

Manual High School

1700 East 28th Street
Denver, CO 80205
720.423.6300



March 31, 2010

Tom Boasberg, Superintendent
Denver Public Schools
900 Grant St.
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Tom,

I am writing to offer my resignation as soon as a new school leader for Manual High School can be hired and a smooth transition can be effected. I was hired as the principal of the re-opening Manual to develop the school's design, mission and academic program; rebuild relationships and trust with the community; hire and develop a world-class faculty and staff; establish a school culture focused on high academic achievement; implement assessment-driven feedback loops that guide instruction; provide personalization and support for every student; challenge and prepare students for future learning; and, of course, turn around Denver's "failingest" high school to make it one of its best. These goals, for the most part, have been achieved.

When Manual was closed in 2006, its metrics were abysmal—low test scores, low attendance, high student attrition, and low graduation rates—and Manual was a case study in failed school reform. After three years, Manual outranks eight of the ten traditional DPS high schools and is acknowledged as a Top Performing and High Growth School on the School Performance Framework. Manual has the highest CSAP scores of any Title I DPS high school; proficiency rates more than double those of the school that closed in 2006. Manual CSAP growth exceeds the district and state. Manual student attendance exceeds the district and far exceeds attendance in Title I schools. Manual has the highest on-track-to-graduate rate in DPS. Manual student attrition, which was at 40% by this time of year in 2005-06, is currently standing at 5%. Community organizations which had condemned or given up on the school are now re-engaged and voicing active support. Manual leads the district in standards-based curriculum and data- and assessment-driven instruction. The halls of Manual are safe and orderly, and a sense of urgency and focus prevails in the classrooms. The most common disciplinary infractions are for dress code and cell phone violations; violence and gang activity are extremely rare in the school. These accomplishments are not so much a credit to my leadership as to the world-class faculty who work the longest school day in the district, dedicate countless hours outside of school, work and learn together as a team, and constantly reassess and change course in their search for improvement. All of Manual's eligible English and Math teachers earned ProComp bonuses this year for exceeding expectations.

There is never a good time to leave an evolving organization, and I cannot claim that my work is completed. However, the school that was closed has been turned around and it is now heading in a far better direction. The past three years have been the most challenging of my career, and I have to weigh the cost to my family, relationships and my own personal goals, and to assess how long I can maintain the necessary momentum to continue to move the school forward. I have been an educator for 28 years, 14 of them as a principal, and it is time to hand the baton of daily management in schools to a younger generation of leaders.

I hope you will allow me to work with you to complete four remaining goals before ending my term as principal of Manual High School:

1. Complete the development of the full, four-year school design this spring and summer to launch the first senior class towards graduation and 100% college acceptance.
2. Work collaboratively with the district, School Leadership Team and other community stakeholders to identify Manual's next principal and develop a "strategic, deliberate induction plan" as called for in the Innovation Plan to ensure a smooth leadership transition.
3. Fully implement the terms of the Innovation Plan and live up to the spirit of the Innovation Schools Act of 2008 to set an example for the rest of the state and nation.
4. Develop a strategy for long-term co-location on Manual's campus that best serves the students and community.

As an alumnus of Manual High School, I will always care deeply about the school and its destiny. My own children, now enrolled in DPS schools, will be fourth generation graduates of DPS. I remain loyal to Denver and all of its children, and hope to continue to serve in other ways. I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve and learn at Manual, and I continue to be an advocate of your efforts to reform the district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rob Stein".

Rob Stein
Principal