People need to treat students like human beings and focus on what students are doing right, not what they’re doing wrong.” – Nishiia, senior, East High School

“We held events in elementary and middle schools to get students excited about taking CSAPs [student performance tests]. We want to bring back elective classes instead of having to take the two-block math and language arts classes [required of those with low CSAP scores].” – Darryl, senior, Montbello High School

“We want youth to drive our programs and ideas. It’s key to educating them successfully.” – Angela Davis-Robertson, parent/community involvement coordinator, Montbello High School

Leadership Actions — Selected examples of actions pledged by summit participants

- Keep advocating for youth and finding alternatives and opportunities for them
- Be active in talking to people in the community and helping students make connections
- Work with high schools to see what we can do to engage students who are falling through the cracks
- Link students to peer mentors and other positive services, such as after-school programs
- Hire teachers and other school staff that mirror the ethnicity/culture of students and can serve as positive role models
- Develop quality alternative education programs for students that are struggling to stay in a traditional school
- Build strong partnerships between parents and teachers to support student success

Summit Relevance

Ninety-four percent of participants rated the summit “above average” in increasing understanding of issues surrounding the dropout crisis and knowledge of best practices to increase the graduation rate. Comments included:

- Made me realize as a youth that there are people out there that care about my future success
- Recognize the challenges that teachers and students face; let them give us solutions and recommendations
- Listening to the voice of young people; I will never forget what they had to say

Mayor’s Office for Education and Children

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

For more information, contact the Mayor’s Office for Education & Children: 720-913-0900; www.denvergov.org/education

America’s Promise Alliance

Through an extensive cross-sector coalition of national and local partnerships, America’s Promise Alliance is mobilizing a nationwide movement to bring leaders from all sectors together in state and local summits in each of the 50 states, and in 50 major cities. The campaign is aimed at reducing high school dropout rates and preparing young people for college, work and life. Visit www.americaspromise.org for more information.

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Statewide Efforts — Selected remarks by the Governor

- The framework needs to begin by increasing college degrees, not preventing school dropout.
- The generation that now spans ages 25-32 is the first to lose ground in the number of higher education degrees.
- Not only is this a human problem, it’s also an economic problem: Those who don’t complete their education will need government intervention.
I formed the P-20 Education Council to study ways to ensure students stay in school and go on to attain degrees in higher education. Some of the council’s findings are now being implemented:

- We have removed the waiting list for low-income kids to go to preschool through the Colorado Preschool Program. This was an investment opportunity we couldn’t miss because it prepares them to achieve all the way through high school.
- We learned that Colorado has a very low ratio of counselors to students. We are adding 70 new counselors for “7th-12th grades.
- Through the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, we are working to align content standards from Pre-K through grade 12 and what it means to be proficient in each grade.
- A proposal we’re placing on this November’s ballot, the Colorado Promise Scholarships, would provide a special tax credit from severance taxes on the oil and gas industry and raise $150 million a year for lower- and middle-income families to make colleges and universities more affordable.

**Citywide Efforts — Selected remarks by the Mayor**

- I believe that mayors and city councils should make the education of children a top priority — right up there with public safety.
- I supported the school district’s bond issue because it was important to the city overall.
- We are fortunate. We have an engaged school board, governor and state and city officials. All are on board and are working hard to find more resources for education.
- Our citywide goals include:
  - Increasing parent and family engagement. When parents participate with their children in educational activities, students improve academically.
  - Strengthen neighborhoods. We must connect with schools because they are part of our neighborhoods. They help create a positive atmosphere for kids throughout the day.
  - Student engagement. Higher education pays off. The Denver Scholarship Foundation ensures every young person who works hard in school and wants to go to college has the funds to go.
  - Increasing skills development. We need to make sure we’re competitive on a national and international level.

**National Dropout Crisis — Selected remarks by Richard Wells, America’s Promise Alliance**

- National statistics show that every 26 seconds a student drops out of high school. That equals 7,000 a day, and more than 1 million a year.
- The reading scores of 3rd graders are an indicator of how many prison beds will be needed down the road.
- We are a nation at risk. General Colin Powell calls our national dropout crisis “an issue of national security.”
- The dropout rate is a student-support issue as well as a school issue.
- Experiencing the “5 Promises” can provide young people with a huge boost:
  - Caring adults in all areas of their lives
  - Safe places
  - A healthy start
  - An effective education that builds marketable skills
  - Opportunities to help others

**“We have to make sure that Chemistry at West High School is the same as Chemistry at Dakota Ridge High School.”**
- Carlos Valverde, Jr.
  Senior Policy Specialist
  National Conference of State Legislatures

**“This has been called the ‘silent epidemic,’ and we all have a part to play in its cure.”**
- Richard Wells
  Vice President
  State and Community Dropout Prevention
  America’s Promise Alliance

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**Closing the Achievement Gap — Selected remarks by Carlos Valverde, National Conference of State Legislatures**

Mr. Valverde told the story of his participation while he was a student at Denver’s West High School in a program called Upward Bound. He was paid $25 each month and required to attend tutoring twice weekly, as well as summer school. He credits Upward Bound for allowing him to become accepted to, and earn a bachelor’s degree from Colorado College. He ended the story by saying, “It was pure luck that I got into that program. We can’t leave the educational success of our students up to luck.”

- A rigorous high school curriculum is the most significant predictor of bachelor’s degree attainment for all students, regardless of race.
- Does raising high school graduation requirements increase dropout rates? The data suggests probably not. Virginia, Indiana and Texas are among the states that have raised their requirements and have seen a corresponding increase in graduation rates.
- Research has shown a 50-point difference over three years in the achievement rates of students in classrooms with effective teachers, and students in classrooms with ineffective teachers.
- Free-and-reduced-rate lunch students in Denver Public Schools are 460 percent more likely to be taught by less experienced teachers.

**Demonstrating Success in Educational Settings — Selected remarks from the youth and adult panel**

A panel of four youth and four adults, representing programs successful at engaging students in their education, was moderated by Michael Simmons from the Office of Community Engagement, Denver Public Schools. Panelists shared their stories and fielded questions from the audience.

- “We work hard on relationships and on rigor; we owe it to our students to raise the bar.” — Donna Campanella, principal, Florence Crittenton
- “It was pure luck that I got into that program. We can’t leave the educational success of our students up to luck.” — Jerry, West High School student
- “We have made sure that Chemistry at West High School is the same as Chemistry at Dakota Ridge High School.” — Carlos Valverde, Jr.
  Senior Policy Specialist
  National Conference of State Legislatures

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**“In this knowledge-based economy, we need our students to go beyond a high school education.”**
- Colorado Governor Bill Ritter

**“We all have a significant stake in the future of our children and our schools.”**
- Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper

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**AT&T’s Corporate Investment in Dropout Prevention**

In April 2008, AT&T Inc. launched “AT&T Aspire,” a 4-year, $100 million community engagement and corporate giving initiative to strengthen student success and workforce readiness. AT&T Aspire provides:

- Grants to schools and nonprofit organizations focused on helping students graduate
- Student job-shadowing opportunities to give them a firsthand look at the skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century workforce
- Underwriting for national research on the dropout issue
- Support for 100 state and community dropout prevention summits, in partnership with America’s Promise Alliance

For more information, go to: www.att.com/education