

Denver Public Schools

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

TEL 720-423-3414

FAX 720-423-3318

www.dpsk12.org



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 4, 2010

Contact:

Mike Vaughn

Office of Communications

michael_vaughn@dpsk12.org

(720) 423-3414—office

DPS High Schools Showing Strong Signs of Progress

Multiple Pathways Strategy, Partnerships with City, DSF Lead to Gains in Overall Enrollment, College Readiness, Attendance, 'Freshman On-Track' Rates

Denver – Hundreds more students are enrolled in DPS high schools, taking rigorous college-prep courses, and on-track to graduate, according to data that will be presented today to the DPS Board of Education.

The school system's multiple-pathways programs and college-readiness efforts in partnership with the City of Denver and the Denver Scholarship Foundation have helped boost DPS's 12th grade enrollment, which is up 24% over last year.

DSF provides a strong incentive for students to succeed in high school through its promise of helping to pay tuition and the establishment of the foundation's Future Centers, which provide students in all DPS high schools with on-site college counseling and application and financial-aid assistance. DSF is hosting 33 workshops throughout the city in February and March to help DPS seniors and recent graduates pay for college.

DPS and the Mayor's Office for Education and Children have worked closely on multiple-pathways and dropout-prevention strategies, including co-hosting a "Multiple Pathways to Graduation Summit" last year, with a focus on freshman "on-track" rates.

"We are proving that community partnerships and collaboration between the City and DPS are putting students on the path to success," said Mayor John Hickenlooper. "Of course, this success wouldn't be possible without the faculty and

staff in schools throughout Denver. We are proud to see so many more students on track to graduating from high school and heading to college.”

“This is very encouraging progress in our efforts to dramatically increase our graduation rate,” added DPS Superintendent Tom Boasberg. “Through the great work and dedication of our high school teachers and principals and the partnership with the City and the Denver Scholarship Foundation, we’ve helped hundreds more of our students see the opportunities for a great future through education.”

The City has also teamed with DPS on revamping discipline policies to reduce suspensions and provide more student support. While working collaboratively with Padres Unidos, the Denver Police Department, and the Denver District Attorney’s Office, DPS changed its discipline policy in August 2008 to focus more on embracing restorative justice while having students take responsibility for the misbehavior, repairing the harm, keeping students safe and in school. As a result, the number of out-of-school suspensions in DPS continues to fall; over the past six years, out-of-school suspensions have decreased by about 44%.

The newly released high school data follows last month’s announcement that the district’s college-enrollment rate increased by 7 percentage points this year, to about 49%. In addition, DPS saw its overall high school graduation rate increase by 3.2 percentage points, to 52.7% this year. It’s the district’s biggest jump in the graduation rate since 2003, when it climbed by 6 points.

The district is seeing especially large gains in students taking college-readiness courses—Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and concurrent college-enrollment programs. Over the past five years, the number of AP tests taken has increased by about 67%, and the number of AP exams passed in the district rose by about 40%.

The data also shows that more students of color are enrolling in AP classes. About 59% of students enrolled in AP courses this fall are students of color, an increase from 41% in 2006.

In terms of concurrent enrollment in college courses, there were 1,852 DPS students enrolled in both high school and college classes in the 2008-2009 school year—a 69% increase over the last four years.

The new data also shows that DPS high school students are getting off to a strong start. The district’s fall 2009 “freshman on-track” to graduation rate has increased to 83%, up from 68% in 2007. Ninth grade is considered a critical year in ensuring that at-risk students receive the support they need to succeed in high school. The “on-track” rate is based on attendance and course grades for freshman students’ first semester.

The district has also reached out to at-risk students by expanding credit-recovery classes to help them get back on track. Over the past year, the number of students taking credit-recovery courses has nearly quadrupled, from about 600 students in fall of 2008 to about 2400 students in the fall of 2009.

In addition, overall high school attendance has increased 5 percentage points over the last two years, to 87.5%. The indicators point to a continuing decline in the district's dropout rate, which has fallen by about 30% over the past two years—from 10.4% in 2006-2007 to 7.4% in 2008-2009;

"There's still a great deal of work ahead, but we're seeing strong growth in many of the areas that are key indicators of high school progress," Boasberg added. "And the most encouraging evidence to me is the tremendous energy and commitment to success that I see and feel in visiting our high schools regularly. That's what will keep our high schools improving and getting all of our students to the commencement stage prepared to succeed in college and careers."

For more information, contact the communications office at 720-423-3414.

###