



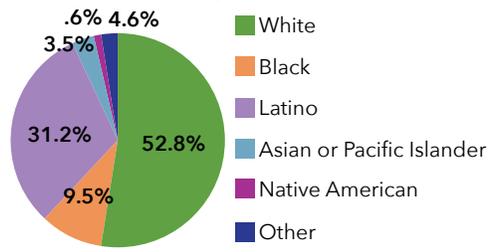
Denver, CO **COPPER**

Denver sits on the western tip of the Great Plains states, and has long served as a sojourn for traveling Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples. The discovery of gold in 1858 brought prospectors from the eastern United States into this region, ignoring the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, which was supposed to safeguard Native lands. Today, Denver's economy relies on its stronghold in farming, ranching, and food processing, facilitated by its proximity to rail, and tourism. A burgeoning economy is growing in the tech sector as well.¹

Denver's racial make-up is largely a mix of Whites (representing 53% of the city's population in 2014) and Latinos (31%). In 2015-2016, Denver operated 199 schools, serving just over 92,000 students. At the time, the school district was comprised predominantly of Latino (56%) and White students (23%). Over one-third of the students are identified as limited English proficiency, and over 70% of the students in the district are economically disadvantaged. The city's population has changed rapidly, as Latino and mixed-race populations have grown in size over the past twenty years, and are projected to continue growing in the coming decades. Like many places in the country, Denver is segregated by income and race, and there are wide disparities

42%
of supports measured through Index

Racial/Ethnic Composition: 2014



U.S. Census Bureau; NHGIS; Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. Policy Link/PERE National Equity Atlas, nationalequityatlas.org

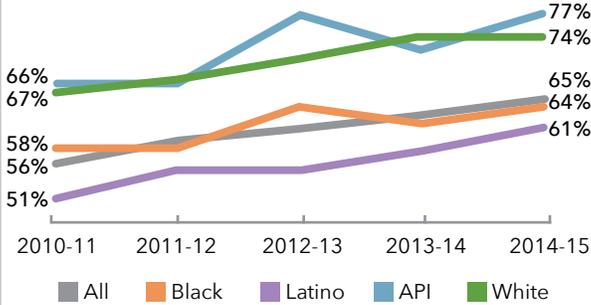
for children and people of color. Denver's Black youth are more than five times as likely as White youth to be living below the poverty line, and Latino youth are nearly four times as likely, and we see similar disparities in graduation rates and rates of "opportunity youth" (children not in school and not working). The outcomes for health and safety illustrate further disparities among youth: rates of infant mortality in Denver are nearly three times as high for Black children as they are for Whites; and 2.5 times higher for youth mortality.

THERMOMETER INDICATORS

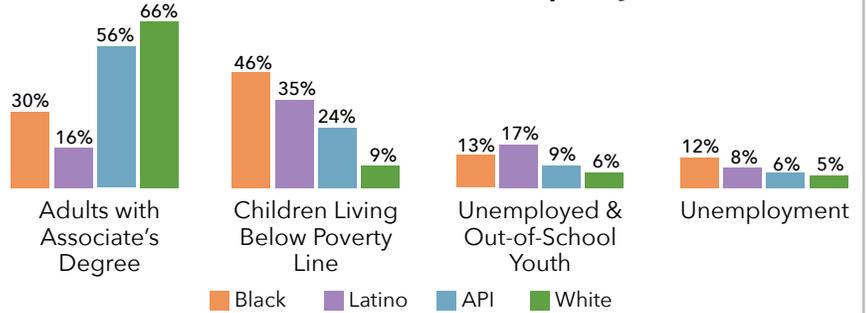


Current conditions for childhood success

5-year Graduation Rates



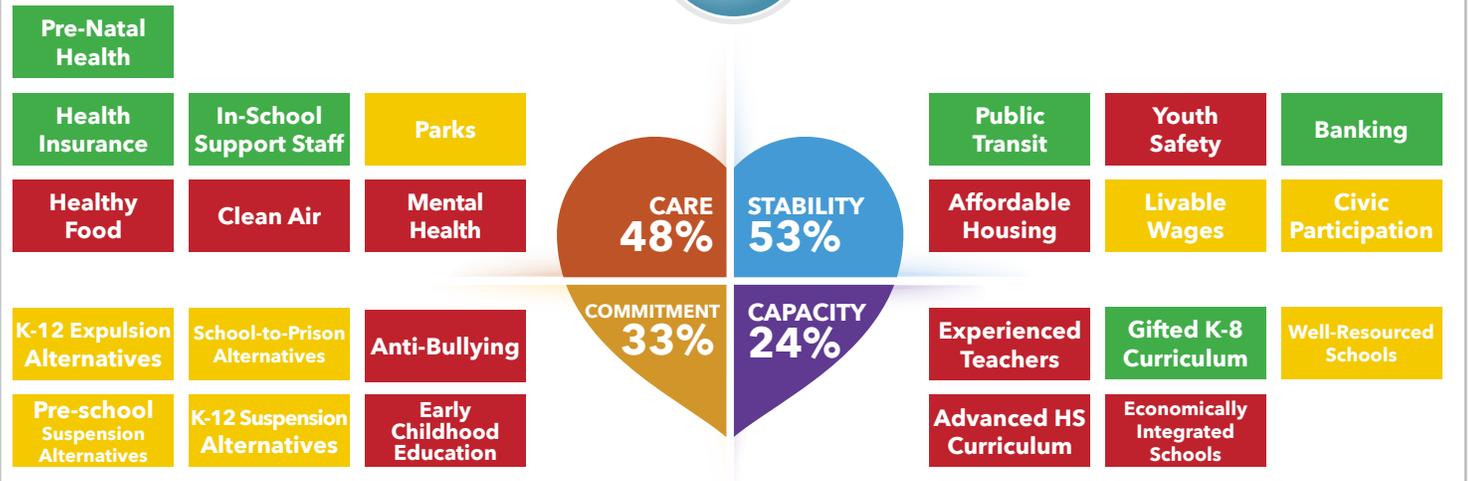
Social & Economic Prosperity



THERMOSTAT INDICATORS



Access to supports that provide all children the opportunity to learn



State of Healthy Living and Learning in Denver

Overall, **Denver** has 42% of the supports measured through the Index, which is above average among the ten cities studied. Denver demonstrates one of the highest levels of Stability measured, with low levels of unbanked households (households without a checking or savings account) and geographic accessibility of public transportation, though increasing affordability of transit for low-income students and parents has been a priority for local organizing groups like Together Colorado.

The greatest opportunity for deepening systemic love is increasing the Capacity of public schools to effectively serve all youth, with a significant need to address economic and racial segregation. In Denver, only 16% of White public school students attend a “high poverty” school, compared to 76% of

Latino and 52% of Black public school students. The system of segregation in Denver and countless other communities deeply affects gaps in the opportunity to learn for low-income students and students of color. In addition, Denver has one of the lowest levels of access to AP/IB coursework of the 10 cities studied, with only 79% of students attending a school with at least one AP/IB class and only 23% of students participating in at least one AP or IB class, and the lowest level of teacher experience. Additionally, only 63% of teachers having more than two years of experience. There is also opportunity to improve levels of Commitment, particularly when it comes to suspension and expulsion of Black students who are experiencing punitive discipline policies at significantly higher rates than White, Latino and Asian students.

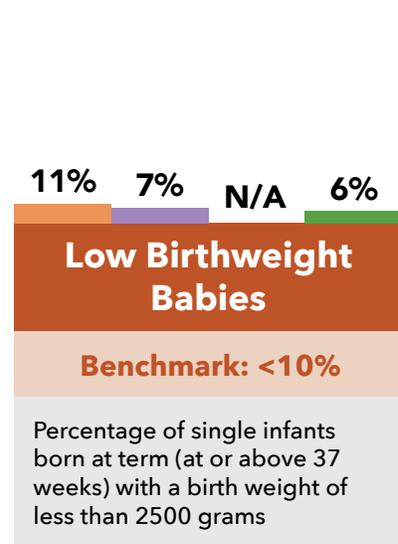
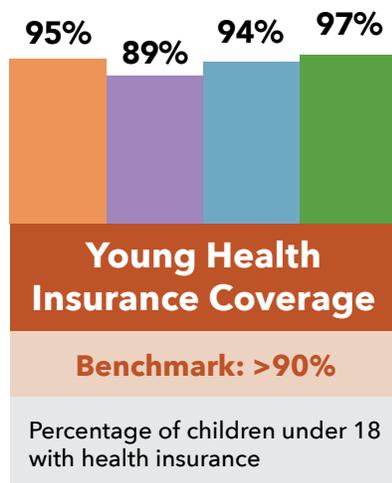
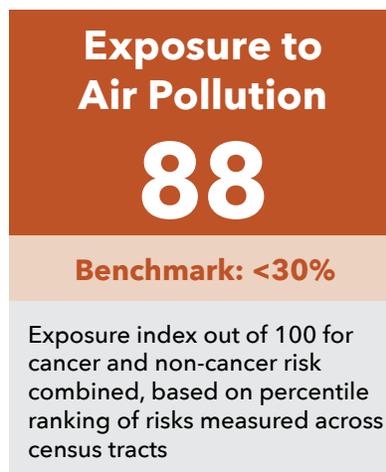
CARE

Denver has 48% of the supports measured for *Care*, including access to health insurance, pre-natal care, healthy foods, parks, clean air, and in-school mental and physical health services.

Denver schools have a relatively high number of in-school support staff on average, including guidance counselors, instructional aids and staff that can assess and connect students to services that meet their individual needs. This is a critical support for students and families, particularly those experiencing poverty, to ensure they have the physical, mental and behavioral supports needed to overcome the trauma and toxic stress caused by poverty that can negatively affect a students ability to come to school focused and ready to learn. Additionally, the data

suggests that there are fairly strong systems in place to support parents in nurturing babies to healthy birth weights, though there are somewhat higher rates of low birthweight among Black babies. While youth health insurance coverage is relatively high, Latino children have lower coverage compared to other racial groups.

To improve systems of *Care*, community leaders can increase access to community supports that support health, including access to grocery stores and clean air quality, given that Denver has higher exposure to pollution than any of the other 10 cities studied. Black, Latino and Asian people with low incomes have significant gaps in access to grocery stores compared to low-income White people.



Black Latino API White

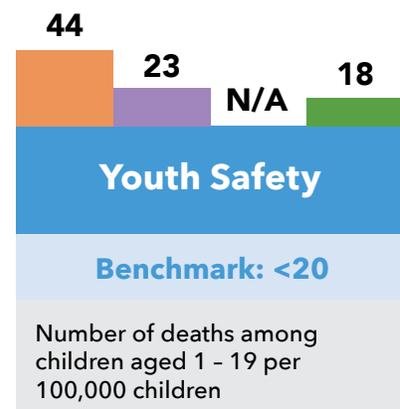
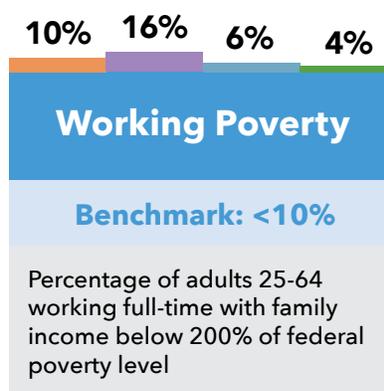
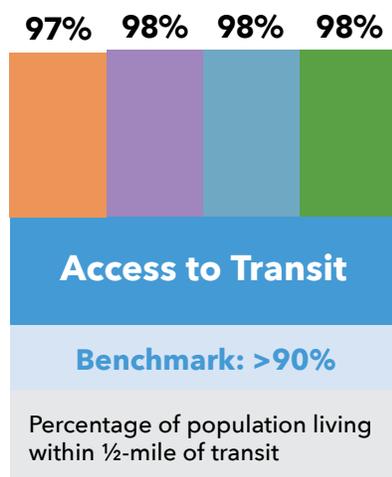
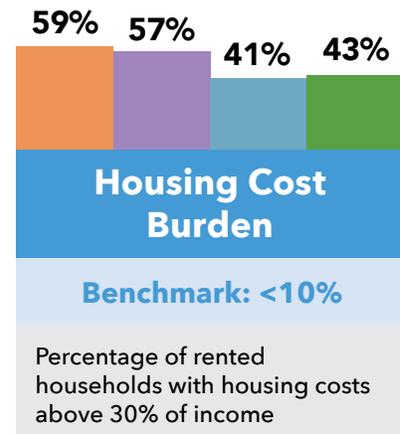
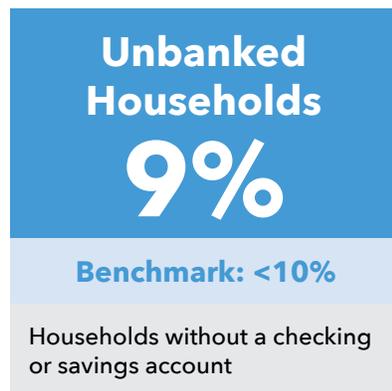
STABILITY

Denver has 53% of the supports needed to provide children with *Stability*, measured by housing affordability, transit access, child safety, civic engagement, working poverty and financial security.

Denver has excellent availability of public transit, however local advocates are focused on reducing the price for students and families to increase ability to utilize transit and access resources and opportunity. Working poverty rates in Denver, overall, are less than 10%, though the rate is 16% for Latinos working full time compared to 4% for White people. Affordable housing is an issue in Denver, as with the other cities studied: nearly half the population of renters are experiencing housing cost burden, where 30% or more of their income is spent on housing. There are significant differences in housing

cost burden for Black and Latino renters compared to Asian and White, though the discrepancies aren't as dramatic as in other cities. Additionally death among Black children is approximately double that of Latino and White children, highlighting inequity in health and safety for Black children that also disproportionately affect exposure to trauma and health and educational outcomes.

With voter turn out at 71% in the last presidential election, there is a need to ensure all children and families have a voice in choosing the elected officials that represent them.



Black Latino API White

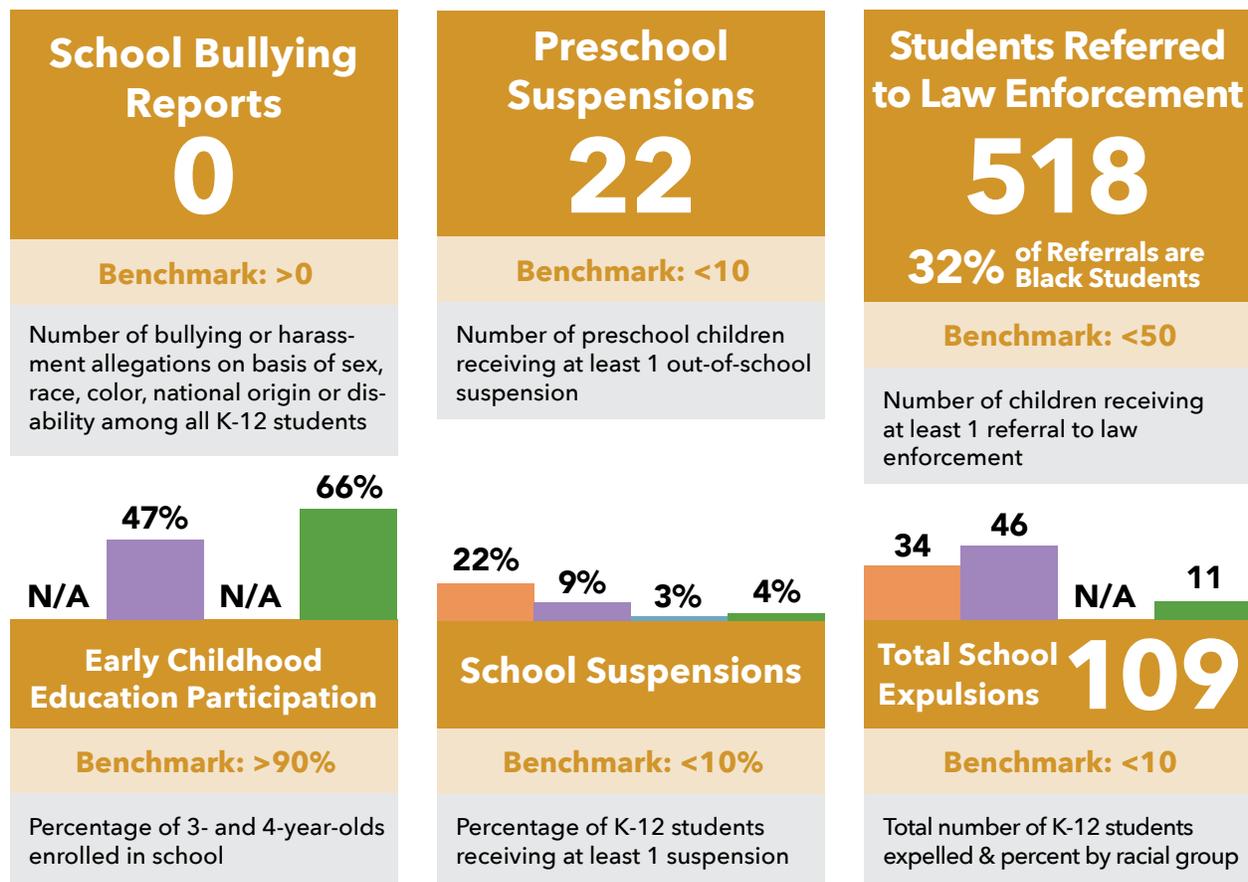
COMMITMENT

Denver has 33% of the supports needed to demonstrate *Commitment*, as measured by access to early childhood education, positive discipline practices, anti-bullying efforts and ending policies that create a school-to-prison pipeline.

Overall, data indicate a need for Denver officials to address the school-to-prison pipeline and excessive use of suspensions and expulsions, which disproportionately affects Black children. One third of the total students expelled are Black despite the fact that Black students only make up 13% of total enrollment. Schools also refer Black students to law enforcement at a similarly disproportionate rate. Additionally, over 20% of Black students and Native American students received at least 1 suspension compared to less than 5% for Asian and White students. In June 2017, Denver’s Board of Education unanimously approved changes to the district’s discipline policy to dramatically curtail suspensions and expulsions for those in preschool through grade 3, showing the city’s awareness of and commitment

to addressing challenges in school discipline policy. Denver as well as several other cities reported zero allegations of bullying or harassment, but this is more likely a function of instances going unreported rather than not existing, highlighting a need to better assess the culture of inclusion within schools.

Lastly, there are large gaps in access to early childhood education in Denver as with other cities, as well as large differences in participation among Latino children compared to White children (47% and 66% respectively). As with other cities, Head Start Programs have a relatively low number of facilities, with only 9.4 Head Start facilities per 10,000 children under 5. While Head Start was introduced to ensure that youth living in poverty can access early childhood learning, relatively low levels of public funding means that there is considerably less seats available compared to the level of need among children, and policy does not guarantee this support for moderate income families, who largely struggle to afford childcare options for their young children.



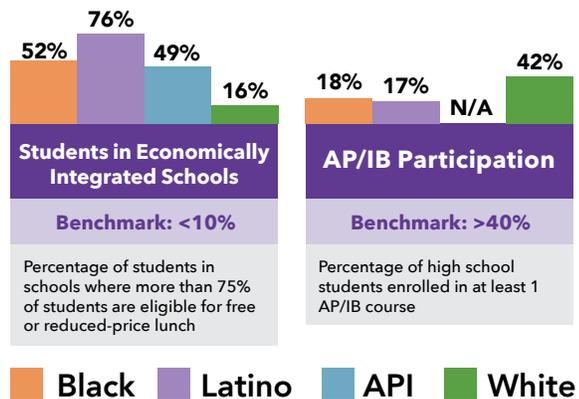
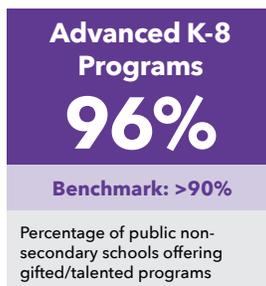
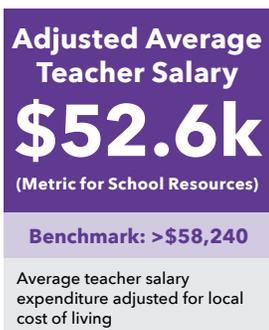
Black Latino API White

CAPACITY

Denver has 24% of the supports for *Capacity*, measured by access to challenging curricula and experienced teachers and integrated, well-resourced schools. Denver has one of the lowest levels of teacher experience, with only 63% of the district's teachers having more than two years of teaching experience. Reports highlight that the state of Colorado is experiencing teacher shortages, causing school districts to take bold steps to recruit and train new teachers. The Center for Rural Education at the University of Northern Colorado was recently established to better understand the problem and to build a self-sustaining pipeline of new teachers. When adjusted for cost of living, Colorado teacher salaries are relatively lower than other cities studied, which may be connected to issues with recruiting experienced teachers.

While K-8 schools largely offer gifted/talented course options, Denver high schools have one of the lowest levels of access and enrollment in AP/IB coursework. There are significant disparities in access to AP courses, with only 78% and 73% of Black and Latino students enrolled in schools that offer at least 1 AP class, compared to 92% of white students. This likely contributes to major differences in enrollment in at least 1 AP class: 42% of White students are enrolled in an AP class, while less than 20% of Black and Latino students are. In addition to ensuring fair resourcing and integration of schools to provide equal access to critical resources like challenging curricula which is linked with postsecondary success, teachers and administrators should proactively identify Black and Latino students that are often able to succeed in AP classes but are not encouraged and supported to enroll.

As with other cities, Denver also needs to address high levels of economic and racial segregation in schools to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn: Overall 57% of students attend high poverty schools where 75% or more of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch – the majority of Black, Latino and Asian students are in high poverty schools (52%, 76% and 49% respectively) while only 16% of White students are affected by this. Poverty affects childhood trauma and toxic stress, which can affect students' physical, mental and behavioral health, and require individualized supports to ensure those children have the opportunity to learn. When schools have a mix of students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, teachers and administrators can more easily address the individual needs of students experiencing poverty, but schools where the vast majority of students are experiencing poverty often do not have the time and resources required to meet the needs of those students, and as a result students in those schools do not have a fair and equal opportunity to learn. The Strengthening Neighborhoods initiative in Denver engaged a broad coalition of partners in the creation of a blueprint, in the face of neighborhood changes, to increase racial and socio-economic diversity in its schools, and hopefully the city will see improvements in school segregation through those efforts going forward.





LOVING CITIES CALL TO ACTION

Across the country, we see powerful examples of organizations and community members taking steps to provide systems of supports that give all children an opportunity to learn. While each city may identify their own priorities, there are four key things that all cities can do to strengthen their system of supports. These are outlined below along with promising models and approaches to learn and build from.

1. Increase Adoption of Models for Delivering a System of **CARE** to all Children and Families

To address childhood trauma and other mental and physical health needs, cities need to equip each and every public school to be a hub for assessing and meeting healthcare and other resource needs. Models like **Communities in Schools** and **City Connects** equip schools with staff and tools to provide a system for addressing individual student and family needs at scale. For more information on CIS's model go to: www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/.

For more information on City Connects model go to: www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lsoe/sites/cityconnects/our-approach.html.

In addition to school models that refer students to providers, **School-Based Health Alliance** is a network of local, state and national nonprofits working to “complement the work of school nurses by providing a readily accessible referral site for students who are without a medical home or in need of more comprehensive services such as primary, mental, oral, or vision health care.”²

SBHA and its state affiliates help schools establish and effectively run school-based health centers. For more information on SBHA affiliates, go to www.sbh4all.org/about/state-affiliates/.

2. Elevate Policies and Practices That Integrate Communities and Schools to Increase Community **STABILITY** and Equitable Allocation of Community Resources

To address community and school segregation, we need to build mainstream understanding of the history of policies in the U.S. that created segregation and wealth inequity and come to terms with the damage those policies continue to have on communities today. In his book *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein recognizes that we as a society have largely “forgotten the history of how our government segregated America,” and schools widely teach curricula that has been

white-washed, failing to educate the public on our history of oppression and de jure racial segregation.

The Color of Law outlines several examples of affirming policies that could be adopted if there were greater political will to reverse the damage of past policies and supports rooted in racism. One key policy change communities can adopt is inclusionary zoning policy, which can “require housing devel-

opers to set aside a portion of the homes they build at below-market rates, and reserve the right for the public housing commission to purchase one-third of those units to operate as subsidized public housing.”³

Reforming the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program can also lead to greater community integration.

Increasing subsidies to be on par with housing costs in more affluent neighborhoods and increasing the number of vouchers allocated to serve all families that have been damaged by historically racist policies would be a large step in beginning to heal and repair communities.

3. Increase **COMMITMENT** to All Children Through Increased Early Childhood Education Opportunities and Greater Training for Teachers and Administrators in Anti-Racist Practices and a Culture of Inclusion and Healing

Federal programs that provide access to early childhood education need increased funding to meet the scale of need that exists.

Racial opportunity gaps are not just about gaps in access to resources; they also result from unintentional differences in the ways adults and other students treat children of color.

These “invisible forces” are hard to measure, but are becoming clearer through research from groups like GLSEN and Georgetown Law Center that put data to the implicit biases and harassment that students, teachers, administrators and other adults within the system inflict against girls and boys of color. For recommendations on practices for increasing inclusion and reducing bullying in schools see GLSEN’s report at: www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTortment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D_0.pdf

For recommendations on policies and practices to address bullying without using zero tolerance approaches that are more harmful than helpful to school safety and culture, go to www.schottfoundation.org/resources/two-wrongs-dont-make-right-why-zero-tolerance-not-solution-bullying.

The Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF) is a leader in strengthening the organizing infrastructure in local communities by giving grants to local and regional groups that organize young people, parents and caregivers, educators and other community members to advocate on behalf of students impacted by exclusionary school discipline practices. For individuals and foundations interested in contributing to local organizing, CJSF shares several ways to get involved: www.cjsfund.org/get-involved

4. Deepen Public and Private Commitment to Increasing **CAPACITY** of Public Schools

According to research by the Education Law Center and Rutgers Graduate School of Education, states are largely failing to invest adequately and fairly to provide all students with the resources and supports that they need to succeed.

For data and resources to advocate for fair school funding, go to: www.schoolfundingfairness.org/is-school-funding-fair

Endnotes

- 1 Visit Denver. (n.d.). *Early Denver history*. Retrieved from <https://www.denver.org/about-denver/denver-history/early-denver-history/>.

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- 2 School Based Health Alliance: <http://www.sbh4all.org/school-health-care/national-census-of-school-based-health-centers/>.
- 3 Rothstein, R. (2017 May). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*.