City of Dreams

Denver’s Aspirations for Its Children and Youth
About MOEC

The Mayor’s Office for Education and Children (MOEC) is committed to helping families of Denver ensure that every child grows up with all the strength, knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in an information-based economy and to be good neighbors and citizens of Denver.

The office advocates for the children and youth of Denver, serves as the City’s liaison to the Denver Public Schools, and helps develop policies and initiatives to help every child in the City grow up confident, strong, smart and skillful.

Thank you

A special thank you to our Advisory Committee members for their dedication to strengthening our efforts in safeguarding the well-being of Denver’s young people.

- Katherine Archuleta, City and County of Denver
- Jill Conrad, Denver Public School’s Board of Education
- Doug Linkhart, Denver City Council
- Happy Haynes, Denver Public Schools
- Raelynn Perez, Denver Youth Commission
- Kevin Patterson, Denver Department of Human Services
- Tom Patton, Colorado Department of Education
- Al Martinez, ACF Region VIII State Lead for Child Care
- Craig Jones, Investment Banker
- Anthony Hermosillo, Community College of Denver
- Stephanie Hoy, Assets for Colorado Youth
- Christine Martinez, Denver Health and Hospital Community Board

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“Working together, we can make Denver the best city in which to raise a child.”

John Hickenlooper, Mayor
Denver is a large and diverse city, but throughout the Mile High City we are united by this: we care about our children. When we asked people across Denver about their hopes, dreams and aspirations for young people in our community, we consistently heard universal themes and desires: safe and inclusive neighborhoods, quality education, supportive adult relationships, and meaningful opportunities that allow youth to discover their talents and achieve their dreams.

Economists talk about investing in human capital as a way of providing the knowledge and skills citizens need to be productive members of our workforce. The City and County of Denver is investing in the next generation of our human capital — our children — by protecting the safety of our entire community, by supporting quality educational opportunities from preschool through college through an unprecedented partnership with Denver Public Schools, and by seeking to leave a legacy of genuine environmental and economic sustainability for future generations.

Working together, we can make Denver the best city in which to raise a child. We can all help to ensure that young people attain the knowledge, skills and health they need to succeed.

As one respondent stated: *I would like to see all children valued. As a result, all children would thrive — reaching for dreams never thought possible alone, but possible through the support of the community.*

Such dreams are within reach.

John Hickenlooper
Mayor
"A child/youth friendly city is a city friendly to all."

Dr. María Guajardo, Executive Director, Mayor’s Office for Education and Children
Beginning in 2006, the Denver Mayor’s Office for Education and Children (MOEC), with the help of its Advisory Committee, launched the Aspirations Project to gather community responses to the question: “What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations for children and youth in Denver?” The intent was to find out what the Denver community envisioned for children and youth, and to align MOEC’s policies and programs with those aspirations.

MOEC staff posed the Aspirations Project question to members of all its various partner groups; it asked the question at community meetings and forums it attended; and it even broadcast the question to all city employees through email. By the end of the year, more than 400 youth and 800 adults had shared their aspirations with us.

After compiling and analyzing the responses we received, it was clear that community members most often aspired for young people to receive a quality education; to live in a welcoming, inclusive community; and to have access to healthcare, a safe and healthy environment and nurturing relationships. These common and recurring themes allowed MOEC to develop five guiding aspirations for Denver’s children and youth:

• Quality education and opportunities accessible to all
• Diversity is embraced and celebrated
• Basic physical and safety needs are met
• Voices of youth are sought, valued and engaged
• Children and youth reach their full potential

These five aspirations are guiding work towards making Denver the most child/youth friendly city in the country. A child/youth friendly city is a city friendly to all. We hope you join Denver’s conversation.

Dr. María Guajardo
Executive Director,
Mayor’s Office for Education and Children
Adult Aspirations
What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the children and youth of Denver?
Quality Education and Opportunities

- My hopes, dreams and aspirations for the children of Denver are to give them hopes, dreams and aspirations. I want to give my students a strong base for a quality education so that one day they can become highly qualified individuals. I want them to have equal opportunities to learn — to expand their knowledge and potential, no matter what racial, religious or economic situation they find themselves in. And most importantly, I want to give my students the most positive academic experience possible. I want to let them know how important their education is and, no matter what, no one can ever take that away from them.

- My dream is for all children and youth to be supported in a child-friendly city in obtaining a great education.
Quality Education and Opportunities

- To be provided a safe community to grow and learn in with appropriate tools and support: updated books and computers in all schools; trained teachers with smaller class numbers; multicultural influence in school to celebrate diversity; opportunities for parents to take classes.

- A Youth Advisory Board linked to the school board, which helps kids influence school structure and policy and includes a restorative justice component to help youth “police” or influence behavior and achievement in schools.
Quality Education and Opportunities

- All students have the opportunity to learn in an environment that supports their potential. Families have a clear understanding of the importance of education.

- I hope that there are adequate preschool programs available to all, so that all children will be ready to enter the public schools. I hope that the public schools will reinvent themselves to capture and engage all students — regardless of socioeconomic status — in the learning process. I hope that community resources can be marshaled so children do not go to school hungry.

- That they will learn academics, art and music in school, and that they will learn respect, consideration and politeness towards other people at home.
Quality Education and Opportunities

- All kids would be motivated to attend school daily. Schools will be viewed as a privilege, not a right. All students learn when challenged and motivated.

- My dreams for children are they get the best education possible to be the future of tomorrow. My aspirations are that they do have aspirations in life. My hope is that our education will be better for children in the future.

- 100 percent graduation rates; 100 percent employment; 0 percent incarceration of youth.
I hope that our children will develop to the best of their ability in an environment that values their individuality and provides for their safety and education in an atmosphere of acceptance and love. I hope that each one is welcomed into a community free of discrimination.

My dream is that the youth in the community can see more positive adults in their neighborhoods.

Children will care about the world they live in and the people around them. They will be able to identify injustice and be proud to stand up against it. All children will have food, clothes, a warm bed in a warm home, respect and unconditional support.

I hope for understanding by all cultures that we are all the same — human beings. I dream that one day children will not fear walking the streets or asking a stranger for directions. I aspire for all children to have the opportunity for higher education.
Safe and Cared For

- That no child is hungry, no child is without a roof over his head, no child is without adequate healthcare and no child is taught to hate.

- My hopes and dreams for children growing up today are that they can do so safely, both physically and mentally. I hope that they can be safe in a home where there is no domestic violence, drugs or alcohol. That they can attend a school and not be afraid of bullies or violence, and can feel safe to be creative and express themselves. Where they can play outside and not fear strangers, neighbors or bullies, and breathe safe air. My hope is that our children can grow up with hope — knowing that they can be successful and have a life that they can enjoy. I believe we should aspire to give them free medical care and a free education so that they truly can grow up healthy and strong and to be whatever they want to be.
Safe and Cared For

- Children will be raised by parents who have the support of their community and have all the resources necessary to raise a happy and healthy child. Every child will be educated by qualified, empathetic and caring teachers. Medical care will not be questionable or unavailable. Children will be raised in an optimistic world, knowing they have the potential to be anything they want to be and have the resources available to really be anything they want to be. Children will have art, music and sports. They will find enjoyable activities that are inspiring.

- That they will all have families that will support and love them unconditionally and be their advocates to ensure that they have access to excellent healthcare, an education of the highest quality and various opportunities to help them develop a healthy self-esteem, self-confidence, leadership skills and a strong desire to give back to their communities.
Safe and Cared For

- My hope is that every child is wanted and has access to health care and nutrition. Every child has access to public schools with trained teachers and where there is no bullying. If bullying/harassment does occur, it is dealt with swiftly by enlightened and sensitive teachers and administrators. Every child is aware of the choices they have for life after high school — college, trades, military, careers — and are encouraged to explore all of them. My hope is that every child in Denver grows up knowing that they are valued as an individual, and with truly equal access to and awareness of the rights of all citizens.

- I would like a city that has safe water supplies, organic food, sunlight that does not kill, and streets full of playful children running and enjoying without fear of attack from others.

- My hopes and dreams for the children of Denver are: to be able to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment, and to have adults to look up to who set good examples of strong work ethic and dedication, and who encourage their dreams.
Safe and Cared For

- Where we are born, our parents, color of our skin, and where we started are circumstances beyond our control. Not so with where we finish. It is my prayer that children are taught and encouraged to rise above their situation; to know they have a choice and are not victims of their environment. That families would remain strong and engaged in their children’s lives and education. It all begins with the family unit.

- That all children will have safe, stable home lives, access to good health care and adequate nutrition, and all the resources they need to grow into happy, healthy adults.

- I’d like kids to have much less exposure to and tolerance of violence. This would include violence at home, at school and in the media. Ideally, the last would be accomplished by voluntarily limiting or eliminating TV-watching, not by media censorship. Limiting TV can also encourage creative thinking, active play and a love of reading. All of those are desirable!
Safe and Cared For

- I pray that all children can someday soon feel safe at school and at home in their own neighborhoods. My dream is that these children can once again be children without worrying about being shot, or beaten or harassed. And I also pray that these children are taught the value of human life, and know that they are cherished. I think that only then, gangs will no longer be a problem.

- That we provide the basics for sustaining the family structure — affordable housing, food, clothing, access to other necessary resources — without a lot of red tape. That each child receives good medical care and a quality education (which includes the arts), regardless of family income or neighborhood location.

- To have a loving family, friends, a good education and a safe place to live.
Valued and Engaged

- My aspirations for Denver’s children and youth are that their well-being and future become the community’s top priority.

- That every child will feel listened to and heard. That every child’s dreams and visions for their future are a possibility. That the community will provide youth with the tools, support and confidence to actualize these dreams.

- Knowing that they and their lives matter and are valued by a supportive community.

- Voice in the governance of their schools and education. A community that embraces their energy, ideas and hopes, and that listens. Lots of great places to explore — wild nature full of mystery.

- For every child to have healthcare and an equal opportunity in education. Children’s voices need to be heard in shaping their futures as well. We neglect to really reach out and understand their needs and aspirations.
I hope all Denver’s children will have opportunities to learn the skills they need to be self-sufficient, productive citizens — that includes both employment skills and citizenship skills — in the 21st century. I also hope these children and youth will have the chance to enjoy being children, to explore their imaginations before they become over-scheduled or addicted to television.

That every child in Denver will have a moral start, a safe start, a healthy start and a head start in life. Every child should have the opportunity to be all they can be, provided through education, economic support and mentoring from caring adults.

That our youth can experience caring and nurturing relationships with adults. Skills they learn help them become productive and proud members of society.
Reach Their Potential

- Children need to be celebrated, encouraged, recognized and nurtured. They will find a cure for diseases, fly to planets, improve the environment and have lots of fun.

- To live fun, happy, healthy lives filled with challenging experiences and opportunities to learn, love and play. To be active, respected contributors in society. Opportunity to share and achieve hopes and dreams with their community.

- That all children, including children with disabilities, will have a recreation center and a library in their neighborhood. That all children will be welcome and able to participate in after-school activities and that, as they get older, the kids would have the ability to start volunteering and give back to their neighborhoods. I’d like to see more free and drop-in offerings for kids who have parents not quite so involved. And at those libraries and rec centers, I want to see parent classes, ESL classes, mommy and me classes for all little ones, family activities...anything that strengthens opportunities for kids and families is a great thing.
Reach Their Potential

- I am concerned that technology (automobiles, internet, TV, video games) is limiting their personal interactions and sensory experiences, and I want to see a child and youth-friendly urban environment that provides them with many compelling choices to complement what technology already offers. I hope that through this they become more intellectually stimulated, compassionate, tolerant and visionary, and are able to reach their true potential because of these diverse experiences.

- I hope that all of Denver’s children will grow up connected to their individual life’s purpose and be empowered to live that purpose out.

- My greatest desire is for all children and youth to not get stuck in the “can't happen,” but to focus on the possibilities, to see the future with hope instead of despair, and to trust.

- That every child be filled with confidence that they can change the world.
Reach Their Potential

- That at the earliest possible age, they come to the realization that they have a purpose in life, not just as an individual, but as a member of the human race.

- I want children and youth to realize that there is opportunity in the world. They have the opportunity to make choices about their life and pursue those choices and they need the opportunity to recognize those opportunities. This is no easy task. The poverty culture (especially generational poverty) has a very limited worldview. But, if through education and other resources, we take children and youth and present to them the world as a whole — let them see the various possible ways to live a life, encourage them to pursue their interests and not just their circumstances and make quality experiences available to all children — then we will have laid a solid foundation for the future.

- I hope that all kids would believe in themselves and realize their potential to achieve their dreams and have a positive impact on the world.

- That they live with laughter, love and confidence. That they are independent and strong. That they smile.
Youth’s Aspirations
My hopes are for children to be welcomed anywhere they go.
Quality Education and Opportunities

- My hopes are that Denver will be a safe place. I hope that youth have a good place to get an education. My dreams are to see everyone happy. Also, to have good job opportunities for youth.

- My hopes and dreams for Denver’s youth and children are to have happy lives and have more opportunities to make it.

- My dream is to be the first one in my family to graduate college.

- My hopes and dreams are for schools to have better teaching skills.

- I hope for an all-black high school without any drop outs.
Quality Education and Opportunities

- I hope that all Denver’s youth and children can go to school and have more education than friend time and they can all succeed.

- To go to college. To stay in school. To be successful.

- My dream is to go to college because I am not American.

- I hope that the children and youth of Denver all get the proper education to become future leaders.
Inclusive and Caring Community

- My hopes and dreams are for everyone to get along and go pro at everything they do.

- I hope Denver’s youth/children will be able to appreciate each other’s differences and accept one another.

- To live in peace and harmony.

- For everyone to be treated the same and be accepted.

- For individuals to be able to dress and look how they want without being judged or discriminated against.

- That people will be more accepting and less judging.

- I hope we get out of the world of racism and become much more diverse in schools. To get everyone in college.
My hopes and dreams are no more gangs.

I hope Denver’s youth do not have to experience crime.

To stop all the violence and succeed in school so they can do big things when they grow up.

To stay out of gangs, trouble, and be drug-free.

I want everyone to live in a good environment. I want all kids to have a good education. Most of all, gangs gotta go.

My hopes and dreams for Denver’s children and youth are to be drug-free for their whole lives.
Safe and Cared For

- I would hope that someday you would be able to go to any park or neighborhood and not worry about what would or could happen – that all the gang nonsense would stop.

- I dream for every child to have a home.

- My hopes and dreams are every child that has a certain disease gets better.

- That everybody gets along and that there will be no more violence.

- My hopes and dreams for Denver’s youth and children is that everyone has a home to live in and everyone gets the opportunity to go to college.

- Children grow up in a safe environment and go on to do big things and give back to the community.
Valued and Engaged

- The hope is that people will have hope in us and that they won’t lose hope, love and trust in my generation. So we want you guys to have faith in us.

- That they are all loved and supported, as well as having their cultures, perspectives and experiences respected and embraced. That all kids are free of violence, hatred and discrimination.

- My dream is to have more things for children to do. My hope is that every young person can help to create a child-friendly city.

- Respect, honor, prosperity.

- My hopes are for children to be welcomed anywhere they go. Also, for them to have more opportunities in jobs and other activities around the city.
Reach Their Potential

- My dreams are for all to be safe and succeed in everything they want to accomplish.

- To finish school. To pursue their dreams. To be successful.

- My hopes and dreams for the youth and children are for all youth to make the right choices.

- I want them to be able to have all the opportunity in the world — not just Denver. I want them to grow up better than their parents.

- To learn more and to understand, to succeed and to help to do better.

- My hopes and dreams for Denver’s youth and children are that everyone can reach their highest achievement and be proud.

- To be a positive leader. To have lots of money.

- I would like them to be successful and to keep helping others who need it.
Reach Their Potential

- My hopes and dreams are to become a singer, basketball player, and even a dentist.

- My hopes and dreams are that I get to go to Harvard or Yale to be a social worker or psychologist.

- My dream is to help poor children when I grow up.

- My dream is to become a doctor to cure people. I hope I can accomplish this dream.

- I want to be a teacher for special needs kids.

- My dreams are to own a veterinary clinic.

- I want to graduate from high school, go to college and study to be a mechanic.

- My dream is to graduate high school, go to college and become a pediatrician or anything that has to do with medicine. Hopefully, give my children a future.

- My hopes are to make my dreams come true. My dreams are to be a culinary chef.

- To help homeless people and children.
Reach Their Potential

• To succeed in life.

• My hopes and dreams are to have a nice job and a great family.

• To become leaders and to become someone that we as youth can look to and grow from.

• My dream is to make my mama and dad proud and to be rich with a Ph.D.

• I hope we find our paths in life — a job that we love and are excited to go to everyday. I hope that something in our lives touches us and ignites a passion that will last a lifetime. I hope that we learn from the mistakes our parents made and make the world the place they had hoped it would become.

• I hope that they accomplish what they are trying to do and that they can be the change in their environment.

• For them all to be happy and stay happy.
Denver’s Child/Youth Friendly City Initiative

The Child/Youth Friendly City Initiative, sponsored by UNICEF, works with local governments to translate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ideals into concrete actions for children and youth. In June 2006, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper joined with more than 50 local leaders to launch the city’s Child/Youth Friendly City Initiative. The initiative seeks to strengthen efforts to provide healthy, safe and caring environments for young people, and to develop and implement a strategic plan that will make Denver the number one child-friendly city in the United States.

Be part of the conversation.
The main goals for the Child/Youth Friendly City Initiative are to:

- Ensure children and youth have a voice and are decision makers in their communities and in Denver
- Strengthen people and places that make children and youth feel recognized and valued
- Ensure that Denver supports the healthy development of children and youth

The Mayor’s Office for Education and Children, Assets for Colorado Youth, and the University of Colorado’s Children, Youth and Environments Center are spearheading the initiative, and would like your input. Please fill out and mail the attached postcard:

**Join the Conversation**

1. What are the best things about Denver for young people?

________________________________________________________________________

In your neighborhood? ___________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. If you were in charge of the city, what would you do to make Denver a better place for young people to live? ________________

________________________________________________________________________

Please provide your:

Name ___________________________ Age ____ Gender____

Neighborhood ______________ Zip Code_______ Affiliation_____________

Thank you for sharing your thoughts for this important citywide initiative.
For more information:

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