WHEREAS, Denver Public Schools (DPS) is committed to our mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our diverse society; and

WHEREAS, DPS has a shared core value of equity, in that we celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all of our students; and

WHEREAS, DPS has a shared core value of accountability, in that we take responsibility for our individual and collective commitments; we grow from success; we learn from failure; and

WHEREAS, the DPS Board of Education (the Board), as outlined in the Denver Plan 2020, is committed to eliminating gaps in opportunity and achievement for all students – especially students of color, English language learners, and students frequently left behind by circumstance -- and believes it is every DPS educator’s responsibility to support the development of each child’s unique assets and to provide targeted supports that will help all students achieve their potential; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that disparities between the achievement of white students and that of Black or African-American students persist, even though these students have the same academic potential and all bring unique, valuable perspectives and experiences to our classrooms; and

WHEREAS, today our Black or African-American students represent 13% of the district but experience disproportionality of access to learning in that they are disproportionately overrepresented in discipline statistics and special education programming while being underrepresented in rigorous classes including Advanced Placement, honors and gifted and talented programming:

• 28% of out of school suspensions in 2017-18 were experienced by Black or African-American students;
• 16.5% of students identified with a disability in 2017-18 were Black or African-American;
• 10% of students enrolled in rigorous high schools courses in 2017-18 were Black or African-American;

WHEREAS, our Black and African-American students also experience a disproportionality in academic outcomes:

• in 2017-18, 67% of Black or African-American students graduated on time while 78% of their white peers graduated on time;
• in 2017-18 only 2% of the Black or African-American students identified with a disability were on grade level as compared to 21% of their white peers; and
WHEREAS, additionally our Black and African-American students are least likely to report that their Whole Child needs are met with 58% reporting they feel safe and 77% reporting that they feel supported on our annual Whole Child Survey as compared to 67% and 82% of their white peers respectively.

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that both research and practice have created an unbalanced picture that overemphasizes the deficits of Black and African-American children, families and community, instead of celebrating them for the unique gifts they bring with them into schools and providing them the opportunity to access more rigorous grade level classes and materials; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, in response to concerns from our schools and the community, DPS commissioned Dr. Sharon Bailey to research in detail the experiences of our African-American educators as well as their perspectives and concerns about how our African-American students are being cared for and educated. In response to this report, the Board and the Superintendent commissioned the African-American Equity Task Force in the fall of 2016; and

WHEREAS, on December 5, 2018, key staff and stake holders embedded in the work of increasing African-American success identified the following key district level barriers to ensuring the success of black students:

• Lack of clarity about what equity means for DPS and competing priorities impeding focus;
• Unclear expectations regarding what equitable outcomes we seek to achieve;
• Confusion around how our belief in schools as the unit of change and flexibilities should impact district-wide priority setting to target supports for black students across the system;
• Need for more effective structures for collaboration and cohesion of work across the district;
• Need for district team members at all levels to engage in and commit to the hard and intentional work of becoming more culturally proficient in service to our students and communities; and

WHEREAS, the Board is reminded that when we focus and target our efforts, we see success as evidenced by the results we have achieved through our English Language Acquisition, Concurrent Enrollment, and Early Literacy initiatives.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board embraces the excellence of Black and African-American students and will prioritize and target their academic achievement. To this end, the Board directs the Superintendent to create a plan by May 31, 2019 to be operationalized by the start of the 2019-20 school year that utilizes the tools, systems, resources and talent that exist within our district and community and increases the investment of students and their families in their own successes by focusing on the following three main areas of work, and therefore see marked improvement for Black or African-American students over the next three years:

School-Level: Prioritize Black Student Success
We will prioritize supporting the success of our black students by requiring that all schools in our family of schools participate in an equity building initiative. As part of this equity work, all schools will review student performance data and referral data (discipline and special education) to understand how their black students are doing on an individual level, develop a plan of action to increase their success, set goals for supporting these students including prioritizing black student access to grade-level and more rigorous coursework, and clearly articulate how they will monitor their progress toward these goals and increasing black student achievement.

District-Wide: Be a District that is Community Driven, Expertly Supported
We will prioritize valuing communities and families as true partners in our work by training all members of Team DPS in implicit bias and culturally responsive education on an ongoing basis, with a special emphasis on staff working directly in front of students.

We will assess how we are doing and include families and external community members in holding us accountable.

Central Office: Equitable by Design
We will develop a common language for what equity looks like for Black or African American students, and define the results of the additional focus on Black Excellence – at the adult level (relationships/teaching); student level (identity development, student outcomes); systems level (changes to how we operate and function).

We will perform an equity audit to understand what we are already doing successfully to advance equity and where we have gaps and opportunities for improvement. We will review our structures, priorities, plans, definitions, and goals by department to figure out how we as an institution can better prioritize the success of our black students.

We will know we are successful when we have established school-specific targets for Black or African-American students, aligned with instructional priorities that are carefully monitored for progress and gaps, and therefore the opportunities for success and the number of Black and African-American students at or above grade level increase.

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Anne Rowe, Board President                                      Dr. Carrie Olson, Secretary