

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: JUNE 15, 2009

Contact: Alex Medler – 720.635.8329

COMMUNITY GROUPS RELEASE FIRST OF ITS KIND REPORT ON DENVER'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS Groups Call on all Citizens to Join in Push for Urgent Improvement

DENVER, CO – Today the Colorado Children's Campaign, the Metro Organizations for People and A+ Denver released a joint report on the state of Denver Public Schools, calling current achievement levels dismal, but seeing hope for improvement with promising reforms in place.

The report, titled, *Denver's Public Schools: Reforms, Challenges and the Future*, is a first of its kind analysis, offering a comprehensive look at how well DPS is performing in educating its students. The three community groups joined forces to produce the report because of a shared concern that unless the public can understand the true state of its public schools, it will be difficult to build the public will for the dramatic reform needed to improve student outcomes.

“There is a steady stream of information about school and student performance, but unless you can look at all these different measurements together, it is hard to get the big picture of what is going on,” said Alex Medler, Vice President for Research and Analysis of the Children's Campaign and one of the authors of the report.

“Our community faces a crisis and the people of this city need to know that,” said Federico Peña, Chairman of the Board of A+ Denver and former Denver Mayor. “We have a school system that is going to require major change to give the students in our community the education they both need and deserve. And that will require significant public and political will,” he added.

The report gives the leadership of Denver Public Schools credit for enacting a number of research-based reforms that have had success in other urban districts. While DPS hasn't yet seen dramatic improvement as a result of these reforms, the report cautions against the urge to drop reforms and adopt others before giving them a reasonable chance to succeed.

(more)

“What often happens is that school leadership changes and there is this expectation that new leaders bring new reform, but that can be exactly what prevents progress,” said Medler. “DPS has some well researched reforms in place. The focus should be on improving them and supporting them with the necessary resources, not dumping them before they have a chance to get traction and show results,” he added.

Nola Miguel, a parent leader with MOP spoke at the noon luncheon at which the report was released. She told attendees that MOP parent and community leaders have been strong supporters of school autonomy and innovation reforms which were highlighted in the study saying, “we need to accelerate these reforms, demand rigorous research on what is working and not working and engage more parents and students in making our schools the best in the nation.”

DPS Superintendent Tom Boasberg told those attending the report presentation, "this report highlights the need to accelerate the reforms underway in the Denver Public Schools. Though we are making progress in key areas, the status quo is profoundly unacceptable. We need to work closely with our families, our students and our teachers to speed up the pace of improvement in our schools so that every one of our students has the opportunity to graduate from high school and attend college."

The three community groups will use the report to start a community awareness campaign and dialogue about the performance of Denver’s public schools and what needs to happen to accelerate reform.

You can see a copy of the full report by going to:

www.coloradokids.org

www.aplusdenver.org

The Colorado Children’s Campaign is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization working to improve the lives of Colorado’s more than one million children by expanding access to quality health care, K-12 education and early childhood experiences. For more information, please visit www.coloradokids.org.

A+ Denver is an independent nonpartisan, nonprofit citizens group formed to harness the power of Denver’s civic community to dramatically increase the level of achievement of all students in Denver’s public schools. For more information, please visit:

www.aplusdenver.org.

Metro Organizations for People (MOP) is 30 year-old community organization comprised of 35 member schools, congregations, youth and neighborhood associations representing over 50,000 people in metro Denver.

-end-