

December 3, 2020

DPS Board of Education Members and Interim Superintendent Jones,

As leaders of Denver's vibrant and diverse charter school community, we're writing today to ensure continued outreach and dialogue during this moment of incredible change at Denver Public Schools. Board President Olson has assured us that we will be "seen, heard and well supported through these transitions and beyond." We appreciate this sentiment and want to provide our initial thoughts on how we best see this commitment being actualized.

As charter schools, we represent more than 21,000 students and families across DPS. This translates into over 20% of total District enrollment. We want to ensure that our voices are considered in the processes the Board and Staff are setting up to address the recent transitions of Superintendent Cordova, Deputy Superintendent Mark Ferrandino, and Jennifer Holladay, as well as other changes on the Portfolio Management Team.

Superintendent Cordova has been a strong ally for our work and our schools over time, always with an eye towards equity and what is best for our most vulnerable students. We hope that DPS will continue to honor these commitments to all students moving forward.

Given our current context, we also know that in her absence it will be critically important that there is still strong leadership, particularly as it relates to the health risks connected to reopening schools. We appreciate the Board acting quickly to name Interim Superintendent Jones and know that the Board's process to select a long-term Superintendent will be central to the future of the District. We urge you to include the voice of us as charter leaders and, more importantly, the voice of our students and families in this process.

In addition, we have deeply appreciated the support and partnership we have received from the Portfolio Management Team under the leadership of Jennifer Holladay and are concerned about the high level of change on that team. While we see all of DPS as our partners, it has been critical to have a team that is dedicated to supporting autonomous schools (both us and the 39 innovation schools) and advocating for differentiation in District systems given our unique needs. While we know that hiring and organizational structure are staff decisions, we wanted to take this opportunity to implore the District to maintain a dedicated, unified team for autonomous school support and authorizing functions. It is essential that this team be led by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure the needs of our 21,000 students are represented in decision-making spaces. We strongly advocate for representatives from the charter community as part of the hiring process for this role as well as that of the Superintendent.

This has been a tremendous amount of change in a challenging time and we know you as a Board have asked for patience as you make decisions on how to move forward. We deeply respect this need, and we believe in the Board's commitment to finding a leader who is focused on our District's most vulnerable students and supporting schools, like ours, that serve these students well. We welcome the chance to be a part of these conversations and look forward to a process grounded in collaboration and Students First. We would like to request a meeting with Interim Superintendent Jones and Board representatives in early 2021 to discuss this further; please let us know when this would be possible.

In Partnership For Students and Families,

Melissa Mouton, 5280 High School

Rebecca McLean, Academy 360

Jennifer Jackson, Academy of

Urban Learning

Terri Bissonette, American Indian

Academy of Denver

Clark Callahan, Colorado High

School Charter

Marcia Fulton, Compass Academy

Stephen Parce, Denver Justice

Letia Frandina, Downtown Denver

Expeditionary School

Bill Kurtz, DSST Public Schools

Marnie Moody-Cooke, The

Odyssey School

Kathy Benzel, Denver Language

School

Carol Bowar, Girls Athletic

Leadership School

Christine Ferris, Highline Academy

Tomi Amos, KIPP Colorado

Schools

Laura Pretty, Monarch Montessori

Kristen Williams, Omar D. Blair K-8

School

Jason March, REACH Charter

School

Karen Ikegami, Rise Up

Community School

James Cryan, Rocky Mountain

Prep

Kate Bergles, SOAR Denver

Chris Gibbons, STRIVE Prep

Bret Poppleton, The Cube

David Singer, University Prep

Kate Mishara, Wyatt Academy