating more equity within the district, offering more resources and funding to cover fundamental basics, engaging parents and community more, and hiring a Superintendent that is more visibly engaged with teachers and community. FACE University participants said they want to see more authentic empowerment of parents, especially because parent surveys often reveal the disappointment parents feel in regards to authentic parent engagement.

Participants advocated for a Superintendent who is focused on equity and understands that some students need more resources than others (social workers, school psychologists, etc.) and that those resources should be a priority for the school district.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Most importantly, FACE University believes that above all else, students should be able to identify with the incoming Superintendent, and that the Superintendent exhibits a keen awareness of different cultures and backgrounds and provides resources to meet the needs of a highly diverse student population.

Name of Organization: DSST Board and Parents
Number of attendees: 40
Board Member(s) Present: Anne Rowe
Date: September 24, 2018

DSST parents and students expressed their appreciation for DSST and the value it offers to students. They then shared their concern that a new
Superintendent may not be supportive or take time to understand their strengths and unique offerings. Participants specifically voiced support for a new Superintendent who will see and acknowledge that what DSST is doing “is essential and not extra.”

Furthermore, participants expressed their desire to have a Superintendent who is going to study Denver, the achievement gap, and variables that affect the entire community in order to better understand what the district is dealing with.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

DSST participants said it is very important to have a visionary leader who can create goals and execute the plan effectively. They are seeking someone who has an education background, is flexible and open to working with a diverse team, and who can lead with a focus on integration and diversity.

DSST would like to see a Superintendent who is rooted in what’s best for students. According to participants, the ideal Superintendent will have an education background and focus on new and innovative ideas for students, including those with special needs. Participants would like to see someone who is a fierce advocate for students, who is willing to partner with colleges and universities, and who is open to what is working but also not afraid to explore new ideas. They said they want the new Superintendent to develop college-bound and trade school-bound students equally so students with different aspirations have equal access to long-term possibilities and opportunities.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

SEO and Advocacy Denver hope that DPS will train their teachers, not just SPED teachers, and provide a strategy to support their learning environment. This includes repairing and/or dealing with the significant reduction in SPED staff and services. They are concerned about the school autonomy that causes SPED students to be pushed out. They strongly recommend that principals be educated on the laws and supports required for SPED students. They are also concerned about the classroom teacher assistance needs, special education services, IEP services follow through, and the effects of school choice on SPED students.

Finally, participants expressed hope for a more collaborative process that allows them to work with private providers and parent advocates to provide continuity of support across multiple environments.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

SEO and Advocacy Denver seek a Superintendent who is well-versed in the learning of all students, is committed to leading by example, and who “walks their talk.” They desire someone who will embrace the resolution and follow-through with successful implementation. They believe the district needs a leader with proven ability to inspire a team as well as someone who is approachable. They expect the Superintendent to be someone who can build a culture that supports and addresses concerns that already exist, as well as new concerns. They want a strong, humble leader who continues to learn and asks for help from the community as they learn about the district.

Participants said they also want a leader who has experience working with teachers and students of color as well as with special needs students. Participants expressed the importance of a district leader who is an educator committed to protecting students, faculty, and the education process. As such, the Superintendent must also have knowledge of how to make traditional school models work for all students.
Participants expressed multiple concerns in regards to the increase in charter schools in the district and stressed the need for neighborhood schools -“our schools.” They also voiced concerns pertaining to unsatisfactory graduation rates and the negative impact on graduation completion, especially by black males. Furthermore, participants said resource equity is inadequate. For instance, some students said they didn’t realize their schools offer college preparatory services. Some parents expressed the importance of being informed of the resources and programs that are available to students and their families. Some parents addressed the “school to prison pipeline,” indicating that while focus is placed on risk factors and programs for the whole child, their families are also in need of support. They strongly suggested the district implement social-emotional programs both within and outside of the classroom, to support families as well.

**What do you believe is the current state of DPS?**

Initially, participants asked about the search process and if the community will have an opportunity to vet candidates. They also asked how the Board will use the feedback from community sessions to inform the hiring of the Superintendent.

Climb Higher also brought up several questions regarding equitable funding, early literacy, the root cause of the achievement gap, diversity and inclusion, division in the community, and district leader engagement, to name a few.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

Climb Higher believes that DPS’ main priority should be equitable funding for schools, specifically for the creation and implementation of focused programs that support more culturally sustainable practices. Overall, individuals were especially focused on improving culture, opportunity, and equity within the district, especially for communities of color. Some discussed the need for a Superintendent who has prior experience turning around low-performing schools through the implementation of consistent academic rigor and additional social-emotional supports. The group also advocated for a more community-engaged search, which would include town hall sessions for all candidates.

Participants spoke in favor of early literacy and 9th grade intervention to ensure that high school completion is on track. They want a Superintendent who will root out the causes of the achievement gap while also focusing on mental health support for schools in order to create more capacity schools. The believe this effort will reach beyond the newly implemented, broad trauma-informed district work. Furthermore, participants advocated for a full-time staff member in every school who will be responsible for mental health support.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Climb Higher believes a leader with experience turning around low-performing schools is very important. They also want a leader who is committed to diversity, can engage with Denver’s diverse community, and has a diverse leadership team that will engage principals and teachers so that they have the information they need to run their schools. Participants stressed the need for equity in funding, as some schools do not have libraries or access to field trips, among other things.

They also believe transparency is important, especially as it pertains to school measurements, and said the SPF frequently changes and is difficult to interpret.

**What programs would you like for DPS to start, continue or stop?**

SEO said they are not aware of available resources or how to access specific programs and services. Therefore, they would like DPS to start sharing what they have available, so that parents can spend less time “fighting for the needs of their
children." Participants said they would also like DPS to consider offering social-emotional support for families - not just students - as well as resources that help parents support their students better. Finally, participants said they would like DPS to find more creative, fun, and exciting methods for teaching students.

They requested that DPS stop assigning students to homebound services, because that eliminates social interaction for those students. Instead, participants recommended that students with behavior problems should be equipped with the tools to resolve their issues instead of being displaced.

**What is your hope for DPS in the future?**

SEO Advocacy Denver members said they hope DPS will be more transparent and engage the community more – even through tough conversations. They believe every student should have an IEP, because every student learns differently. Participants also said resources should be distributed more equitably to support every student and should include resources to support early intervention, early detection, and preparation for challenges that SPED students may face.

Additionally, one parent stated, “there is no placement for my child because there is no middle school for SPED.” The parent further explained that her child was not enrolled in school because of SPED deficiencies.

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

SEO Advocacy Denver wants a Superintendent that is collaborative and values working with families, understands what families are dealing with daily, and is transparent about issues. They believe the next district leader should have strong ethics, experience in the classroom, and political savvy.

Overall, Facilities believes the next district leader should have a combination of education and business experience because with both, the Superintendent might understand that a student’s home environment is equally important to the academic components of their learning environment. Therefore, the district must support the whole child.

Facilities members also desire a leader who is inclusive of every division of DPS. One representative said, “[Facilities] feels like the stepchildren of the district,” because they do not feel equally valued. Participants expressed the importance of principals who have the abilities necessary to manage the school environment. For example, Facilities believes they are experts in their field, yet school principals largely dictate building needs - despite having little to no expertise with building and environmental management. Facilities staff want to work with school leaders on such problems as school heat, school cooling, and other issues that create healthy environments for the students.

They would also like a Superintendent with aptitude who understands that non-traditional learning is just as important as traditional programs. For example, Facilities believes too much emphasis is placed on college preparation and STEM, whereas trade and art experience are not emphasized, even though they are equally important. They desire a leader that will evaluate the success of tradition but also look to the future to support the current needs of today’s students.

Facilities also expressed interest in having a leader who is less politically charged and is more focused on education. They want a Superintendent who is willing to listen to the expertise of the stakeholders who are directly immersed in the issues that are being discussed and decided.

They believe that the district needs a leader who puts more resources into teachers so that class sizes can be smaller and teachers can focus on helping students succeed. They said paraprofessionals cannot be substituted for teacher.
Name of Organization: DPS Teachers (South High School)  
Number of attendees: 8  
Board Member(s) Present: Anne Rowe and Carrie Olson  
Date: October 9, 2018

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

First and foremost, DPS teachers believe it is imperative for the incoming leader to have an education background. Someone said, “It’s hard to follow someone who doesn’t know our classroom.” Therefore, DPS teachers believe the new leader should have classroom experience, in addition to prior experience learning another language and leading an urban school district. Participants noted that a leader who understands teaching will better understand students, teachers, and the challenges they face daily. DPS teachers are also looking for a tried and true risk taker, change agent, and negotiator with a strong will to succeed. They are seeking someone who is willing to work collaboratively with the community and DCTA and who can assemble a strong team. Participants voiced their preference for a Superintendent who is a female and person of color.

What is your hope for DPS in the future?

DPS Teachers’ biggest hope for the future is that the district will adapt a change agent mentality and work towards resolving issues, rather than merely digesting the data developed to identify issues. Several participants agreed that if the process is not working or the plan is ineffective, the district should rethink the process and try something new. Likewise, participants said the district spends too much time looking at GAP data…and not fixing the GAP.

Ultimately, DPS Teachers believe the world is changing and DPS must learn to evolve. They suggested DPS could do so by restoring trust, repairing the disconnect between teachers and the administration, and allowing teachers to connect with college professors to better understand what they are looking for in students.

Teachers also hope that DPS will restore their original pay scale and will allow educators to take more classes. “If you invest in people you will have better outcomes.”

What programs would you like for DPS to start, continue or stop?

DPS teachers would like to continue the “home visit” program, and suggested DPS do more with “career connect” and offer it for all high schools. They said they would like DPS to discontinue the LEAP program or at a minimum, equip LEAP facilitators with formal training on how to use it successfully, along with a graduation component. Teachers also suggested that “education connect” allows for more teachers of color.

DPS teachers said while remedial rates are growing, no real progress is being made. Therefore, teachers seek autonomy and would like the flexibility to engage students outside of the classroom more, especially since students are becoming increasingly bored with traditional teaching practices. Teachers would like to “explore the community [with their students] and be part of it,” engage students more, and be part of a “whole child” district. Teachers also feel strongly that DPS relies on testing and academic data too much and does not leave room for children to “enjoy school.”

Name of Organization: LGBTQ+ Students  
Number of attendees: 5  
Board Member(s) Present: NA  
Date: October 9, 2018

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

Students expressed their appreciation for the LGBTQ+ issues that are being addressed and expressed their desire for this level of support to continue with the next district leader. While they appreciate the response they have had regarding some issues, they want to Superintendent to know that they are concerned about the experience and professionalism of some teachers. The students expressed the need for more support of LGBTQ+ students, especially in regards to student safety and anti-bullying. They are concerned that student voices are being ignored and explained that this is general concern for all students, not only LGBTQ+ students.

They would like a Superintendent who is visible, accessible, and values youth voices. The LGBTQ+ students suggested the creation of a youth advisory board as an extension of the current student advisory board, as well as the incorporation of student town hall meetings.
Students suggested that DPS prioritize trainings for administrators which outline successful methods for supporting LGBTQ+ students. There is fear that “ground is being lost and bullying behaviors are being emboldened,” as federal policies continue to work against safety measures for LGBTQ+ students. Students also stressed the importance of issues affecting both homeless and undocumented students, who are also LGBTQ+.

Name of Organization: DPS Young Alumni Group (2008-2018)
Number of attendees: 16
Board Member(s) Present: Lisa Flores
Date: October 10, 2018

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Much of the discussion focused on the experiences of alumni throughout their K-12 journey. Individuals in the group talked about their experiences with DPS and shared how they felt both prepared and unprepared for college, experiences that differed among the group. Those who expressed deficiencies in their college preparation attributed it to having poor student habits, learning habits, and note-taking methods. Some shared that they also did not understand the process and planning required to prepare for college, and were not equipped, in part, due to the lack of school mentorship. Others felt they were prepared well, in light of being enrolled in charter schools. One participant cited “earning their associates degree by the time they graduated from SEC.” Several said they were motivated to attend college, largely, because of their charter school experience.

Many expressed their preference for a Superintendent who has an education background, understands the DPS community, and is a person of color. Participants advocated for a person of color because they said that would enable the district leader to be more connected with the full community and understand the issues that Denver families face. Ultimately, participants agreed that the Superintendent must place students first.

They want a leader who is visible and accessible. They are also seeking someone who is more community-driven than business-driven, has high expectations for every student, and also holds every teacher to high standards. Participants said a new Superintendent should distribute resources equitably taking into consideration the needs of the students they serve.

Name of Organization: Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Number of attendees: 50
Board Member(s) Present: Happy Haynes and Barbara O’Brien
Date: October 10, 2018

Denver Metro Chamber members expressed concern with DPS’ plan and direction, stating, “the district has not drastically improved the achievement gap.” From their perspective, DPS has endured only a modest reduction in dropout rates. Consequently, they asked what the district is doing to research other urban school districts, for best practice success. They also asked how DPS is supporting teachers and whether support includes a career path to leadership as well as methods to retain talent.

As it relates to the search, Chamber members asked what characteristics and qualities have been identified as important by other community roundtable meetings for the next district leader. As described by Board members, emergent themes include: integrity, transparency, experience in urban education, communication skills, focus on leadership reflecting the diversity of student, community engagement, and visible/accessible presence.

Chamber members stressed the importance of addressing racial inequity. They stated that there was hope that open enrollment and choice would provide a more level playing field. They reminded Board members that these policies have been challenging and the district has been criticized for them. Even as many schools are working toward greater diversity, lack of funding for needed resources makes quality education programs more challenging.

Chamber members expressed that DPS should be considering candidates with successful leadership track records, excellent communication skills, and those who are committed to workforce education.

Name of Organization: STAND for Children
Number of attendees: 7
Board Member(s) Present: Carrie Olsen and Anne Rowe
Date: October 11, 2018
What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

STAND for Children requested more social-emotional supports in schools and expressed their desire for a stronger commitment to programs that support students who are struggling with their own emotions and the emotions of other students. They stressed the need for more social workers and psychologists in middle schools and high schools to help students in need.

STAND expressed their concerns with equity funding and building trust between the community and the district. They said they would like to see low-achieving schools improved as well as more diversity within the administration.

Participants believe the District is lacking transparency. They noted that community outreach plans have also not been clear. For instance, some members shared their concern with not being aware of the Superintendent search process. They seek a Superintendent who sees organizations like STAND for Children as partners in the educational community.

What programs would you like for DPS to Start, Continue or Stop?

They believe DPS needs to rethink the SPF framework because it does not show growth and it feels like a moving target. Furthermore, they said testing should not shape the whole education experience.

Participants believe that DPS needs a better plan for supporting the “whole child” that includes accountability measures which extend beyond test scores.

They suggested that DPS initiate programs that include conversations about marijuana, suicide, and mental health and then provide the vision and resources to support each conversation.

Participants expressed concern about racial inequities within the school system.

What are your hopes for DPS Future?

Participants said they would like the current district vision, which is shared and supported by more than a few, to be reevaluated. They want a district leader who is transparent and willing to explain how funds are disseminated and used as well as someone who encourages dialogue on hot-topic issues. Finally, they expressed support for a district which holds both charter schools and traditional neighborhood schools to the same standards.

Participants said they are seeking consistency, less bureaucracy, and the simplification and alignment of processes across the entire district. Participants provided examples of funding, college preparation, and hiring practices.

Someone explained that many have a fear of retaliation for speaking out about SPF and other areas that are deemed sensitive. More than one principal stated they were personally told by their superiors to “stop speaking out on issues.”

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

As it relates to characteristics and qualities, DPS principals are looking for an educator with administrative experience. They want a district leader who will take time to develop a plan, set realistic expectations for that plan, and hold all stakeholders responsible for the successful implementation of the plan. They voiced their preference for someone who will evaluate current policies and work with stakeholders to see if they can be enhanced or improved. Finally, they want a leader who listens, knows how to build coalitions, supports school principals, and is open to creating collaborative solutions.
Extended Leadership said they would like DPS to reexamine SPF+ and stop focusing solely on tests and scores to determine success. They stated that some of the factors which affect the district negatively do not pertain to tests, but rather to institutional racism, bias practices, segregated schools, and mental health issues.

They would like the district to stop all programs and processes that are not deemed effective. Likewise, they believe the district must find programs and processes that are sustainable and turn them into long-term practices.

What are your hopes for DPS Future?
Extended Leadership is hopeful that DPS will create a more collaborative environment that allows divisions to work more efficiently. Some participants implied that there is a disconnect in the working relationship between schools and the central administration.

They would like the district to be an agent of change and get to know their stakeholders. They believe this will help the district to balance innovation with change and build trust – both internally and externally – because the community will see that the district is listening.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?
Participants voiced strong support for a person of color with a K-12 education background who comes from a coalition rather than corporate America. They said they also want somebody with expertise working in a large district with sizable gentrification and who has a solid track record of engaging community stakeholders.

Participants said they want a Superintendent who is a transparent leader with political savvy and is not afraid to ask tough questions and advocate for the district. This leader must be vested in DPS and believe in DPS’ mission and core values wholeheartedly. They said the Superintendent could show positive investment and advocacy by taking a stance on lowering the cost of living in Denver, to ensure teachers can afford to live in the district.

Extended Leadership would also like to see a leader who understands social justice, inequity, and has managed a large budget for a district the size of DPS.

Padres Unidos brought several questions to the attention of the Board regarding areas of concern shared by many of their constituents. Some topics of discussion addressed inequities and armed police officers in schools, as well as what the district is doing to resolve community concerns around both issues. In addition, participants expressed concern about the district creating safe and welcoming schools for immigrant students. Members pointed out what they perceive as “transparency issues,” which pertain to not receiving updates on issues and district communications in a timely manner. Some said Padres Unidos wants to receive timely and complete information so that it can keep its members informed about policies and practices. They want to be able to provide feedback and input to the school board members.

Participants raised questions about the Superintendent search process pertaining to timeline, selection process, candidate requirements, and community engagement. Participants said they want a diverse Superintendent who is bilingual and can represent the community. They added that the incoming Superintendent should understand the importance of integrating equity into systems to better meet students and their needs. They stressed that Latinos are the new student majority and a district leader must understand and appreciate that. Finally, the group reiterated its concern about SROs and their roles in the schools and within community.

A number of themes emerged while discussing the Superintendent search, including:

- Teacher leadership
- Strengthening neighborhoods
- Financial transparency
- Early literacy partnership with the City of Denver
- The role that behavioral health plays at DPS
- What it means to be a trauma informed district
- The need for teachers of color
Participants also addressed issues of access, equitable distribution of funds, institutional racism, and immigration.

**Name of Organization:** Charter Roundtable  
**Number of attendees:** 22  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Jen Bacon and Anne Rowe  
**Date:** September 19, 2018

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

The Charter Roundtable noted several qualities they consider important for the Superintendent search. They believe strongly in alternative educational models, so they would like a leader who also values “choice” and innovation.

They want a forward-thinking leader with education experience who believes in fairness process, is community-oriented, and possesses integrity. They also desire a leader that is from Denver and knows Denver well. They added that the new leader must understand and embrace the diversity of Denver schools.

They believe the district leader must have the ability to listen to all contingencies from charter and traditional schools and facilitate understanding and equity, because doing so is in the best interest of students. They desire a values-based leader with a commitment to quality school choices in every neighborhood. They seek someone who will follow through with their commitments and who understands what it means to serve students today.

They want a leader who can provide clear communication and vision and weigh decisions against multiple voices and models, all while building a collaborative bridge to unite the district.

The Charter Roundtable also addressed a few areas of concern as it relates to the Superintendent transition. Specifically, their concerns pertained to changes that might naturally occur under different leadership and whether or not new leadership with a new vision would add value or set the district back further.

Likewise, they relayed what they believe to be “areas of opportunity” that may result from the Superintendent transition, such as the possibility of creating a fresh start and exploring new ideas and new perspectives.

**Name of Organization:** DPS Belong  
**Number of attendees:** 12  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Carrie Olson and Anne Rowe  
**Date:** October 1, 2018

Overall, DPS Belong wants to see a Superintendent who will continue to support LGBTQ+ groups. They want a leader who shows their support by being more visible with LGBTQ+ initiatives, and by offering more intentional training for school leaders in regards to supporting LGBTQ+ communities.

They desire an accountable leader who will move beyond discussion to implementation - someone who will intentionally push the needle forward. They believe the district is doing right by LGBTQ+ students but agree that bullying, fear, and discrimination still exists. Participants added that teachers and students need a safe space for conversation and fellowship. They are seeking a district leader who recognizes the need for supportive structures for LGBTQ+ employees and students and who is willing to stand up to support these initiatives and require other district leaders to be accountable for them.

**Name of Organization:** West High School Alumni Group  
**Number of attendees:** 25  
**Board Member(s) Present:** Carrie Olson, Happy Haynes and Angela Cobian  
**Date:** October 2, 2018

**What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?**

Collectively, the West High School Alumni Group strongly advocated for a person of color as well as someone who knows DPS well and understands priority issues for the city of Denver, such as gentrification and gangs. They would like a leader vested in Denver with an education background. They prefer someone who lives in Denver, has taught in Denver, and raises their children in DPS. Special emphasis was placed on the hiring of a bilingual leader.

They would also like a compromiser - someone who is willing to listen to all stakeholders and support all segments of the community. They are also looking for someone who will consider nontraditional methods for engaging students and preparing them for adulthood - even if students are not interested in college. The participants were concerned about school closures in the
neighborhood and want a new Superintendent to be mindful of the impact these closures have on the community. Safety issues on the school campuses were mentioned by most participants as the top priority for the new Superintendent. Equitable distribution of resources between neighborhood schools and charter schools was also mentioned as a concern that they want a new district leader to address.

What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

LGBTQ+ parents are looking for a leader who will set a clear vision and implement a plan to support all students in the district. This leader should be an effective communicator who is visible and accessible, and intentional in their support for LGBTQ+ students.

They want a leader who is community-oriented and is committed to social justice and serving marginalized students.

Board Community Stakeholder Meetings

Name of Organization: LGBTQ+ Parent Meeting
Number of attendees: 5
Board Member(s) Present: Lisa Flores
Date: October 9, 2018

What programs would you like for DPS to start, continue or stop?

Parents and students expressed concern that many principals and teachers are not properly handling the bullying of LGBTQ+ students. The district has policies in place, however, they are not being implemented in some schools. They have heard principals express that they lack the ability to deal with transgender students because they’ve never dealt with a situation. Parents requested that the district provide more training for school principals and teachers so they are better poised to support LGBTQ+ students. Both parents and students offered information and support about how the district can build this support including through trainings, town halls in which students have a platform to be heard, task forces, and educational forums.

They are particularly concerned about the bullying of LGBTQ+ students and were adamant that the students need support from principals and teachers so that truancy and dropping out do not become the answers, adding, “schools should be a safe space for students at all times.”

What are your hopes for DPS Future?

They would also like to see more programming for LGBTQ+ students and parents, and more of a focus on LGBTQ+ history in curriculum. They want to help train teachers, principals, and administrators about how to protect and advocate for LGBTQ+ students through programs and curriculum.

Name of Organization: Principal Forum (South High School)
Number of attendees: 4
Board Member(s) Present: Anne Rowe and Carrie Olson
Date: October 10, 2018

What programs would you like for DPS to start, continue or stop?

The participants voiced their concerns about the use of SPF in evaluating schools. They fear that parents have been distracted by the color coding and have come to rely on a system that does not fully inform parents of what each school offers. They believe that SPF has caused parents to take their children out of DPS which has resulted in schools closing.

They also expressed concern about assisting parents in choosing their students’ high schools including innovative tools and how high school transfers take place.

DPS Principals would like the district to find a successful method for re-integrating students who were on leave.

What are your hopes for DPS Future?

The participants want to replicate what works throughout the district and provide the resources to do so, especially as it relates to filling the achievement gaps. They want a leader who will work with the community and support teachers.

Principals are concerned that the district has created an environment of unhealthy competition among schools - eliminating the spirit of collaboration, unity, and alignment throughout the district. They seek a leader who can support innovation and creativity among all the school leaders.
What are the expectations, characteristics and qualities you are looking for in the next Superintendent?

The participants want a Superintendent who is an educator with administrative experience who can build a cohesive team, learn from all stakeholders, and has experience running a district that is similar to Denver in size. Participants said if the new district leader is external to Denver, they should commit to getting to know the entire district. Participants said they are seeking an individual who is an independent thinker with real world experience, is committed to leading a strong team built on collaboration, understands the need for partnerships throughout the community, and is willing to listen to all employees. They also seek someone who has new ideas, is accountable, collaborative, has political acumen, and is not afraid to advocate for students.

They believe that the Superintendent must be able to demonstrate a commitment both to equity and putting students first.