

BEACON SCHOOLS

PROPOSAL COVER PAGE

The Denver Public Schools and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association jointly recognize that all families demand rigorous and compelling academic choices for their students. To this end, DPS and DCTA will encourage teachers and principals to collaborate in the development and implementation of Beacon Schools. In Beacon Schools, teachers and principals will work closely together to exceed the expectations of the Denver Plan by establishing coherent and consistent instructional practice that leads to high academic performance for all students.

Provide the name of the **primary point of contact** for your proposal. This individual will serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding this process. *Please note: names and contact information may be shared with external groups by DPS.*

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Names and roles of members applying:

Stephen Wera, Principal
Terry Frazier, Administrative Assistant
Kathy Leerssen, Humanities Facilitator
Stacey LaConte, 1st grade teacher
Chris Blach, kindergarten teacher
Jason Krause, 4,5,6 literacy teacher
John Schauble 4,5,6 math teacher

Name of the Proposed School:

Columbine Beacon School

Proposed Site(s) for the School:

Columbine Elementary

Section I

ACADEMIC VISION STATEMENT

Through intensive, expert instruction, targeted support and a lot of hard work, Columbine Beacon School will be a place where commitment and dedication to the success of each and every student are evidenced by both staff and students. Columbine Beacon School will be a school where each and every student is striving to attain his or her *personal goal of academic achievement* and he/she is learning how to become a *master student*. Columbine Beacon School will be a school where teachers are experts in their content area and where teachers and staff pledge to carry out the Denver Plan, thus ensuring the success of their school. Through hard work and substantial amounts of time and effort, the teachers and staff at Columbine Beacon School will continuously and thoughtfully state their commitment to their students' success and the success of their school by offering students teacher-availability and assistance and by showing them models of quality work. It is the vision of our staff members that achievement, quality, and success among our students is possible and attainable. Students at Columbine Beacon School will also state their commitment to their *own* learning by completing tasks, creating purposeful and personal goals and by earnestly reaching out to teachers, other adults and parents for guidance, assistance, and support.

It is our goal that upon completion of their Columbine Beacon School experience, all students will read at or above grade level. Upon completion of their Columbine Beacon School career, all students will be able to plan, draft, revise, and edit a clear, concise, quality piece of writing depicting every genre (narrative, expository, persuasive, etc.) they have studied. All final student work will be required to have been completed using a computer for word processing. All students at Columbine Beacon School will perform at or above grade level in Math, Science, and Social Studies as determined by both DPS Benchmarks and Statewide tests.

Finally, each staff person from custodian to administrator will have made a proactive choice to work toward making Columbine Beacon School the *best elementary school in Northeast Denver*.

Section II

EDUCATION PLAN

Columbine’s academic plan of team teaching, content teaching and content learning is based on educational, research-based best practices that we believe will lead to improved student learning and achievement. Columbine Beacon’s content teaching approach includes teachers in the “team” working together to deliver instruction to all students who “switch” throughout the day in and out of their Literacy classes and into their Math/Science classes or elective classes. As working partners, team teaching affords teachers the opportunity to work, design, plan, and implement lessons appropriate to their classes and individual students. **We believe that when team teachers collaborate, they combine the expertise of each individual educator. They bring together the knowledge and skills each teacher possesses. This unique type of synergistic collaboration produces a more successful program than one individual teacher could produce alone.** *Together* two or more teachers can better ensure a creative, high-energy classroom where the needs of all students benefit from the knowledge of more than one teacher. Moreover, the benefits from team teaching to the students are innumerable, because all students learn from the expertise of two or more professionals. Through team/content teaching, students attending Columbine’s Beacon School will experience more help available to them, *increased* individual attention and instruction, and students will appreciate experiencing a variety of teaching styles. Teachers will *share* responsibilities and duties, promoting collegiality, thus fostering new approaches to student-grouping and problem-solving, as well as decreasing teacher frustration and discipline issues.

Based on the strong foundation of curriculum, instruction and assessment established by the Denver Plan, the district’s Benchmark Assessments and CBLA data, teachers, as well as students, will be required to write and meet measurable, academic goals. As per the Denver Plan, students and teachers at Columbine Beacon School will hold high expectations and a responsibility for their learning and achievement. With appropriate and adequate support, each and every child at Columbine Beacon will be told that he/she can and will achieve at grade level. Utilizing the Accelerated Reader program and with appropriate and adequate teacher and parental support, each and every child will understand that he/she can and will read at grade level. It is our desire that Columbine Beacon students become “master students” by reading and appreciating every genre and by responding appropriately to their reading in the form of: Reports, graphic displays, power points, character “lockers,” (shoe box dioramas or character interviews), critical essays, summarizations, or maybe the student has a better, creative idea! These activities will be meaningful and relevant ideas and thoughts required to ascertain critical and progressive thinking by all students. By demanding high quality and excellence through the aforementioned college-prep opportunities and activities, Columbine Beacon students will “value” and understand that their education is geared towards college and beyond.

The Writing goal of each student enrolled in the Columbine Beacon program will be to write in a personal journal daily, publish bi-monthly, and understand and appreciate the “life of a writer.” Upon completion of Columbine Beacon School, each and every student will be able to plan, draft, revise, and edit a comprehensive, clear, concise, and quality piece of writing depicting every genre they have studied. Our parental expectation is that parents will sign off on all student writing, projects and required at-home reading.

Teachers at Columbine have made great strides in the implementation of the Everyday Math and Connected Math program. Our 5th and 6th grade classes have exceeded the district and CSAP scores through successful and thoughtful planning, practice, and collaboration among our Math team. We follow the consistent K–6 Everyday Math and Connected Math curriculum which enables all students in the development of mathematical thought processes and fundamental skills. Math continues to be our strongest academic area at Columbine.

As presented in the DPS Social Studies Curriculum, Columbine Beacon School will strive to teach its “master students” to:

- Make their intentions positive.
- Develop listening skills.
- Communicate assertively, not aggressively.
- Present facts without blame.
- Separate “liking” from learning.
- Participate—show interest in class.
- Take responsibility for their own learning and attitudes.
- Work hard toward achievement of their goals.
- Avoid excuses.

Teachers at Columbine Beacon School will make every effort to appreciate variance among learners in their classrooms. In order to create the best learning experience possible, Columbine Beacon teachers will respond and reach out to individual students or small groups through differentiation. Differentiation will be through content, what the student needs to learn and how the student will access the information, and through engaging and thoughtful activities in order for him/her to make sense or master the content.

Because “expert” teachers are attentive to their students’ varied learning styles and needs, Columbine Beacon School will implement differentiated instruction with each and every child. Differentiated instruction will include, but not be limited to: assessment, evaluation, planning, re-teaching, and communication with students’ parents. Struggling students, students not performing on grade level, and students on an IEP, will be provided extra support as well as explicit instruction through our Read to Achieve grant monies, after school tutoring, DPS Success, and our Reading Teacher-to-Teacher Partner program. Identified students will also be provided additional and supplemental support from our ELA, G/T, and Special Services programs and teachers.

Examples of differentiated instruction at Columbine Beacon School will include, but not be limited to: (1) student and teacher conferences to assure the successful completion of goals and objectives; (2) using reading materials in the classroom at varying readability levels; (3) meeting with small groups to re-teach an idea, skill, strategy or concept to struggling learners; (4) using reading buddies across grade levels; (5) using spelling or vocabulary lists at readiness levels of students, individual or group; and/or to (6) extend the thinking or skills of advanced learners.

Examples of differentiating activities at Columbine Beacon School might be: (1) using tiered activities through which all learners with the same understandings and skills proceed with different levels of support; (2) provide learning centers that encourage students to further explore the class topic; (3) provide relevant homework or extended projects; (4) vary the length of time or the length of the project. Students will be given strategies on how to express required learning rather than the typical pencil/paper project, such as: create a puppet show, write a letter, develop a mural; or allowing students to work on projects in small groups. Rubrics will be created for all course work, projects, and activities that identify and connect the required learning.

The goal of required differentiated instruction at Columbine Beacon School is to maximize learning and the individual potential of each and every student. Our student's goal is that they "stretch" to complete a task that may be challenging, but nonetheless achievable.

Section III

LEADERSHIP and STAFFING

Perhaps the most important quality the Leadership Team brings to Columbine Beacon School is that of motivation. We are all motivated and united in our efforts to make our school the best that it can be. We also believe that it is *effective leadership that will ultimately make a difference in student learning, growth, and achievement*. We recognize and understand that our final “product” is the knowledge, skills, and values that our students will possess.

The Columbine Leadership Team will consist of Steve Wera, principal; Terry Frazier, administrative assistant, Kathy Leerssen, humanities facilitator; and teachers: Chris Blach, Stacy LaConte, Jason Krause, and John Schauble. Our Leadership Team boasts the following distinctions: National Board Certification, National Distinguished Teachers, Teachers of the Year, and Mile High Teachers.

With an eye on the Denver Plan, the Columbine Leadership Team’s overriding priority will be that of defining student learning and educational performance. It will be the Leadership Team’s responsibility to constantly and consistently direct staff time and energy towards instructional issues. It will be the leadership team’s responsibility to secure resources, training, and staff development for teachers and to provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate on instructional improvement. It is the responsibility of the team to promote a sense of community and collective responsibility for each and every student’s improvement and achievement. It will be the teacher’s responsibility (team and specialists) to collaborate on instruction as well as to utilize peer coaching to help all students succeed. It will be the responsibility of all of us (teacher, administrator, staff) to make the concerted effort to reach out to parents and community via our Thursday Folder communication, weekly/monthly telephone calls, conferences, Family Nights, Parent Committee annual events, and books sent to parents for home-reading partnerships.

Our faculty will be composed of an ECE, K, 1st grade level team, a 2, 3, ¾ grade level team, and a 4,5,6 grade level team. Administrators, specials teachers, the librarian, special education teachers, and ELA teachers are also included in this configuration. Vertical teams will consist of the Literacy team, the Math/Science team, and the Early Education team. Team teaching pairs are K-K, 1-1, 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, 6-6, specials teachers, special education teachers, and the ELA teachers. All teachers at Columbine Beacon School are ELA-E certified.

It is our intention that all teachers at Columbine Beacon School have a clear awareness of their purpose, a clear understanding of their intent of practice, and a strong sense of task and direction. It is the responsibility of each teacher to convey to their students the goal of every lesson and why the lesson is important to students. It is a responsibility of every teacher at Columbine Beacon School to hold high expectations for every student and to expect that every child can improve and move forward. Teachers will be consistently well prepared with materials ready and close at hand. All Columbine Beacon School teachers will possess strong classroom management skills and be proactive in preventing classrooms disruptions. All classrooms will have predictable routines and rituals, but

there will be flexibility to allow students to pursue topics that arise in the course of discussions and student-interest. “Praise of thinking” and “praise of effort” will be evident at Columbine Beacon School, and all students will be on task.

The implementation of Columbine Beacon School’s Education Plan will proceed with a strong emphasis on Literacy (reading and writing). We will maximize use of our instructional time for literacy with 2.75 hours spent each day on reading and writing. We will devote 2 hours per week on Staff Development. We will spend more time on lessons, getting and maintaining student’s attention and less time on transitions, etc. We will offer much more time on small group instruction, especially in grades K-3. Of course, our students will spend more time reading independently! Our emphasis will be on both basic skills and higher order comprehension skills. The integration of reading and writing activities will be abundant. Students must write daily in their journals. Literacy instruction will be integrated across the curriculum; reading and writing will be a part of science instruction, social studies, and math. We will constantly evaluate and assess our progress through the Benchmark Assessments, CBLA, the CSAP, and through teacher made assessments.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Description for 3rd grade Math/Science Teaching Assignment

Columbine Elementary School is looking for an exceptional, dynamic, energetic and accomplished 3rd grade Math and Science teacher. Columbine Elementary School is an award-winning ECE-6th grade school which has a tradition of high expectations, rigor, teamwork, intentional instruction, and staff development coupled with specific interventions that help all children reach proficiency in all areas. We use the "Content Teaching" model where teachers specialize in specific subject areas to enhance instruction. Content teachers teach one or more subjects and are experts in their content area(s).

Teachers must have a deep understanding of 3rd grade standards in both Math and Science. We follow the Denver Plan and use the Everyday Math curriculum and the TRACKS Science curriculum. This position will provide specific, intentional instruction to 3rd grade students. Qualified candidates must have verified training in Everyday Math and experience working in an urban setting. Due to the unique Content Teaching Approach, this teacher will need to partner with the other 3rd grade Literacy teacher to implement a schedule that shares the 3rd grade students throughout the academic day. Communication and shared planning time are essential. Teachers have common planning times as well as dedicated weekly professional development time to ensure the highest quality instruction for our students. Finally, all teachers at Columbine are ELA-E certified. New teachers to our school will need to be ELE-E certified within the first two years of teaching at Columbine.

Columbine is a school that actively seeks academic excellence and life-long learning through the promotion of community, the valuing and embracing of diversity, and the encouragement of self-discipline and care. Our curriculum supports each and every child as a worthy and dignified learner. Columbine is proud to be in a neighborhood that reflects the distinct social diversity of America.

We are proud of our professional, loving, dedicated and compassionate teachers. Our teachers strive to personalize and differentiate instruction to ensure that our students learn to read and write critically and effectively, speak articulately and confidently, and think logically and creatively.

Section IV

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Columbine’s leadership team has studied the efficacy of several different types of inservices for our teachers and staff. We are aware that much of the “staff development” schools engage in has not proven to be effective at helping teachers gain the deep content knowledge and quality implementation skills we seek for Columbine Beacon School.

The Columbine leadership team is highly motivated to the relentless pursuit of improving our systems of delivery of staff development and broadening the scope of responsibility to include parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, students, district educational leadership and student support staff. Columbine Beacon School will strive to:

- Provide time and support for teachers to master new content and strategies and integrate them into their practice. **We will orchestrate opportunities for teachers to explore, risk, question, and debate best practices.**
- We will know and follow established best practices, constructivist teaching, and district standards and we will view these as an integral part of *all* teachers’ work, not as an “add on.”
- Alongside teachers, the Columbine Leadership Team will continuously evaluate the content, quality, and results of professional development experiences.
- Allow teachers to work and plan in vertical and grade level teams discussing task-specific topics and problem-solving around job-embedded issues.
- We intend to provide on-going support to our teachers including: teacher-to-teacher partners in the instruction of Reading, study groups, inter-school literacy labs, peer observations, peer coaching, peer mentoring; self-assessment, and the collaborative study of student performance.
- We will continue to work to help teachers understand the direct value and importance of data-driven decision processes.
- We will provide our valued teachers support and opportunities to extend their knowledge through PDU’s, National Board Certification, and action research.
- Columbine Beacon School will constantly work to design and evaluate clear, concise, long term plans and goals.
- We will encourage our teachers to visit other classrooms in our school and across the district.
- We will continue to send teachers to district and state workshops to better their understanding of current standards for advanced teaching and best practice.
- We will share school-wide Book Studies, specifically studying *Best Practice, Today’s Standards for Teaching and Learning in American Schools* by Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde; and *Making Standards Work* by Reeves.

Section V

ENROLLMENT

“My daughter is enrolled in a second grade classroom at Columbine. I like the programs and I like the fact that she has two teachers, one for Math and the other for Writing and Reading. My daughter likes school and I like this school because she is learning so much...”

Rosa E. Gomez
Mom of 2nd grader

Columbine Beacon School enthusiastically anticipates approximately 250 students minimum and at least 500 students, maximum. (Our enrollment currently sits at 325 students). Our exceptional and caring teaching staff, our increased CSAP scores indicating student growth and achievement, our consecutively-successful AYP performances, our content/team teaching model, our before and after school tutoring programs, and our many Community Partnerships will continue to be an inducement and attraction to Columbine Beacon School. Our broad range of activities and extra curricular opportunities include: Colorado UpLift, Whiz Kids, Rocket Club, Summer Scholars, Chess Club, Morning Study Club, HelpOut, Inc., First Tee of Denver Golf Club, Intramural Sports, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Kids, Inc., Art Reach, Earth Walk, Spanish Club, Math Counts, Columbine Honor Society, Gifted and Talented program, DPS Success tutoring, and several in-school reading groups by Reading Assistants. Despite these many attractions to Columbine, the principal and leadership team will work on an ongoing basis to bolster enrollment proactively by conducting neighborhood walks, presenting at churches and other neighborhood organizations, and hosting multiple community events/family nights.

“I want to say thank you to Columbine Elementary School for your new teaching methods. The new technique of students having two or more teachers is beneficial to their learning experience. I feel that having more than one teacher at my children’s school gives them the opportunity to learn different ways of teaching and learning. As my children get older and proceed to higher grades, this method will to be helpful to their adjustment. My children already have a head start and are ready for different teaching styles they will encounter later. Please continue to implement these new methods at Columbine. Thank you.”

Yulanda Ford,
Mom of 2nd and 4th grader

Section VI

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Columbine Beacon School understands and values the vital, essential, and critical engagement, support, and trust of its community. Columbine Beacon School will maintain its active parent committee group and its award-winning After School Program. Parents at Columbine Beacon School will continue to commit to their child's education and success through the coordination of seasonal and community events throughout the academic year including, but not limited to: Taste of Columbine, Iron Chef competition, and our always-popular Talent Show. To further support our Literacy programs, Columbine Beacon School will continue to encourage, persuade and promote parents, students, and community attendance in its Family Nights. Family Nights are conducted around intermediate and primary Reading, Writing, Math, and Science nights. We have also involved our community in the RIF and Read-2-Kids programs. At these popular family events, students are read to by community members, students receive a bag of goodies and a book, students and parents enjoy relevant, hands-on presentations and information, and finally students, parents, staff, and community enjoy a dinner together.

The Columbine Community also plays a significant part in our Extended Day Enrichment/After School Program. Our Extended Day Program activities occur five days a week for around 200 students in grades kindergarten through six. Our morning program daily serves 50 students and is supervised by four Columbine staff members. The morning program gives students a safe, supervised "family-room-type" environment for math games to supplement our Every Day Math curriculum; other educational games; homework assistance; independent reading as well as supervised gym-time. Because this program is a huge success for our families, many students wait outside the building (even in winter) as early as 6:30 a.m. to start their day at Columbine. Serving 160 students, our After School activities are supervised by Denver Parks & Recreation staff and Summer Scholars staff. Reading Tutoring is provided to 50 students by Columbine teachers and Summer Scholars staff. Another 50 students additionally receive four hours of specific Reading tutoring every week. Other students receive tutoring through Summer Scholars, DPS Foundation, LOAS (Lights on After School grant monies), DPS Success, and Math Counts. A significantly-generous donation for our After School Program also came by way of local Denver business entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

Students in our After School program receive a snack and recreation time during the first half-hour of attendance. All students receive help and support with their homework from mentors and community tutors. Clubs and sports activities are provided and supervised by Denver Parks & Recreation staff, First Tee Golf of Denver, Girl Scouts, Girls Inc., and Rocket Club. (Our principal sits on the Board of the Northeast Collaborative Association, First Tee, and HELP OUT, Inc). HELP OUT Inc. provides funding for sports activities such as soccer, basketball and golf. ArtReach and HELP OUT Inc. provide funding for our visual and performing arts programs. To foster and maintain our alliances with our community and to preserve and communicate our vision and goals, Columbine's Leadership Team meets and collaborates with the Extended Day Program staff and community partners monthly.

SECTION VII

SUSTAINABILITY

We believe that the content-teaching/team-teaching paradigm is the ideal environment for our varied and diverse student population. Content/team teaching allows for on-going essential communication among our teachers, students, parents, and community. Most importantly, our staff expertise, experience, and professionalism is fully utilized. Through “team-building” we acknowledge and recognize that ***we all*** share responsibility for each and every student’s growth and achievement. Since our teachers are currently utilizing this teaching model, in the future we will hire teachers with their full knowledge and understanding of content teaching. Because of our efforts to continue to acquire staff who are committed to our academic push, we have enjoyed AYP success for the past four consecutive years. We will use many and varied assessment tools to secure the academic performance that we know all of our students are capable of and we will strive with every all-out effort to sustain our continued growth and achievement.

Columbine’s Leadership Team and staff pledge to research, write, and receive significant and important grants to aid us in our efforts. We are proud to have received a three year \$180,000 LOAS grant continuing through academic year 2007-2006; a \$5000 parent and community grant; and \$18,000 for supplemental Art instruction and an Art teacher, as well as Math Counts monies.

We will market and sell our school through our already-successful community involvement and partnership. Columbine Beacon School will maintain its active parent committee group and its award-winning After School Program. Throughout the academic year, parents at Columbine Beacon School will continue to commit to their child’s education and success through the coordination of seasonal and community events. Our Parent Committee and CSC will continue to meet monthly to encourage and promote school purpose and function. In order to build and promote relationships and to pass informational flyers, the Leadership Team will continue to walk the neighborhood. We will continue to preserve our alliances with local business establishments who agree to hang Columbine posters which may attract new students.

Our goal is for Columbine Beacon School’s *State Accountability Report* (SAR) to reveal that our CSAP scores have finally taken us to the top. **Ultimately and in due course, we strive to become the best DPS elementary school in Northeast Denver!**