

Overview of School Choice Options Provided by Colorado's Douglas County School District

A presentation to the
Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight
Committee

October 23, 2013

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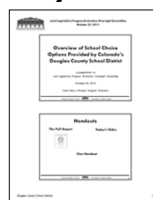


Handouts

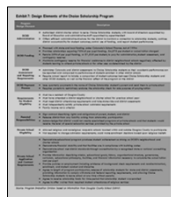
The Full Report



Today's Slides



One Two-Sided Handout



Study Direction

The 2013–15 Work Plan of the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee directed the Program Evaluation Division to examine Colorado’s Douglas County School District (DCSD) and its approach to school choice

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Evaluation Team

Carol Shaw, Evaluation Lead

Chuck Hefren, Principal Program Evaluator

Sara Nienow, Senior Program Evaluator

The evaluation team traveled to Colorado in June 2013 to examine Douglas County’s implementation of school choice options

Research Questions

- How does Colorado's Douglas County School District foster school choice for families?
- What does North Carolina need to consider in determining whether to implement aspects of the Douglas County approach to school choice?

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Overview

- The Douglas County School District has implemented strategies to improve and expand school choice
 - Home education enrichment services
 - Choice Scholarship Program
 - Partnerships with locally authorized charter schools
- Colorado education law enabled expansion of school choice

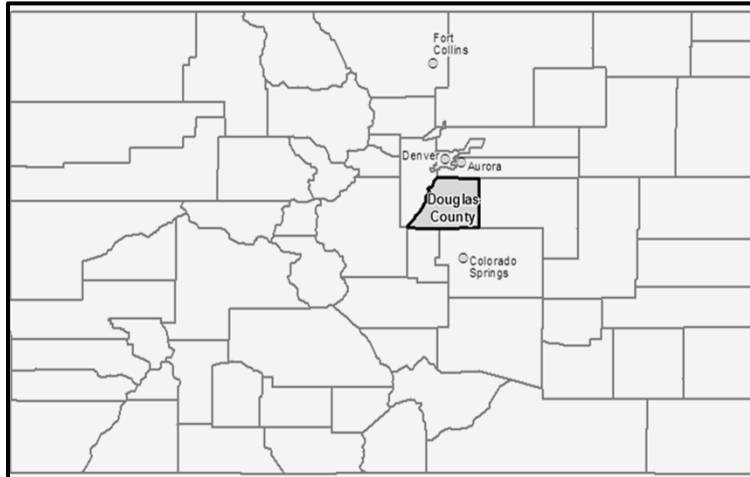
Overview

- The General Assembly should consider several factors in determining whether to implement Douglas County approach to school choice
 - Limited performance data available to measure effectiveness
 - Demographic differences may affect implementation
 - Statutory changes may be required for implementation
- A statewide community engagement and strategic planning process could assist in determining whether Douglas County strategies for expanding school choice are appropriate for North Carolina

Background



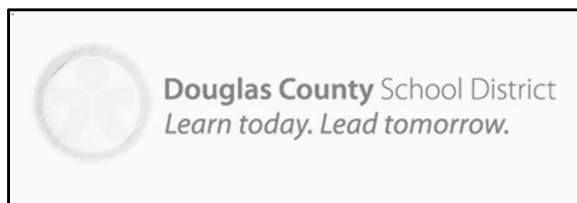
Colorado's Douglas County is located between Denver and Colorado Springs



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Douglas County School District

- 3rd largest school district in Colorado with 83 schools serving more than 63,000 students
- Student performance exceeds Colorado state averages in every grade
- 87% of students graduated on time in 2012

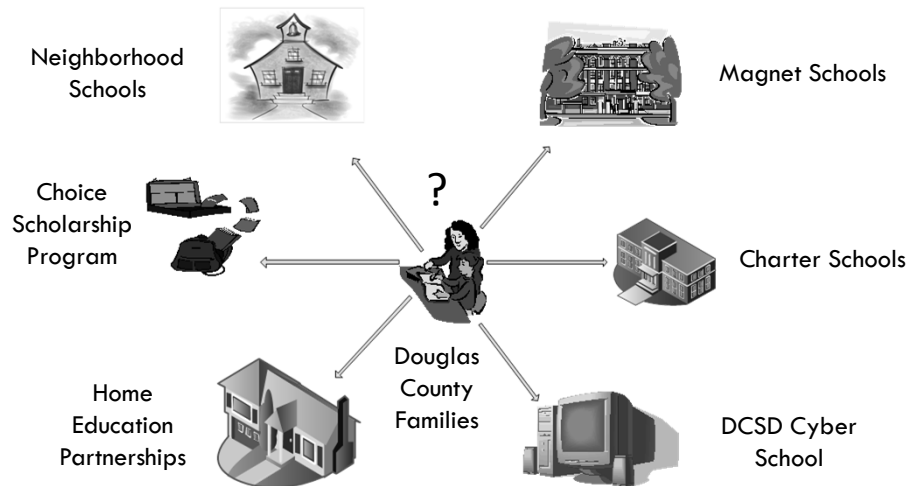


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How does Colorado's Douglas County School District foster school choice for families?



DCSD provides families with a variety of educational opportunities



DCSD's Community Engagement and Strategic Planning Process

- Board of Education promoted community engagement by initiating the School Choice Task Force
- Task Force members studied improvements to existing school choice options and opportunities to expand choices
- Board of Education adopted a strategic plan (*Blueprint for Choice*) that identified strategies for improving and expanding school choice

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Cloverleaf Home Education

- Innovative program offering home education enrichment instruction for grades K–8 in a variety of subjects
- Parents remain the primary instructional provider with the program supplementing their efforts
- DCSD purchases nonreligious home education curriculum and software that families borrow each school year
- Families receive services and educational materials at no cost because program is supported with state funding

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Choice Scholarship Program

- Authorized a district charter school to administer the scholarship program
- Financed program with state and local funding providing scholarships equaling 75% of per pupil funding or actual tuition charged
- Retained 25% of per pupil funding to pay for administration, student assessment, and contingency reserves
- Required state assessments of scholarship students to compare their performance to students enrolled in other DCSD schools

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Choice Scholarship Program

- Student eligibility requirements
 - Douglas County residency and attendance at a DCSD school the previous school year
 - Independently satisfy private school admission requirements
 - Family income not a criterion
- Private school requirements
 - Religious and nonreligious private schools could participate
 - Demonstrate educational program produces strong student achievement, has financial stability, and meets district standards
 - Provide financial information necessary to calculate actual tuition cost per pupil
 - Offer waiver from required attendance of religious services

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Charter School Partnerships

- Board of Education authorizes and contracts with charter schools located in Douglas County
- Charter schools administer state assessments and testing results for DCSD charter schools contribute to district performance
- Charter schools funded in the same manner as neighborhood schools, receiving 100% of state and local per pupil funding
- School facility planning and financing includes charter schools

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What does North Carolina need to consider in determining whether to implement aspects of the Douglas County approach to school choice?



No Student Performance Data Available to Measure Effects of DCSD's Choice Programs

- Colorado home education law does not allow DCSD to test students enrolled in the home education enrichment program
- DCSD Board of Education intended to measure effectiveness of Choice Scholarship Program, but program halted by litigation
- Without performance data, Program Evaluation Division cannot determine how implementation of these programs would affect student outcomes in North Carolina

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Comparison of NC and Douglas County Demographics Reveals Major Differences

Characteristics	North Carolina	Douglas County, Colorado
Total population	9,535,483	285,465
White	71.3%	91.8%
Black	22.4%	1.4%
Asian	2.5%	3.9%
Other	3.8%	2.9%
Estimated population age 25+ with bachelor's degree or higher	26.5%	54.6%
Median household income	\$45,206	\$101,193
Estimated population below poverty level	16.1%	3.5%

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NC Education Law Affecting School Choice Differs Significantly from Colorado Education Law

State School Choice Law	North Carolina	Colorado
Mandated intra-district open enrollment	No	✓
Mandated inter-district open enrollment	No	✓
State funding for home education services provided by school districts	No	✓
Statewide scholarship programs	✓	No
School district chartering authority	No	✓
School district oversight of charter schools	No	✓
Mandated local funding of charter schools	✓	No
School district performance includes charter school testing results	No	✓

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Potential Modifications to North Carolina Education Laws Affecting School Choice

- Require local school administrative units to offer open enrollment
- Authorize a pilot program to allow local school administrative units to use state funding for home education enrichment programs
- Authorize a pilot program to allow local boards of education to act as chartering authorities for charter schools located within their district
- Consider whether the design for the Choice Scholarship Program could inform future decision-making for North Carolina's scholarship programs

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Statewide Community Engagement and Strategic Planning Process

- Community engagement and strategic planning helped the Douglas County Board of Education determine how to improve and expand school choice options
- Establishing a statewide community engagement and strategic planning process could assist the General Assembly in determining whether Douglas County's strategies are appropriate for North Carolina
- Education policy-makers and community stakeholders could be directed to examine whether the district's approach provides opportunities for improving and expanding school choice options in North Carolina

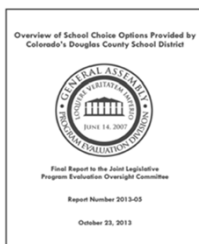
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Summary

- Colorado education law enabled Douglas County to implement strategies to improve and expand school choice
- Changes to North Carolina education law would be required to enable implementation of the Douglas County approach to school choice
- A statewide community engagement and strategic planning process could assist in determining whether Douglas County strategies for expanding school choice are appropriate for North Carolina

Committee Instructions to Staff

**Report available online at
www.ncleg.net/PED/Reports/reports.html**



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