

Community Views on Quality and Equity in Education

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Brown, Black, and Indigenous students and their families have invaluable perspectives on quality and equity in education. This report presents those perspectives based on a year-long study conducted by community co-researchers. For many years, the terms quality and equity have been used by the district to describe Denver Public Schools' (DPS) values and goals. However, as the DPS 2020 Community Insights report indicates, the meanings of quality and equity are not fully shared or understood by DPS educators or alumni, nor by DPS students and their families. With this in mind, community members (community organization staff) and formally-trained researchers (academics who work, parent, and/or live in Metro Denver) collaborated to design and carry out a study about quality and equity in DPS.

Over a period of five months, data for this study were collected through 200 community surveys and 28 community interviews (in English or Spanish), each consisting of 3-10 participants with a total of 92 interview participants. Each community interview was hosted by community organization staff members, recorded, and transcribed before being analyzed by the formally trained researchers.

Indigenous, Brown, and Black¹ families, students, alumni, and educators discussed five topics that are related to educational quality and equity: systems, responsiveness, struggles, voice, and hope. Combined, these topics emphasize the need for a systemic approach to racial justice in DPS.

“. . . it's incredibly fundamental for them to address issues such as racial injustice.”

“I just don't see a focus on elevating student voices and actually learning from their perspectives.”

“I heard. . . someone saying that it starts at home, but how does that start at home if the parents don't even have those resources to help their kids?”



90K

STUDENTS ENROLLED

Denver Public Schools (DPS) is Colorado's largest school district with a total of 90,000 students enrolled.



70%

ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR

More than 70% are students of color who deserve the best public education.

¹Throughout this report, we alternate the order of these three racial-ethnic groups to honor their significant contributions of leadership for racial and educational justice in DPS and throughout the US.

Based on what participants shared, the community co-researchers identified community-based recommendations to help DPS clarify the meanings of quality and equity and to achieve both throughout the district. These recommendations are:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 Create systems that ensure consistency across and within DPS schools for equitable, quality education.
- 2 Hire, support, retain, and develop Black, Brown, and Indigenous educators and leaders at all levels of the DPS community.
- 3 Provide rigorous, relevant, culturally-rooted, and racial justice curricula for all students.
- 4 Combat school-to-prison pipelines with an action plan and timetable.
- 5 Provide pathways for Brown, Black, and Indigenous students and families to pursue dreams, opportunities, and possibilities.
- 6 Honor and incorporate Indigenous, Black, and Brown student/family/community definitions of success.
- 7 Expand pathways for multiple postsecondary options that align with Black, Brown, and Indigenous students' interests and needs.
- 8 Prioritize Brown, Black, and Indigenous students' well-being and provide ongoing, culturally-affirming mental health support.
- 9 Listen to and respect the voices of Indigenous, Black, Brown students, families, and educators, and engage them in leading educational change.
- 10 Improve and increase parent/family communication, support, and opportunities for learning and growth.

Full report available at <https://www.yaaspa.org>.



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