



January 30, 2014

Dear Kepner Middle School Families:

I want to share with you some important information about your school. Beginning next week, your family will be invited to join a collaborative process to discuss the importance of excellent educational opportunities in our community, and explore changes that will help ensure your middle school student is prepared for the challenges of high school, college and careers. Before those conversations begin, I want to provide some background information that will help prepare you to take an active role in this process.

Our goal for every student is that they graduate from high school prepared for college and a career. In today's global, knowledge-based economy, education is critical to the future educational and career opportunities our young people will have. To be successful in high school and beyond, it is essential that our students finish middle school well-prepared for high school. We also believe that we must continue the proud tradition of a welcoming, supportive community school at Kepner.

Principal Stephen Linkous and the entire Kepner staff have worked incredibly hard and care deeply about their students. At the district level, we have also provided Kepner with significant additional resources and supports in recognition of our students' needs. But even with this dedication and these supports, we are not moving quickly enough toward our goal of preparing all students for success in high school and beyond. The academic growth of our students at Kepner is significantly below that of other students at middle schools in Denver. It is very important that students at Kepner grow much faster academically to be prepared for high school.

For these reasons, we are asking parents and community members to be part of a conversation about how to significantly improve our academic programs at Kepner. Based on that community conversation over the next five months, we are looking to make recommendations to our Board of Education in June about changing programs for sixth-graders in Kepner beginning in the 2015-16 school year. These changes could include bringing in new schools or new school programs in the fall of 2015 for sixth-graders.

There will not be any significant program changes for students who are currently attending Kepner or students who enroll in Kepner as 6th graders for the coming 2014-15 school year. And, we will continue to fully support existing Kepner students and faculty to continue their efforts to improve opportunities for current students.

It is very important that the middle school program at Kepner meets your student's unique educational needs. **Please plan to join us on Wednesday, February 5 at 5:30 p.m. or on Thursday, February 6 at 8:00 a.m. for a special parent meeting.** You may attend either meeting; the presentation and conversation format at each will be exactly the same, so you do not need to attend both. These meetings will be the first step in a process to gather feedback from parents, community members and other stakeholders throughout this spring and fall.



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Prior to the meeting, I want to share some important details that will serve as the foundation for this process. If you are able, please take a few moments to review the fact sheet that is enclosed with this letter. This information will help you to prepare for this first conversation. In the meantime, we welcome any questions or concerns you may have. In addition, if you are unable to attend one of the parent meetings identified above, we would be happy to meet directly with you. Please feel free to contact Marianela Turner at marianela_turner@dpsk12.org or (720) 423-3054.

Thank you for your support of our school, and for your involvement in your child's education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Boasberg".

Tom Boasberg
Superintendent

For Kepner Middle School Parents: What You Need to Know

What's Happening and Why

- Denver Public Schools believes that all students deserve a high-quality school in their neighborhood—a school that offers excellent educational opportunities, supports strong achievement for all students, and meets all students' educational needs.
- We also believe that we absolutely must continue the proud tradition of a community school at Kepner.
- In partnership with Kepner faculty, parents and community members, DPS will begin a process to explore potential programmatic changes that would better prepare all students for the academic challenges of high school and beyond.
- Over the past several years, Kepner's support for student academic growth and academic achievement have significantly declined.
- For example, in 2013, the percentage of students scoring as proficient or advanced was 27% or lower in every subject, with the lowest subject being just 9%.

School Leadership

- Mr. Stephen Linkous will continue to serve as Principal of Kepner.
- Mr. Linkous, as well as teachers and parents, are strongly encouraged to submit a proposal for a new program at the school. DPS will provide support to Kepner staff members who are interested in developing a school proposal. We will also welcome new school program proposals from other educational leaders.

Kepner Campus and Programs

- DPS will not close the Kepner campus. Kepner will continue to serve all current students, as well as to enroll new students for the 2014-15 school year.
- Any changes that take place at Kepner will continue to support the needs of English-language learners, including through native-language instruction, and special-needs students. In addition, Kepner will retain a strong focus on culturally responsive education.
- All programs at the Kepner campus will be designed for and accessible to Kepner-area students.
- In the meantime, we will introduce extra academic support for current students for the remainder of this school year and throughout the 2014-15 school year.

Parent Involvement

- The DPS Family and Community Engagement team will provide multiple opportunities throughout the spring and fall for faculty, parents and community members to express their needs and desires for Kepner.
- To best support parents and community members, community meetings will be facilitated in Spanish, with interpretation available in English.
- The first step in this process will be the creation of a collaborative committee that will include teachers, parents, community members and other stakeholders. We will consider best practices in community engagement as models for this committee, including examples of collaborative processes that have demonstrated success in Denver.



- This committee will discuss all alternatives and provide advice and feedback to inform the improvement process.
- We will share the results of this feedback process with the entire community.