

# THE DENVER GREEN SCHOOL

## APPLICATION TO BE DESIGNATED AN INOVATION SCHOOL

### 1. Mission:

In partnership with our diverse urban community, Denver Green School (DGS) will provide a hands-on, brains-on experience that engages all students, staff, families and community, in preparing our learners to lead the way toward a sustainable, bright green future.

### Vision:

DGS is a national beacon for real-world learning. We strive to integrate a flexible student-driven approach to curriculum and instruction, where diverse learners of all ages:

- Achieve at a high level academically,
- Partner with their teachers to engage in relevant, student-directed learning,
- Build leadership capacity by embracing a democratic decision-making model,
- Use service-learning as a way to become community stewards,
- Create mind-body connections as well as community connections,
- Use our school building and our neighborhood as laboratories for the study and implementation of carbon footprint reduction and sustainable living.

### Core Values

- Community: Organizations, neighbors and family members are key stakeholders in the education of children. DGS will involve these stakeholders both to support student learning and to contribute to our community.
- Equity: DGS is committed to establishing learning conditions under which all students can achieve at the highest level. The DGS community demonstrates leadership in cultural proficiency in a system that supports diversity.
- Engagement: DGS believes that students learn best when they are engaged a flexible, student-centered and standards-based curriculum. This engaged

curriculum emphasizes hand-on, brains-on project-based learning in a real-world setting, thus inspiring natural curiosity and innovation.

- Stewardship: DGS takes ownership of and responsibility for maintaining, protecting and improving our natural surroundings. We engage in direct action to address environmental problems and implement sustainable solutions.
- High expectations: DGS students hold the highest expectations for their own achievement, as well as that of the greater DGS community. We will align curriculum, instruction and assessments as an accountability tool for continuous learning and improvement.
- Relevance: DGS students are enthusiastic learners because they use knowledge to solve real-world problems in their own communities. Focusing on sustainability issues, we will build community partnerships to create a more durable future.
- Shared leadership: DGS is committed to a vision of distributed leadership that is collaborative, democratic, effective, reflective and courageous.

## **2. The Need for innovation**

Throughout our nation's history, education has been linked to the promise a bright future for children and for the country. This vision has been undermined by staggering national dropout rates and discouraging graduation rates here in Denver (51% graduation rate in DPS according to the Colorado Department of Education) and equally astounding achievement gaps between ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups. These alarming trends call into question the notion of education as a great equalizer.

Clearly, something needs to change in public education and more specifically in Denver Public Schools. Innovation status will provide the autonomy needed to create such change. We must reflect thoughtfully on the future of public education. Over the past several decades, educational reform has often been confined to what happens in the classroom and within school buildings. While such efforts are indeed essential, DGS believes that such attempts at reform will ultimately fall short.

Through Project Based, Place Based Education and Education for Sustainability, DGS will offer a reform approach that is grounded in research for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. This requires the autonomy to be able to implement a researched based, portfolio-based curriculum in which students participate in challenging, hands-on, brains-on projects that are initiated and fostered by their guided inquiry approach. Be able to use the building, grounds and community as a teaching and learning lab that enables us to provide sustainable solutions to improve the building efficiency, use of gardens on school grounds and create a quality food service program.

The restrictions often placed on schools to comply with certain schedules and school year calendars inhibit the flexibility that DGS needs in order to successfully implement our instructional model. DGS will utilize a flexible schedule, extended school-day and school –year to allow additional time for project based learning to take place in the community.

Typically, schools are neglecting to look at the “whole” child in terms of long-term success. Student goals are focused solely on academics when research and models of other successful schools (Community of Peace Academy, Minneapolis, MN) tell us that we are missing the boat and losing many students as a result. We will teach and expect students to live up to DGS’ core values, which are further described throughout this document. They will engage in intense, integrated curriculum and receive individualized support to ensure mastery of core content areas. Throughout the core curriculum, Education for Sustainability standards will be integrated using backward design. Individual learning plans (ILP’s) addressing the whole child will be developed by students, facilitated by teachers, shared and monitored by parents.

Currently, the DCTA contract does not enable DGS to adhere to our mission and vision. It is imperative that we are able to hire professional staff, that are willing and able to support the mission and vision of DGS including working within a flexible scheduling and extended school day and school year. It also requires the need for us to be able to terminate those are not in alignment with the mission and vision of the school..

DGS is a program with a clear vision and a mission driven by the needs of our students and community. DGS will attract families that have chosen to opt out of a traditional school setting by offering a relevant, high quality education for all students. DGS will respect diversity, expect engagement, and thrive on the very foundation of why public schools were created in this country: to participate in a democratic society and strengthen communities.

## **A Snapshot of the life of a student at DGS:**

Juana has been a DGS student since she was in Kindergarten. Now a high school senior, she is contemplating her future. She reflects on how her notion of community has evolved over the years.

\* When she was seven, she focused on close-in relationships like her family and her first grade class. She learned the importance of supporting these communities, especially when they were right there for her on her bad days.

\* By the age of ten, Juana had become aware of her whole neighborhood and her place in it. She began offering leaf-raking and snow-shoveling to three elderly residents. Later, she transcribed these peoples' stories in an oral history project about the neighborhood. She always had a strange feeling that even though she was doing work for them, that somehow they were providing her with something even more important.

\* At twelve, Juana was traveling with classmates to farms on the state's western slope. Some of the fruit they harvested was brought back and sold along with the salsa, sauerkraut and garden produce that DGS students were marketing that summer. Although Juana's group made several hundred dollars, the best part was learning about how generations of Colorado farmers had been producing delicious organic fruit. She was proud to be part of this history.

\* When she was fifteen, Juana took a trip to an organic farm in Wisconsin. There, she teamed up with students from a local green school who taught her about sustainable farming techniques. She and her classmates shared their experiences with the orchards in Colorado. She still gets several e-mails weekly from them, seeking advice and offering encouragement.

\* At age 18, having just returned from a fact-finding trip to Holland, Juana is buzzing with excitement: she has been invited to return and study wind power as a college student. She feels a powerful kinship with the students she met while abroad. She understands that despite their different cultures, they share much in common: a desire to shape their own lives, a longing to make a positive difference in their communities, and a strong commitment to their families and neighborhoods.

Juana struggles a bit to understand what "community" really means: is it my little first grade community? Or is it my wonderful home state of Colorado? Maybe it's the entire country, including my friends in Wisconsin. Or could community mean the global community? Juana settles on this last notion of community, but resolves to stay connected to the friends and family in the neighborhood where it all started. She's already invested so much energy there, and she's beginning to feel like it's making a difference.

### **3. Innovations to be implemented:**

#### **A. The Instructional Model:**

#### **Waivers Requested; Sec 22-32-109(aa)- adopt content standards and a plan for implementing standards.**

In alignment with the Colorado State Standards, Denver Plan and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Framework, the following Instructional models are essential to the unique foundation of the DGS mission and vision. Teachers need the flexibility to pace, plan and adjust within this model. The EFS standards and instructional models listed will be integrated into the content and Colorado State Standards using Backward Lesson Design of units and courses of study offering a Standards Based academic program.

- **Education for Sustainability – The Cloud Institute**

EFS reflects a global dialogue between people working for the planet’s biodiversity and ecological systems, and those addressing hunger, literacy, health, and equity.

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The President’s Council on Sustainable Development defined education for sustainability as “a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. These actions will help ensure an environmentally sound and economically prosperous future.

DGS will collaborate with The Cloud Institute for ongoing professional development to integrate the following EFS standards into the school culture and curriculum through whole school facilitation, curriculum mapping with Colorado State standards and coaching on designing units for the whole school year starting with social studies and science.

#### **The Cloud Institute- Education for Sustainability Content Standards - Knowledge and Action**

##### **\_\_\_ Cultural Preservation and Transformation**

How the preservation of cultural histories and heritages, and the transformation of cultural identities and practices contribute to sustainable communities. Students will develop the ability to discern with others what to preserve and what to change in order for future generations to thrive.

##### **\_\_\_ Responsible Local/Global Citizenship**

The rights, responsibilities and actions associated with leadership and participation toward healthy and sustainable communities. Students will know and understand these rights and responsibilities and assume their roles of leadership and participation.

### **\_\_\_ The Dynamics of Systems & Change**

A system is made up of two or more parts in a dynamic relationship that forms a whole whose elements 'hang together' and change because they continually affect each other over time. Fundamental patterns of systems include growth, decline and vacillation. Students will know and understand the dynamic nature of complex systems and change over time. They will be able to apply the tools and concepts of system dynamics and systems thinking in their present lives, and to inform the choices that will affect our future.

### **\_\_\_ Sustainable Economics**

The evolving theories and practices of economics and the shift towards integrating our economic, natural and social systems, to support and maintain life on the planet. Students will know and understand 21st century economic practices and will produce and consume in ways that contribute to the health of the financial, social and natural capital.

### **\_\_\_ Healthy Commons**

Healthy Commons are that upon which we all depend and for which we are all responsible (i.e., air, trust, our collective future, water, libraries, public health, heritage sites, top soil, etc.). Students will be able to recognize and value the vital importance of the Commons in our lives and for our future. They will assume the rights, responsibilities and actions to care for the Commons.

### **\_\_\_ Natural Laws and Ecological Principles**

The laws of nature and science principles of sustainability. Students will see themselves as interdependent with each other, all living things and natural systems. They will be able to put their knowledge and understanding to use in the service of their lives, their communities and the places in which they live.

### **\_\_\_ Inventing and Affecting the Future**

The vital role of vision, imagination and intention in creating the desired future. Students will design, implement and assess actions in the service of their vision.

### **\_\_\_ Multiple Perspectives**

The perspectives, life experiences and cultures of others, as well as our own. Students will know, understand, value and draw from multiple perspectives to co-create with diverse stakeholders shared and evolving visions and actions in the service of a healthy and sustainable future.

### **\_\_\_ A Sense of Place**

The strong connection to the place in which one lives. Students will recognize and value the interrelationships between the social, economic, ecological and architectural history of that place and contribute to its continuous

### **Place-Based Learning (PEEC-Placed Base Education Evaluation Collaborative)**

Place-based learning is another important pedagogy rolled into the practice of EFS. EFS begins with an understanding of one's own place. Especially in the elementary grades, we need to cultivate student awareness and understanding of our natural and human communities. From that understanding or "sense of place," they can begin to comprehend the complex interactions of local (and later global) environmental, economic, and social needs, and learn to address them in ways that last into the future. While place-based programs generally use ecology or history as their integrating context or lens, EFS uses sustainability, a more interdisciplinary approach.

While much of the SL research effort is focused on student outcomes, some studies of impact on teachers have also been conducted, with general trends suggesting the following impacts:

- increased confidence in their ability to have a positive influence on students
- improved classroom management and discipline;
- more positive attitude toward students;
- greater job satisfaction; and
- an increased sense of collaboration within the school.

### **Student Engagement:**

- **Meaningful Content:** Learning occurs in places outside the standard class room, and focuses on issues that have meaning for students. For instance, DGS will have a market garden that will provide students with a wealth of learning projects, Denver Urban Farm, the Platt River, local farms, community businesses, NREL, solar and wind companies/farms, Denver Zoo, Balarat, just to name a few.
- **Voice and Choice:** Learning is active and provides students a role in decision making. Students will learn how to ask the essential and focus questions that will help guide them to determine what they will study and produce in order to meet the content standards as well as participate in the democratic governance model of the school.
- **Personal and Public Purpose:** Learning goals connect personal achievement to public purpose. Through Compelling Conversations, individual learning plans will be designed, implemented and assessed on an ongoing basis through a team process that may include the student, parent, teachers and partners.
- **Assessment and Feedback:** Ongoing assessment gives students the opportunity to learn from their successes and failures. This is an integral component that will drive the high academic achievement goals of DGS. Students will be engaged in goal setting and review of academic, social/emotional and physical achievement based on their individual learning plan.

- **Resources and Relationships:** Community partnerships increase the resources and relationships available for student learning. As a community hub, students and staff will be immersed in creating and maintaining these relationships through strong partnerships with neighborhood groups, businesses, and non profits such as Earth Force and Denver Urban Gardens.

**Best practices include:**

- Defining clear curricular goals, using the service learning as an essential part of the curriculum (not a one-time event or an add-on)
- Involving students and community members in the leadership and decision-making for the projects
- Focusing the projects on a relevant, authentic need in the school or community<sup>4</sup>. Keeping the focus of the projects and its goals within the students’ understanding and ability to make a difference (locus of control)

**Effective Teaching and Learning Strategies:**

The DGS adopts the DPS belief that, powerful teaching and learning does not happen by accident. A strong theoretical foundation and effective strategies will be the foundation of teaching and learning from ECE through eighth grade at DGS.

- **Understanding by Design**—Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe believe that teaching for deep understanding requires planning backward—first determining the big ideas students are to learn, then working backward to identify methods to reach those goals and ways to assess the effectiveness of teaching.
- **Nonlinguistic Representation**—Many psychologists believe that students think and remember better when they store information in both linguistic and nonlinguistic forms. Research by Robert Marzano and colleagues demonstrates that teaching with nonlinguistic activities, such as graphic organizers, mental images, and movement helps to improve students’ understanding of content.
- **Multiple Intelligences**—According to Howard Gardner’s revolutionary theory, every student is intelligent—just not in the same way. Because everyone learns in a different way, the best activities tap more than one kind of intelligence. Gardner has described these seven intelligences: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, body-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.
- **Cooperative Interaction**—Elizabeth Cohen’s research has led her to conclude that cooperative group work leads to learning gains and higher student achievement. Cohen has found that if students are trained in cooperative behaviors, placed in mixed-ability groups, and assigned roles to complete during a multiple-ability task, they tend to interact more equally. This increased student interaction leads to more learning and great content retention.
- **Spiral Curriculum**—Educational theorist Jerome Bruner championed the idea of the spiral curriculum, in which students learn progressively more difficult

concepts through a process of step-by-step discovery. With this approach, all students can learn once a teacher has shown them how to think and discover knowledge for themselves.

- **Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)** – Echevarria, Vogt & Short (2000) produced this research based model of sheltering content area instruction for ELLs.

## B. K -8 Curriculum

### Waiver Requested; Sec-22-32-109(t)- educational program and text books

Based on the data for the last 4 years in DPS, there have not been significant increases in student achievement and therefore innovation will allow DGS to incorporate a body of curricula that supports our vision, mission and achievement goals. As the Instructional Planning Guides created by DPS teachers and curriculum staff are meant to be guides only, there are huge gaps in what they provide. Teachers spend way too much precious planning time trying to locate appropriate materials in order to differentiate for the wide ranges of levels in every classroom. We need to take the guess work out of what to teach when and provide a researched- based, systematic approach to teaching and learning reading that the current guides do not include. Our staff will be comprised of new teachers in the district who are learning on the job as well as veteran teachers who demand a systematic, efficient and structured framework as well as the freedom to integrate inquiry based tools in order to ensure that students are proficient or above in every standard. The following tools will provide that difference as well as addressing the needs of the whole child. They are described separately but are integrated into the broader context of the model.

DGS believes that a “program” is only as good as the instruction. In alignment with the Colorado State Standards and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Framework, these researched based tools will guide the high level of instruction and learning that students are guaranteed in order to reach their

- **Earth Force Service Learning** - From their website, “Earth Force engages young people as active citizens who improve the environment and their communities now and in the future.”<sup>1</sup> This is not a curriculum but a six step process to structure student driven service learning, providing the thread that runs through years at DGS and ties the content areas together. In every grade students will use content learning in developmentally appropriate projects to demonstrate

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.earthforce.org/section/aboutef>

both a well-integrated body of personal knowledge and a belief that everyone can contribute to making change in the real world. This approach will be the formal venue in which students pursue issues of sustainability in areas like energy, food, and community. They train and support teachers and educators who use the innovative six-step process to guide young people as they inventory their local communities, identify issues they care about, and then develop a plan for addressing that issue. Bringing their passion and energy to bear, Earth Force students have tackled a wide range of issues, including water quality in homes and local waterways, water and energy conservation at their schools, indoor air quality, waste (and more nutritional lunches) in their school lunchroom, and other civic issues, such as bullying, graffiti, and school spirit, making lasting impacts that affect the health and wellbeing of their fellow students, their teachers, and their community.

These programs utilize a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic learning, utilizes strategies that have proven effective in motivating students to learn and in enhancing youth leadership skills.<sup>[1]</sup> Participation in service-learning has been shown to improve student engagement in school and bolster academic performance and reduce negative behaviors.<sup>[2]</sup> A growing body of research shows that students who participate in service-learning activities develop a greater sense of civic responsibility, a more sophisticated understanding of politics and a feeling that they can make a difference.<sup>[3]</sup> Through Earth Force, young people enhance their decision-making/problem-solving skills, which in turn can help them avoid making high-risk choices.<sup>[4]</sup> (Research can be found in the Appendix)

- **Peaceful People /Physical Education/Nutrition** - - The Peaceful People Curriculum provides another important thread through the years at DGS. This program has been developed at the Namaste Charter School in Chicago, The curricula provides support and opportunities for children to acquire the skills, knowledge, and understanding to thrive academically and socially, find personal health and fulfillment, and take responsibility as productive members of their community. All of this is encompassed by a daily focus on health, nutrition and physical fitness. It also teaches “spatial awareness, self-control and stress management, managing anger and conflict resolution to support their emotional and social development.”<sup>2</sup> It aligns with our fundamental belief that all children possess the attributes necessary to become healthy, literate and life-long lovers of learning. It aligns with the DGS “immersion” approach designed to nourish

both minds and bodies of students. Nutrition education and regular physical activity are integrated into the academic curriculum. DGS will make physical activity and nutrition education a daily part of our curriculum to provide a focus on health, nutrition and physical fitness to support highly engaged learning and to develop in students life-long habits that support general well being. The connections and overlap between PE and Peaceful People will structure a safe and holistic environment in which students will explore, learn and grow. The whole school will engage some aspect of this combination every morning during a ½ hour block. The idea that we “fill our buckets” at the very start of the day is one that we believe to be essential in maintaining focus and energy as well as positive connections with each other.(Examples of the curriculum can be found in the appendix)

Innovation status is necessary in order to achieve the DGS goal of assuring that all students have met the reading standards by third grade, by allowing us to choose a reading curriculum that is anchored in sound research, aligned with state standards and the National Reading Panel. We need to fill in the following gaps that are present in the Denver Planning Guides. This includes the need to support the RTI model by providing materials and lesson plans for a three tiered approach to instruction, provide a strong, systematic framework for Readers workshop and a wide variety of built-in assessments to provide frequent feedback for student goals.

- **Reading**

Within a Readers Workshop model, Scott Foresman’s **Reading Street** © will be our reading curriculum for Grades **ECE-6**. Reading Street is designed to support teachers and students by providing a complete three-tiered, balanced literacy model. Instead of having to choose different intervention programs to support Tier II and III, it provides a continuum of levels for all three. Reading Street’s motivating and engaging literature and materials, scientifically researched instruction, and its wealth of reliable tools support teachers as they build strong readers at all levels. The program takes the guesswork out of differentiating instruction with a strong emphasis on ongoing progress-monitoring and an explicit plan to help manage small group instruction. In addition, Reading Street prioritizes skill instruction at each grade level, assuring teachers the lesson is focused on the right skill at the right time for every student based on ongoing progress monitoring.

The Tier I core program provides explicit and systematic instruction on the critical elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Tier II supports and enhances core classroom instruction by providing strategies and materials for re-teaching of core concepts, more teacher modeling and feedback, more scaffolding, multiple opportunities for practice, and more time on task for Tier II students. Tier III instruction for Reading Street consists of an intensive intervention program, Sidewalks, that is parallel to the core program in concepts and vocabulary, but more slowly paced in skill instruction. This intensive intervention is for students who are significantly below grade level (1 1/2 to 2 grades below) and need more substantial support. It addresses the needs of students at the bottom 25% of their grade level.

**Springboard** is the new, current language arts program for **7-8<sup>th</sup>** grades in DPS. It provides a comprehensive approach to reading and writing that can be easily adapted to project based learning. Provides differentiation for all learners and includes ongoing assessment to assure student success. Highly engaging and rich literature, including many classics are the foundation of this program.

- **Writing**

Step Up to Writing curriculum will be used in conjunction with the district-developed Planning Guides units of study, including a variety of genres for grades K-8. Additional resources to the Planning Guides include New Standards for Reading and Writing from NCEE, classroom libraries, Shared Reading materials, Reading Street bookrooms and Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Teaching Writing. Step up to Writing provides all learners the tools needed for writing excellence. It aligns with state standards and content area learning. It provides differentiated, multi-sensory strategies for all students including those who are gifted and talented, at risk and English language learners. Three important components include increased critical thinking skills, strategies that teach the writing process and strategies that improve reading comprehension. Step Up to Writing provides a common writing language across all content areas and grade levels. It is unique in its ability to serve as an effective tool for increasing writing proficiency among all students by providing basic through advanced skill levels and age appropriate tools. This curriculum is being successfully implemented within DPS's Three-Tier model of instruction at all grade levels.

- **Math**

Innovation status will provide DGS with the choice to provide a math curriculum that will more closely align with the DGS instructional model. Investigations has been successfully implemented at Goldrick Elementary in DPS as indicated by their continued improvement on CSAP. It aligns with the NCTM curriculum focal points, state standards, and RTI. The inquiry design of this program integrates much more accurately than Everyday Math, to the Placed Based Education and Service Learning models that will be the context for student centered/project based learning. Students who participated in high quality service learning programs showed an increase in measures of school engagement and mathematics. (Melchior, 1999) When you engage and challenge the brain with investigative activities that require thinking, doing and explaining, students will become mathematical thinkers. This curriculum provides students with more relevance through real-life problem solving. The focus on discussion activities allow students to make connections by sharing their thinking as well as to provide opportunities to develop oral language skills that are crucial to support the needs of ELL's. The ongoing assessments ask students to explain concepts, describe their thinking and evaluate understanding.

The math curriculum for K-6 at DGS will be **Investigations in Number, Data, and Space** from Scott Foresman. The curriculum is designed to support students to make sense of mathematics and learn that they can be mathematical thinkers and focus on computational fluency with whole number as a major goal. It also provides substantive work in important areas of mathematics-rational numbers, geometry, measurement, data, and early algebra-and the connections among them. Reasoning about mathematical ideas is emphasized as well as, the ability to communicate mathematics content and pedagogy. Investigations engage a range of learners and scaffolds into the Three Tiered model of RTI. There is daily progress monitoring with suggested strategies to support students with common problems as well as those who struggle. Success Tracker is the online component that can support and monitor learning for all students at every level. The curriculum provides teachers with strategies to support ELL's that include visuals to help solve problems, opportunities to discuss their thinking, use of manipulatives and realia. Math Words and Ideas provide challenges for those students who are in need of going above and beyond. There are built in home connections to provide students with supports for homework that promote independence. It provides teachers with a format that is easy to follow, with explicit support every step of the way. As collaborators and facilitators of learning, teachers will engage in ongoing learning about mathematics content, pedagogy and student learning through effective and differentiated professional development.

We will analyze the gaps between Investigations and our selected high school curriculum, Discovering Mathematics (algebra, geometry and advanced algebra). We will then map the 6th - 8th grade books of Connected Mathematics 2 into those gaps and sequence our selection of books for use in the 7th and 8th grade math courses. In the event that we need additional material during these two years, we will supplement with Lessons in Mathematics to support students understanding of and ability to model complex and dynamic systems as mentioned in our proposal on page 45.

- **Science**

**In order to implement the student driven, project based, Place based and Service Learning models of teaching and learning, DGS teachers must have the flexibility to adjust the instructional time, pace and place based on student need. They may be spending chunks of time on a project out in the market garden or at the Urban Farm. A group may be out interviewing members of the community about water conservation issues. Sixth graders could spend some time with third graders developing essential questions that will drive a unit of study focused on an aspect of the neighborhood history. Portfolio time will be set up to provide students with ongoing support with goal setting and review of standards met for all content areas.**

DGS will implement the DPS elementary Science curriculum, BSCS Science Tracks and integrate the EFS standards and the Earth Force Service Learning model. It aligns with our belief in teaching science as inquiry and will provide the foundation for hands-on learning. Tracks and Earth Force incorporate a researched based, constructivist approach to learning that supports all learners. Tracks focus on the principles in earth, life and physical sciences will blend in with our focus on environmental, sustainable, green energy studies from the Earth Force 6 component curriculum.

DGS will use the DPS selected programs for Earth Science (grades 6 and 9), Life Science (grade 7), and Physical Science (grade 8). These will be integrated using Backward Lesson Design to create units within the context of Placed Based and Sustainable Education as well as Earth force Service Learning curriculum.

- **Social Studies**

DGS will use the DPS Social Studies Standards Matrices for each grade level while incorporating EFS standards into carefully crafted standards-based lessons which are rooted in a strong theoretical foundation and effective strategies in order to develop a standards based approach to teaching and learning. DGS shares the DPS belief that, the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make

informed and reasoned decisions for the public good. Our moral imperative as educators is to see all children as precious and recognize that they will inherit a world of baffling complexity. Our responsibility is to respect and support the dignity of the individual, the health of the community, and the common good of all. This responsibility demands that DGS teach our students to recognize and respect the diversity that exists within the community.

DGS will use the DPS selected programs for Geography (grades 6), World History (grade 7), and US History (grades 8). These will be integrated using Backward Lesson Design to create units within the context of Place Based and Sustainable Education as well as Earth force Service Learning curriculum.

- **Homework:**

Students will be required to complete relevant homework at every grade level. Differentiated, teacher designed homework will be given on a regular basis in order to ensure mastery of the standards. It may be in the form of practice, projects or online assignments. Parents will be provided with support in the form of workshops and student led conferences with ways to best support their child with homework.

- **RtI (ECE-8)**

#### **RtI Leadership Team**

The purpose of the RtI Leadership team is to provide overall guidance and support to the RtI process at Denver Green School. The team will accomplish this goal by focusing its work on the following:

- Meet monthly to monitor the RtI Instructional Plan to ensure that the data demonstrates that the plan is working as designed; making any needed adjustment.
- Ensuring effective classroom instruction in the core
- Creating a process that ensures that teachers/interventionists use and document research-based intervention prior to bringing students to the SIT.
- Ensure that regular observations are conducted to ensure fidelity of implementation at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels of instruction.
- Ensuring regular data team content meeting cycles & data team intervention meeting cycles to monitor student progress and make timely adjustments to instruction for students in Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

- Ensure that budgeting and scheduling decisions are closely tied to student and teacher needs based on data.
- Meet quarterly to analyze benchmark data and re-sort students into new intervention groupings(when appropriate)
- Ensure Special Education services for students in Tier 3 are in compliance with IDEA
- Coordinate and plan differentiated professional development around meeting the needs of students in all three Tiers including best practices for the inclusion of students on the Autism spectrum in the general classroom.

### **Elementary K-5 Reading Interventions:**

#### **Targeted Level**

A 45-minute intervention block will be provided according to the master schedule for all grades 1-6. During this time students are grouped for interventions based on data from DIBELS or Aimsweb CBM's, DRA2, CSAP, benchmarks and classroom based assessments. These groups will remain fluid as students reach goals based on progress monitoring data.

Intermediate Grades (2-5): Six Minute Solution

Primary Grades (K-2): PALS, My SideWalks

#### **Intensive Level: Provided during 45minute intervention block with additional time added for students who require more time**

Primary Grades (K-1): My SideWalks, Foundations

K-3: My Sidewalks, Wilson, Foundations

Intermediate Grades (4-6): My Side Walks, Wilson

#### **Math**

Intervention will be provided by a teacher for Mathematics to provide support to grade level Mathematics instructors by working with small groups of students from across each grade level to provide them with the small group differentiated lessons provided within the Investigations curriculum during the designated Mathematics block.

### **Secondary Reading Interventions (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade)**

#### **Targeted Level:**

Reading Advantage

Rewards

Rewards Plus (Social Studies/Science):

Spellography

**Intensive Level:**

Wilson

LANGUAGE!

**Math**

A teacher will provide interventions for Mathematics will provide support to grade level Mathematics instructors by working with small groups of students from across each grade level to provide them with the small group differentiated lessons provided within the Investigations curriculum during the designated Mathematics block.

- **English Language Development:**

In keeping with policy IHBEA, the Denver Green School will offer services for language learners in accordance with state statutes and district policies. All practices in working with ELL students will be consistent with DPS including creation of an ISA team, assessment (CELA), instructional practices (ELD classes, Sheltered Instruction for ELE-E), parent input (BPAC) and additional staff support including a ELAS resource teacher. Among the initial partners, there are 4 ELA E certified staff and two ELA S certified staff members.

While the basic model for services will be in direct alignment with DPS practices, other features as identified within other instructional features will serve as critical support for enhancing ELL success. These will include project based learning, service learning, emphasis on collaborative learning and an emphasis on real world situations. All of these features will support the full continuum of language development (oral, listening, reading and writing) through use of comprehensible input (making content more understandable) and increasing student interactions (more opportunities to use language). Student progress will be tracked and supported through use of ILP and individual conferencing (compelling conversations).

It should also be noted that an emphasis on involving parents and the community can serve as powerful components in creating a supportive environment for ELL students. Again, this type of general program feature will be supported through many of the waivers detailed in the innovation application.

**C. Food/Nutrition:**

DGS wishes to involve students (& community and staff) in all aspects of food and nutrition within a project based model. We envision students taking active responsibility for their own health, the health of their community, and the health of the Earth.

Studies have shown that healthy foods have a positive impact on student success. We expect to see DGS students highly engaged and motivated, with enough energy for demanding coursework as well as robust physical activities. We also expect students who eat right to have fewer discipline problems.

All of this aligns perfectly with DGS' stated goals of academic excellence, carbon footprint reduction and community involvement. We see students growing their own food and in this way nurturing a connection with the Earth. Students will benefit directly from their labor by eating healthy, organic, delicious food that will sustain them mentally, physically and emotionally. They will learn lifelong habits that they'll take to their families and community.

**Student Engagement:**

- Students will actively participate (at all ages/grade levels) in planning, growing, harvesting, preparing and eating their own food.
- Students will work in gardens and urban farms (both on and off school grounds) to grow the food that they will eat in school (and share with their families and community).
- Students will be involved in planning menus that reflect personal health and environmental sustainability.
- Students will learn to cook healthy meals for themselves and their families. They will be active in the kitchen at school.
- Students will have access to a "food mentor"/chef/nutritionist (who may not be a certified teacher) working with them to plan and prepare meals.
- Students will have opportunities to share their knowledge and their harvest with their families and community. This includes bringing produce to the marketplace.
- DGS will have full control over the food served in school. We will work with DPS foodservice and USDA providers as well as local growers and distributors to select and prepare food that meets student needs. This includes the possibility of choosing not to serve DPS foodservice and/or USDA offerings.

**D. Grade Level Organization:**

Waiver Requested- Sec 22-32-109(aa)- adopt content standards and plan for implementing standards. Sec 22-32-109(1)(n)-schedule and calendar

In order to provide a true Standards Based education model, DGS will need the autonomy through innovation to develop a plan to provide a process that allows students to move according to when they meet the standards/attained the credits, not

when everyone else has. Confining students to a grade level for an entire year for every content area holds students back from reaching their full potential when *they* are developmentally ready. On the other hand, moving a student on in a particular content area whether they have met the standard or not robs them of the time and support needed to assure mastery.

Through our project based model, students will be able to demonstrate mastery using a body of evidence on an ongoing basis. Consistent teacher/student goal setting and review, data analysis and Compelling Conversations will provide the opportunity to allow for more fluid movement through the standards. Students may have the flexibility to attend a group where the grade level standard they are currently performing is being taught. This will ensure the needs of all students will be met including those designated as Gifted and Talented and Special Education. An integration model will be developed for students in Center Based programs ECE-8 based on individual learning plans focused on meeting the needs of the whole child.

#### **E. Report Cards/Promotion/Graduation:**

Denver Green School will use the current DPS standards based report card for year 1 at least, with the goal to develop our own that meets the needs of our model.

Promotion and graduation requirements will also follow current DPS and state requirements.

#### **F. Assessment:**

Waiver Requested: Sec-22-32-109(aa)- adopt content standards and plan for implementation

Innovation will provide DGS the opportunity to create assessment tools aligned with our project based model that will positively impact student achievement. Teachers and students will be able to design assessments that provide a large body of evidence in the form of a portfolio process that will include opportunities for an online assessment system for collection and presentation in conjunction with community presentations.

The Denver Green School is committed to being a high performing elementary, middle and high school that uses Data Teams (Besser, Anderson-Davis, Peery 2006) and Compelling Conversations (Piercy 2006) to drive and adjust instruction. It is our feeling that all pieces of school improvement, teacher evaluation, and student growth objectives and data team goals need to be tightly aligned and consistently visited to

attain our goals. The combination of these processes will provide a framework that allows us to engage in thoughtful conversations about teaching strategies, leadership decisions, and other adult actions that influence student achievement. The body of evidence will include;

**Formal-**

- CSAP
- (TBD) A benchmark assessment (3-8) every 4-6 wks that is aligned with CSAP/Standards/Curriculum
- DRA2/SRI - use to assess reading levels/five components of reading skill levels - fall and spring (and as needed based on anecdotal records below)
- DIBELS or AIMSweb- CBM benchmarking 3 times per year and ongoing progress monitoring for reading.

**Informal-**

- Success Tracker (K-6)- both Investigations and Reading Street have;
  - An online assessment system that provides pre and post unit tests
  - A bank of assessment topics and questions aligned to assessment formats including CSAP from which teachers can create custom assessments.
  - A data management system for progress monitoring
- Unit assessments from Springboard curriculum (7-8)
- Unit assessments from CMP curriculum (7-8)
- Unit assessments from Tracs-science curriculum (K-8)
- Rubrics (K-8) designed to assess projects/service learning. This would include science and social studies. (Using the Project Based Learning Handbook- Buck Institute for Education)
- Anecdotal Records from; observation, conferencing, running records.

**Compelling Conversations:**

The intentional, structured process of Compelling Conversations (Piercy) will engage colleagues in reflective practice that will lead to deepened understanding of the process of instruction and of the products created through the teaching and learning process. The success Compelling Conversations had in Maryland (2004-2005) shows how powerful this process can support student achievement. The compelling aspects of conversations lead to the development of a culture of accountability that is embraced rather than feared and support a culture of shared knowledge and leadership (DuFour, Dufour, Eaker, Karanek, 2004). At DGS, these scheduled conversations will be about taking a closer look at every student's progress, slowly taking time to discuss their needs from a whole child perspective and to support Individual Learning Plans. Leaders and teachers will participate in summer professional development using the book, *Compelling Conversations* to ensure understanding of the process and be able to begin day one.

**We will follow the Three Stages of Compelling Conversations;**

Stage 1: Individual Student goals are established - backward mapping quarterly from June and monitored each month

Stage 2: Data from Conversations are used to create Learning Plans – hard data is transferred immediately from conversations for use by teachers, leader teams, and Data Teams

Stage 3: Visual data pie charts are created – data snapshots that tell an ongoing story of accountability for each student, teacher, grade and school

**Individual Learning Plans:**

**The Personal Learning Profile project**, supported by the Exceptional Student Services Unit at the Colorado Department of Education, was initiated to develop materials that would support students in their efforts to develop the skills and dispositions associated to self-determination. These skills include expanding students' abilities to understand their learning strengths and needs, name their preferences, generate long and short term goals, and identify resources that they can use to meet their goals. These ILP's are focused on the "whole" child. As the first project of the school year, they will be created by the students through facilitation by the teacher. They will include academic, social/emotional and health SMART goals, strategies to reach those goals and a timeline. Progress reviews may include the student, teacher, parent, mentor or other DGS partner/s. The timeline will include dates for review of progress with a minimum of 4 times per year.

The Compelling Conversations framework (T. Piercy) will be used regularly by our professional learning communities to guide our discussions around specific student

achievement and using data to monitor the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, as well as to guide the individual learning plans for each student.

### **Data Teams:**

Teachers, administrators, and other staff members will be involved in department and grade level planning during the teacher work day. During this time, teacher teams will be involved in the data team process. Facilitated meetings will involve examining the CSAP assessment frameworks and unpacking the skills students need in order to meet the benchmark areas. Teacher will then work with the curriculum to pace, chart and map when students will be practicing the needed skills. A common pre- and post-assessment will be created and the pre-assessment will be given. At this point, teachers will collect and chart data, analyze gains and challenges, set goals, decide upon instructional strategies and determine results indicators. Student work will be looked at using a variety of protocols to help drive instruction. The post assessment will be given, scores will be analyzed and teams will determine if their goal was met or not and develop new SMART goals and strategies to ensure success. This process will be repeated every 6 weeks.

The data team cycle will be intertwined with the Denver Green School professional development model. Each data team will report out their learning's in staff meetings. Teachers will decide upon the professional development opportunities that will help them to better understand how to reach their data team goals. Teachers will be supporting their data team work by creating their professional development around their SMART goals. Examples would include, case studies, book reviews and school site visits all focused around reaching their data team goals.

**Using data to build a culture of continuous learning:** The Denver Green School will be using a modified version of the EarthForce 6 step process throughout our work with staff and students. This process combined with Compelling Conversations will be the backbone of our professional development process. The process includes the following sequence: inventory, issue, practice, option, action and reflection. Data analysis serves as the critical element in taking inventory

### **G. Calendar and Schedule:**

Waiver Requested: Sec 22-32-109(1)(n) Sec 22-32-109(II)(A) Sec 22-32-109(II)(B)

The innovation status will allow the Denver Green School to support its mission by adjusting both the daily schedule and calendar year. Many of the elements defined within our school proposal and innovation application will require time. In order to

allocate time for service learning, project based learning, peaceful person and other program features while still maintaining fidelity to the Denver Plan, it is essential to operate with an increase in time. Further, certain projects, which will be critical to the integrity of the school mission, such as urban agriculture will, through necessity, include the summer.

The Denver Green School seeks to extend its day by 45 minutes and adjust late starts and early releases. Before and after school programs will be offered daily as well as during the early release days. Further, the school will offer summer options in essence extending the number of school days. The school day schedule will allow for flexible start and end times for staff based on course offerings and to allow for flexible programming. At DGS, we are committed to providing an excellent academic curriculum that will lead to high achievement; but we want to produce well rounded students and to do so we will support a diverse array of extracurricular activities. We expect to support several athletic teams—from soccer and basketball to ultimate Frisbee to foreign language studies, as well as gardening, dance, drama and green energy clubs (any club that will help further the mission of the school and build meaningful community partnerships for our students). All constituents including parents, students and staff will be informed prior to starting with the school and given adequate prior notice of any changes as they occur (minimum 30 days). Any changes in the school would take approval from a majority of key stake holders. All of these changes would reflect an increase of the minimum hours for all grades as defined within state law. ( Appendix 1 - School year/School day calendar)

## **H. Leadership/School Governance**

Waivers Requested: Sec C.R.S. 22-60.5-301(1)(a) Governing Principal Licensure Sec 22-9-101, Licensed Personnel Evaluation Act Sec 22-33-105(2)(a) C.R.S. 24-72-204(3)(a)(II)

The Denver Green School will utilize a distributed leadership model and therefore needs waivers from the traditional leadership model. The team of full partners at the Denver Green School will use a democratic process to come to consensus in a variety of issues traditionally delegated to the principal. Additionally, tasks will be delegated to committees which do not necessarily have licensed administrators amongst the members. DGS will seek four waivers from the traditional leadership model.

- The team of full partners at DGS will be responsible for the teacher evaluation process. DGS values the responsibility and accountability that will be created by teachers evaluating their peers. In a school that places community as one of its founding pillars, it is crucial to have educators trust the professional judgment of their peers. This process will give better insight to those who are evaluated but

also motivate the evaluators who respect the importance of their duty. In the school there will be a full partner who chairs the committee on teacher evaluation. This committee chair will lead a team that will work to evaluate staff members.

- Because full partners will be responsible for teacher evaluation they will need access to Infinite Campus and the employees' personnel files. Essentially, evaluators will need to have the same resources as principals and this waiver ensures that teacher evaluators will be able to perform their task.
- A group of full partners will comprise a discipline team which will have the authority to suspend students. DGS sees the discipline process in much the same way it views the teacher evaluation process. DGS values community and believes that by including more members into critical decision making, the school strengthens the decisions it makes. Just as in the case of teacher evaluation, there will be a discipline committee which will work to create a consensus on the best ways to discipline a student whether that be suspension, expulsion or hopefully discipline that allows the student to not miss instruction.
- While two of the Lead Partners for DGS possess a principal's license, Lead Partners at DGS in the future do not necessarily need to have a principal's license. The DGS team knows from experience that distributing leadership tasks creates quality work while fostering a greater sense of ownership amongst the partners. Several of the tasks normally delegated to the principal will be distributed amongst the various committees run by full partners at DGS. Among other duties, the Lead Partners at DGS will act as liaisons to the district, instructional leaders, representatives of the school and emergency coordinators. (Appendix 3- Articles of Partnership)

### **Administrator, Teacher, Community, and Collaborative School Committee Support:**

The DGS and surrounding neighborhoods will become a beacon, nationwide demonstrating the impact that a united community dedicated to sustainability and learning can achieve. In an effort to attract diverse families to Denver Green School (DGS) the founding members will employ two central strategies to work with families as a major asset for building the DGS community. Strategies include: meeting with families in diverse community settings, creating compelling, multilingual marketing materials, working with parents as partners beyond the initial outreach. The goal will be to treat parents as more than a consumer; they are invested and valued contributors of the school.

The Big House- Appendix 3- Articles of Partnership

Shall work to engage the school community in a collaborative effort to advance the mission and vision of DGS. It will conduct its business in scheduled open meetings at the school site. It's members will include:

Associates, Employee Groups, Parents, Students, Community, and will be facilitated by a Lead Partner.

**Approval needed to inform alignment with school design**

- Budget
- Staffing allocations and adjustments
- Discipline and safety procedures
- Calendar and schedule

**Duties**

- Function as SIAC
- Inform and evaluate the things they have power to approve
- Provide a forum for parents, community, civic, service, neighborhood organizations to provide input
- Evaluate Executive Cabinet
- Recommend changes to school design to BoE via Executive Cabinet
- Engage in conference committee to resolve policy differences between houses

**Not involved in**

- Day-to-day operations
- Issues with individuals
- Personnel matters except as defined in 2.2.2  
(Appendix 2- Organizational chart)

**I. Staffing Plan**

Full time teachers at DGS are either associate or full members in the DGS Partnership.

Waiver Requested: §22-61-103, C.R.S., No group membership

No group membership shall apply to teachers hired by DGS with the following exception: Before accepting an assignment at DGS, all teachers will review and affirm that they understand the conditions of partnership defined in the DGS constitutional document, described in the Employee Handbook and in any other related documents.

The Partners agree that the **Teacher Employment, Compensation, and Dismissal Act of 1990** (TECDA) contains important ideas but the processes it requires do not translate well to the context of a teacher led professional practice model of school governance. Further, the Partners accept the finding that teacher quality affects student outcomes

more than any other factor we control directly. However, the Partners do not believe that teacher licensing is a consistent indicator of teacher quality or of an individual's suitability for a teaching position at DGS.

Based on these beliefs, we seek waivers from Colorado statute, DPS policy and labor contract provisions:

- To control the hiring and dismissal of all staff (including but not limited to teachers) at the school level in order to ensure a common commitment to the DGS mission and vision
- To allow the hiring of unlicensed but well qualified part-time or contract staff to teach in their area of expertise (examples include but are not limited to working artists, dancers, yoga instructors, farmers, chefs, writers, mathematicians, scientists, historians, etc.)
- To create a simple, fair and timely process to address staff performance issues in the context of the DGS mission and vision.

All hiring, support, remediation, and dismissal parameters and procedures will be defined in the DGS Articles of Partnership and described in the Employee Handbook.

Waivers Requested: **Teacher Employment, Compensation, and Dismissal Act of 1990**, § 22-63-101, et seq., C.R.S

Teachers hired by DGS from outside the district shall not be subject to the Teacher Employment, Compensation, and Dismissal Act of 1990, § 22-63-101, et seq., C.R.S and will not have the employment rights defined therein. When seeking to become full partners in DGS, teachers already granted tenure from DPS will acknowledge in writing that they accept all rights, benefits and obligations in the Articles of Partnership, and no longer have any claim to reassignment in another DPS school except through successful interview.

When a full partner of DGS secures a position in a DPS school other than DGS, s/he shall have non-probationary status with DPS and all employment rights and conditions as defined in TECDA.

The staffing plan in year 1 at DGS will consist of 7 of the 9 founding partners. They will fill capacity as lead partners/teachers in ECE, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, Instructional Lead, Operational Lead and Community Engagement/Fundraising Lead. All Lead Partners will be teaching

in a variety of capacities which may include; Interventions, technology, team teaching to allow for teacher planning time, small group project support, service learning projects.

The addition of K, 1 and 2 teachers will be made during the hiring process in January and February through a very effective teacher selection process modeled after the New Teacher Networks.

Each of the following years a grade level will be added to elementary and middle and teachers will be selected for those using the same process.

#### 4. Expected Improvements in Academic Achievements

DPS School Performance Framework Indicators	Innovation School Annual Achievement Goals and Measures
<i>Academic Performance &amp; Success</i>	
<p><b>Student Growth Over Time Toward State Standards</b>, including the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSAP and other assessments chosen, including assessments in compliance with the Colorado Basic Literacy Act</li> </ul>	<p>The DGS has a commitment to academic success. We expect the school to receive an overall rating of, “Distinguished,” and an academic Growth rating of “Significant Improvement.” Therefore we will meet the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The schools median growth percentile will be 65 or higher in reading, writing and math.</li> <li>• The median growth percentile will be above the acceptable range (at least 5 percentiles above the cluster median).</li> <li>• The school’s percentage of students moving to a higher CSAP performance level in reading, writing and math will be equal to or above the district’s percentage.</li> <li>• The school’s percentage of students staying at proficient or advanced CSAP performance levels will be equal to or above the district’s percentage.</li> <li>• The change of percentage of AYP targets made will be at or above the district’s average of schools with positive change.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school’s percentage of students Proficient or Advanced change over time will be 10 percent points or more than the district’s non-continuously enrolled students' percentage change over time.</li> </ul> <p>All students will be expected to show at least one year growth in one year time in reading, writing and</p> <p>Mathematics. In addition, those who are not yet at</p> <p>Proficiency will be expected to improve by an additional .5 each year until they reach proficiency.</p>
<p><b>Student Achievement Level/Status,</b> including the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSAP and other assessments chosen, including assessments in compliance with the Colorado Basic Literacy Act</li> <li>• Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</li> <li>• Achievement gaps (FRL, ELL, Special Education, and ethnic subgroups)</li> </ul>	<p>Our goal is that 90% of students reach proficiency in reading, writing and math. Comparing the DGS to other elementary, middle and high schools in the surrounding area our school would achieve a 60% reading proficiency, a 50% writing proficiency and a 50% math proficiency. These goals are 15-25% higher than schools in the selected in the surrounding area. Our students would continue to progress eventually reaching and surpassing the 90% level by gaining a year and a half of instruction each year.</p>

**5. Budget/Cost Savings and Efficiencies:**

Waiver Requested: Sec 22-32-109(1)(g)- handling/receipt of money

The Denver Green School has a set of core values that include stewardship, engagement and community. With these values in mind it is essential that our school have control over its budget to model for students and community members our commitment to those values. Our commitment to sustainability and place based education driving student achievement will be focused around learning at all levels. Including transportation, food services, facility management, maintenance, student services , instructional support services, professional development and substitute teachers. Many opportunities to teach our students the latest ideas in sustainability will come from

ownership over these areas.

Our school senior partners will agree on budget allocations based on the number of students enrolled on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The senior partners will be able to purchase administrative services based on our model for the following; such as transportation, food services, facility management, maintenance, student services and substitute teachers, from Denver Public Schools, based on a pricelist that will be provided by DPS to the Principal or designee, or from other providers.

The Denver Green School is committed to being a high performing elementary and middle school. We expect the school to receive an overall rating of “exceeds expectations” and an Academic Growth rating of “Significant Improvement” within three years of opening (DPS SPF Framework). We will use Data Teams (Besser, Anderson-Davis, Peery 2006) and Compelling Conversations (Piercy 2006) to drive and adjust instruction. It is our feeling that all pieces of school improvement, teacher evaluation, and student growth objectives and data team goals need to be tightly aligned and consistently visited to attain our goals. The combination of these processes will provide a framework that allows us to engage in thoughtful conversations about teaching strategies, leadership decisions, and other adult actions that influence student achievement.

## **6. Evidence that the majority of administrators, teachers and school advisory council consent to designation as an innovation school:**

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the 9 founding partners of the Denver Green School voted to designate the school as an Innovation School. (Attachment 6)

## **7. Statements of support**

The Denver Green School (DGS) founding partners have worked in collaboration with the DPS staff and administration to engage in a very thorough and thoughtful community process in determining the community’s threshold for a program such as Denver Green School. Overall, the community has shown strong support for DGS and its academic program.

Throughout this process, we engaged with the following community stakeholders:

- The George Washington Home Owners Association (GWHOA) served as one of our primary means to engage parents and/or residents of the GW/Fallis neighborhood.
- DGS partners conducted meetings with area principals (All SE Denver principals, particularly those affected by the DGS opening to gain perspectives from their parents and families over such a program) and overall, the response has been positive and
- We engaged with our local political entities: Councilwoman Johnston and School Board Member Jeannie Kaplan, and School Board Member at large, Mary Seawell, and all have been supportive of DGS
- We have engaged with local organizations that provide direct services for parent and families: Jewish Family Services, African Community Center and each have been supportive of DGS
- The district conducted (and DGS partners were present) at a total of 3 Regional Community Meetings: 2 Pre-Board Vote meetings to synthesize community feedback and 1 follow-up meeting to socialize the Board's decision.
- The district contracted with the PITON Foundation to conduct a telephone survey for parents and families potentially affected by any schools re-opening and specifically asked for interests in a variety of academic programs. Over 450 families participated in this survey, and there has been a large amount of support for DGS.

In addition to these outreach efforts, DGS has:

- Attended over 6 GWHOA and several Mayfair HOA meetings to answer questions and meet families in our boundary area
- Participated in the community ice cream social in fall 2009 where we shared and disseminated information about their program while seeking community input and initial perceptions of such a program.
- Participated in several smaller group community meetings throughout SE Denver to specifically address questions from the community (in a Q&A format)
- DGS has hosted two community open houses so that the community could come see the school and meet the founding partners. On December 18<sup>th</sup> we had over 60 families in attendance and mostly positive support. On January 9<sup>th</sup>, we had over 100 families in attendance with overwhelming community support from parents inside our boundary and those wishing to choice in. We had members of DPS staff at both events to help families with the enrollment and choice in process.

We, the founding members of DGS, have engaged in a very inclusive, collaborative and transparent process. As a result of these outreach events and families signing up on our website, we have over 200 names of parents interested in having their students attend DGS. We believe we are off to a strong start and have tapped a strong buzz about our school.

It is clear that we want to provide a high-performing K-8 small school that provides an opportunity for families in our boundary (and for those families wishing to choice in) that works for their children. By providing a school environment that will focus on hands-on, brains-on learning we firmly believe that we will be unique and effective to help students achieve at a high level academically and that we will graduate young citizens ready for college and ready to solve our most critical community problems. We know that parent and community engagement will be critical to our success and that is why we have and will continue to engage in such outreach efforts. For community will play a vital role in making DGS a true success story. (Appendix 7)

**8. Listing of Statutory , Regulatory and District Policy Requirements That Need To Be Waived:**

(Attachment 4- Waivers)

**9. DCTA Contract:**

(Appendix 4 – Waivers to Contract)

Teacher Offer of Employment Letter:

( Appendix 7)

**10. CAO letter of support:**

## **Appendix:**

- 1. Budget/School Calendar/Schedule/Staffing plan/Enrollment projections**
- 2. Organizational Chart**
- 3. Articles of Partnership**
- 4. Waivers**
- 5. Letter of consent for Innovation Status-founding partners**
- 6. Statements/Letters of Support**
- 7. Teacher Offer of Employment Letter**
- 8. Curriculum Matrix**
- 9. Educational Model**
- 10. Professional Development Plan**

## **Research:**

Placed Based Education-PEEC- <http://www.promiseofplace.org>

Closing the Achievement Gap- State Education and Environment Roundtable

The Cloud Institute Mission, Vision and scope of work

Scott Foresman Reading Street- Validation Summary

National Reading Panel recommendations for researched based reading programs- from article "Whole Language High Jinks" Louisa Moats

Step Up to Writing- Research Base

Scott Foresman Investigations- Evidence for Success

Earth Force Program Evaluation

## Namaste Charter School- Article

[http://www.greenearthinstitute.org/nutrition/school\\_policies\\_programs.html](http://www.greenearthinstitute.org/nutrition/school_policies_programs.html) Link to a study in Appleton, WI showing a strong correlation between healthy food and improved student behavior.

<http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/resourcelibrary/genResourceLibraryCategoryList.asp?CATNID=1057&CATNGUID={D74538AF-C1DA-438C-8986-4A75010ABF09}> Link to California Project Lean, a study showing connections between nutrition and student achievement.

<http://www.vtfeed.org/> Link to Vermont FEED (Food Education Every Day), which has designed and implemented gardening, cooking and nutrition programs in several Vermont schools. FEED has also published several books which outline the complete curriculum associated with these programs.







