

RootED

Funding great schools.
Rooted in community.



IMPACT REPORT



2020 - 2021

PRESENTED BY ROOTED



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Watch the video
introduction at
RootEDdenver.org/annualreport

Welcome from RootED Denver

RootED Denver: Funding Great Schools. RootED in community.

RootED Denver is committed to ensuring that every child in Denver has the opportunity and support to achieve success in school and beyond. We invest in public education to transform lives in communities across Denver. Since the spring of 2020, we've seen the injustices and shortcomings of the systems that have long existed come into clearer view. People of color continue to fight for equity in the classroom and in their communities, and a pandemic has exasperated our dire need for change.

Our ultimate aim at RootED Denver is an equitable, accountable, responsive Denver Public Schools system where race and/or income are no longer a barrier to excellent student outcomes.

We invest in community-driven organizations, schools, and strategies that advance racial equity in education—to ensure that all DPS students receive a high-quality education that recognizes and values individual and community strengths and cultural differences, enabling students to attain academic achievement, personal growth, and college and career success.

By amplifying the power of community led education change we believe that we can support our schools, students and families in the best way. The perspectives of the community must be valued, heard, and their voices should shape education innovation and transformation.

In partnership with innovation school [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Early College](#) we created a film, [Power in Our Voices: The Know Justice, Know Peace Story](#). The film showcases the remarkable story of four young women finding their voices and becoming empowered to envision and effect change at their school and across the city. The film showcases the emotional and inspirational journey that led to Denver Public Schools (DPS) adoption of the [Know Justice, Know Peace Resolution](#). Dahni Austin, Alana Mitchell, Janelle Nangah and Kaliah Yizar, the students featured in the story, show us that community-driven change can unite and inspire transformative outcomes.

As the academic achievement gaps continue to widen for our students of color from communities with low income, the time is NOW for us all to join in support of our 90,000 kids in DPS.

Schools need autonomy to make the decisions that are best for their students and their local community. Autonomy empowers them to thrive in the education ecosystem and to disrupt systemic racism in education. It also gives schools the tools needed to be responsive to our students and educators. This summer, [University Prep](#), a Denver charter, was highlighted in a national publication, The 74 [Case Study: The 3 Pillars Guiding Learning Recovery — and Student Growth — at Our Denver Schools as We Rush to Catch Kids Up After the Pandemic](#) for their innovative learning recovery plan created with the community in a responsive way. We want quality education for all students and believe school autonomy is a key lever that can make this happen.

We will continue to develop authentic relationships, invest in autonomous schools and community organizations, and push the education system to respond to the needs of the students and communities that look to public schools as essential to realizing their potential. Join in as our partner.



Dr. Brenda J. Allen

RootED Board Chair
and Professor Emerita



Patrick Donovan

RootED Managing Partner

RootED Staff



Pat Donovan

Managing Partner



Victoria Scott-Haynes

Partner, Community Relations
& Administration



Ambar Suero

Partner, Community Partnership
& Advocacy



Latia Henderson

Director of Communications
& Engagement



Ashley Martinez-Doublin

Director of Operations



80% of RootED staff identify as a person of color

Board of Directors



Dr. Brenda J. Allen

RootED Board Chair
and Professor Emeritus



Erin Brown

RootED Board Member
President of Community
Investment and Impact,
The Colorado Health Foundation



Luis de la Fuente, Ph.D.

RootED Board Member



Ethan Gray

RootED Board Member
Partner with The City Fund



Jesus Salazar

RootED Board Secretary
Co-Founder, President, and
CEO of Prosono



Abigail Schaller

RootED Board Treasurer
Senior Program Officer at
Colorado-based Gates Family



**66.67% of the RootED board of directors identify
as a person of color**

RootED Impact

Celebrating Impact In Denver

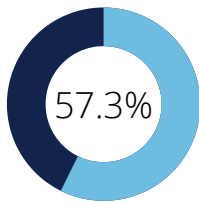


"At RootED Denver, we invest in community-driven organizations, schools, and strategies that advance racial equity in education."

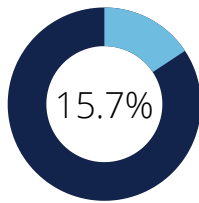
Students Impacted by RootED Denver



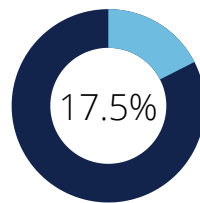
Racial/identity background of students served by RootED grantees by percentage



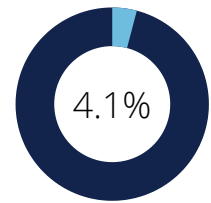
Hispanic



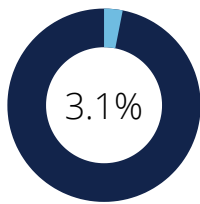
Black (Not Hispanic)



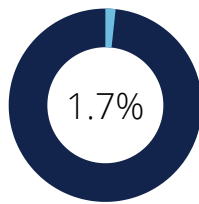
White (Not Hispanic)



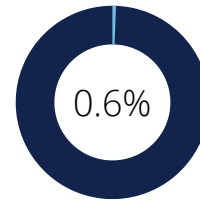
Multiple Races



Asian



American Indian /Alaskan



Native Hawaiian or Other

81.4%

of autonomous school students served by RootED identify as a person of color



69%

of all autonomous school students are Free and Reduced Lunch program



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Our ultimate aim at RootED Denver is an equitable, accountable, responsive Denver Public Schools system where race and/or income are no longer a barrier to excellent student outcomes.

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GRANTS GIVEN TO BIPOC-LED ORGANIZATIONS



29 GRANTS



50.88%
of total grants



51.29%
in total grant dollars



\$2,218,815
of total grants



Data represents June 2020 - July 2021

HIGH QUALITY SCHOOLS SERVING COLE AND WHITTIER NEIGHBORHOODS



Built in 1925, Cole Junior High School was one of nine junior high schools built in Denver in the 1920s in response to the school district's decision to create schools specifically for 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students. With its grand entry and three-story-high Tuscan columns, the school is located at 3240 Humboldt Street in Northeast Denver.

The school has a rich history serving the diverse Cole neighborhood and instilling in its graduates a sense of civic duty. This [video](#) features Cole graduates spanning several generations reminiscing about what the institution has meant, and its essential role in Denver in shaping the leaders of tomorrow. This year marks the first time the Cole building houses both DSST Cole Middle School and DSST Cole High School. With its mission to provide every graduate with a world class education, DSST Cole educators work with each student to develop a strong sense of self while learning to contribute to a caring and diverse community. The [video](#) features Anna Jo Haynes and Elbra Wedgeworth, two prominent leaders in Denver who grew up in the Cole neighborhood.

Another high performing neighborhood public charter school nearby is Wyatt Academy, check out this [video](#) that overviews the history of Wyatt and its impact on the community.

Total Number of Schools Served by RootED

72

(Includes all Zones, CMOs and
single sites within DPS)

Data represents 2018-2021

TRANSFORM EDUCATION NOW



One meeting changed the trajectory of work for Ariel Taylor Smith and Nicholas Martinez, two former Denver Public Schools teachers and the co-founders of the advocacy organization, Transform Education Now (TEN).

In 2016, the pair organized a gathering for parents who were on a lengthy waitlist to enroll their students at DSST: Green Valley Ranch High School.

They wanted to talk with parents about opening another DSST school to accommodate more students, but quickly realized the parents had come to the meeting thinking that their students would get a coveted seat at the high-performing, Far Northeast school.

“It was heartbreaking,” Smith said. “We realized there was no one organizing parents of students who didn’t get into good schools in our city. ... And we know there is a level of urgency that is unmatched when parents come to the table informed and empowered.”

That meeting led Smith and Martinez to found TEN, which organizes and empowers families, students, and community members to advocate for increased access to high-quality schools and to fight for equity and accountability in their school districts.

TEN also provides a leadership development program for parents to help them better advocate for quality schools and their students, and provides resources related to grade-level learning and school choice processes.

Ultimately, Smith says, “Our mission is to have 10 out of 10 students have access to high-quality seats in every grade level in every neighborhood and move through their academic career on grade level.”

Where They’ve Been

If it hadn’t been for the COVID-19 pandemic, TEN’s work during the last two school years might have looked very different. For example, it might have spent more time supporting opening new high-quality schools and helping families navigate Denver’s school choice process.

But the wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic meant that TEN had to change its course – and that resulted in unexpected and successful outcomes.

For example, TEN’s co-founders knew that families were struggling during the pandemic, with some feeling more acutely the economic impacts. So, with the organization’s limited budget, it created paid, hourly work for parents to check in with other parents.

In total, TEN's paid parent fellows made more than 12,000 calls and conducted a broad survey of more than 500 Colorado families to measure the impacts of the pandemic on student learning and success.

The survey results prompted TEN and other family and student advocacy groups to create a call to action, asking the Denver Board of Education to develop a plan to better measure and communicate student progress to families; to find creative solutions to mitigate learning loss and provide better social-emotional supports to students; and to collaborate with educators, families and community members to develop a vision for equitable, quality, free public education.

Through the paid opportunities for parents to become involved, the organization was able to develop the parents into stronger leaders and increase its outreach.

The organization also provided resources for at-home learning and social-emotional support, and information about food, financial and technical assistance for families.

"Of everything we've done, our response to the pandemic is one of things I'm most proud of," Smith said. "We led with our values and our understanding that justice is what love looks like in public."

"We proved to ourselves and everyone else that TEN is an organization that families can count on in difficult times when they have needs for their students."

Where They're Headed

In 2022 and beyond, TEN hopes to focus on school quality and accountability.

It will do that by making more school quality data available on its website and engaging in conversations about opening and consolidating schools because of lack of enrollment. On the latter, it is critical that school consolidation is done with an emphasis on equity and excellence, Smith said. "There is not a clear path for district-run school quality and we have serious concerns there," she said. "The thing we'd love to see – if we move forward with leadership that enables it – is real, community-driven improvement plans that ensure every school is keeping its promise to kids and families."



STUDENT PROFILES



In the Spring of 2021, we asked Denver Public Schools (DPS) high school seniors to share their experiences about their educational journey. Four students from different high schools throughout DPS gave us some insight into their favorite parts of their school, what they hope to achieve in the future and what they thought DPS could do to improve as a district. **Our work is always driven by students and we wanted their words to speak for themselves.**



Cesar Arellano

DSST College View High School; Graduated in Spring 2021

Attending: California Institute of Technology, majoring in Mechanical/Aerospace Engineering and Physics

My most memorable experiences in high school are the ones that I created with my friends. At DSST, I made so many meaningful relationships, and just being with [my friends] for so long makes them a memorable experience.

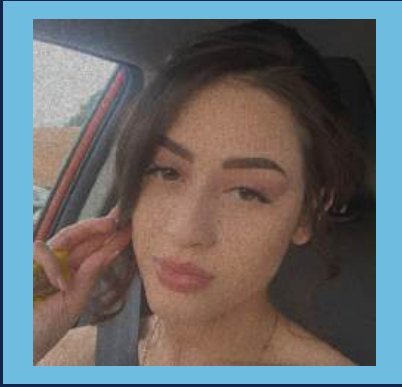
My school has helped me succeed because of the teachers and advisors I have encountered. I've always had at least one teacher every year that supported me in my dreams, no matter how far-fetched they might have seemed. My advisors always believed in me, and I think that helped me keep pushing forward to succeed and make them proud. One of my teachers urged me to study chemistry at a higher level because he noticed I already knew all of the material. He was the first teacher that encouraged me to stimulate my brain by learning things at a higher level. While I was already doing that, he was the only teacher that found ways to help me get other resources so I could learn more.

Although I was not as involved at school as I wished I was, every year I would try new things like a new sport or club especially if I found it to sound interesting, like volleyball or robotics.

In my experience, I think **there should be a much wider reach that gives students the opportunity to take advanced studies in DPS.** Not just AP tests, but ways to enroll in classes at community colleges and even local universities so we can enrich our high school learning experience. Personally, the vast majority of the learning I did in high school was by myself in my room reading textbooks and doing research. I think it could be useful for others to have the opportunity to take courses at higher institutions, especially for people who might not be used to studying with a textbook in high school. My advice to an incoming high school freshman would be to never let go of that curiosity that they're still familiar with. You should never let the lack of accommodation decrease the thirst of your curiosity. Never let go of it, and you will make it very far.

Favorite Quote

**"I WAS TAUGHT THAT THE WAY OF PROGRESS
WAS NEITHER SWIFT NOR EASY."
- MARIE CURIE**



Jessica Henriquez

KIPP Northeast Denver Leadership Academy,
Graduated Spring 2021

Attending: Regis University, planning to majoring in
Pre Law and International Business/Accounting

KIPP Northeast Denver Leadership Academy (KNDLA) has helped me succeed by pushing me towards my goal. During my time at KNDLA, I went through very tough situations but thanks to my supportive teachers and staff I was able to overcome almost all my situations and give the best I could throughout my high school experience. My most memorable experience at school would be sophomore year when we had a whole school assembly and every grade level was having a class competition of who was louder. It was an incredible experience!

I am forever grateful to the teachers who have been with me throughout my school career. They have truly impacted more than just my education, they've impacted my life. I've learned so much, from how to count and read, to how to respect others and their beliefs.

I was the head manager for the boy's basketball team for three years and am also one of the founding members of the Student Board of Education. **I think DPS should support first-generation students more by providing additional resources, motivational groups, and more scholarships.**

My advice to incoming freshmen would be to not take your first two years for granted. Freshman year and sophomore year are the most important years and they will determine the rest of your high school career. Always try hard and never give up. You are smart and amazing, don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Favorite Quote

**"GOD IS WITHIN HER, SHE WILL NOT FALL; GOD
WILL HELP HER AT BREAK OF DAY."**

- PSALM 46:5



Analuisa Cervantes-Romo

STRIVE-Prep Smart High School,
Graduated Spring 2021

Attending: Barnard University and majoring in
medical anthropology

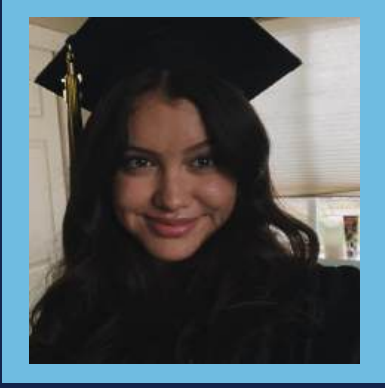
I am grateful for my time at STRIVE-Prep Smart High School because they taught me the importance of working hard until the very end. I learned to try your best so that you have options after high school. My advice to incoming freshmen would be to work hard so that you can truly do whatever you want once you graduate and are not tied down by GPA requirements or test scores. But mostly, take care of your mental health. You can't do well in school if you aren't doing well internally.

My teachers were the ones who encouraged me to follow my dreams and who wanted me to do well in life, even when I doubted myself. My teachers were there for advice and for times I just needed someone to take care of me and listen. My most memorable experiences in school were the times when I wasn't stressed out over the class content, because my teacher created an environment where I was enjoying everything I was learning - it didn't even feel like school.

As an ambitious person, I think DPS could give students more opportunities to explore their future career interests and include classes with important topics for adults like taxes and mental health before they graduate.

Favorite Quote

**"YOU KIND OF OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO DO
ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE DREAMED."
- UNKNOWN**



Graciela Bustos

DSST: Conservatory Green, Graduated
Spring 2021

Attending: University of San Diego, majoring in
a STEM field

What would I say to incoming Freshmen? Explore. Don't shelter yourself out of fear of failure. Explore your interests, hobbies, and career paths. It's never too late, and knowing parts of your identity before graduating will be so valuable in the long run.

At DSST, I was involved in a variety of different activities. I was part of the National Honors Society, I played varsity Volleyball, I was a cheerleader, and I was part of Student Council. My senior year I was involved in a separate interest group called Student Voice, which advocated for educational reform.

My school has never let any student fall behind. They believe in teamwork, hard work, and helpful guidance. When I was struggling in a class, my teacher would reach out to me personally, which motivated me to do better. It is not uncommon for a student to feel embarrassed to ask for help. But that was not an issue at DSST. They made asking for help a safe space.

My teachers have shaped me into the person I am today. They have taught me valuable life lessons such as how to manage my time and how to maintain a work life balance. Everything I've been through, they've been there for me every single day.

My most memorable experience at school has been school gatherings where the student body can show off our school spirit. My school has a very strong sense of community, and we are all very proud of where we go to school. It is our pride that will always bring me back to this strong community, no matter where I go.

I think **DPS could improve communication with families**. They have a system of communication currently, but it is not very effective. DPS should filter out unnecessary communication and communicate important events so DPS families stay informed and engaged.

Favorite Quote

"DO WHAT MAKES YOUR SOUL SHINE. "
- MAMA MIA

TEACHER FEATURE



Photo Credit :
Hanif Abdur-Rahim

How [innovation status](#) helps one Denver educator connect families to their schools

SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES



Boni Sanchez Flores
Family Liaison Beacon
Network Schools

As a southwest Denver family liaison for the innovation zone Beacon Network Schools, Boni Sanchez Flores is a needed advocate for our communities of color.

“When I see a parent who doesn’t speak English or who doesn’t look like their kid’s teacher or the school’s staff, I ask, ‘If my mom had come to this school, how would I serve her to make sure she feels welcomed and supported?’” he says.

Sanchez Flores’s family comes from a small Indigenous village in Oaxaca. His family migrated to northern Mexico before eventually immigrating to the U.S when Sanchez Flores was a young boy.

As a child, his family experienced poverty and racism, and Sanchez Flores struggled in school.

He realizes now that school was difficult, in part, because his teachers didn’t understand him or his family of where they had come from. They didn’t know, for example, that Spanish was his second language and that his Indigenous language was his first.

Despite challenges with the education system, Sanchez Flores became the first person in his family to graduate from high school. He also graduated from a college university and earned his master’s degree.

Today, his experiences as a young learner still inform his work.

“There are systems that are still in place that were not designed for our communities, especially our communities of color,” he said. “Instead of asking families to come to school and tell us what they need, why don’t we go to them? Why don’t we get to know our kids and what they experience every day? If we don’t understand that, then who are we serving?”



How Innovation Helps

Sanchez Flores is motivated to serve Denver families, and the Beacon Network's innovation status is key to his ability to develop deeper connections with families and prioritize their needs, he says. If something isn't working for families, he has the ability to propose and implement new, creative solutions.

He also has the ability through Beacon's family education and advocacy programs to empower families—particularly underserved families—to become more involved in their students' education. He says, "In innovation schools, we have the flexibility to ask, 'How do we do better? How do we talk about historical trauma and academic gaps? How do we build bridges our schools and our communities and our families and kids?'"

During the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the nature of Sanchez Flores's work, and Beacon's innovation status empowered him to help families in new ways.

For example, home visits—one of his most impactful ways of connecting with families—were temporarily suspended and virtual visits didn't work well. He was able to begin home visits again with all necessary safety precautions in place. That's when he realized how badly the pandemic had affected families, particularly families of color.

"The pandemic disconnected so many services for our kids," he said.

He saw that many families of color weren't getting basic needs met. There wasn't enough food in the house or they were behind on rent. They didn't have internet access for students to do remote learning. Childcare was closed so some students had to care for younger siblings and couldn't log in to daily lessons.

To help families during home visits, Sanchez Flores often helped them apply for rent and utility assistance and for low-rate Comcast internet services for low-income families. Also, Beacon Network Schools opened food pantries for families and partnered with The Colorado Food Cluster to deliver free daily meals and snacks to kids.

He is proud of the work he has been able to do because he believes deeply in connecting families to their schools, and to resources that can help their students thrive.

Years ago, Sanchez Flores visited his native village. He hadn't been there for more than 20 years, and he didn't know how his visit would be received.

There's something from the journey that stands out still, he says: He encountered a village elder who told him they were family. He thought she would be angry that he hadn't returned for so long. Instead, she told him it was a good thing he had come back. "Don't forget this is your home," she told him. "Don't forget this is where you come from."

It was a powerful reminder for Sanchez Flores—a reminder that it is important to honor community, culture, and traditions, and to keep them alive. As an educator, it's a guiding principle.

"Success can be small things," he said. "It can be the smallest thing. What can we do to make things just a little better? When I think things seem very bad, I say there has got to be another way or there should be another way—and if there is no way, maybe I can be the one to make that path for my community...Maybe I can change how we serve our community in better ways."

ROOTED GRANTMAKING HIGHLIGHTS

Total Amount of Grants Given
Since Our Founding

\$19,125,157



Photo Credit : Hanif Abdur-Rahim

Total number of grants given to BIPOC-led
organizations since our founding

86 grants

\$6,003,122
in total grant dollars

TOTAL # OF STUDENTS IMPACTED
SINCE OUR FOUNDING

82,576

TOTAL # OF GRANTS GIVEN
SINCE OUR FOUNDING

190

TOTAL NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS SERVED BY TYPE
(INCEPTION TO JUNE 2021)

Charters - CMOs
5 CMO'S
36 total schools

Independent/Single Sites
22 total schools

Innovation Zone Schools
3 zones
14 total schools

Founding - 2018 to 2021.

ROOTED GRANTMAKING HIGHLIGHTS

PERCENT AND DOLLAR AMOUNTS OF GRANTS GIVEN IN FY21 BY TYPE

Community Driven Change

20 grants
\$1,082,000
in total grant dollars

Autonomous nonprofit public schools

New Community
Driven Schools
2 grants
\$45,000
in total grant dollars

School Quality
and Equity
13 grants
\$1,513,200
in total grant dollars

School
Expansion
11 grants
\$1,290,400
in total grant dollars

Charter
Facilities
4 grants
\$3,566,500
in total grant dollars

Special Initiatives

Education
Research
1 grant
\$75,000
in total grant dollars

Talent and
Leadership Diversity
3 grants
\$250,000
in total grant dollars

COVID
6 grants
\$70,550
in total grant dollars

2021 ROOTED GRANTEES

Here is the full list of our 2021 RootED Grantees.

A+ Colorado	Generation Teach
Academy 360	Highline Academy
African Leadership Group	Innovation Fund
American Indian Academy	KIPP Public Schools
Beacon Network	Luminary Learning Network (LLN)
Boardhawk	Lyra Colorado
Colorado League of Charter Schools	Montbello Organizing Committee (MOC)
CEO Funding Collaborative (Rose)	Moonshot edVentures
Climb Higher Colorado	Northeast Denver Innovation Zone
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy & Research Organization (CLLARO)	Odyssey
Colorado Succeeds	PEACE Collective (YAASPA)
Community Empowerment Organization	Radical Arts Academy Denver
Denver Food Rescue	Radian
Denver Green School Northfield	Rocky Mountain Prep
Denver Metro Collective Impact (DMCI)	School Board Partners
Denver Public Schools	STEM School
Denver Journal of Education and Community	Stand for Children
DPS Coalition	STRIVE Prep
DSST Public Schools	Teach for America
Epworth Foundation	Transform Education Now (TEN)
Faithbridge	The CUBE High School
French American School	University Prep
Generation Teach	Young Aspiring American for Social & Political Activism (YAASPA)

THANK
YOU



IMPACT REPORT 2021

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