

MEMO

To: Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) Board of Education

From: District Accountability Committee (DAC)

Date: January 12, 2021

Re: Recommendations on District Spending Priorities for the 2021-22 School Year

To fulfill the DAC responsibility: C.R.S. 22-11-302(1)(a) – *To recommend to its local school board priorities for spending school district monies. Whenever the school district accountability committee recommends spending priorities, it shall make reasonable efforts to consult in a substantive manner with the school accountability committees of the school district. The local school board shall consider the school District Accountability Committee recommendations in adopting the school district budget for each fiscal year pursuant to article 44 of this title.*

Process The DAC considered a variety of information to guide its annual spending recommendations. Sources include historical academic data, available Academic Return on Investment information, the BVSD Strategic Plan, BVSD UIP, Stanford University data (Appendix D), UVA Program Recommendations, BVSD Gift Reports and KH Allocations (Appendix E), and budget forecasts. As always, the DAC consulted with the BVSD School Accountability Committees (SAC) through a budget survey, modified this year to address current financial constraints.

General Recommendation: The DAC recommendations and the SAC survey data identify spending priorities that converge with the priorities articulated in the Strategic Plan and the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). Given long-standing achievement gaps and structural inequalities in access to opportunity, the DAC recommends the Board make longer term funding decisions, and create structures that allow the district to be more responsive and targeted with its largest line-items, including staffing. To ensure greater fiscal responsibility and transparency, the DAC strongly encourages the district to prioritize funding items in which the impact and outcomes are measurable and regularly monitored, and reconsider funding items in which return on investment is poor or unclear. Additionally, the DAC urges the Board to hold the district accountable for meeting the objectives outlined within the strategic plan and UIP. The district should provide regular, public, reports on the metrics, benchmarks and action steps identified.

Specific Recommendations: The DAC recommends BVSD prioritize funding the following Strategic Plan Objectives:

- **Culture of Accountability & Transparency:** The DAC strongly recommends the Board of Education hold the District and its schools responsible for shifting to a data-driven culture of accountability and transparency. Strategic priorities must have clear action plans and timelines with implementation benchmarks, evidence-based improvement strategies, measurable outcomes (quantitative and qualitative) and regular intervals of progress monitoring, public feedback and reporting. Additionally, the DAC recommends the Board of Education establish a feedback loop with the DAC to regularly report on the degree to which the DAC recommendations are acted upon.
- **Objective 1 - Increase Alignment to Guaranteed and Viable Instructional Models:** The COVID-19 Pandemic has placed pressure on our educational system and highlighted how lack of instructional alignment and evidenced-based practices exacerbates challenges for schools, students and the District. The DAC recommends the district expedite the implementation of a standards-based scope and sequence, and ensure allocation of resources is responsive, accountable, and focused on student growth so all students in this district have access to similar opportunities for educational excellence. Additionally, the DAC believes the district should address systemic barriers that prevent some students from enrolling in accelerated courses thus

ensuring all students have equitable access to engaging, relevant and challenging coursework. Without increased accountability in these areas, the DAC is concerned that preexisting gaps in opportunity and achievement will be further amplified.

- **Objective 2 - Increased Fidelity to a Tiered System of Supports:** Large disparities in achievement and growth have plagued BVSD for many years. The conditions created by the pandemic have resulted in a situation in which some students are struggling more than before, thus making the need for tiered supports more critical. The DAC recommends the District develop an intensive catch-up plan to assist students that are performing below expectations, or otherwise identified as needing additional support. In order to identify such students, the district must develop and/or utilize adaptive, formative, assessments across all content areas and grade levels. To ensure students have accelerated growth during the catch-up period, BVSD should strategically utilize “Master Teachers” and other evidence-based supports to provide the highest quality services possible.
- **Objective 6 - Ensure all Students and Adults Feel Supported, Respected and Safe:** Culturally responsive practices that challenge inequities and bias are the first step, of many, to foster positive learning experiences. The DAC commends the district for implementing more culturally inclusive curricula, providing staff training on bias, adopting a more restorative discipline policy and developing a uniform Discipline Matrix. The DAC believes the district can go further by helping schools: a) create culturally responsive climates to ensure all individuals feel safe and supported; and b) establish best-practices for authentic family engagement. A first step toward being accountable for family engagement would be adopting CASB policy KB and amending [policy KBA](#).

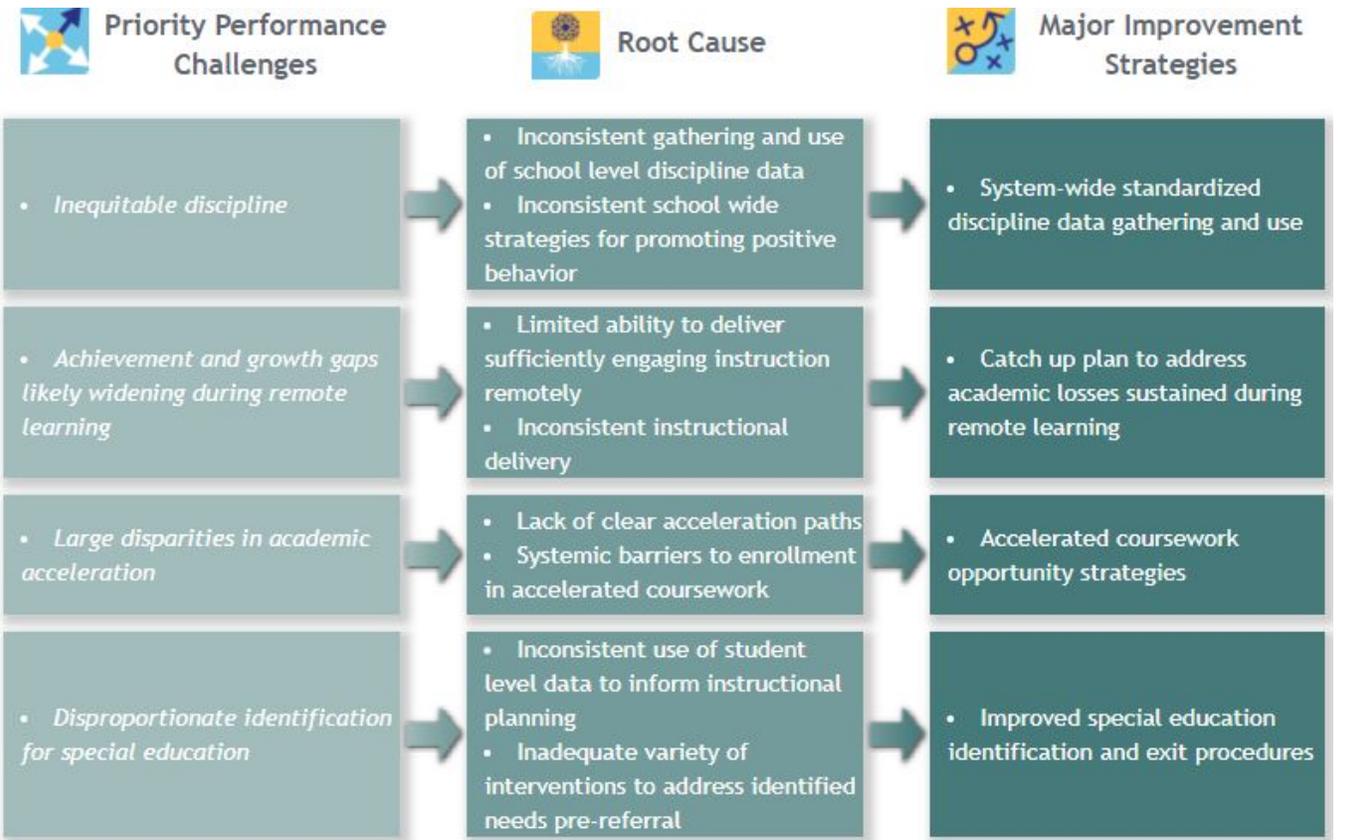
Appendices

- A. BVSD Strategic Plan
- B. BVSD 2020 UIP Summary
- C. SAC/DAC Budget Survey Analysis
- D. BVSD Student Performance Trends (Historical)
- E. Executive Summary
- F. BVSD Fundraising

APPENDIX A: BVSD STRATEGIC PLAN

Long Term Student Outcomes			
<input type="checkbox"/> All students benefit from challenging and relevant educational opportunities		<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce disparities in achievement	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Every student graduates empowered with the skills necessary for post-graduate success	
Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
Ensure all instruction is challenging, engaging, relevant and meets the needs of all students	Provide schools and educators with responsive and customized supports to best serve students	Engage the talent and passion of our community and families through communication, empowerment and partnership	Cultivate a positive and inclusive culture throughout BVSD that promotes the well-being of students, families and employees
Objective 1	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 6
Increase alignment to a guaranteed and viable instructional model	Ensure allocation of resources is responsive, accountable, and focused on student growth	Increase and improve school-family connections to develop a more supportive and collaborative environment that promotes equitable outcomes and removes barriers	Align to a common, research-based framework that ensures all students and adults feel supported, respected, and safe
Strategic Initiatives	Strategic Initiatives	Strategic Initiatives	Strategic Initiatives
1a. Create a standards-based scope and sequence for PreK-12 1b. Define and implement a common and aligned instructional model and practices 1c. Design support systems to maximize school-based administrators' instructional leadership capacity	3a. Create a tiered system of school requirements, supports, and accountability metrics which drive the allocation of resources 3b. Implement a needs-based allocation system 3c. Create a system to monitor and assess academic return on investment for current and future programs	4a. Strengthen school-family connectedness through implementation of consistent district-wide strategies that improve communication, collaboration, and belonging Objective 5 Optimize community partnerships to systematically align with BVSD's priorities Strategic Initiatives 5a. Establish a system for strategically managing existing partnerships and building new partnerships 5b. Embrace community assets to ensure meaningful career discovery and postgraduate preparation across all school levels for every student	6a. Define and put into practice culturally responsive principles and best practices that challenge inequity and bias 6b. Develop and implement an employee support system to increase their overall wellness and efficacy in serving students

APPENDIX B: 2020 UIP TARGETS



APPENDIX C: [SAC BUDGET SURVEY ANALYSIS \(LINK\)](#)

APPENDIX D: BVSD STUDENT PERFORMANCE TRENDS

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the ability of the state and the district to collect reliable data on student achievement and academic growth. The DAC is concerned that academic disparities we regularly see across the district have only widened during the pandemic.

2019 Achievement For All Grade Levels

Gaps in achievement between groups of students persist at all school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, high). More specifically, students identified as Black and Hispanic, as well as students classified as English Language Learners (ELL), or eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL) and those with individualized education plans (IEPs) consistently do not meet state expectations. Whereas, White, Asian and students identified as Gifted consistently exceed state expectations. The DAC did not have access to local data.

2019 Academic Growth For All Grade Levels

Student growth, which typically meets state median student growth, is more promising. Growth for Black students has been trending upward overtime with the median growth percentile (MGP) at the 55th percentile in ELA at the elementary grades in 2019. Growth for most student populations was above the 50th percentile for the PSAT/SAT. However, students identified as Hispanic, English Language Learners (ELL), as qualifying for free and reduced lunch (FRL), and those with IEPs consistently do not meet state expectations for growth at the elementary and middle school levels. Growth at the middle school level, while below state expectations, was trending upwards. Substantially higher rates of sustained growth are needed across all levels to close gaps in achievement.

[The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University](#) & [DAC Export of Stanford National Database Charts](#)

While the District performed above the national average for test scores (2008-2016), the average learning rate across the district is at the national average. The distinction here is important - learning rates better assess what is learned in schools whereas test scores are “heavily influenced by factors outside of school.” As we dig further into this data we see a wide range of disparity in educational opportunity and school effectiveness across BVSD schools.

APPENDIX E: [EXECUTIVE SUMMARY \(LINK\)](#)

APPENDIX F: BVSD FUNDRAISING TRENDS

DAC discusses the topic of fundraising annually when discussing district and school budgets. The main focus of these discussions is around the inequities created, whether intended or unintended, at the school and pupil level. The pressures to fundraise at the school level may also contribute to a perception of scarcity, and it is unclear whether the discretionary spending (from fundraised dollars) works to meet the goals of a school's UIP and the strategic plan. The DAC encourages broad community input on how to improve the current fundraising policy and practices to help ensure monies are raised and spent in more transparent, effective and equitable ways.

- [BVSD Policy KH](#)
 - [2019-20 Year End Gift Report](#)

- [2019-20 Year End KH Report](#)