

Staff Spotlight

[Climate and Safety Spotlight Newsletter Sep 26 2025](#)

TRENA MARSAL

Chief of Operations



“We’re one system—interconnected, aligned, and here for kids.”

That’s how Trena Marsal, Chief of Operations, describes Denver Public Schools.

After 26 years with the district, she’s still energized by the same north star that brought her here: supporting students and the people who serve them.

Trena’s DPS journey began in 1999, when the former environmental consultant joined the district on what was supposed to be a short, bond-funded assignment. “Just four years,” she recalls—but four years turned into a calling.

Since then, she has advanced through roles in construction and environmental services, served as Director of Operations & Maintenance, and led as Executive Director of Facilities for a decade—before stepping into her current role as Chief of Operations, now in her third year.

She also carries the distinction of being the first Black woman to serve in all three of those leadership roles at DPS.

For Marsal, Operations is not a standalone office but the umbrella that connects departments and partners across the district.

“Facilities, HR, legal, finance, community partners, and Climate & Safety—we succeed together as one system. If one piece is missing, we’re not operating as a whole.”

She sees the Department of Climate & Safety as vital to that system, ensuring schools are safe and welcoming while working hand in hand with partners across the city.

Leadership Grounded in Kids and Core Values

Marsal says her leadership philosophy starts simply: love kids.

“Our work isn’t easy. But you have to keep the vision in mind. We’re here to support students and their outcomes—that’s the motivation every day. My second priority is supporting the people who do the work. Everyone deserves opportunities for growth.”

She has long championed professional development for her teams, creating training pathways in Facilities and now building the Operations Leadership Institute (OLI) to expand growth opportunities for custodians, technicians, and managers alike.

Her personal values align closely with DPS’s shared core values—Students First, Collaboration, Accountability, Equity, Fun, and Integrity—which she credits as the reason she’s remained so committed to the district.

Safety as a Multi-Layered Priority

Marsal highlights DPS’s multi-layered safety strategy, funded in part through \$27.7 million from the recent bond program. Safety vestibules, upgraded dispatch systems, new crisis notification tools, and a canine detection pilot at select sporting events are just some of the pieces working together.

“Safety isn’t one thing—it’s layers working together,” she explained.

She is especially interested in how the canine pilot evolves, noting that while some see dogs as intimidating, others find them therapeutic. “We’ll keep listening to students and community members as we evaluate,” she said.

A Personal Mission

For Marsal, the work is not abstract—it’s personal. The daughter of educators, and the mother of four and grandmother of two, she carries her family’s legacy of resilience and opportunity into her leadership.

Her father, who left school after eighth grade to work, remains her guiding inspiration.

“He didn’t have a choice. But he made sure his kids did. I have a bachelor’s and two master’s degrees because of his sacrifice. My mission is to make sure no child feels they don’t have options.”

As a parent, Marsal knows the anxiety of entrusting children to others’ care.

“The scariest thing is releasing your child to someone else’s hands. At DPS, we are that someone. From the moment a student steps onto a bus to the time they return home, we have to ensure they are safe. I consider every child in this district my child.”

Final Word

At the end of our conversation, Marsal returned to a theme that drives her leadership: gratitude.

“I’m very thankful for the Climate & Safety team. Because of their quality and commitment, I can rest assured that our kids are protected. And that means parents across Denver can rest assured, too.”

 **Do you know someone outside of DoCS who helps strengthen our work and should be featured in a future edition? We’d love to hear your suggestions!**