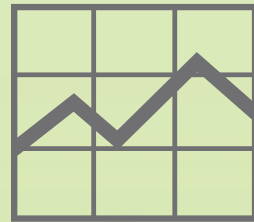


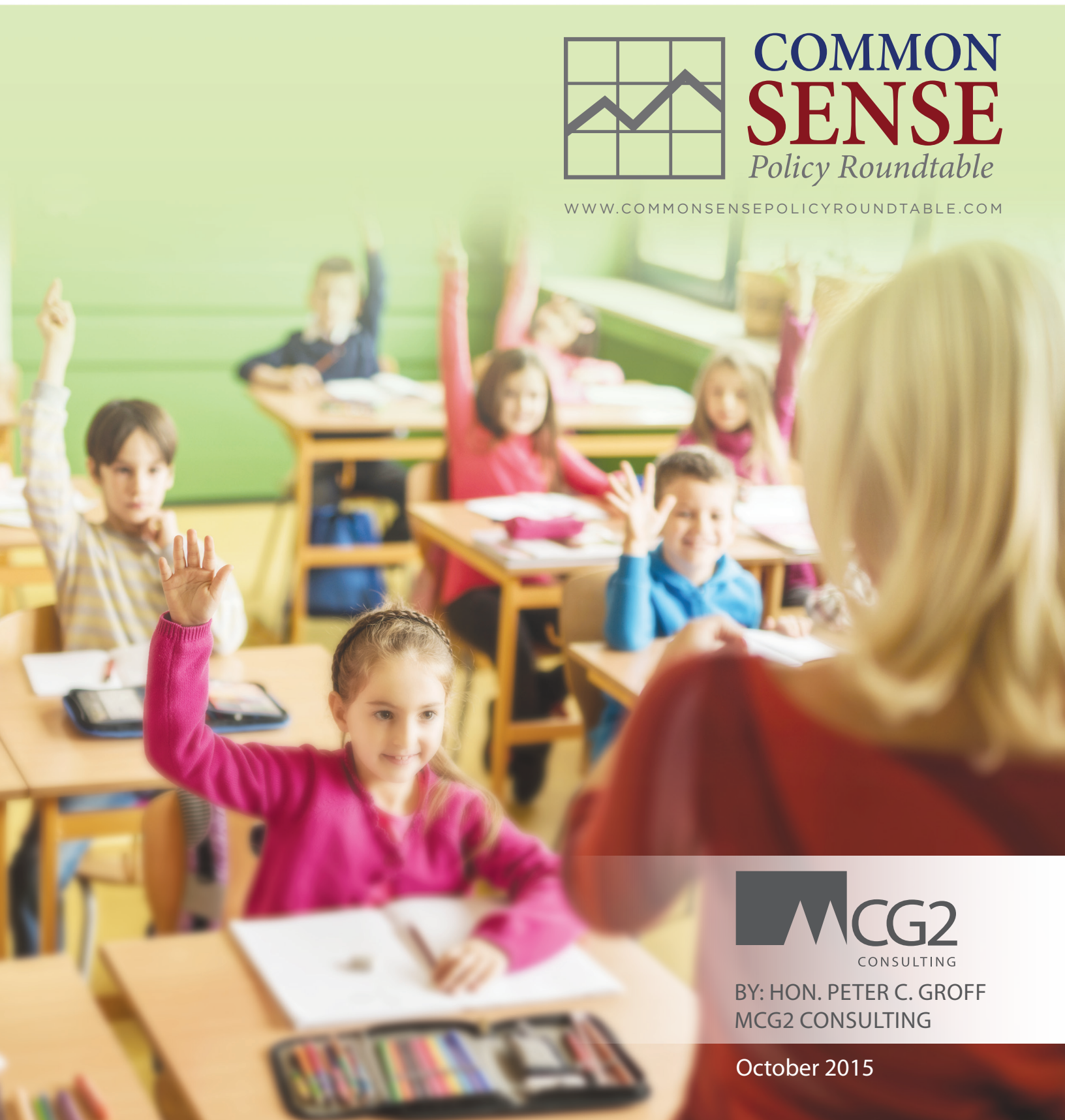
# DOUGLAS COUNTY'S DRAMATIC SHIFT

## Treating Teachers Like Professionals



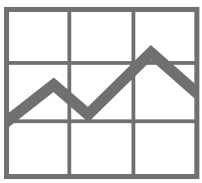
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# INTRODUCTION

The critical importance and impact of great teachers is undebatable. “The national research is clear: good teachers dramatically increase student’s achievement”<sup>1</sup> while ineffective teachers stunt student growth.

In fact, Douglas County School Superintendent Elizabeth Fagen says “two poor teachers in a row and a student doesn’t recover.”<sup>2</sup> That frightening statement is backed up by Kati Haycock, the CEO of The Education Trust and co-author of “Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality”<sup>3</sup> who says “[T]he research shows that kids who have two, three, four strong teachers in a row will eventually excel, no matter what their background, while kids who have even two weak teachers in a row will never recover.”<sup>4</sup>

Academic studies clearly show the transformative impact a great teacher can have on students in the classroom and even outside the classroom. “Elementary- and middle-school teachers who help raise their students’ standardized-test scores seem to have a wide-ranging, lasting positive effect on those students’ lives beyond academics, including lower teenage-pregnancy rates and greater college matriculation and adult earnings”<sup>5</sup> according to a new study<sup>6</sup> that tracked 2.5 million students over 20 years. “Replacing a poor teacher with an average one would raise a single classroom’s lifetime earnings by about \$266,000,”<sup>7</sup> the authors of the study estimate. “Multiply that by a career’s worth of classrooms. ‘If you leave a low value-added teacher in your school for 10 years, rather than replacing him with an average teacher, you are hypothetically talking about \$2.5 million in lost income,’ said Professor Friedman, one of the coauthors.”<sup>8</sup> The study, *The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood*, was released in 2011. Over time, it becomes more evident that the teacher makes a difference in a student’s life outcomes. Once a student crosses the threshold to enter the classroom, the teacher begins to pave the way for the student’s future. The difference between a student with a well-constructed path and one with a non-existent or poorly constructed one will be distinguishable later in a student’s life.

Despite this research-based knowledge, very few major school districts in America differentiate teacher pay based upon performance or pay new hires based on the supply of teachers for a certain discipline against the demand in the sector for those teachers. However, three years ago the Douglas County School District (DCSD) broke the mold when it implemented both a pay for performance system and a market based pay guide for hiring its teachers. Both programs reflect the understanding DCSD has about the rapid transition education is undergoing across America.

# INNOVATION

The state of Colorado has been a driving force of transition in education. In Colorado and nationally, DCSD has been a large part of that transformation. Despite being one of the top performing districts in Colorado in all measures, DCSD Superintendent Elizabeth Fagen bemoaned the traditional system as one “...geared toward outcomes suited more for the assembly lines of the Industrial Revolution rather than the economy of the future. [O]ur goal is to prepare our students to compete on the world stage for the college or career pathway of their choice.”<sup>9</sup>

To better prepare students for that world stage Superintendent Fagen and an innovative and reform-minded school board, elected in 2009, pledged to give every student a world-class education.

The outcome of their commitment was a “three pronged strategic plan:

- Enhanced student and parental choice, including public and private options
- An enriched system of world class standards, curriculum and assessments
- Performance-based instructional, evaluations, pay and career growth”<sup>10</sup>

Out of that plan came expanded power for traditional schools to explore different learning models, an increase in charter schools, unique partnerships to expand homeschooling, combined academic and technological innovations to offer online schools and the Choice Scholarship Program allowing DCSD students the opportunity to attend partnering private schools.

Another piece of DCSD’s transformative effort was creating groundbreaking Market-Based Pay (MBP) and Pay for Performance (PFP) systems for the District’s teachers. MBP and PFP “work in concert”<sup>11</sup> according to Brian Cesare, Chief Human Resources Officer for DCSD, to ensure the District recruits the teachers it needs and rewards and retains those teachers who are highly effective. The holistic approach to recruit, reward and retain outstanding teachers is just “doing what’s right for kids,”<sup>12</sup> says DCSD board President Kevin Larsen. President Larsen added it was time to give Human Resources flexibility and add transparency to teacher recruitment and increase top applicants in areas of need. The District should pay on “scarcity skills and how well you do your job,”<sup>13</sup> said Larsen.

Until DCSD partnered these two concepts, paying by need and awarding performance, DCSD practiced a process that all other Districts performed; it used salary schedules and matrices where “you found your cell and that’s what you were paid,”<sup>14</sup> acknowledges Superintendent Fagen.

The “step and lane” scale “...that many districts rely on began in the early 1900s, [a]t that time, teacher salaries were susceptible to bias because of gender and race. It was important to value teachers on an objective basis – years of experience...this system rewards the time served and degrees earned, not the hard work a teacher puts in to helping their students succeed. Outstanding teachers get paid the same, or in some cases less, than peers who do little to impact their student’s learning. This creates a disincentive for teachers to go above and beyond, instead rewarding mediocrity. Secondly, it values graduate credits that may be unrelated to improving teaching. Research shows little or no correlation between attaining an advanced degree and classroom effectiveness. A step-and-lane system is also incredibly rigid, making it difficult for school districts to stay in step with the market.”<sup>15</sup>

The problem with step and lane was “everyone was treated equally”<sup>16</sup> even though the DCSD had “more than 70 different type of positions...”<sup>17</sup> It was time to replace step and lane and move “to the next level. Add alignment, more rigor and more relevance to the strategic plan and move in the direction that we want the students to move.”<sup>18</sup>

# MARKET-BASED PAY

“Nearly all American K-12 pay systems not only fail to distinguish teachers by effectiveness, but also by job description.”<sup>19</sup> Even though professionals and scholars readily admit that there is demand in hard-to-fit areas, the supply of teachers for those areas is small, and although Districts continue to struggle to fill those critical needs, they have not responded with new avenues to recruit potential applicants. Enter Douglas County who created the Market-Based system from scratch with varying entry levels that create opportunities to increase compensation and drive professional development.

Despite being a high performing district, DCSD struggled to bring in high quality applicants for hard to fill positions. A high ranking district official said, “[B]efore our market based system was in place we had to hire whoever applied whether the application was good or bad.” Now DCSD has more applications than open slots, that allows for a much more selective process which, in turn, has a positive impact on children’s learning.

Andy Abner, principal of Rock Canyon High School, says veteran highly effective teachers “hit the ground running and help to maintain and increase academic achievement levels.”<sup>20</sup> Abner said that before the implementation of MBP “obtaining staff with experience in hard to fill positions was very difficult and they would lose those type of staff members to other districts.”<sup>21</sup> Since MBP allows Abner “to offer competitive and higher salaries”<sup>22</sup> he has been able to hire three veteran science teachers, one veteran math teacher and one “very critical” special ed teacher from Arizona. Those slots are all hard to fill positions. Before MBP “leveled the field” Abner was not only more likely to lose highly effective and experience teachers but was left hiring for hard to fill spots teachers “right out of college or” inexperienced teachers still learning their craft...MBP has made “the district much more competitive.”<sup>23</sup>

## Compensation – Metro Denver Board Approved Increases

DISTRICT	2014-2015	2015-2016
<b>Douglas County</b>	<b>3.00%</b>	<b>3.20%</b>
<b>Cherry Creek</b>	2.80%	2.90%
<b>Denver</b>	2.26%	2.80%
<b>Boulder Valley</b>	2.80%	2.80%
<b>Littleton</b>	1.50%	2.25% + 1% LS
<b>Aurora</b>	2.80%	2.25%
<b>Jefferson County</b>	2.50%	1.00% + 2% Adj

Source-DCSD Human Resources Update. DCSDH Human Resources 9/15/15. Slide 17.

DCSD arrived at this “more competitive” level by “asking all principals to rank the 90 plus positions based on their scarcity,”<sup>24</sup> and after some adjustments suggested by school leaders, DCSD “placed all teaching positions in one of six different salary bands based on the supply of qualified applicants.”<sup>25</sup> “The pay structure no longer reflects years of service and education level,”<sup>26</sup> but appropriates a supply and demand model that allows districts to better serve students. The bands are not carved in stone, but are shaped by the constant ebb and flow of markets and needs.

## Certified Salary Bands

BAND 25	B30	B35	B40	B42	B45
Art Mid/Sen Fifth Grade Fourth Grade	Art Elementary Business Cons Family	ACE Admin Intern Counselor Mid/Sen	Agriculture Amer. Sign Lang Chinese	Severe Needs SED/Autism DHH	Audiologist Autism Spec Behavior Spec
Fresh Trans Health E/M/S Lead Spec Librarian	Drama Mid/Sen Homebound Home Sch Spt Math Elem	English Mid/Sen First Grade French Grade K Intervention Spec	Criminal Justice ECE Sped Engineering ESL/ELL Fire Science	Industrial Arts NurseHealth Ser Social Worker Student Support Technology	Occ. Therapist Psychologist Speech Lang SWAAC Spec Visually Imp
Phys Ed E/M/S Second Grade Soc Studies Speech Middle Third Grade	Music Elem Music Inst El Ed Music Inst Mid Music Mid/Sr Choral Music Orchestra	Library Media Spe Music Instrument Reading Recovery Sixth Grade Elem Spanish Star/CCP Lab	German Japanese Math Mid/Sen Moderate Needs Science Mid/Sen		
	Science Elem Speech Senior	Stem Mid STEM Mid Swap Lead			
(35(38-54)66)	(37(40-55)67)	(39(42-64)76)	(42(45-73)85)	(43(46-76)88)	(47(50-80)94)

First number if directly out of school with no experience. Next set is range for experienced hires.  
Last number is current range cap for all but HE. Source Pay for Performance Overview. DCSD Human Resources.

This differentiation in pay not only makes it easier for the DCSD to attract, retain and reward higher qualified professionals in those critical hard to fill positions, it also makes perfect education and business sense. Opponents grouse that the “system will send good teachers whose positions have been labeled as less important to other school districts.”<sup>27</sup> But the argument seems to offend the professionalism of those staff members who are hard workers. General practitioners don’t leave their hospitals or the profession because surgeons or anesthesiologists earn more than they do.

Not only are the students of DCSD benefiting from MBP because of the increase of quality applicants, the DCSD Human Resources office that has handled the increase in applications has also benefited. “In 2013, 163 postings were posted for internal applicants only. [E]xtrapolating, posting these positions externally may have generated 21,027 additional applications, and increased the average apps to 81.”<sup>28</sup> This would exceed the average applications by as much as 42% over the previous four years. Teachers who believe they are or can be highly effective are seeking out DCSD.

The Human Resources office created an “entry interview” to determine why there was an increased interest in DCSD. According to Cesare, three reasons were consistently given. First, “district philosophy, the DCSD encouraging and driving innovation in the classroom, secondly, the idea that the district was ‘committed to doing right by kids’ and finally, they were treating their teachers and staff as professionals.”<sup>29</sup>

# PAY FOR PERFORMANCE

According to Superintendent Fagen, believing “teachers and school leaders are indeed professionals and deserve professional pay”<sup>30</sup> is one of the reasons DCSD created MBP and PFP. Recalling her own classroom experience, Fagen said teachers shouldn’t have to take a vow of poverty<sup>31</sup> and “DCSD should move to competitive market salaries and reward and incentivize the very best teachers who are making the most significant difference for students.”<sup>32</sup>

To determine what an effective teacher looks like, DCSD developed, with the help of “100 teachers and multiple principals and assistant principals,”<sup>33</sup> the Continuous Improvement of Teacher Effectiveness measure, better known as CITE. CITE started over 5 years ago and is an evaluation tool that acknowledges teaching as both an art and a skill. Total teacher evaluation is composed of two components, Student Performance and Teacher Practice, each worth 50% and they combine to create a comprehensive evaluation of teacher performance. Teacher Practice is evaluated by CITE and the total evaluation aligns with state requirements that flow from Senate Bill 191, which changed how educators in Colorado should be evaluated.

Through the CITE evaluation and the performance of students, every educators’ performance is assessed and their effectiveness measured. If the teacher is measured as effective they stand to receive a base pay increase and opportunities for professional development through career paths. If educators are measured as highly effective, not only are they eligible for a base pay increase but they have the opportunity for a bonus through World Class Education Targets. World Class Education Targets are attributes or skills that are known “to make a difference for students in the classroom,”<sup>34</sup> The 12 targets help to determine whether a teacher will receive an additional bonus. The 12 targets are:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Backward Design                             | 7. Professional Growth and Development |
| 2. 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills Integration | 8. Authentic Assessment                |
| 3. Sustainable Learning                        | 9. Leadership                          |
| 4. Student Engagement                          | 10. Alignment                          |
| 5. Advocacy for All Students                   | 11. Student Satisfaction               |
| 6. Restorative Practices                       | 12. Parent Satisfaction <sup>35</sup>  |

The Targets were designed by teachers and are assessed by teachers in a peer review setting. As a highly effective teacher you also have the chance to coach or mentor others and explore careers within the district.

If an educator is assessed as effective or below effective the teacher is offered developmental opportunities to become highly effective or effective. Teachers evaluated as below effective are not eligible for pay increases but are cycled through professional development and coaching.

# TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

MBP and PFP are working and having a transformative impact.

After two years, more highly effective teachers and staff are staying with DCSD and below effective teachers are leaving the district. District officials feel PFP is incentivizing teachers to stay with DCSD as was mentioned previously by Principal Abner and “dramatically shifting...what we’ve seen in the classroom previously.”<sup>37</sup> The dynamic pay systems are “incentiviz[ing] that change.”<sup>38</sup>

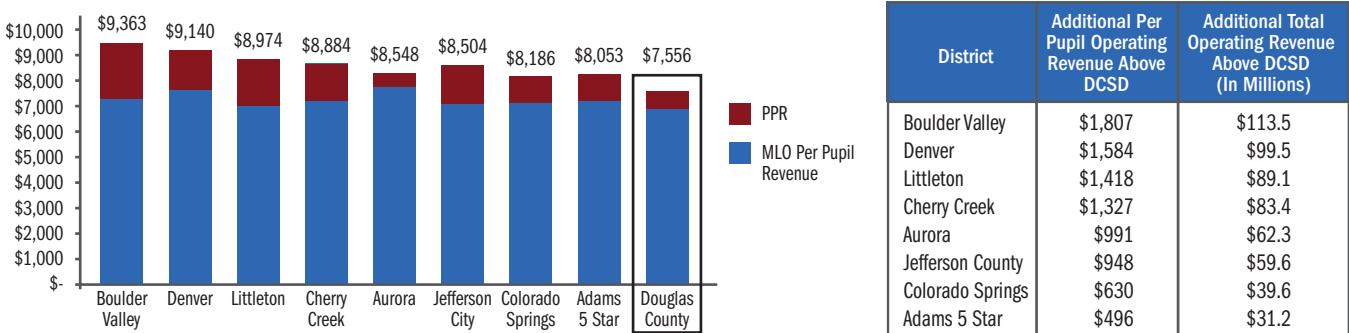
During the recent recession and the state’s response to the economic downturn, which included a midyear rescission from the state, DCSD had to freeze the pay of teachers, which created huge inequities. MBP and PFP are allowing DCSD to correct for those pay freezes as it creates a new and more professional structure to drive excellence, increase pay and build better outcomes for students. While teachers are worried about what the union would say is narrow data or a fractious relationship with the principal, the teachers are protected by a three-pronged approach<sup>39</sup> built into the system. Student growth and achievement is just one prong. The others are teacher evaluation through CITE, and world-class education targets. The targets are completely within the teacher’s control.

DCSD’s ability to measure their teachers and reward and retain those who are succeeding allows the district to put more effective teachers in front of students. Since the implementation of MBP and PFP in the 2012-2013 school year the district believes the impact on student achievement has been dynamic. However, in the 2013-2014 school year a new state testing regime was initiated, so it isn’t possible to compare results from the different tests, and to complicate matters the Colorado Department of Education has not released test results. But since the launch of MBP and PFP, the data available shows that academic achievement is increasing:

“There is a 95% retention of highly effective staff and 90% of effective educators.”<sup>36</sup>

- ✓ Accredited with Distinction. The state ranks districts and the highest rank is Accredited with Distinction. After the 2009-2010 school year that accreditation was lost but in 2011-2012 DCSD regained that designation. DCSD is the largest school district in Colorado to have the highest ranking. In 2013 the aggregate achievement score was 72.4, now it is 80.6.<sup>40</sup>
- ✓ In 2012 DCSD’s average ACT score was 21.4 now it is 22.1. Students scoring over 22 is important since it increases their chance to qualify for many top tier schools.<sup>41</sup>
- ✓ DCSD was also named to the AP Honor Roll in 2014. The district’s AP participation has sky rocketed. In the 2011-12 school year 3724 students were participating in AP. In 2013-2014 DCSD had 4331.<sup>42</sup>

## Combined School Finance ACT PPR and MLO Funding



FY2015-2016 Projected Per Pupil Revenue per CDE as of 7/1/2015. FY2014-2015 Mill Levy Override revenue received per CDE. Per pupil calculations based on FY2015-2016 Projected Funded Pupil per CDE as of 7/1/2015.

“Graduation rates are up from 83.1% in 2010 to 88.9% in 2015 and ACT test scores are up and the district was recently named an AP honor district.”<sup>43</sup>

The designation is given by the College Board for increased participation/access to AP courses coupled with improved performance and an increased or maintained percentage of exams taken by students of color.<sup>44</sup>

Attracting, competing and retaining the best teachers is tough for DCSD “since it’s one of the lowest funded districts”<sup>45</sup> along the Front Range. Resultantly, the district had to “make the money go as far as it could go.”<sup>46</sup> Larsen believes the system not only “affected change and drive”<sup>47</sup> but has not further stretched County dollars and has been very “efficient with taxpayer dollars.”<sup>48</sup>

“In business, customers have long demanded higher quality products and services for less money. Efficiency and excellence are required to meet the demands of the customer and succeed in the marketplace,”<sup>49</sup> said John Brackney former President and CEO of the South Metro Chamber of Commerce which unanimously endorsed the PFP and MBP. The Chamber and Brackney understand the need for “a first-class education system like that in Douglas County to ensure our continued economic prosperity...”<sup>50</sup> and to produce a better prepared student and work force.

## CONCLUSION

Douglas County is unique. It is a district that is suburban and high performing with upper middle class to wealthy parents. It did not have to change its processes, but to its credit it did not want to be complacent. “Top athletes don’t stop working once they begin winning, they look forward and try and get better.”<sup>51</sup> There is no complacency in DCSD. In the district, there is a strong sense of a “continued diligence”<sup>52</sup> to do what is in the best educational interest of kids. The Superintendent and Board “value collaboration, creativity, critical thinking in students and teachers”<sup>53</sup> but understand that “teachers were trained for a different time and despite professional development there is a need to update the craft.”<sup>54</sup> MBP and PFP are updating the craft and could very well lead college teacher programs to review how they prepare the next generation of teachers.

The system has already generated interest from “Arizona, North Carolina and Indiana,”<sup>55</sup> all of whom have engaged in education reform efforts in recent years. They have reached out to DCSD to inquire about MBP and PFP while national publications are clamoring for interviews.

Districts from around the country that embrace innovation will see this model as another way to assist their students and reward their teachers for effectiveness.

In a sector where there is a teacher and professional staff shortage and a growing dearth of highly effective teachers and professionals, in particular, the competition for those strong and highly effective people is robust. As Jenny Brundin recently reported in the Denver Post, “...[E]nrollments in the [Colorado] teacher prep schools are down 23 percent compared with five years ago...’[T]he sheer number of teachers that we need aren’t available so we’ve started going out of state to recruit where there’s a surplus of teachers...where they’re just churning out more teachers than they can hire, trying to convince them to come to Colorado.”<sup>56</sup>

MBP and PFP gives DCSD an advantage over other districts in Colorado and nationally in the search for talent and the quest to bring them to Colorado. Because of that leverage, DCSD students will have an edge over other students in Colorado and the United States.

Education is the one thing that consistently, constantly and permanently changes the trajectory of a student’s life. If the student is fortunate enough to have a highly effective teacher guiding their education, the trajectory of their life will be at a much steeper angle. The critical importance and impact of a good to great teacher cannot be disputed.



# AUTHOR BIO

The Honorable Peter C. Groff

Peter C. Groff is the Principal at MCG<sup>2</sup> Consulting, LLC. and a noted education reformer and national policy and political analyst and leadership lecturer.

Groff's more than 25 years of public service includes serving as a consultant to numerous entities at the national, state and local level and as a Visiting Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Prior to his tenure at Johns Hopkins, he was the Director of the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the U.S. Department of Education during the first term of President Barack H. Obama. The Center is part of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Groff is currently serving on the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars, appointed to that post by President Obama in 2014.

Groff served as the 47th President of the Colorado State Senate and was the first African American in Colorado to ascend to the post, and only the third African American in the nation's history to hold the gavel as State Senate President. Senator Groff, who was renowned as the "Conscience of the Senate," served in the Colorado General Assembly for nearly ten years and passed landmark and visionary legislation in the areas of education reform, criminal justice and health.

Born in Chicago, Groff was raised in Denver. He has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Redlands (Calif.), a Juris Doctorate from the University of Denver College of Law and an honorary Ph.D. from the University of Denver. Groff is married to the Rev. Dr. Regina C. Groff and they are parents to two teenaged children.



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