

Recommendations for Denver Public Schools

Reimagine SPF Committee | May 2020

Recommendations Overview

Committee Recommendations:

1. Adopt the state performance framework to capture and track essential information about how our schools are performing and how they relate to other districts and schools across the state to meet state accountability requirements.

- a. Federal and State Accountability:** This tool acts as an initial scan to determine, at a high level, the general condition of a school, the results of which might suggest additional assessments and interventions. The committee recommends that DPS use the Colorado State SPF for accountability purposes to meet federal ESSA and state requirements. It is not designed to report on school quality but acts as a useful assessment of the generalized performance measures of school performance that conveys comparable data across schools. The state also has a threshold for when they consider other more significant interventions, which might include gathering more data on potential school closure.
- b. Local Accountability:** It is important that we have systems in place to support schools, keep them off the state accountability clock, and hold schools accountable to high expectations. The state framework will be used to trigger the local accountability processes. .

Recommendations #2 and #3 are intended to drive transparent information sharing that paints a more robust picture of each school's performance and for the school district to work with schools in support of continuous improvement. These recommendations are not intended to add parameters or expectations related to triggering state and local accountability requirements.

2. Create a School Dashboard to inform all stakeholders on school performance and growth.

An important step in this process is to empower all schools to present themselves in the most comprehensive and accurate way possible. It is our intention that this dashboard includes a broader set of information and does not include a summative rating or score, but rather shares important information about schools. This will provide parents and the broader community with a more accurate picture of each school, and because of the broader set of indicators which speak to a wider array of what is valued in an education, lead to a better fit between students and schools.

3. Leverage a collaborative continuous learning and improvement cycle to assess the ongoing performance of schools across our three value domains: Academics, Whole Child, and Culture/Climate.

A continuous improvement learning cycle is meant to fully explore the deeper data story through a robust body of evidence, diagnose key strengths and weaknesses across a variety of outcomes, flag potential problems for early action, and support school-level improvement strategies. While the dashboard does provide a more robust body of

measures than the former SPF, we also recognize that there could be additional metrics that the district could utilize to truly drive school improvement such as interim assessments, an accounting of the resources and support provided by the district or available at the school and metrics that are simply too nuanced to measure empirically. We hope that the District will utilize the research conducted by the committee to help inform their processes to improve schools.

The committee would like to issue one note of caution. It is a very difficult balancing act between having full transparency of data and providing an opportunity for the context of that data to be understood and acknowledged. For example, a school might have a high student turnover rate due to having a large homeless population. But, without that context, the school might be viewed as a “bad school” due to its low student retention numbers. We hope the district will consider including school context along with these types of measures in order for the community to get a clearer picture of each school’s true strengths and weaknesses.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it is clear that no single tool is going to resolve the spectrum of opinions and perspectives held across such a wide range of diverse stakeholders. What has, however, become evident along the way, is that all stakeholders deserve access to critical information. Whether a member of the school board, a parent, a teacher, a principal or a local community member who wants to know more, it is important that the community has access to key information that illuminates a wide range of information about our schools. As a result, the multiple buckets of both quantitative and qualitative information that may be shared as a result of this proposal’s recommendations are an area of agreement that the committee stands by. This kind of transparency is ultimately in the best interest of the children and families being served by our schools.

We also understand that it is imperative to align the district SPF with the updated Denver Plan. Aligning this reimagined SPF to the Denver Plan will ensure our plan for holding our schools accountable is aligned to our district’s vision. It is our intent to ensure the implementation of this framework is a part of the implementation of the Denver Plan.