



# 2024-2026 Policy Platform

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## Theory of Change in Action

### 2023-2024 Listening Tour

As part of Denver Families for Public Schools' ongoing community organizing efforts and commitment to authentic community engagement, our team conducted a two-year listening tour, engaging **8,575** Denver families, educators, alumni, and community members and culminating in the identification of the top issues outlined below. We used our 2023 and 2024 Kitchen Table Survey project, our 2023 and 2024 [LEARN](#) programs, and two polls of the 2023 and 2024 general electorates.

### Creating and Championing a Community-Centered Platform

After conducting an extensive listening campaign, Denver Families began work with community members to (1) define our policy agenda, (2) prioritize opportunities for collective action, (3) identify policymakers who will champion the work, and (4) work with those champions to demand the change we seek. This work is led by our leadership development program participants and supported by the Denver Families staff.

# Academics

## Quantitative Results

2023 Kitchen Table Survey	#2 Issue	179   54%
2023 LEARN	#2 Issue	843   31%
2024 Kitchen Table Survey	#3 Issue (Tie)	347   42%
2024 LEARN	#3 Issue	1,366   44%

**Qualitative Results: Gathered as part of 2023 & 2024 LEARN programs.**

### How community defined “Academics”:

- **Academic Performance:** High levels of student achievement and ability to be successful in academic core content areas like reading, writing, and math. Measurable outcomes in academic achievement and graduation rates.
- **Critical Thinking/Problem Solving:** Students develop the ability to think critically, solve problems, and apply their knowledge to the real world.
- **Preparedness for Future:** Students graduate with the life skills and knowledge necessary for postsecondary success, whether that be higher education or career. Students are engaged as lifelong learners.
- **Equity and Opportunity Gaps:** Ensure that all students of color, low-income students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities have access to an excellent education and the opportunities traditionally unaffordable to underserved and under-resourced communities.

### Ideas of solutions we heard from community:

- **Curriculum:** Students have access to a broad range of curricular models and options that include core subjects, arts, music, STEM, physical education, financial literacy, and career and technical education (CTE). Curriculum is culturally responsive and represents the contributions of traditionally marginalized groups.
- **Resources:** All schools have access to tutoring, counseling, special education services, and multilingual education services to serve all students well. All schools have access to up-to-date technology and learning materials.
- **Supporting Educators:** Educators are well-trained and passionate. Schools and systems provide access to ongoing professional development.
- **Community and Caregiver Involvement:** Schools see caregivers and community partners as collectively responsible for academic success and include them in the educational process. Engage caregivers and community members to inform what makes a “good school” and/or “good education.”

# Mental Health

## 2023-2024 Listening Tour Results:

2023 Kitchen Table Survey	#1 Issue	233   70%
2024 Kitchen Table Survey	#1 Issue	510   61%

***Qualitative Results: Gathered as part of 2023 & 2024 LEARN programs.***

### How community defined “Mental Health”:

- **Emotional & Psychological Well-Being:** supporting students and staff with emotional regulation, managing and coping with stress, and maintaining self-esteem.
- **Social Well-Being:** building and maintaining healthy relationships, feeling included and connected, having a sense of belonging.
- **Support Services:** availability of counseling, therapy, and mental health resources within school and outside of school.

### Ideas of solutions we heard from community:

- **Need for more resources:** Increasing the number of mental health resources and providers, decreased caseloads, and support for all students and staff along a continuum of needs.
- **Equitable access to resources:** Ensuring that mental health support is culturally responsive and accessible to historically marginalized groups.
- **Holistic supports:** Ensuring students are receiving the mental, social, emotional, and academic support they need. Recognize students’ inherent greatness and unique challenges.
- **Pandemic response:** Schools and systems adapting to the stress and anxiety that were exacerbated by the pandemic and ongoing climate of anxiety.
- **Better integration with education:** Literally integrated by inviting service providers into partnerships and on school sites; also ensuring school experiences are responsive to research in behavioral science like course offerings that support mental health and reducing screen time.
- **Parental and community involvement:** Include caregivers in mental health initiatives and programs, support caregivers accessing resources beyond school walls and hours.

# Safety

## Quantitative Results

2023 LEARN	#1 Issue	972   35%
2024 Kitchen Table Survey	#2 Issue	496   60%
2024 LEARN	#1 Issue	1,588   51%

**Qualitative Results: Gathered as part of 2023 & 2024 LEARN programs.**

### How community defined “Safety”:

- **Physical Safety:** respondents described this as protection from threats, gun violence, and intrusions.
- **Emotional and Psychological Safety:** inclusive environments free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- **Health Safety:** access to health care services, protocols for managing and supporting student and staff health.
- **Community and Caregiver Involvement:** parents and community members understand safety measures, schools invite families and community partners to be collectively responsible for student and staff well-being.

### Ideas of solutions we heard from community:

- **Physical Safety:** Secure building infrastructure, emergency response protocols, presence of security personnel that do not exacerbate the school-to-prison pipeline.
- **Emotional and Psychological Safety:** Effective anti-bullying programs, interventions like restorative practices for bullying separate from being mislabeled as conflicts, mental health supports, staff and students sharing a culture of respect, families and caregivers feeling respect and inclusion.
- **Health Safety:** Students and families having access to health care services through their school site and/or resources connected to schools.
- **Community and Caregiver Involvement:** Education for parents and caregivers, easier points of collaboration between schools and community organizations and providers.
- **Enriching Spaces:** Students have access to before- and after-school programs, extracurriculars, and community spaces that reduce incidences of youth violence.