

January 14, 2009

Dear Members of the Denver School Board:

On behalf of the members of Metro Organizations for People we are pleased to write this letter of support and endorsement for Manual High School's application for designation as an innovation school within the Denver Public Schools.

MOP has long been an advocate of increased school autonomy over budget, staff, curriculum, and school schedules. We were strong supporters of the autonomy proposals put forth by Bruce Randolph and Manual HS as well as Senator Groff's School Innovations Bill (SB 130) which was passed in 2008. We have applauded the board, superintendent and teachers' union for their growing support of increasing school autonomy in schools that are ready and capable of taking this step. Autonomy promises to increase the capacity of teachers, administrators, and parents to shape a school more closely to the particular needs of its student body. Paired with a student-based budgeting model that (we hope) will move toward greater weights for ELL and at risk students and increased funds in the SBB budget; schools like Manual HS will have a transparent understanding of the funds they will receive and have more autonomy over how to spend those funds to provide the best education for our students.

We would encourage the board and administration to provide the conditions and ongoing support necessary for innovative-autonomous schools to succeed, well into the future. The district and many in the community have staked a claim that autonomy will be one successful feature of the DPS reform plan. A commitment towards providing autonomous schools the support they need to succeed is critical to ensuring and evaluating this reform.

We have reviewed a draft of Manual's application and believe that it strongly reflects the key elements of autonomy and innovation that MOP has consistently supported.

We can't imagine a school that is better positioned to prove the efficacy of becoming an innovation school. Manual High School has a strong leader in Rob Stein, an enthusiastic teacher team and a strong parent organizing committee that is committed to making Manual the best high school in Denver.

We encourage your support of Manual's innovation school application.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the MOP Education Committee:

Zorri Spearman  
Jennifer Gonzalez  
Nola Miguel  
Steve Kennedy  
Martha Carranza  
Karla Loaiza  
Frank Tapy  
Jessica Buckley