

EL Education School Partnership Application

School Overview

1. Provide a narrative overview of your school and your community including defining elements, programs, partnerships or accomplishments. Please describe any unique elements of your school mission and any current partnerships with local or national organizations. (up to 3 paragraphs)

Columbine is an ECE3-5th grade Elementary school in northeast Denver. Eighty-nine percent of Columbine's students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Ninety percent of our current student body are children of color, equally split African-American and Hispanic. Twenty percent of our students are learning English as a second language. Columbine's interest in pursuing a formal partnership with EL is a natural through line for the transformation work we have begun over the last few years. We would also partner with EL to accelerate our school's growth. We believe that a partnership would help us provide the rich vision and practice of cultivating a culture of excellence that our students deserve.

Our commitment to every child who crosses its threshold is to prepare them to succeed by ensuring their safety and providing the best education we possibly can. We aim to actualize that vision every single day. The highly qualified and impassioned teachers and professionals encourage students to take the Cougar LEAP to College and Career Readiness.

The dedicated staff at Columbine cultivates an atmosphere that welcomes innovation designed to support rapid school improvement in concert with a commitment to equity and social justice. Columbine's leadership focuses on the values of high expectations and collaboration to focus on meeting the individual needs of each child who walks through Columbine's doors. Our strength comes with our collaboration and focus on rigorous instruction delivered in a safe, risk taking environment. We are a resilient team and have shown that our professional development structures, instructional programming decision and leadership results in improvement in student achievement and builds relational capacity amongst all stakeholders; ultimately improving the school experience for our students.

2. Copy or recreate the first two tabs of this [spreadsheet](#) to help us learn more about your school. (Excel spreadsheet also attached)

	ELA	ELA	Math	Math
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2014-2015	2015-2016
% Proficient Overall - School	15.60%	23.70%	23.60%	31.20%
% Proficient Overall - District	31.90%	34.90%	26.40%	29.90%
% Proficient by Grade - School				
<i>Inserts 1 row per tested grade</i>				
3	9	22	9	15
4	27	18	51	32
5	8	31	4	44
% Proficient by Grade - District				
<i>Inserts 1 row per tested grade</i>				
3	31	32	30	31
4	32	37	24	28
5	33	35	25	30

% Proficient by Subgroup - School				
FRL	13	19	19	29
Non-FRL	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Students w/ Disabilities	0	0	5	0
English language learners	12	17	12	24
Students of Color	16	24	23	34
African-American or Black	16	25	22	31
American Indian or Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian or Pacific Islander	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	16	23	24	35
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Proficient by Subgroup - District				
FRL	22	23	16	16
Non-FRL	64	66	56	57
Students w/ Disabilities	8	5	6	5
English language learners	7	11	9	11
African-American or Black	22	24	14	15
American Indian or Alaskan Native	22	22	12	16
Asian or Pacific Islander	49	50	46	47
Hispanic	23	24	16	17
White	66	69	59	61

Narrative (up to 2 paragraphs per question)

1. Why is your school interested in pursuing a partnership with EL Education? What are the primary factors that are driving your interest?

Our vision is to develop a proactive framework to personalize learning and support the whole child by integrating the 21st century technology, the arts, social and emotional curriculum and community assets. The work associated with this proposal will focus us on the transformation of Columbine into an elementary school that eliminates deficit thinking and exudes an atmosphere of forward thinking and moral consciousness. We believe that supporting the whole child with an asset-based approach will address many of the underlying issues causing the achievement gap, and will give students the confidence and support they need to be able to successfully own their own learning.

Our pursuit in partnering with EL Education results from the discovery that our school values, improvement strategies and instructional priorities tightly align to EL Education's Core Practices and Dimensions of Student Achievement. As you will see in our performance data below, we are a school on the rise and we know that we have a long way to go. With EL Education's network of support, we believe that a partnership will both push and protect our vision of excellence. We are driven to partner with EL Education because we believe it will provide our team with supports to focus our actions to support our vision, provide strategic planning support around those actions and ultimately result in higher levels of student engagement and student work products.

2. Describe a recent, strategic initiative undertaken by your school. How did you decide on that initiative and define success? How did you manage the change process for all stakeholders? What did you learn through your implementation of this initiative?

In February of 2014, a planning committee met and identified five stakeholder groups as follows: Parents, Columbine Teachers, Columbine Administration/Support Staff, DPS/School Board, and

Community Members. One or two representative from each group served as the Steering Team for the process. The Steering Team worked to identify and enroll up to eight people for each of the above stakeholder groups from various backgrounds, perspectives and demographics as participants in the process. On May 30-June 1 of that year, thirty-six participants gathered for a weekend at Manual High School to develop a results-oriented plan of action. The May 30-June 1 session design was adapted from a process called Future Search developed by Dr. Sandra Janoff, and Marvin Weisbord. People work in small groups as "stakeholders" (shared perspectives), and in mixed groups that are a cross-section of the whole. Every person has a chance to speak and listen. This makes possible a shared picture based on the experience of all those present. The session resulted in four action teams to focus on four critical improvement factors:

- High Achievement
- 21st Century Readiness
- School Culture/Learning Environment
- Stakeholder Engagement

The four action teams worked under the umbrella phrase “Building our Exceptional Columbine”(BEC). Members of the action teams are still actively leading systems at Columbine.

Recently, we invited families in to learn about Columbine and discuss EL Education. Meetings have been well attended by a cross section of Columbine’s diverse community and have involved a series of conversations led by the team of Columbine staff who attended the EL Education National Conference. During the final of four community engagement meetings, Columbine leadership highlighted the BEC work done three years prior and cross-referenced it with EL Education’s three dimensions of student achievement. In our most recent spring session, the synergy in the room was palpable. Our work engaging the community taught us that our community supported EL Education’s approach and are committed to continuing to partner with us as we embark on this life changing work together. Of the thirty attendees, all supported a submission of this RFP. Furthermore, twenty-four participants expressed interest in becoming more involved as a steering team. It is worth noting that this group was the most diverse group of community participants in a school event in known history.

3. Briefly describe your most important school improvement priorities for the next 3-5 years and existing structures you plan to leverage to address those priorities. What elements of EL’s Dimensions of Achievement and Core Practices would most directly support these priorities and structures?

Specifically, we believe that EL Education will support our teachers by providing strong professional development in the core practices. To guide this professional learning, we want to partner with EL Education in part to develop more aligned metrics of school priorities.

EL will support our goal to become a top school of choice in the northeast quadrant in Denver, support current and prospective learners and ultimately set a high bar for student achievement for all subgroups of learners we serve. It is clear that that the school priorities align with the key dimensions of life in school and their associated EL Education core practices.

Columbine Priority	EL Education Key Dimension	EL Education Core Practice
Success Criteria for Writing Across Content Areas	Curriculum	Producing High Quality Student Work
	Instruction	Teaching Writing Across the Content Areas
Rigorous, standards aligned tasks anchored in teacher modes and exemplars exit tickets	Curriculum	Producing High Quality Student Work
	Instruction	Delivering Effective Lessons
	Assessment	Using Assessment for Learning Strategies on a Daily Basis

creating visions and systems for student behavior resulting in an environment of trust, respect, responsibility and joy. We have established a structure around morning meetings and are currently working alongside teachers to create crew-like atmospheres during these meetings.

5. List and briefly describe your existing professional development and collaboration structures - including frequency and duration (i.e. daily planning, data teams, early release days).

Columbine’s PD and collaboration structures include opportunities for both horizontal (grade-level) and vertical (K-2 Math, K-2 Literacy, 3-5 Math, 3-5 Literacy) teams to collaborate and grow professionally. During vertical weeks (every other week), our Dean of Instruction and Math/Science Facilitator lead data analysis meetings and collaborative lesson planning, using Mike Schmoker’s elements of effective lessons. These vertical meetings are content-specific for platooning teachers. We have adapted the Data Team Process from Uncommon Schools, where we focus on students who are “approaching” expectations, so that we can address their misconceptions and move them to meeting expectations through intentional lesson planning. During this planning time together, teachers create writing exemplars for the end of each unit, so they are clear on the high quality student work that they are expecting and can plan how to get there with their students. We incorporate learning labs into the vertical teams, where teachers have the opportunity to visit each others’ classrooms to learn from one another. We build time into our structures to debrief the lesson, provide feedback for the hosting teacher, and set next steps for each participant based on their learning. During grade-level horizontal weeks (every other week), we focus our work on building a culture that is data driven, proactive, positive and responsive. Conversations are focused on morning meetings, collaboratively scoring student work, pertinent professional reading intervention tracking meetings every six weeks. Independently, teachers have the opportunity to build their capacity as educators through individual coaching with the Dean of Instruction or Math Facilitator. The coaching sessions include weekly co-planning, a classroom event (co-teaching, modeling by the coach, or a classroom observation), and de-brief with action steps. All teachers have the opportunity for coaching during the school year.

On district release days, we support teachers with intentional backwards-planning and data analysis. We facilitate the backwards planning, guiding teachers through the Common Core State Standards alongside their curriculum to have a clear understanding of where students are going and how we will get there. These planning sessions also incorporate our interim assessments, so that we have a clear picture of how we will assess our students on the standards. These sessions allow teachers to use professional judgment and best practice in preparing our students for

academic success. After the interim assessments, we spend time analyzing student data to plan a reteach of specific standards to address common misconceptions.

6. Describe the team of leaders (administrators, coaches, lead teachers, etc) in your school and district that will be central to a successful partnership with EL Education. Describe the strengths of this team and how the team would ensure strong buy-in across stakeholders including teachers and parents. Are you anticipating any changes to this group of leaders in the near future (retirements, site changes, resignations, etc) Finally please include short bios for leaders (*Bios do not count toward paragraph limits.*)

Columbine’s leadership team makes EL Education a formidable match. We have two school administrators, two instructional leads, and two culture leads integrated into our leadership team. As a team, we meet weekly to review progress toward unified improvement goals. We responsively make adjustments based on observation, formative and assessment data encompassing our instructional program, school culture and operation. Each team lead works directly with teacher teams to guide instructional decisions and support them at both classroom and student levels. Because we differentiate so intentionally, the aforementioned leaders lead smaller teams who establish working norms and protocols for lesson planning and collaborative planning time. Team leads are consistently bringing feedback to the ILT. Next year, we will lose a full time non- teacher instructional lead on the math side. This position will be replaced with a Senior Team Lead who will teach half days and coach half days. This is the only anticipated change.

This is the second school in which the majority of this leadership team have led a school out of the bottom tier of the School Performance Framework by maintaining a level of meeting or exceeding district expectations for student growth. As a team, our CollaboRate (DPS’ teacher perception survey) scores were sixteen points higher than our district average for leadership teams. The following strengths were identified by forty staff members:

1. Values and respects the students in my school
2. Honors cultures and diverse backgrounds
3. Takes action to highlight and close equity gaps at our school

As a team, we have already embarked on a community engagement process to ensure strong buy-in across stakeholder groups. We have included two brief sessions on EL for any incoming families alongside their tours. Additionally, we have had two community mornings and two community nights to discuss the desire to submit this RFP. The events were attended by teachers,

community members, current, incoming and prospective families. New applicants are choosing to apply to Columbine due to its improved reputation and future focus on EL Education's model.

7. Should your school be selected as an EL Education Network School, what multi-year funding sources would you commit to support a partnership?

We would utilize three funding sources to support a partnership with EL Education:

- 1) **Intensive tiered support funds for the initial implementation lift:** Denver Public Schools is committed to creating an equitable school system that closes opportunity gaps. Our equity lens very much includes funding and Columbine receives specific specific tiered support dollars, weighted by socio-economic and academic need. These funds can be targeted for the additional services in phase one and phase two of the accreditation process.
- 2) **Model specific funds.** We are working to secure a base amount of district funding support for an ongoing EL Memo of Understanding.
- 3) **Student Based Budgeting (SBB) funds:** Schools control the majority of funds at the site level in DPS. Once Columbine has worked through the initial stages of becoming an EL accredited school we do expect that enrollment will continue to increase and that additional funding will come through our SBB funds. We look forward to EL's support with intentional marketing and branding of our evolving vision of excellence.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Partnership Development Process Overview

Attachment 2: Partnership Success Conditions

Attachment 3: Sample Instructional Autonomies Agreement

Attachment 4: EL Education Credentialing Overview

Attachment 5: Prospective Partner Data Spreadsheet

Required Attachment

1. Please include a brief letter of support for this RFP from the authorized district or charter board representative. The letter should address which of the necessary autonomies can be guaranteed and which would need further discussion.

Please see signed letter attached to email submission from our Instructional Superintendent, Kevin King.

Jason Krause

My name is Jason Krause, principal of Columbine Elementary school. I grew up in Denver, Colorado in the Park Hill neighborhood. I grew up in Park Hill during a time in Denver's history that was quite controversial. Desegregating schools was a priority of Denver's citizens. School bussing dominated headlines of the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post. I attended Phillips Elementary just four blocks from my house. I still recall the first day of kindergarten. I recall arriving to the playground and being confused for the first time about the color of my skin.

I was too young then to realize that Montview Boulevard was a racial dividing line in the Park Hill neighborhood between Monaco and Quebec. Phillips sat just north of that division.

Throughout my school years in Denver, a drive to better understand race, bias and inequity in Park Hill had more influence on me than most anything else. By the time I attended middle school at Smiley, I was acutely aware there were a handful of white children walking to school from the south. The rest of the walkers to Smiley were children of color and walked north of 26th Avenue between Monaco and Colorado Boulevard. During these impressionable middle school years, I latched onto a concept of social justice. My sister, eight years my elder, was simultaneously engaged in peaceful protests against the apartheid in South Africa. My family dinners were filled with conversations highlighting global concerns and social inequity surrounding me.

It was during an eighth grade math class when I first thought that one day I would like to be a public school principal. I am now entering my 10th year of school leadership in Denver. I married the special educator across the hall from me during my first teaching assignment at Columbine elementary school and now have returned to lead. Together we have two children attending our neighborhood school in the Park Hill Neighborhood. We believe in a life of service that promotes a conscious worldview, dissolves the opportunity and achievement gap and is an obligation we have if we are true believers in an equitable society.

As Columbine Elementary enters its fourth year with me as principal, I know the next best move for our community is to partner with EL Education. The philosophical alignment with EL education is palpable in relationship to not only myself, but the leadership team and subsequent hires the leadership team has made as we assemble a school of life-changing educators.

Kevin King

Dr. Kevin King serves as an instructional superintendent for Denver Public Schools' Near Northeast Network. He describes the job as ensuring that we are our best selves for our 5,695 brilliant students.

Kevin has nearly two decades of public-service experience as an award-winning teacher, a founding principal, and a central-office leader. Kevin is most proud of the opportunity to open an EL school. Collaborating with parents, students, and teachers, Kevin founded Explore Elementary in 2006. Explore, an EL public school of choice committed to the power of an active, integrated, and participatory approach to education, received the Colorado Commissioner's Choice Award for Getting Results in 2011. As a central director in the offices of human resources and learning services, Kevin supported the creation of Mapleton's Effectiveness Framework, facilitated principal induction, and spearheaded the District Advisory and Accountability Committee (DAAC).

Kevin received his Doctor of Education Leadership from Harvard University and published *A Case Study in Realigning Public Value in School Choice and Enrollment* (King, 2016) focused on how a diverse school district with a history of political debate about school choice can create a sustainable enrollment system that affords every child access to a high-quality education.

Vanesa Medina

My name is Vanessa Medina, former ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher for the last seven years and continuing into my eighth year as a second grade math/science teacher. I am thrilled for my new role at Columbine. It will be different for students to see me in a this role, and it is exciting for me to service Columbine second grade scholars enhance their grade levels math skills. I look forward to a great year. Prior to becoming a teacher I was a paraprofessional at Barrett (6 years) and Columbine (3 years).

I obtained my education degree from the University of Northern Colorado, Center for Urban Education @ Lowry and currently working on my Master's in Equity/Cultural Diversity in K-12 through the University of Colorado @ Boulder.

I am proud to say I play two roles at the school, not only am I an employee of the school but also a parent, as Yaretzi begins her journey in Kindergarten this school year. In addition to these two roles, allow me to introduce myself as one of eight of our EL (Expeditionary Learning) Education Leaders at Columbine.

My country of birth is Mexico and I was raised in the southern part of Texas beginning at the age of seven. My family and I have called Colorado home since 2000. I am a wife and a mother to three amazing children: Anahi (12), Yaretzi (6) and Michael (3). We share our house with our three pet dogs. On my free time, I enjoy the outdoors, camping, playing soccer, and mostly spending time with my family and friends.

Becca Mendoza

I am extremely excited to become a part of the EL Community as the Music/Whole Child Lead! This position has me teaching Music and Culture in the Dialogue District. This room is an excellent space to encourage student curiosity, exploration, and of course: student-driven dialogue!

My educational journey extends throughout our country, beginning with my grade schooling in a suburb of San Francisco, California. For junior and high school, I lived in the Washington, D.C. area. I chose to attend Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, MO, where I received a B.S. in Instrumental Music Education. I taught at a Behavioral Health Hospital in MO for one year, and then moved to Texas. In TX, I received my M.S. in Educational Administration and studied Counseling Psychology as I worked with college students in that capacity.

I also taught in Austin for 2 years, and Bryan/College Station, TX for 3 years before I moved to Denver in 2008. Since 2008, I have been in DPS except for last year, where I received the opportunity to teach in a school that uses an inquiry approach to learning alongside the content standards. In music, I will be using that inquiry lens with students, encouraging their curiosity and exploration into how music and dance are used in various cultures throughout the world. My philosophy is to work with student strengths and curiosity and capitalize on student leadership maneuvers to guide their learning. I consider it an honor to walk alongside students in their educational journey. I was fortunate to have teachers who guided me into music, which became a language for me when I could not use words. I also believe my job to help students learn how to access music as a tool to use in their communication to navigate life's challenges and joys when words fail them.

My free time has me running around with my wife and three (3!) teenagers and their three (3!) miniature schnauzers. We enjoy anything outdoors in the sunshine when possible, and coloring during movies if the weather is cold. I also enjoy playing various instruments and musical composition whenever the mood strikes me.

Caitlin Caligiuri

I grew up in Vail, Colorado and graduated from CU Boulder in 2005 with degrees in Spanish & communication. I received my master's degree in special education in 2013 from UNC Greeley and I am working on my educational leadership master's degree and principal license from Regis University. I have been in education for 7 years, 6 of those with DPS and this is my third year at Columbine. As Dean of Personalized Culture I support the systems and structures that help to develop a strong school and classroom culture. I know that our students can do anything they put their mind to and I am honored to be a support for them and offer some of the tools they need to be exceptional students, people, and agents of change and contribute to making the world a better place. I value the profound impact the Columbine community, parents, and staff have had on the school and I am inspired to continue working alongside them. I speak English and Spanish and love to travel, hike, read, cook, paddle board, spend time with family and friends, and most of all hang out with my best bud, my dog Tyco.

Heidi McClellan

Heidi McClellan, Dean of Instruction, joined the Columbine team in 2014. She has spent all of her 15 years in education in Denver Public Schools. She works at Columbine because it is important that all students are prepared for college and career and believes in the strong Columbine community of students, parents and staff members to reach that goal. Her strength is in instructional leadership and building teachers' capacity through professional development. She has experience as an elementary instructional coach, facilitator, administrator, and teacher. Heidi has been a National Board Certified Teacher since 2010. She has a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Colorado. She earned her principal's license and M.A. in Leadership through the Ritchie Program for School Leaders at the University of Denver

Brad Riley

My name is Brad Riley, better known as Coach ‘B’ here at Columbine Elementary. Originally from Flint, Michigan, I moved to Colorado in 2010 from Washington, DC after 3 years working in elementary and middle schools mentoring, coaching, and running recess programs. I’ve been working with youth across the country for over 10 years, and this is my 3rd year at Columbine, and I could not be more excited for the 2017-2018 school year

I’m very appreciative of the work I have the privilege of doing on a daily basis. As Columbine’s Behavior Coach, I will support students in and out of the classroom and strive to be a positive piece in the students’ lives here at Columbine, while working toward building a strong community of families, students, and staff and guiding our youth to reach their full potential at Columbine.

Aside from my passion for working with youth, I’d like to share that I am a twin, I like drawing and writing short stories/poetry, I LOVE to dance and choreograph dance, and football is my favorite sport. Go GREEN Go WHITE! Oh, and jolly ranchers and purple pack skittles are my favorite candy! I look forward to getting know the students and families of Columbine and having a great year.

Brad ‘Coach B’ Riley

Dawn Salter

My name is Dawn Salter. I am extremely honored to be the Assistant Principal of Columbine Elementary. This is my 15th year serving Denver students and families. I am a proud mother of two daughters and a product of Denver Public Schools; graduate of George Washington High School. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Maryland, and a Master's degree in Administration and Policy from the University of Denver. I am currently fulfilling my life's dream to become a certified family therapist. I attend the University of Colorado Denver working for a master's degree in marriage and family counseling.

I am passionate about building strong character in our students that will boost them into high self-esteem, high achievement, and tomorrow's leaders. I depend on good relationships to lead and collaborate within our community. It is a privilege to be a leader in the work of preparing our children for the future. I believe education changes lives.