

AT-LARGE—Pull prior page out to left to see questions.



Julie Bañuelos

I spent 15 years in DPS as a teacher, a union leader and community advocate. I bring a unique voice to the at-large seat on the DPS board of education, one that draws from many intersectional communities; I come from a working class immigrant family where I was brought up bilingual while living in a bicultural world. I attended my neighborhood schools, Gilpin and Ebert, in the Curtis Park Neighborhood.

It's time to put a teacher's perspective on the board, especially one that shares the experience of the majority of students in DPS. My platform is focused on protecting students, defending families, supporting teachers and monitoring district spending. website: juliedps.com; social media: <https://www.facebook.com/banuelosforeducation/> <https://twitter.com/banuelos4Ed>; email: feedback@banuelos4education.org; phone: (303) 900-8912



Barbara O'Brien

I am a lifelong champion for our kids. I fought to increase access to early childhood education, counseling services, and health care for Colorado's kids as the head of the Children's Campaign and as Lieutenant Governor. As a Denver school board member, I'll keep pushing for more autonomy for principals over their budgets and curriculum, more shared leadership for teachers in their schools, accountability for

chronically underperforming schools so that student have a chance to attend a high performing school that meets their needs, a continued focus on improving reading in the early grades, and making college or careers more affordable with paid apprenticeships and community college credits while still in high school.



Robert Speth

Unlike my competitor Barbara O'Brien, I am not likely to be supported by hundreds of thousands of dollars of out of state super PAC money. Unlike my competitor Barbara O'Brien, I have not been sitting on the DPS board while also serving as president (until recently) of another company, Catapult, which has been receiving payments from DPS. I'm a parent with two children in DPS who has three key areas of focus: What's

best for our (1) students, (2) schools, and (3) communities. No strings attached. If you are reading this and can help, please do so! Can you take a yard sign? Help knock doors? Donate? We are a grassroots volunteer organization! Please join us! www.spethforstudents.org; Facebook/[spethforstudents](https://www.facebook.com/spethforstudents); email: spethforstudents2017@gmail.com

DPS created a colorful website, established monthly English learner advisory committee meetings, launched teacher and parent portal platforms and established EDUCA Radio. However, the district still must comply with the federal court order regarding English learners and improve retention of experienced teachers of color, which would improve student learning given the district pupil demographics. DPS boasts about its school choice model but doesn't mention how few benefit, while closing neighborhood schools that serve working class families and sending them to schools far from home while hoping for a "better" school.

Since 2013, as a member of the Denver School Board, I called for a study of reading achievement in elementary schools which led to a new literacy and reading curriculum, a new system of progress monitoring for young students, and professional development in the teaching of reading for all elementary paraprofessionals and teachers. We saw historic gains in reading in K-3rd grade last year. I will apply those same strategies to math and science so that young students are ready for the challenging work of middle school.

DPS' move to give principals more control as to how they operate their schools is a good step in the right direction. I have seen firsthand the benefits that can come from a quality principal operating with some measure of autonomy. DPS has done a poor job of meeting the goals of the Denver Plan 2020, specifically early literacy, college readiness, and closing the achievement gap. We need more money in the classrooms, we need to stop outsourcing public education, and we need to listen to our communities.

1) Ending "school choice" as we know it and its admin-heavy, expensive structure. Respecting the organic, first choice of parents, which often is their neighborhood school. 2) Ending discriminatory policy via fidelity to the English learner federal court order and recalibrating school ratings to reflect growing English fluency instead of scapegoating English learners. This practice applies to our students with disabilities. 3) Pursuing a cost-benefit analysis of initiatives like "choice," Success Express and charter schools. Pushing for promised bond-funded improvements in schools like air conditioning and modern HVAC systems.

Too many students face uncertainty with unstable housing, poverty, and hunger, making it difficult to learn. Last year, 22,000 DPS students changed schools due to housing or family instability. I will continue to work with the board on breaking down barriers for our kids and on supporting the "Whole Child." We also have to resist harmful Washington policies that undermine the community values that make Denver so unique. Our schools need to be a safe place for ALL kids, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

DPS has made lackluster progress on the Denver Plan 2020. Less than 38% of 3rd graders are reading at grade level or above, graduation rates are among the lowest of any major city in the US, and the achievement gap persists and is even growing in some cases. All of this is a result of pursuing a portfolio strategy of school management, and a continued outsourcing of public education. We need more money in the classrooms and we need to listen to our communities.

"Choice" depends on an unfair representation of school effectiveness. DPS must reform the School Performance Framework so that students in poverty or with disabilities and English learners aren't used as an excuse to close schools. Schools should be recognized when students show subject mastery on Spanish assessments and English proficiency growth. Schools need leeway as they transition students from Spanish to English-only classes.

I support more autonomy for principals over their budgets and curriculum, more shared leadership for teachers in their schools, and accountability for chronically underperforming schools so that student have a chance to attend a high performing school that meets their needs. Autonomy lets principals be flexible and fast in using his or her budget to meet the unique needs of their students. Elementary schools in particular have improved due to principal and teacher leadership. Denver was rated as having the best school choice system in the nation, with more than 80% of families getting their first choice of school.

In general I am supportive of choice, but strongly in favor of supporting and enhancing strong neighborhood schools. We need to be cognizant that due to a myriad of issues, lack of transportation options being one, choice is, on average, being leveraged more by people of means. While spending on transportation could be increased, most communities indicate a strong desire for investment in their neighborhood schools so their children can be learning and spending time with friends and family vs. sitting on buses.

As an elected official, my fidelity and decision making would be guided by the community needs, as opposed to the current push for Portfolio Management, a neoliberal strategy that represents elements of competitive market forces. The current board unanimously votes 7-0 against the wishes of school communities, which is evidence that there is no balance on the board. Building consensus entails meeting students and families in their community more than once, not just selecting which groups to meet with that best reflect the values of the superintendent.

I am an elected at-large board member. I listen to a community and try to balance what I hear with the needs of the whole district. After attending several Stapleton community meetings, I helped find funding in the 2012 bond to accelerate the buildout of Northfield. Sometimes there are different perspectives within a community but I look for solutions to ensure that every child has access to a high performing school and will graduate college and career ready. That is my continued commitment to the voters of Denver.

Northfield was a classic bait and switch. DPS told the community one thing in order to get the bond passed, and then after it was passed they revealed their true plan. DPS cannot and should not have secret agendas. If their plan is truly what is best for students, then they should be open and transparent about it, period.

The SPF unfairly targets English learners by ignoring the growth of a student's English proficiency. It ignores achievement on Spanish-language assessments, and this matters in a district of nearly 50% English learners. For some low income families, getting the child to school demonstrates a high level of engagement, and the SPF does not allow for the impact of poverty on student achievement.

Overall, the SPF is still too dependent on standardized testing. Every family has the right to opt out of standardized testing without persecution from school officials.

The SPF has been successful in identifying schools that are good for students and schools that need to improve. The academic gaps between groups of students are now being highlighted in the SPF and we have the opportunity to learn from schools that are closing their gaps. I hope that my focus on adding meaningful SPF measures of school culture and the social-emotional health of students will give parents a better understanding of their children's schools and give the district better insight into a school's performance.

The entire reason the SPF exists is because the district needed a justification to close schools as part of their portfolio strategy. I believe we should not be closing schools, we should be helping them. We shouldn't be creating a system that force ranks schools, we should be ensuring that all schools have the necessary resources that they need to meet the challenges that they face.

The LEAP system measures teacher performance. Teachers could earn more through professional development and the school's SPF ratings. However, teachers that earned the most taught in schools of mainly affluent students. Teachers in high-poverty schools rarely saw increases based on the SPF. Today, paying our teachers a base salary large enough to live in Denver without having a second job has become a greater need.

Teachers helped develop the LEAP evaluation system. Every year, teachers report through an anonymous survey on the fairness and usefulness of LEAP. The results from last year's survey were the highest they've been. Teachers tell me that the addition of observations by master teachers has been a high quality improvement to the evaluation process because they receive classroom-based, individualized feedback for their professional development.

Teachers should be evaluated by principals, assistant principals or senior teachers based on a set of standards that are known in advance. Teachers should also be given the opportunity for self assessment and possibly peer reviews, although the latter might be too burdensome. The veteran teachers I have spoken with don't believe good performance should be rewarded, but there should be ample opportunities for career advancement.

I prefer to refer to the opportunity gap, since DPS' students are nearly 50% English learners, more than 70% low income, and more than 70% students of color. When only the affluent receive resource-rich schools, while the most vulnerable get zero-tolerance and high-stakes testing, it's little wonder that a gap exists. Every child deserves arts and music, gym and recess, languages and sciences. Providing wraparound services must be prioritized, and these services are just as crucial as learning how to read and write. We must make our schools safe and functional community centers, to build cooperation from families.

The achievement gap often begins before children enter school. DPS is partnering with community groups to expand early learning opportunities for vulnerable children. We are using 2016 mill levy funding to direct extra literacy services, teacher leaders and social-emotional supports toward students who are behind. We know that minority students benefit academically by having a teacher of color, especially in elementary school. DPS has a number of new programs to recruit and retain educators and administrators of color. I support the new achievement gap metric in the SPF to increase accountability for closing the gap in every school.

The achievement gap is the difference in test scores between particular groups of students. For example, the difference in reading proficiency between students on free and reduced lunch, and those not. In a "Focus on Achievement" session in September, the district released results that show that the achievement gap is increasing (i.e. getting worse). Determining causality is a very complex question - certainly worthy of many years of research. Part of the solution is what I've outline above: giving schools and teachers the resources they need - not pursuing policies such as school closure and more high stakes testing.

I have raised approximately \$12,000 as of September 5, 2017. My top five contributors are friends and members of the community who have each given approximately \$250 apiece. More specific information will appear on the first campaign finance report due in October.

I file all of my contributors publicly with the Colorado Secretary of State. I am incredibly grateful to the hundreds of people who have stepped up to support me.

Robert Speth - \$2,100
David Grasc - \$1,986
Craig Kaley - \$600
Larry Lovelace - \$500
Laura Curtis - \$500