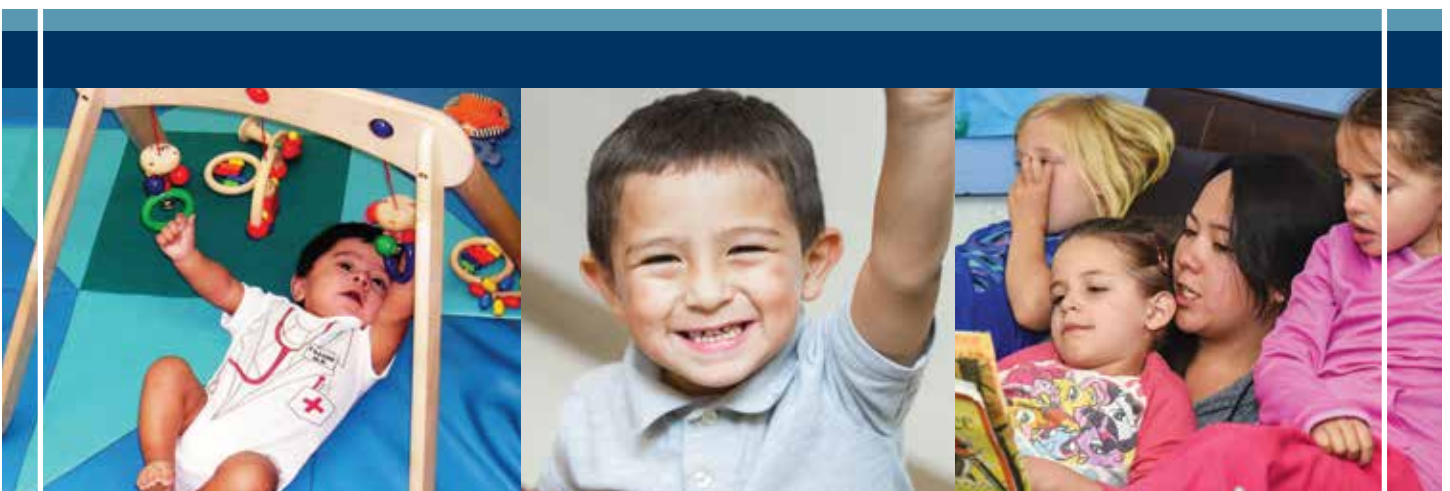




Birth to Eight Roadmap



A Letter from the Birth to Eight Roadmap Initiative Co-Chairs

Dear friends and supporters of the Birth to Eight Roadmap,

We want Denver to be the most literate city in the nation. Research affirms the centrality of literacy to future success—children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.¹ Yet, supporting our youngest learners is a complex endeavor given the multiple factors that impact language and literacy. We all have a role to play—it will take sustained partnerships between Denver Public Schools, the City and County of Denver, community partners, public agencies, parents and caregivers.

In late 2015, Denver Public Schools invited early childhood community leaders to launch the Birth to Eight Roadmap initiative, a new effort that seeks to dramatically improve outcomes and close opportunity gaps amongst the city's youngest learners. We conceived an ambitious goal: *Support and empower families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty so that young children in these neighborhoods reach their developmental potential and succeed in school and in life, starting with early language and literacy.* Although ambitious, we believe this goal can be realized over time through ongoing collaboration that places families and children at the heart of this work.

The Roadmap is grounded in the collective educational vision of Denver Public Schools' Denver Plan 2020, Mayor Michael B. Hancock's Five Goals for Youth and the Early Childhood Colorado Framework. In addition, it leverages Denver's strong early childhood community and key assets, such as comprehensive early learning guidelines, new quality standards, high quality prekindergarten, a school district committed to early childhood education and deeply impactful partnerships that extend beyond early learning into healthcare and social-emotional services.

Supported by local philanthropy, the planning process has built momentum among nearly 100 leaders working in child development, education and health who have expressed their willingness to be a part of this collective effort. This planning has been focused upon actionable recommendations that put parents and children at the center of the effort.

This document lays out the first steps of a roadmap that will take us closer to our shared goal. Let us seize upon the momentum that has been created and get to work!



Happy Haynes
DPS Board of Education

Erin Brown
Mayor's Office of Children's Affairs

Barbara O'Brien
DPS Board of Education

Executive Summary

I. Overview of the Planning Process

The Birth to Eight Roadmap reflects the launch of a plan that has generated a shared understanding of the work needed to support children and families. It was developed over a seven-month period from December 2015 through June 2016. Over that time, a Steering Committee of 25 members met monthly to provide overall direction. Planning efforts included an analysis of the well-being of Denver’s children as well as the resources and programs available to them (see Appendix IV). Twice, the Steering Committee consulted its Advisory Committee, a broad set of over 50 experts working in Denver’s early childhood landscape, to provide direction. To inform Denver’s path forward, the Steering Committee also consulted educators and families as well as national experts who supplied research and promising models.

DEC/JAN

- › Aggregated existing plans and goals
- › Began research of Denver’s landscape
- › Identified five Guiding Principles

FEB/MAR

- › Identified potential recommendations
- › Solicited Advisory Committee feedback
- › Met with families and educators
- › Conducted Boston learning visit

APRIL

- › Drafted recommendations; work groups developed action steps
- › Concluded local data collection
- › Gathered national expert feedback and recommendations

MAY/JUN

- › Identified conveners and partners to support recommendations
- › Solicited Advisory Committee feedback
- › Finalized Actionable Recommendations

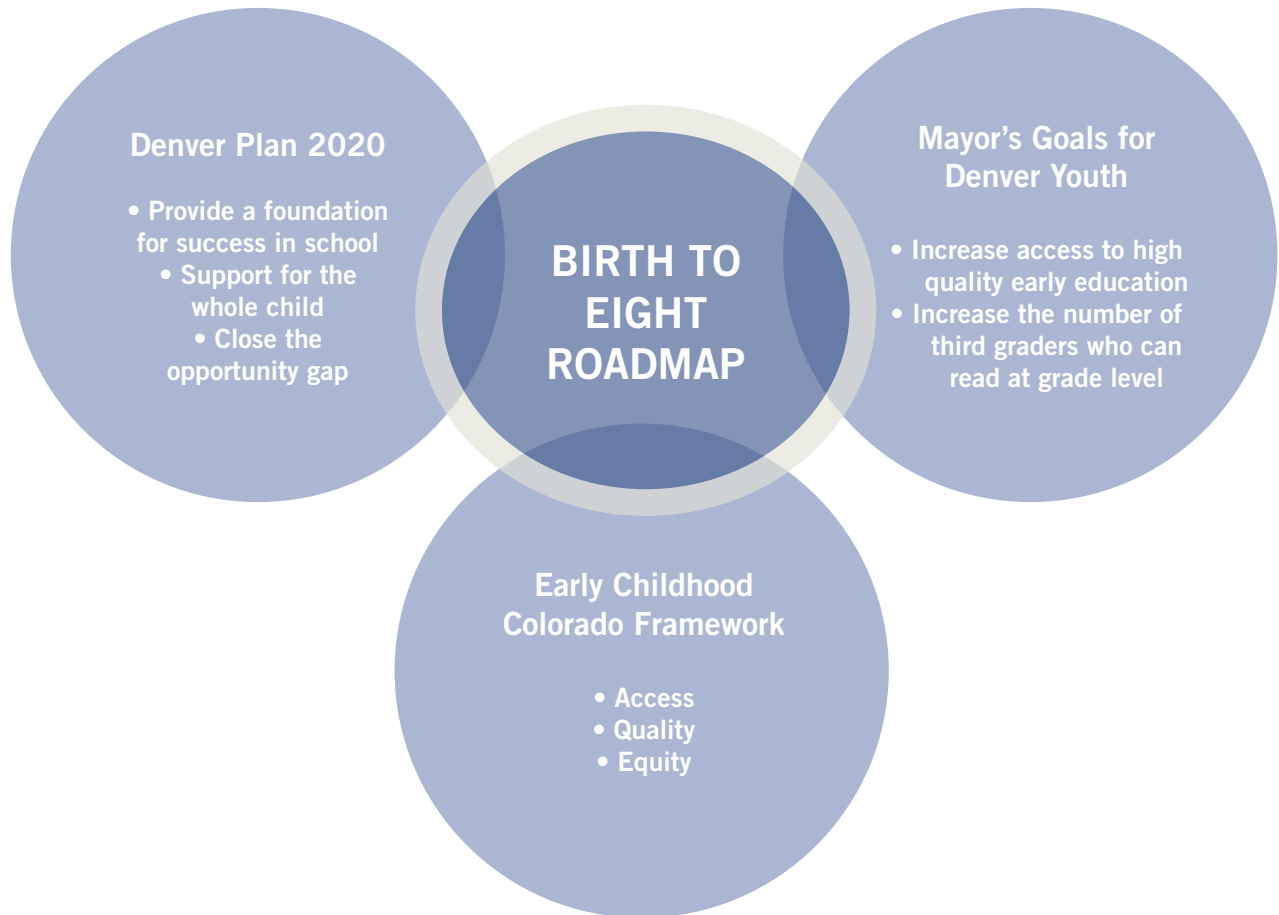
JULY

- › Launch Roadmap recommendations
- › Drive, monitor and evaluate progress



II. Commitment and Alignment between Key Stakeholders across the City of Denver

Denver Public Schools (DPS), the City and County of Denver and the State of Colorado have all articulated goals that highlight the importance of early childhood to a child's future development (see Appendix I).








This convergence of mutual goals and priorities has led to a common Birth to Eight Roadmap Goal:

Support and empower families living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty so that young children in these neighborhoods reach their developmental potential and succeed in school and in life, **starting with early language and literacy.**



III. Recommendations

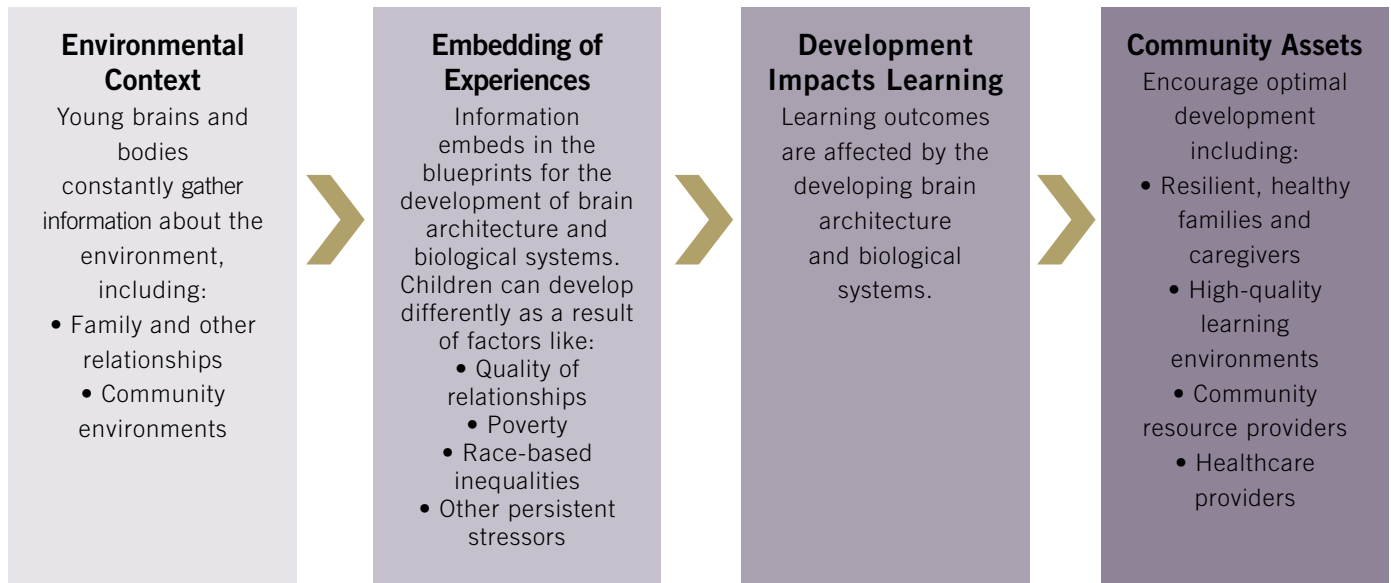
The Birth to Eight Roadmap five *Guiding Principles* and eleven *Actionable Recommendations* are organized around the Early Childhood Colorado Framework, a shared vision for early learning and development, health and well-being, and family support and education. These *Guiding Principles* and *Actionable Recommendations* respond to opportunities within the current Denver landscape and are directly informed by research.

Early Childhood Colorado Framework Domains				
 Family and Child	 Relationships: Caregiver, teacher and other professional	 Environments: Home, neighborhood, program, school	 Colorado: Local and state systems	 Colorado: Local and state systems
Birth to Eight Roadmap Five <i>Guiding Principles</i>				
Engaged and Supported Families	Effective Professionals	Citywide Culture of Language and Literacy	Shared Leadership	Continuous Improvement
Birth to Eight Roadmap Eleven <i>Actionable Recommendations</i>				
1. Launch an “Early Opportunity System” to enable early screening and support 2. Support neighborhood-based parent leadership 3. Increase access to high-quality early education through alternative prekindergarten delivery methods 4. Focus on ECE-K transitions through Countdown to Kindergarten	5. Develop and implement a birth to eight language and literacy strategy that incorporates the DPS Early Literacy Plan 6. Increase and align ECE-K professional development and coaching	7. Promote consistency across settings by implementing common tools, standards and approaches 8. Forge agreements between cultural institutions and others to use consistent strategies and messaging about early learning and development 9. Create a network of birth to eight resource hubs that will support neighborhood priorities	10. Implement shared and sustained leadership for birth to eight initiatives across Denver	11. Embrace data-driven continuous improvement

The Roadmap

THEORY OF CHANGE

When designing solutions, a comprehensive understanding of how a child's environment shapes his or her developmental trajectory is essential. The following graphic illustrates the connections between a child's environment, experiences and learning outcomes.



THIS ROADMAP

- Connects existing community assets with information and collaboration
- Empowers families to build on their assets
- Enhances the quality of early learning opportunities



Creating Supportive Environments for Children by Supporting Families and Teachers

“What we now understand is that the stress that parents and teachers feel can in turn elevate the stress levels of the children in their care . . . The good news is that the process can be reversed, often with relatively simple and low-cost interventions. To help children living in poverty succeed, our best strategy may be to first help the adults in their lives.”²

- PAUL TOUGH , JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

The Roadmap

DENVER LANDSCAPE

The Birth to Eight Roadmap connects and builds upon existing community assets to support and empower families.

Environmental Context and Factors

A variety of factors including poverty, family stability and level of parental education are known to impact school readiness and third grade achievement.

7%
DECREASE
IN POVERTY

In 2014, 22 percent (30,500) of Denver's children were living in poverty, a significant decline from 29 percent in 2013.³ While this trend is promising, it is also evidence of the rising costs of living in Denver, a particular challenge for families living in poverty or near poverty.ⁱ



TWO-THIRDS
OF DPS STUDENTS

QUALIFIED FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH

More than two-thirds of DPS students (68 percent) qualified for the free or reduced-price lunch program during the 2015-2016 school year.ⁱⁱ

Despite a decrease in child poverty overall, the growth of children living in areas of concentrated poverty since 2000 has been dramatic, with approximately

one quarter

of Denver's children now living in these neighborhoods (defined as census tracts with a poverty rate of 30 percent and higher).



31%

In 2014, almost one-third of children (31 percent) lived in families where no parent had full-time, year round employment.⁵



In 2014, 15 percent of adults in Denver did not have a high school diploma. In some Denver neighborhoods, up to half of all adults (31 to 52 percent) lack a high school diploma or GED.⁶



In 2014, 40 percent (55,000) of Denver's children lived in immigrant families.⁷ 44 percent of children under the age of 18 spoke a language other than English at home.⁸

ⁱ Poverty is defined by the federal government as \$24,250 annual income for a family of four. According to the self-sufficiency standard by the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, it costs approximately \$73,749 to meet the basic needs of a family of four in Denver.⁴

ⁱⁱ Free lunch eligibility is set at 130 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$31,500 for a family of four) and reduced-price lunch eligibility is at 185 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately \$44,800 for a family of four).

DENVER LANDSCAPE

Learning Outcomes

A variety of factors including poverty, family stability and level of parental education are known to impact school readiness and third grade achievement.

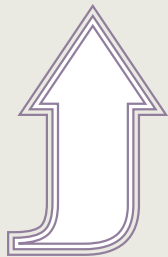


Seventy-one percent of all DPS kindergarteners tested were reading at or above grade level, as measured for the 2014-2015 school year. However, results varied widely by neighborhood. In some neighborhoods, nearly all children met this standard; in others, less than half the children were able to read at or above grade level.⁹



Levels of kindergarten readiness vary widely across Denver. Children with low levels of preparation often struggle to read at grade level by third grade.

Children who have participated in the Denver Preschool Program were more likely to be reading at or above grade level than in the district as a whole.¹¹



English language learners in DPS have made a 12 point gain in reading proficiency in just four years.⁹



Reading proficiency for Denver children has been improving at an incremental rate, but a large achievement gap persists. Depending on the test, up to 70 percent of Denver third grade students are behind in their reading.¹⁰

Community Assets

Denver offers many high quality early learning opportunities for young children, although access is often limited in the neediest neighborhoods.

There are wide discrepancies in preschool attendance rates in Denver. In some low-income neighborhoods, almost no children attend preschool, while in higher income neighborhoods there is near universal attendance.¹⁴

In 2014, **65%** of three and four year olds were enrolled in preschool in Denver.¹²



Among cities of similar size, Denver ranks third highest in the percentage of three and four year old children attending preschool.¹³

DPS provided **7,485** three and four year olds with quality prekindergarten instruction at DPS and community preschool sites. Of these children, **29%** attend half days and **46%** attend full day at DPS sites and **25%** attend community sites. Approximately **12%** of these students are three year olds and **88%** are four year olds.



The Denver Preschool Program provides about 5,000 four year olds with tuition support annually.






Recommendations and Next Steps

The Birth to Eight Roadmap offers eleven *Actionable Recommendations* designed to positively impact Denver children ages birth to eight and their families. The recommendations provide immediate steps that strengthen existing partnerships and initiatives or develop new ones.

Because of the multi-faceted nature of this work, the recommendations are interdependent. For example, a language and literacy strategy for birth to eight must include coordinated professional development. Coordinated professional development must include shared use of the Early Learning and Development Guidelines (the common standard), and so forth.

The recommendations focus on what is immediately actionable. While they do not yet detail the entire scope of work necessary, partners have committed to develop full action plans as part of future activity.

On the following pages is a brief description, suggested next steps and examples of successful models from other districts and states.

Early Childhood Colorado Framework Domains				
 Family and Child	 Relationships: Caregiver, teacher and other professional	 Environments: Home, neighborhood, program, school	 Colorado: Local and state systems	 Colorado: Local and state systems
Birth to Eight Roadmap Five Guiding Principles				
Engaged and Supported Families	Effective Professionals	Citywide Culture of Language and Literacy	Shared Leadership	Continuous Improvement
Birth to Eight Roadmap Eleven Actionable Recommendations				
#1-4	#5-6	#7-9	#10	#11





ENGAGED AND SUPPORTED FAMILIES

Recommendation #1:

Launch an “Early Opportunity System” to enable early screening and support

Linking children and families to community-based support as early as possible is essential to optimal health, well-being and development. While the vast majority of Denver children undergo regular developmental screening from birth, less than half of those with delays or concerns about development actually get connected to services.

Partners in the city of Denver propose to launch an “Early Opportunity System” to provide universal screening and a single point of contact for services and resources to children and families. Resources will meet a comprehensive and varied set of needs—such as speech-language therapy, home visiting and playgroups.

Ultimately, health and education professionals can share useful information about how individual children are developing in order to better support each child’s strengths and needs. Agreement on common developmental milestones and the identification of the issues in data collection and sharing are initial steps toward implementation of this comprehensive system.

Under its Whole Child, Healthy Child Agenda 2020, DPS already maintains strong partnerships with Denver Health, Jewish Family Service and the Mental Health Center of Denver to provide no-cost services to prekindergarten to grade 12 students in need.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Denver Health Denver Public Schools (Child Find) Clayton Early Learning	<p>PHASE I: Define Key Indicators, Identify Resources and Develop a Shared Understanding about how to Enhance the Current System.</p> <p><i>September 2016: Define Key Early Opportunity System Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Synthesize available research to develop a common set of indicators of healthy development - Identify what data is collected about which of the indicators and by whom - Identify data collection gaps for certain indicators and/or populations - Identify data access and sharing issues related to this data <p><i>December 2016: Resource Referral and Navigation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify steps required to navigate resource referrals - Assess the nature and amount of navigation support parents need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) - Bright by Three - Clayton Early Learning - Colorado Health Institute - Colorado Opportunity Project - Denver Great Kids Head Start - Denver Health - Denver Public Schools Departments of Early Education, Child Find, Family and Community Engagement and Whole Child Supports - Denver’s Early Childhood Council - EastSide Unified - Family resource centers - Healthy Steps - Help Me Grow

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify current navigators that support families in receiving services - Map current service providers - Identify gaps in services available - Recommend and support opportunities to facilitate service delivery - Identify data access and sharing issues that impede effective access to services <p>PHASE II: Piloting Solutions</p> <p><i>Data Sharing and Access:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify priorities for addressing data sharing and access issues <p><i>Neighborhood Pilot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify neighborhood based on Phase I data, readiness and awareness of core issues to be addressed - Explore responses to data sharing and access priorities - Explore service delivery and navigation enhancements using a neighborhood hub model <p><i>Parent Leadership:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify existing parent leadership partners based upon location of pilot neighborhood - Incorporate parent leadership into neighborhood hub - Utilize neighborhood-based messengers to communicate service navigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home visitation programs - Invest in Kids - Mental Health Center of Denver - Mile High United Way - Rocky Mountain Human Services - Southwest Denver LAUNCH Together community

The Importance of Data in Supporting Child Development

“For far too long we have not been able to fully document the status of young children and to make the case that they need additional services, their families need more support and their teachers (who need more education, training and pay) are the key to quality. The development of integrated and well-designed early learning and development data systems can help us build our case, share the story and make a difference.”¹⁵

- JOAN LOMBARDI, SENIOR FELLOW AT THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS



ENGAGED AND SUPPORTED FAMILIES

Recommendation #2:

Support neighborhood-based parent leadership

Parent engagement in K-12 significantly correlates with a child’s academic success. When engagement and leadership begin early and families feel empowered to access resources, they are more likely to continue once children walk through the school doors. This work will build upon existing parent leadership efforts to support families as partners and advocates for their children, such as Head Start Parent Councils or neighborhood-based initiatives. To kick off this work, the Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs plans to expand parent engagement and leadership in the coming year through Countdown to Kindergarten (see recommendation #4).

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
To Be Determined	<p><i>September 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiate Countdown to Kindergarten parent leadership activities <p><i>December 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify neighborhood in which to locate pilot for hub site that will emphasize parent leadership <p><i>January 2017</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch design and planning of neighborhood-based hub and parent leadership effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Babies Ready for College - Bright by Three - Center for Family Opportunity (DPS) - Civic Canopy - Clayton Early Learning - Denver Great Kids Head Start - Denver Health - Denver Public Schools - Denver’s Early Childhood Council - Family Leadership Training Institute - Help Me Grow - Mile High Early Learning - Mile High United Way - Neighborhood coalitions - Padres & Jóvenes Unidos - Stand for Children - Strengthening Families Network

Best Practice: Community Cafés Parent Leadership Model

The National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement highlights Community Cafés as a promising model of parent advocacy and leadership training.¹⁶ These events focus on supporting families and strengthening communities. Led by parent facilitators, the cafés can be used to identify key issues and resources for parents as well as develop community connections and parent leaders. The Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs is planning to engage parents through a similar model as part of its Countdown to Kindergarten 2016-17 efforts.



ENGAGED AND SUPPORTED FAMILIES

Recommendation #3:

Increase access to high-quality early education through alternative prekindergarten delivery methods

Results from the Colorado Preschool Program and the Denver Preschool Program indicate that high-quality early education impacts children’s school readiness and success. While Denver has one of the country’s highest rates of preschool enrollment, fewer than one in four children attend preschool in some of its neighborhoods.¹⁷ Alternative prekindergarten delivery methods can overcome barriers to enrollment and give more children an opportunity for school readiness and later academic success. Examples of alternative prekindergarten methods to be explored include mobile classrooms and the expansion of certain home visiting programs such as “Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters” (HIPPY).

Next steps include identification of a convener to lead the development of a full plan for alternative prekindergarten delivery methods by 2017.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
To Be Determined	<p><i>December 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify a convener for this action <p><i>June 2017</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalize plan for introducing alternative methods (e.g. partnership with housing, mobile classrooms, parent coalition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clayton Early Learning - Colorado Parent and Child Foundation - Denver Preschool Program - Denver Public Library - Denver’s Early Childhood Council - Family, friend, and neighbor care networks - Healthcare and mental health clinics - Mile High Early Learning - Nurse-Family Partnership - Play & Learn Groups - Providers Advancing Student Outcomes (PASO) - Reach Out & Read CO - Statewide Parent Coalition



ENGAGED AND
SUPPORTED
FAMILIES

Recommendation #4:

Focus on ECE-K transitions through Countdown to Kindergarten

Investments in resources and services for children and families in the earliest years can be maximized with strong intentional transitions into the kindergarten to grade twelve system. The expansion and enhancement of Countdown to Kindergarten is a key first step. Led by the Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs and the DPS Department of Early Education, the purpose of Countdown to Kindergarten is to provide a coherent transition to kindergarten in order to build upon past gains made and ensure that all students enter school ready for success. The initiative engages families, preschool and kindergarten teachers and informal care networks to support early language and literacy development, particularly among vulnerable students.

During the 2016-17 school year, ongoing Countdown to Kindergarten efforts will be expanded. Basic expectations for high quality transitions that build upon past Countdown to Kindergarten pilots will be articulated. During the 2017-18 school year, DPS, the Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs and community partners will expand this effort by articulating and implementing a comprehensive, long-term vision for Countdown to Kindergarten grounded in nationally-recognized best practices.

Transitions work is being designed to engage parents and mobilize community leaders and organizations to build local buy-in and awareness. Organizers are testing emerging models of parent engagement, such as community cafés (see text box on page 10).

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs Denver Public Schools (Early Education, Choice and Enrollment Office)	<p><i>June 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit comments regarding transitions to the Colorado Department of Education (ESSA) <p><i>September 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare at least two materials for dissemination to parents regarding transitions - Work with community partners and DPS to articulate shared expectations for high quality transition from ECE to kindergarten - Organize community events to engage school leaders, center directors and teachers on prekindergarten and kindergarten transitions to build awareness and local knowledge - Modify Countdown to Kindergarten materials to develop a communications toolkit regarding transitions for use with informal providers/connections 	<p><i>Existing Partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denver Great Kids Heads Start - Denver Housing Authority - Denver Preschool Program - Denver Public Library - Denver Public Schools - Denver’s Early Childhood Council - Focus Points Family Resource Center - Mile High United Way - Padres & Jóvenes Unidos <p><i>Potential Partners Identified by Advisory Committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colorado Parent and Child Foundation - Mile High Early Learning

CHAMPIONS

PROPOSED MILESTONES

POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

December 2016

- Secure funding for pilot of “model” ECE classroom
- Identify resources to reinstate shared and/or aligned professional development among ECE and kindergarten educators as part of Countdown to Kindergarten in DPS ECE school and community sites
- Develop targeted strategy for supporting transitions for students with disabilities

June 2017

- Coordinate transitions communications to parents with Head Start programs
- Develop a long-term vision and strategic plan for Countdown to Kindergarten

- Museums and cultural institutions
- Parents as Teachers
- Stand for Children

Boston’s Countdown to Kindergarten Initiative

Boston Public Schools has built strong partnerships with the Mayor’s Office, local childcare providers, community organizations and the Children’s Museum to launch a comprehensive and unified citywide Countdown to Kindergarten campaign.

Jeri Robinson, a member of Boston’s School Committee and Vice President of Early Childhood Initiatives for the Boston Children’s Museum reports, “With this citywide effort, everyone is focused on the same goal of helping kids transition successfully into kindergarten. We didn’t change or abandon our work, but now we can see how all of our individual work is aiming towards the same goal. It is incredibly powerful.”





EFFECTIVE
PROFESSIONALS

Recommendation #5:

Develop and implement a birth to eight language and literacy strategy that incorporates the DPS Early Literacy Plan

A common language and literacy strategy for children starting from birth is a critical lever to ensure that all adults who work with children and all environments in which children live and play reinforce and support optimal language development. This strategy will emphasize common language, standards and expectations so that stakeholders across the birth to eight spectrum, including parents, are working toward a common goal.

Already in place is a key component to this strategy—the DPS Early Literacy 2020 Plan. This plan provides a comprehensive and coherent approach to early literacy across the district – an approach designed to help DPS close the achievement gap and dramatically increase reading and writing performance.

In the prekindergarten years, the strategy will emphasize quality standards, developmental guidelines, coordinated professional development and awareness about early language and literacy development among families. In addition, DPS commits to examining its internal alignment as well as alignment with community providers.

Some of the first actionable items for this recommendation include expanding awareness efforts to families and better coordinating professional development for professionals working with children from birth through third grade.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Denver Public Schools (Cross-District Early Literacy Team, Early Education, Child Find) Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs Denver Public Library Denver’s Early Childhood Council	<p><i>By July 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin planning DPS campaign for parents on the importance of early literacy and school readiness - Increase awareness of efforts between Earlier is Easier and DPS - Map existing tools and resources, including coordination with complementary Roadmap recommendations - Create three shared messages across birth to eight for DPS and all ECE providers, parents and other institutions to use <p><i>September 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch DPS campaign to raise awareness among parents of the importance of early literacy and school readiness 	<p><i>Existing Partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colorado Department of Education - Community agencies providing Colorado Preschool Program services - Denver Preschool Program <p><i>Potential Partners Identified by Advisory Committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Book Trust - Churches, faith-based communities - Colorado Parent & Child Foundation - Earlier is Easier - Early Childhood Colorado Partnership

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educa (Spanish radio) - Home visiting programs - One Book 4 Colorado - Reach Out & Read Colorado - Rocky Mountain PBS - Stand for Children - Telemundo - Vroom

The Complexity of Factors that Impact Language and Literacy Development

The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s groundbreaking report, *Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third Grade Reading*, identifies a set of factors that contribute to gaps in third grade reading scores, including:

- The child’s readiness for school in terms of health, language development, social-emotional skills and participation in high-quality early care and learning programs;
- Circumstances that undermine children’s ability to learn to read, including chronic absence from school, summer learning loss and family-related stressors (e.g., family mobility, hunger, housing insecurity and toxic stress); and
- The quality of teaching that the child experiences in home, community and school settings. ¹⁸





EFFECTIVE
PROFESSIONALS

Recommendation #6:

Increase and align professional development and coaching

Effective teachers and early childhood professionals have the strongest impact on child outcomes outside the home environment. This recommendation will align and expand professional development and coaching already provided to DPS and community early learning providers through a number of existing channels, including Denver’s Early Childhood Council and DPS’ Early Education Department.

This work has already commenced as part of the DPS Early Literacy 2020 Plan. This recommendation will build upon ongoing work, emphasize transitions between early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers and work towards long-term alignment on practice, language and expectations of developmentally appropriate milestones.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
<p>Denver Public Schools (Cross-District Early Literacy Team, Early Education)</p> <p>Denver’s Early Childhood Council</p>	<p><i>By July 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide DPS early education providers with professional learning on the power of play to advance students’ development. - Begin planning for ways to facilitate transitions conversations between community early childhood providers and feeder schools to support smooth transitions for students from preschool to Kindergarten - Cultivate shared language among birth to eight providers regarding early literacy and language development <p><i>September 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add birth to three training module to DPS training for ECE-3 - Extend DPS literacy professional development and play training to community sites using “train-the-trainer” model - Provide professional development on importance of early screening and diagnostics in informal settings <p><i>December 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin planning convening(s) on assessment alignment between DPS and community ECE providers, including screening and understanding of tools that can inform professional development on screening around language and literacy 	<p><i>Existing Partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community agencies providing Colorado Preschool Program services - Denver Preschool Program - Denver’s Early Childhood Council <p><i>Potential Partners Identified by Advisory Committee:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clayton Early Learning - Colorado Preschool Program - Colorado Shines - Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs - Mile High Early Learning - Qualistar Colorado - School KIT/Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Key Factors that Support Effective Professional Development

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, professional development in early childhood may be most effective when: ¹⁹

- There are specific and articulated objectives for professional development.
- Practice is an explicit focus of the professional development, and attention is given to linking the focus on early educator knowledge and practice.
- There is collective participation of teachers from the same classrooms or schools in professional development. Joint participation that includes administrators can help to support a professional culture and ensure the sustainability of new techniques and skills. It can also foster continuity in the children's experiences as they move through classrooms in the future.
- Educators are prepared to conduct child assessments and interpret their results as a tool for ongoing monitoring of the effects of professional development.





CITYWIDE
CULTURE OF
LANGUAGE AND
LITERACY

Recommendation #7:

Promote consistency across settings by implementing common tools, standards and approaches

Without agreement on what children should know and be able to do in the first eight years, it is difficult to implement supports and services that effectively and seamlessly provide a continuum of language and literacy development. The Roadmap partners will promote consistency across settings by implementing common tools, standards and approaches, which include:

- › Early learning and development guidelines
- › Provider/teacher qualifications and competencies
- › Classroom and environment standards
- › Child assessment
- › Instructional practice
- › Professional development/coaching
- › Data systems (cross-cutting)

This work will build upon the strong foundational elements already in place, beginning with the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDGs). As a first step, this recommendation will engage parents and professionals by increasing their awareness of the ELDGs. A longer-term goal of allowing DPS student identification numbers to be available to all children in early learning settings will enable better tracking of student outcomes and program effectiveness.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Denver Public Schools (Early Education) Denver's Early Childhood Council	<p><i>By December 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate use of Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDGs) with Colorado Shines - Adopt ELDGs within DPS - Take inventory of current activities to disseminate ELDGs to parents and providers <p><i>June 2017</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a plan for increasing awareness of ELDGs, including targeted audiences and goals <p><i>December 2017 or later</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make available DPS student IDs to children in all program settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Babies Ready for College - Colorado Department of Education - Colorado Parent and Child Foundation - Colorado Shines - Denver Great Kids Head Start - Denver Public Library - Denver Preschool Program - Denver Public Schools Cross-District Early Literacy Team - Denver's Early Childhood Council - Each One, Teach One: No More Gaps - Earlier is Easier

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Childhood Leadership Commission - Faith-based communities with preschools - Family, friend and neighbor care networks - Rocky Mountain SER

The Impact of Alignment in Boston Public Schools

“More Boston children are on track in the early grades because of how teachers and schools are supporting them: through common standards, curriculum, instructional practice, professional development and assessment.”

**-DR. JASON SACHS,
DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Language and Literacy Gap in Denver Reflects National Trends

Research conducted by Clayton Early Learning for the Denver Preschool Program affirms a national trend—many children are not having the language experiences starting from birth to be able to acquire the skills needed for later success. The study is consistent with national research that finds that the number of words a child is able to recognize is highly correlated with family income. The children most at-risk tend to live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and face multiple socio-economic risk factors, such as households with low income and education levels, single-parent households and those that speak English as a second language.

Students are able to overcome certain gaps in academic readiness (particularly skill-based gaps); however, deficits in language development can be stubbornly persistent over time. These gaps often lead to lower academic performance and high school graduation rates.

Various programs and evidence-based interventions, which include early developmental screening and targeted follow-up services, high quality childcare and early learning experiences as well as certain playgroups and home visiting programs, can counterbalance the negative effects of prolonged and significant adversity.



Recommendation #8:

Forge agreements between cultural institutions and others to use consistent strategies and messaging about early learning and development

A coordinated language and literacy effort should reach all environments in which children interact and participate – parks, libraries, churches and museums. The Birth to Eight Roadmap recommends the articulation of formal agreements between museums, cultural institutions and others to use consistent strategies, approaches and key messages around early childhood and literacy.

Denver’s cultural institutions are already coordinated through initiatives led by the Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs, including the My Denver Card and Five by Five Card. This recommendation would build on existing work and align programming and communications with the Language and Literacy Strategy (recommendation #5). Additionally, it could support efforts to increase access to cultural institutions for low-income families. Convening institutions to discuss coordination is slated to begin during the 2016-17 school year.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Mayor’s Office of Children’s Affairs Denver Public Library	<i>June 2017</i> - Convene institutions to work with Roadmap to increase access and comfort among parents - Develop concrete goals for partnership with institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children’s Museum of Denver - Denver Art Museum - Denver Museum of Nature and Science - Denver Parks and Recreation - Denver Public Library Cultural Pass Checkout - Denver Zoo - Earlier is Easier - Mobile pop-ups





CITYWIDE
CULTURE OF
LANGUAGE AND
LITERACY

Recommendation #9:

Create a network of birth to eight resource hubs that will support neighborhood priorities

Neighborhood-based, coordinated resources and services have been found to increase access to quality health care and early learning opportunities especially in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. The Roadmap intends to create a network of locally-driven birth to eight “hubs” that will connect local residents with the resources they need. These hubs will play an essential connecting role in supporting parent-driven, parent-engaged services.

Hub leadership will be driven by neighborhood-based family support efforts already in place and will likely include entities such as schools, community centers, family resource centers and faith-based centers. School-based hubs could host neighborhood playgroups and play an important role in introducing families to local public schools and improving connectivity to services.

A successful hub approach has already been established in one DPS elementary school (College View Elementary). A next step will explore expanding and refining the approach to emphasize language and literacy.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
To be determined	<p><i>December 2016</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify process to select pilot neighborhood <p><i>January 2017</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch design and planning of neighborhood-based hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) - Bright by Three - Clayton Early Learning - Colorado Health Institute - Colorado Opportunity Project - Denver Great Kids Head Start - Denver Health - Denver Preschool Program - Denver Public Schools - Departments of Early Education, Child Find, Family and Community Engagement and Whole Child Supports - Denver’s Early Childhood Council - EastSide Unified - Family Resource Centers - Healthy Steps - Help Me Grow - Home visitation programs - Invest in Kids

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health Center of Denver - Mile High United Way - Rocky Mountain Human Services - Southwest Denver LAUNCH Together community

Parent Empowerment Supports Children’s Future Success

“When my son was young, he had a language delay and received speech therapy in English. I took him to a playgroup at Harrington Elementary [DPS] that was recommended to me. There they taught us parents how to read to our kids and make reading fun. At the playgroup, I learned that I needed to stop using Spanglish and separate English and Spanish. Now his language is better, and he is using adult sentences.”

- DPS PARENT FROM PASCUAL LEDOUX ACADEMY





Recommendation #10:

Implement shared and sustained leadership for birth to eight initiatives across Denver

The multifaceted nature of early childhood requires intentional leadership across a number of entities. In the short term, leadership is essential to provide direction and oversight over multiple interlocking recommendations. This leadership will provide a unified public face to the project during the initiative's critical first year.

Long-term, sustained leadership will provide the strategic direction needed to implement the more complex recommendations, particularly those in early stages of development.

Efforts are currently underway to define the leadership structure within Denver Public Schools, with a decision expected for August 2016.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES
Denver Public Schools Mayor's Office of Children's Affairs	<p><i>Short-Term:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convene stakeholder group periodically to monitor progress - Explore staffing for six months to up to one year to execute Roadmap plans <p><i>Long-Term:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review Roadmap recommendations and discuss necessary leadership

Establishing Effective Leadership of Cross Sector Early Childhood Initiatives

The BUILD Initiative notes the following as cornerstones of leadership for multi-faceted early childhood efforts: ²⁰

- Identify cross sector leadership
- Ensure that cross sector leadership is inclusive and representative of families
- Set outcomes and benchmarks across sectors
- Establish processes for ongoing communication, coordination, and decision-making among governance structures and across system sectors as they relate to achieving shared goals
- Use cross-sector data to inform planning and policy decisions



CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT

Recommendation #11:

Embrace data-driven continuous improvement

The Birth to Eight Roadmap recommends the development of a learning agenda to gather information about Roadmap activities and inform adjustments as needed. Beyond the measurement of standard indicators over time, this work would enhance the ability to monitor how families, communities and agencies access information needed on effective services and supports.

CHAMPIONS	PROPOSED MILESTONES	POTENTIAL PARTNERS IDENTIFIED BY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
To be determined	<p><i>Short-Term:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a learning agenda to gather information about the effectiveness and impact of Roadmap activities and to inform adjustments as needed. <p><i>Long-Term:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance the ability of families, communities and agencies to access information needed to provide effective services and supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clayton Early Learning - Colorado Department of Education - Denver Public Schools - Mayor's Office of Children's Affairs - The Piton Foundation mapping project - Professional Development Information System (PDIS) - Sugar CRM





June 22, 2016

Dear Birth to Eight Roadmap Steering Committee Members,

Denver Public Schools and the City and County of Denver are striving to make Denver the most literate city in the nation. Thanks to your shared work and commitment, we now have an articulated plan to move from vision to action, the Birth to Eight Roadmap.

The Birth to Eight Roadmap recommends a collective path forward that links the work of partners serving children ages zero to three with those serving children ages three to eight in order to realize strong language development and literacy outcomes for Denver children.

We are pleased to accept your recommendations as an important next step as we move towards implementation.

This effort brings a sharper early childhood focus to existing work being carried out in our school district and across Denver, including Countdown to Kindergarten, the DPS Early Literacy 2020 Plan, expanded preschool enrollment and aligned professional development. Most importantly, the Roadmap places families and children at the center of all efforts through new models of family engagement and a deeper commitment to family leadership.

It is inspiring to see Denver's numerous early childhood stakeholders work together to develop this actionable plan. The Birth to Eight Roadmap provides a blueprint for successful future collaboration between public agencies, districts and community organizations. That ongoing collaboration is the key to future success. Together, we can build a citywide culture of language and literacy so that Denver's children can succeed in school and life.

Michael B. Hancock
Mayor

Susana Cordova
Acting Superintendent
Denver Public Schools

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Appendices

- I. Source Documents
 - a. Denver Plan 2020
 - b. Early Childhood Colorado Framework
 - c. Mayor Michael B. Hancock's Five Goals for Youth
- II. The Denver Landscape: Maps and Data
- III. Education Counsel Academic Research
- IV. Denver Landscape Analysis
- V. Boston Site Visit Learning Agenda and Trip Report
- VI. Denver Public Schools Early Literacy 2020 Plan
- VII. Birth to Eight Roadmap Steering Committee Members
- VIII. Birth to Eight Roadmap Advisory Committee Members

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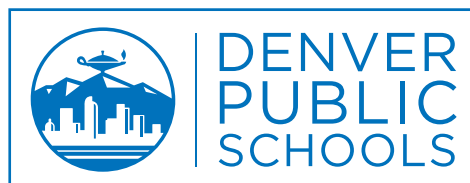


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