

Denver Kids, Inc.

Strategic Plan 2021-2023



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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Methodology</i>	4
<i>Situational Analysis</i>	4
Program Strengths and Challenges	5
Organizational Culture Strengths and Challenges	7
Operational Strengths and Challenges	7
Governance Strengths and Challenges	8
Environmental Context	9
<i>Strategic Plan</i>	11
Program	12
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	18
Organizational Culture	22
Operations	24
Data	26
Governance	29
<i>Conclusion</i>	31

Introduction

Denver Kids, Inc. (DK) is a nonprofit organization that provides educational counseling to students in Denver Public Schools. Through one-on-one counseling and long-term relationships, the organization empowers students to successfully complete high school and to develop strong academic, social and emotional skills. In 2019, DK merged with Denver Urban Scholars, a youth serving organization with a similar mission and approach. With a combined 97 years of experience serving Denver youth with mentorship and academic support, the newly merged Denver Kids is now poised to chart a new course as a unified organization. In addition, after a year of upheaval that included a global pandemic and national unrest over persistent racism, DK is prepared to examine its program and culture to ensure that they are addressing these pressing challenges. This strategic plan lays out the organization's priorities for the next three years and provides a roadmap for achieving programmatic and operational excellence.

Mission

Denver Kids empowers students to positively shape their lives, successfully complete high school, and pursue post-secondary options.

Vision

Every student graduates. Every student is prepared with life skills, equipped with a greater understanding of self, and empowered to pursue their meaningful pathway post-graduation.

Values

- **Integrity** - We are truthful, equitable, and accountable in words and actions – even when it is hard.
- **Learning** - We foster an environment of continuous learning with a growth mindset and train staff to be their very best.
- **Excellence** - We focus on evaluating and strengthening our impact to be a center of excellence.
- **Leadership** - We actively listen with curiosity, welcome feedback, practice empathy and hold each other accountable to bring out the best in others and ourselves.

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity** - We develop respectful relationships by embracing all individuals with their unique backgrounds and contributions on our path towards equity.

Methodology

Cause Effect Advisory Services facilitated the development of this plan. Over a four-month period, guided by a steering committee comprised of board members and senior staff, the input of dozens of stakeholders was solicited and incorporated into the plan.

Data collection included:

- 3 staff focus groups, with a total of 26 participants
- 10 staff interviews, with a total of 12 participants
- 5 board member interviews
- 4 external stakeholder interviews
- A board survey with 11 board member and 2 senior staff member responses
- Staff retreat to review findings and make suggestions
- Board retreat to review findings and make suggestions
- 4 steering committee meetings to refine priorities and prepare the plan for board approval

Situational Analysis

Denver Kids is a long-standing organization with a tremendous history of serving students in challenging situations, ensuring they successfully complete high school and have options for post-secondary education and careers. Over many decades, the organization has passionately pursued its work, buoyed by dedicated staff, board members and donors. Hallmarks of their approach to youth service include maintaining long-term relationships, having authentic connections with youth, families, schools and community, and working in partnership with the school district.

Recent circumstances, including the merger with Denver Urban Scholars, as well as a global pandemic and economic uncertainty, have created both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed in the coming years.

Program Strengths and Challenges

When DK merged with Denver Urban Scholars, the two organizations had similar but distinct programs. DK's model, now called the mobile community program, was to pair students with counselors and to maintain that relationship over a long period of time, regardless of where the student attended school. The Denver Urban Scholars model, now called the school community program, was to embed a counselor in a school and to serve targeted students in that school with both individual and group offerings. Both programs offered one-on-one educational counseling and paired select students with volunteer mentors.

While both programs have strong track records of success, the intention of the merger was to create one program that drew on the best of the legacy programs as well as best practices in youth service. This program integration plan was sidetracked by changes in leadership, as well as a global pandemic that closed schools and upended the way that DK provides services. As the organization anticipates a return to in-person learning and in-person services, merging the two programs has again become a high priority.

Each of the legacy programs has distinct advantages as well as challenges. The mobile community program offers the benefit of long-term relationships, even with transient students, because it is not place dependent. Because counselors meet with students both at school and in other settings, this model may create more authentic and creative relationships. On the other hand, the model is less efficient than school-based programs. With counselors often serving students in 10 or more schools, much of the time that could be used for direct service is spent travelling between locations. Additionally, with schools having up to 10 different counselors working in their buildings, there is diminished opportunity for relationship development between school administration and counselors.

The school community program, on the other hand, does address the efficiency challenge by having counselors assigned to just one school. Added benefits include being able to work with

school leaders to align student interventions with the school's curriculum and being able to offer group sessions. The downside of this approach is that students who leave the school are no longer served by the program. Relationships between counselors and students are also shorter because students have different counselors in middle school, high school and post graduation.

In addition, both legacy programs are highly reliant on counselor autonomy and intuition about how to deliver services to students. While the school community program has more concrete guidelines about the work of the counselors, the mobile community program currently allows counselors to interact with students in ways they deem appropriate. This staff autonomy does allow for great flexibility in responding to individual student needs, but it also creates a host of challenges. This need to find a balance between autonomy and program specificity is also a focus of this plan.

Without specificity about the interventions being delivered, it is hard to assess the impact of the work. In addition, it is challenging to hire, train and evaluate staff without knowing more precisely what they are expected to do. A clear articulation of the role of the counselor will help with hiring the best people for the role and supporting them in their professional growth.

The high degree of autonomy also creates challenges around staff boundaries. Staff views on whether they should be available to students around the clock are divergent, which creates unnecessary tension. There have also been times when counselors have intervened in situations that may be better addressed by people with expertise in crisis situations. Clear policies around when counselors are and are not available, and what types of issues require referral to other resources, will improve staff morale and reduce liability risk for the organization.

A final program challenge, addressed through this plan, is a lack of consistent data collection and analysis, largely a result of the merger. First, there is currently not consensus across the organization about what data is most important to measure and track. Second, staff has not been given clear guidelines about record keeping, leading to inconsistent and missing data. Third, there is potential duplication of data collection efforts between DK and Denver Public Schools which, if addressed, could ease the data collection burden on DK. Most importantly, there is

room for improving the culture of using data to drive program design, program evaluation and staff evaluation.

Organizational Culture Strengths and Challenges

DK has been through significant change in the past several years including changes in leadership, shifts in program focus and cultural challenges that mirror larger societal upheaval. National strife over racism has forced the organization to look inward, and to recognize shortcomings in both its organizational culture and the cultural responsiveness of its program. The staff have shown great resiliency through this disruption, and their dedication to and passion for the students they serve have been critical to DK's ongoing success. However, the organization must address some of this organizational uncertainty and work to create a more inclusive, predictable and accountable culture.

In addition, as noted above, the staff have become accustomed to a high degree of autonomy. They have also operated in distinct silos, particularly between the two program models. As the organization moves toward having a more explicit and unified program, with clear expectations for staff performance, it will require a shift in culture. Staff should look forward to greater input into their professional development and more opportunities to grow in their careers.

Operational Strengths and Challenges

DK is clearly operating from a position of strength with substantial financial reserves, a strong track record of fundraising success, new leadership, and a positive brand association. Yet, there are opportunities for improvement that will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization.

DK recently engaged in a fundraising audit. The audit found that the development team has accomplished a great deal with comparatively limited staffing and resources. It also found that the organization may be overly reliant on events, which is also taxing staff. Going forward, there is an opportunity to increase individual giving, expand planned giving, and engage the board in fundraising in new ways.

Another opportunity addressed in this plan is brand recognition. Despite its long history, DK does not have strong brand awareness with the general public nor with key constituencies. While those who do know the organization have a positive brand association, overall familiarity with DK remains low. While there is likely little value in investing in brand awareness generally, building awareness with key audiences will help with both fundraising and program. Those key audiences include Denver Public Schools (DPS) staff at all levels, leaders in the education reform community and the corporate philanthropy sector.

Surrounding some of these operational challenges is the need to strengthen the leadership structure and increase stability in the administrative ranks. Not only has there been turnover at the CEO level, but the organization has also had significant changes in program oversight. Creating and sustaining a strong administrative team is key to addressing many of the other priorities outlined in this plan.

Governance Strengths and Challenges

The DK Board is comprised of a mix of long serving members from both DK and Denver Urban Scholars as well as some new members without prior experience with either organization. As a whole, the board has a broad and complementary skill set and has demonstrated strong commitment to DK. They have helped navigate the COVID crisis and have also managed recent leadership changes. They have also benefited from strong board leadership.

Going forward, the board recognizes it would strongly benefit from having more racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity and has already made diverse board member recruitment a top priority.

Because of the range of experience with Board service, the group could also benefit from revisiting some of the fundamentals of good governance. There are opportunities to enhance onboarding, leverage committees to increase the effectiveness of the board, improve individual member accountability and improve the way the board holds the CEO accountable. Each of these opportunities is addressed in this plan.

Environmental Context

Beyond the strengths and opportunities within DK, there are external factors that have influenced the strategic direction that the organization is taking. These include a pandemic, conditions within DPS, and racial unrest at the broader community level.

When the Coronavirus pandemic closed schools in March 2020, it also created abrupt changes at DK. The organization was forced to direct all of its energy into reimagining how best to serve students in a new, virtual environment. While this has allowed for some innovation, and has exposed the potential to continue to leverage technology to serve students, it also slowed progress in other areas. The work that might have gone into merging the organization's two legacy programs and to enhancing its data efforts had to be postponed. Now, as there is hope for a return to in person learning, it is important to restart those efforts.

Conditions at DPS have also influenced DK in recent years. DPS has been, and continues to be, DK's primary strategic partner. DPS provides a significant portion of DK's funding and sees the organization as a real asset in the district. While the district's support for DK has remained steadfast, knowledge of the program is fairly localized. There are a few key administrators and advocates who work closely with, and strongly support DK. However, at the building level, even in schools where the mobile community team has students, awareness and understanding of the DK program is limited. Broadening awareness of DK at all levels of the district could help deepen and sustain district support.

The district is also facing its own challenges, which opens up opportunities for increased collaboration. One of the district's strategic priorities, which has only grown as a result of the pandemic, is improving students' social and emotional wellbeing. They are looking to find key partners in this work, and DK is well positioned to be one of those partners.

The district has also articulated a desire for DK to concentrate its efforts in targeted where student need is the greatest. The district believes this would open doors for closer collaboration with school-level leaders, serve more students with significant needs, and increase the number of visible and supportive adults in those buildings. They are ready to work with DK to identify

partner schools, to facilitate collaboration with building leaders, and to address the impact that this transition might have on students currently in the program who do not attend the schools that are selected as hosts for the program.

Finally, changes at the community level and substantial recent social unrest will also impact the work of DK going forward. Community struggles with persistent racism have led DK to examine its own practices and to recognize a need for improved equity, diversity and inclusion both within the organization and in the programming it provides. Like the broader community, DK is working to improve equity and inclusiveness through its hiring, evaluation and cultural practices. It is also looking at its program through a lens of equity and striving to ensure it is offering culturally relevant services to students. Furthermore, DK intends to become more vocal and proactive in denouncing acts of racial inequality and violence. More than 95% of DK's students are racially diverse. Therefore, it is paramount that DK's students and parents unequivocally know that DK is committed to improving equality for the students and communities served through educational support and opportunities.

Finally, increased gentrification in Denver is changing the demographics of the students in the city and pushing many who are in most need to Aurora and other suburbs. Over time, this may push DK to think about where it can have the most impact and whether growth into other districts could be advisable.

Strategic Plan

GOALS

STRATEGIES

Program

Goal: Fully integrate the program and staff (post-merger) and optimize the best aspects of each program and external practices

- Optimize and merge an agreed upon theory of change
- Create a single fully integrated program that draws on the most impactful aspects of current programs and best practices
- Deepen partnership with Denver Public Schools and consolidate delivery in key schools
- Create and implement a comprehensive transition plan for current students

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Goal: Create and sustain an authentically diverse and inclusive organization

- Increase board diversity
- Create a board level DEI committee
- Provide board training on DEI issues
- Create and publish an official DEI statement
- Be vocal and proactive in denouncing acts of racial inequality and violence
- Increase diversity at the staff leadership level
- Create mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and accountability regarding DEI at the staff level

Organizational Culture

Goal: Create an organizational culture based on collegiality, mutual respect and accountability

- Clearly articulate core organizational values
- Conduct a culture audit to check for alignment between values and practices
- Create and implement clear performance standards at the organizational, team and individual level

Operations

Goal: Improve operational excellence to achieve and sustain a highly effective organization

- Complete fundraising audit and implement rec's
- Develop financial sustainability plan
- Increase brand awareness in target markets (DPS, Ed Reform Community, Corporate philanthropy)
- Design, recruit and implement an intentional leadership structure
- Optimize organizational structure to build bench strength & offer staff progression opportunities

Data

Goal: Build a data-driven organization

- Create organizational capacity to become a data driven organization
- Define a set of operational performance metrics and use data to guide operational improvement
- Define a set of program metrics and use data to guide program improvement

Governance

Goal: Ensure best practices at the board level to support the work of the organization

- Provide formal new board member training
- Provide annual training on board governance
- Develop & measure annual committee and board goals
- Measure board member accountability against commitments
- Document and measure clear CEO annual goals

Program

Goal: Leverage successful elements of current programs to create a single, unified, world class program to support students who attend partner DPS schools, to achieve academic, social and emotional, and post-secondary success

Guiding Principles

- Denver Kids will leverage its resources to maximize impact for students, schools and community
- Denver Kids will deliver services that are grounded in evidence-based practice
- Denver Kids will monitor the impact of its services and will hold itself accountable for continuous improvement

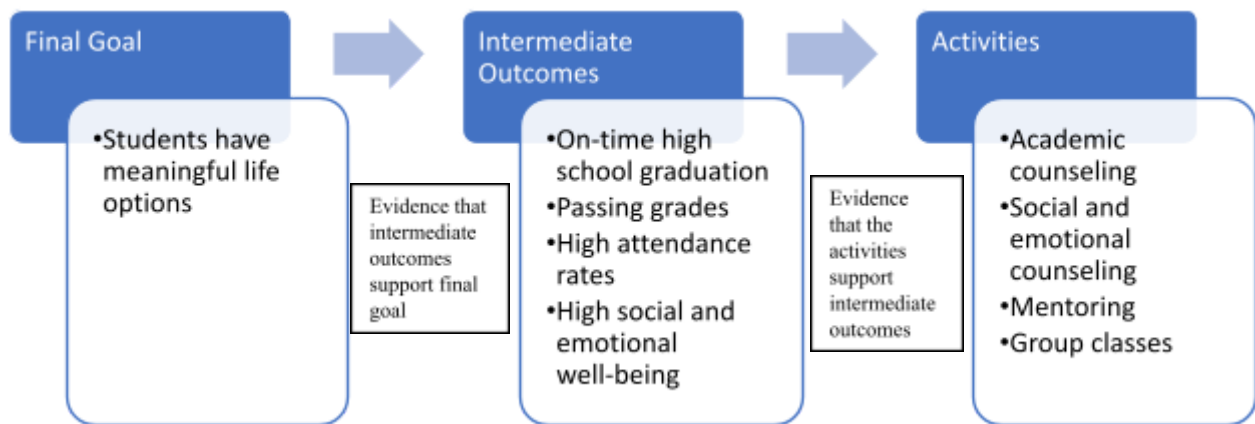
Strategy: Build consensus about an agreed-upon theory of change

Leader: Chief Executive Officer

Key Steps:

- Create a small task force of staff and board members charged with reviewing and revising the theory of change
- Review the current theory of change and assess alignment with a) current organizational beliefs and b) best practices in the field of youth counseling
- Solicit input from key stakeholders including staff, board, partner schools
- If necessary, revise the theory of change to include
 - Desired long-term outcomes for students
 - Intermediate measurable outcomes, or key performance indicators, which
 - Are proven to support long term outcomes
 - Can be directly impacted by the activities of DK
 - Activities that will be implemented to create intermediate outcomes

(SAMPLE)



- Present the theory of change and facilitate discussion to ensure shared understanding at the board level and the staff level

Timeline: 1st quarter, 2021

Strategy: *Create a single fully integrated program that draws on the most impactful aspects of current programs and best practices*

Leader: VP of Programs

Key Steps:

- Oversight
 - Engage a qualified consultant with expertise in program design
 - Leverage the current program committee of the board and engage a small number of staff to join the committee to oversee the program design and development
- Needs assessment
 - Engage staff, students, family and key stakeholders in identifying/confirming
 - Highest priority needs for DPS
 - Highest priority needs for students
 - Highest priority needs for families
- Current program review
 - Clearly document the current program elements of each approach

- Assess the strengths and challenges of each program element using data where possible to inform the assessment
 - Assess student outcomes and where possible connect program interventions with outcomes
 - Gather input from staff, alumni, current students, families school faculty and DPS leadership about program elements that were most and least impactful
- Target student clarification
 - Review current student demographics and personal attributes and assess which students are benefiting most from the program and most closely align with DK’s core competencies
 - Summarize similarities among successful students and use the summary to create a “success profile” for the target student population
- Integrated Program development
 - Determine what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and articulate alignment between skills/knowledge and the theory of change
 - Determine the best delivery mechanism(s) for developing those skills (e.g., counseling, mentoring, group activity, summer programming, connection to third party provider)
 - Review additional resources/program being deployed with DPS and identify areas of collaboration/reduce duplication
 - Review the impact of each of the supplemental services being offered including mentoring, social events and college application support. Survey other organizations offering similar services and determine if partnering with those organizations, in lieu of providing services directly, would be a more efficient way for DK to impact student success.
 - Create curricular resources for each articulated delivery mechanism
 - Create protocols for student, school, family and community interactions including
 - Criteria for matching counselors with specific students

- Counselor availability during non-business hours
 - Types of situations that require supervisor intervention
 - Resources and protocols for crisis situations
- Program Deployment
 - Adjust student recruitment and admissions processes to better reflect the success profile
 - Set annual recruitment targets and develop clear plans for reaching targets
 - Train all staff on new program implementation plan
 - Align hiring, orientation, evaluation and professional development with program model
 - Review all written job descriptions and revise as necessary to ensure that they reflect current roles and responsibilities
 - Create a template for performance reviews that includes individual goals, progress against goals, and well as professional skill levels
 - Implement a twice annual review cycle in which every supervisor meets with every direct report to review progress against goals, complete a written performance review and set goals for the next cycle
 - Based on data from performance reviews, develop a professional development plan for the year that includes full staff training and individual member training
 - Annually adjust individual compensation based on performance and appropriate salary brackets
 - Select partner schools for pilot implementation (see details in next section)
 - Launch new program in pilot sites and closer monitor successes and challenges. Be prepared to adapt quickly during pilot phase.
 - Conduct competitive analysis and clarify points of differentiation
 - Survey local programs

- Survey national programs
- Identify points of alignment and points of differentiation
- Articulate the value of points of differentiation and incorporate into marketing, outreach and fundraising activities

Timeline: 1st through 3rd quarter, 2021 for program design, ongoing for continuous improvement

Strategy: Deepen partnership with Denver Public Schools and consolidate delivery in key schools

Leader: VP of Operations

Key Steps:

- Identify pilot schools
 - Engage DPS leadership in understanding areas of greatest need
 - Review outcome data from past experience and identify any specific school characteristics which increase the impact of DK programs
 - Determine feeder patterns that would support the principal of serving students for an extended period of time
 - Seek to identify schools that both meet the goals of the new program and currently have a significant number of students enrolled in DK programs
 - Develop short list of partner schools for pilot program implementation and engage leadership in those schools to assess interest/support for collaboration
 - Finalize list of schools for initial implementation and list/timeline for rollout over the next two to three years
- Create school transition plan
 - Develop written agreements to be used with partner schools that articulate
 - Roles and duties of the counselors placed in schools

- Roles of DK and school leadership in identification and placement of students in the program
 - Roles of each party in staff evaluation, program evaluation and ongoing program improvement
 - Enroll students
 - Identify currently enrolled students who will continue with the program
 - Identify new students to be served and enroll/onboard those students
 - Develop orientation program for key staff at partner schools
- Launch pilot program
 - Roll out program design in partner schools
 - Closely monitor roll out and react swiftly to any identified needs to adjust program
- Expand rollout into additional partner schools
 - Assess successes and challenges with pilot schools and make program adjustments as necessary
 - Identify additional partner schools and implement school agreements and student enrollment plans
 - Rollout program in additional schools
- Deepen partnership with Denver Public Schools
 - Build relationship with interim Superintendent immediately and new Superintendent once named
 - Create advisory council of leaders in new partner schools to provide periodic formal feedback on program implementation
 - Develop a data sharing agreement and a plan for collaborative data collection and analysis. This should include two-way data sharing

Timeline: 2021

Strategy: Create and implement a comprehensive transition plan for current students

Leader: Program Directors

Key Steps:

- Identify any students who will be transitioned out of the program and assess risk for each
- For students identified as high-risk, work with DPS and community partners to identify potential “handoffs”
- Consider transitional support program for small subset of students – this might include keeping a small number of counselors on a mobile model for a period of one to two years, or asking counselors to maintain virtual connections with students while building school-based caseloads in the newly integrated program model. This could be particularly helpful for students who are close to graduation and do not attend the schools that will become priority schools.
- Develop a policy for students who will exit the program in the future due to family relocation
- Review after six months, and annually thereafter, and, if necessary, revise transition policy

Timeline: 2nd Quarter 2021 for plan development, ongoing for implementation

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Goal: Create and sustain an authentically diverse and inclusive organization

Guiding Principles

- DK acknowledges that bias impacts members of our staff and the community we serve
- We commit to be working openly and transparently to become a more equitable and inclusive organization
- We will hold ourselves accountable for meeting our DEI goals and will listen openly and respond to feedback from all stakeholders about our progress

Strategy: Create a board level DEI committee

Leader: Board Chair

Key Steps:

- Review DEI committee job descriptions from peer organizations, determine key duties of the committee and draft a committee charter for board approval
- Appoint board and staff members to the committee
- Receive regular reports from the committee at board meetings

Timeline: 2nd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Increase board diversity

Leader: DEI Committee

Key Steps:

- Review and revise the Board matrix to ensure that it lists both the ideal skills (such as fundraising, marketing, and financial management) as well as attributes (such as ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity and professional affiliations) for the Board as a whole
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current Board relative to the ideal matrix
- Develop a list of desired skills and attributes for new Board members
- Create a list of prospective candidates that fill the gaps in the current Board
- Develop a long-range plan for recruiting and retaining those new members

Timeline: Starting 2nd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Provide board training on DEI issues

Leader: DEI Committee

Key Steps:

- Using feedback from the DEI audit and board, staff and partner input, identify key training topics and create a calendar of trainings for the next three years
- Reach out to peer organizations, school partners and community resources to identify and schedule trainers
- Review effectiveness of each training and use feedback to adapt future training plans

Timeline: Starting 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Create and publish an official DEI statement

Leader: DEI Committee

Key Steps:

- Review sample DEI statements
- Articulate why DK values DEI and how it will work to become a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization
- Draft a statement for public comment and board approval
- Publicize statement with partner schools, donors and other key stakeholders
- Annually review and, if needed, revise the statement

Timeline: 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Be vocal and proactive in denouncing acts of racial inequality and violence

Leader: DEI Committee

Key Steps:

- Periodically review current events in the context of DK's mission, vision and values

As appropriate, publish written statements and respond to media inquiries with a strong, unified voice denouncing all acts of racism

Strategy: Increase diversity at the staff leadership level

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Audit the current diversity of staff at every level – including a range of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, disability status, educational experience, LGBTQ status, religion, parent/family caregiver status, socioeconomic background and veteran status
- Transparently identify gaps in representation between senior leadership, mid-level leadership and staff
- Identify diverse staff members who could be coached/prepared to assume leadership roles and provide appropriate professional development
- As mid and senior level positions open, ensure that position descriptions are free of bias, actively recruit diverse candidates and follow best practices to reduce bias in interviews
- Annually review and adapt hiring practices

Timeline: 1st through 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Create mechanisms for ongoing dialogue and accountability regarding DEI at the staff level

Leader: VP of Operations

Key Steps:

- Conduct annual staff climate survey that includes questions about DEI
- Share results with DEI committee, identify areas of weakness and create plans to address key challenges
- Include findings in annual staff retreats and board retreats

Timeline: Starting 2nd Quarter 2021 with survey implementation 3rd quarter 2021

Organizational Culture

Goal: Create an organizational culture based on collegiality, mutual respect and accountability

Guiding Principles

- DK believes that the wellbeing of staff is critical to our ability to deliver effective services
- Shared values influence all of our policies and practices
- We hold ourselves and the organization accountable for our performance

Strategy: Clearly articulate core organizational values

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Create ad hoc committee of staff and board members
- Review current values and propose changes for board approval
- Share revised values with staff and facilitate conversation about the practical implications of any changes
- Annually review values and, if appropriate, revise

Timeline: 4th Quarter 2021

Strategy: Conduct a culture audit to check for alignment between values and practices

Leader: COO

Key Steps:

- Working with ad hoc committee, review key organizational practices and identify areas of conflict with organizational values.

- Define “expected behaviors” – things that would be happening daily if the organization was living its values
- Develop a plan for encouraging and reinforcing those behaviors
- Annually review organizational practices and alignment with values

Timeline: 1st Quarter 2022

Strategy: Create and implement clear performance standards at the organizational, team and individual level

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Create and implement clear organizational performance metrics to improve oversight and prevent surprises at the board level
 - Determine key metrics that matter most at the Board level including program metrics (e.g., students enrolled vs. goal, program continuation rates, etc.), financial metrics (e.g., budget vs. actual, fundraising vs. goal,) operations metrics (e.g., employee turnover, caseloads per case manager vs. goal,) and board performance metrics (e.g., meeting attendance, board giving)
 - Review feasibility of data collection and determine appropriate reporting period for each metric (monthly, quarterly or annually)
 - Create board dashboard for reporting
 - Build data review into regular Board agendas
- Create and implement clear performance metrics for each division
 - Engage leadership of program, development and operations divisions to set written quarterly goals
 - Conduct quarterly reviews with CEO
- Create and implement clear performance plans for each employee
 - Review all written job descriptions and compensation revise as necessary to ensure that they reflect current roles and responsibilities

- o Create a template for documenting individual performance goals. Goals should be quantifiable and time-limited
- o Implement bi-annual performance reviews for all staff that includes a written evaluation, documentation of goals for the next review cycle and professional development plan
- o Annually adjust compensation based on performance

Timeline: 3rd Quarter 2021

Operations

Goal: Improve operational excellence to achieve and sustain a highly effective organization

Guiding Principles:

- Strong internal systems are essential to delivering effective services
- Long term sustainability is a priority for the organization

Strategy: Complete fundraising audit and implement recommendations

Leader: Development Director

Key Steps:

- Review fundraising audit with Board development committee
- Create timeline of priorities based on audit recommendations
- Periodically review progress against the plan

Timeline: 2nd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Develop financial sustainability plan

Leader: Board finance committee

Key Steps:

- Articulate the short and long term goals of the financial sustainability plan

- Conduct a detailed analysis of the current financial situation including a three year forecast and sensitivity analysis
- Identify areas of risk and develop strategies for addressing those risks
- Identify areas of potential cost reduction
- Identify areas of potential new sources of revenue (e.g. earned income)
- Develop a timeline of actions to be taken
- Present the plan for board approval

Timeline: 4th quarter 2021

Strategy: Increase brand awareness in target markets

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Identify key market segments (DPS, education reform committee, corporate philanthropy)
- Assign a staff leader for each segment
- Create specific quarterly plans for increasing awareness in each sector
 - Identify coalitions/working groups to engage with
 - Identify “influencers” and engage in one-on-one outreach
 - Maintain appropriate social media presence
- Periodically review and revise outreach plans

Timeline: Beginning 3rd quarter 2021

Strategy: Design, recruit and implement an intentional leadership structure

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Proposed new leadership structure for board approval
- Review and revise written job descriptions to align with new structure
- Compare current staff capabilities and determine if vacancies can be filled through promotion

- For remaining vacancies, recruit using best practices determined by DEI committee
- Annually review leadership structure and adjust as needed

Timeline: 2nd quarter 2021

Strategy: Optimize organizational structure to build bench strength and offer staff progression opportunities

Leader: CEO

Key Steps:

- Frame the problem for staff: adjusting roles and responsibilities will allow all staff members to focus more narrowly and deeply on their responsibilities and to eliminate tasks that can best be accomplished for others
- Identify a new structure that will support the mission of the organization
- Create or revise written job descriptions for every position
- Review current capabilities compared to new job descriptions and determine any training and support needs
- Develop a timeframe and process for transitioning to the new structure
- Develop a process for periodically reviewing the organizational structure and making adjustments as necessary

Timeline: 4th Quarter 2021

Data

Goal: Build a data-driven organization

Guiding Principles

- Denver Kids leaders will model and set clear expectations around data policies and data driven-decision making
- Denver Kids will strive to more fully utilize technology and data best practices
- Denver Kids will strive to incorporate what it means to be data-driven into cultural values

Strategy: Create organizational capacity to become a data-driven organization

Leader: CEO

Key Steps

- Clearly articulate leadership roles related to data
 - Create a board level data committee
 - Assign clear data collection, management and analysis responsibility at the staff leadership level
 - Include program data responsibility in VP of Programs job description
 - Include operational data responsibility in VP of Operations job description
 - Include data goals in performance plans and performance reviews
- Assess technology capacity
 - Consult with Salesforce database experts to ensure current systems are being used effectively to support data goals
 - Adapt systems as needed
- Develop staff capacity to collect data and manage data integrity
 - Create written policy for staff data collection that includes data to be reported by counselors and intervals for reporting (e.g., new student enrollment data, session notes, semester and year end data)
 - Provide any needed staff training to support data collection
 - Include data reporting in performance reviews and create corrective action plans as needed
 - Create and implement protocol for periodic review of data with staff to develop insights about program effectiveness and draw inferences about potential program changes

Timeline: 1st and 2nd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Define a set of operational performance metrics and use data to guide operational improvement

Leader: VP of Operations

Key Steps:

- Determine key internal performance metrics such as staff turnover, staff satisfaction rates, fundraising metrics, and financial performance metrics
- Review current systems for collecting, reviewing and analyzing performance metrics and develop written plan for future reporting and analysis
- Create a data dashboard and incorporate data into Board reports

Timeline: 2nd and 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Define a set of program metrics and use data to guide program improvement

Leader: VP of Programs

Key Steps:

- Determine the key metrics, aligned with the theory of change, to be tracked for the organization
 - Input metrics (e.g., number of students served, demographics of students served, contact hours per student)
 - Intermediate metrics (e.g., grades, behavior incidents, SEL measures)
 - Outcome metrics (e.g., high school graduation rates, college attainment rates)
- Develop schedule for receiving reports on metrics and analyzing data at the Board level
- Assess organizational capacity to collect data and make changes as necessary
 - Data systems
 - Data sharing policies and practices with Denver Public Schools
 - Staff capacity
- Annually review and adjust data plan

Timeline: 2nd and 3rd Quarter 2021

Governance

Goal: Ensure best practices at the board level to support the work of the organization

Guiding Principles

- Denver Kids has a committed board of directors that is independent in thinking and decision making
- The Board holds itself to the highest ethical standards and is accountable to both internal and external stakeholders
- The Board seeks continuously improve its own performance so that it can effectively support the mission of Denver Kids

Strategy: Provide formal new board member training

Leader: Board Chair

Key Steps:

- Create a board orientation packet of documents that includes mission/vision/values, organizational history, annual report, bios of current members, board member job description, board member agreement, committee descriptions and rosters, bylaws and legal documents, financial statements, D&O coverage, and other relevant documents
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with all incoming board members and senior staff that includes review of board packet as well as in-depth introduction to DK programs, fundraising activities and opportunities for Board member engagement
- Solicit feedback from new board members 6 months – 1 year after orientation about strengths and gaps of orientation and adjust as needed

Timeline: 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Provide annual training on board governance

Leader: Board Chair

Key Steps:

- Survey current board members about board performance
- Identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement
- Host facilitated board retreat with training targeting improvement areas

Timeline: 4th Quarter 2021

Strategy: Develop and measure annual committee and board goals

Leader: Governance Committee

Key Steps:

- With committee chairs, review and, if necessary, revise committee charters
- Require committees to create annual work plans with measurable goals
- Annually review committee progress toward goals

Timeline: 2nd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Measure board member accountability against commitments

Leader: Board Chair

Key Steps:

- Create a template for a Board agreement that clearly outlines expectations and responsibilities of the Board. At a minimum the agreement should include:
 - Meeting attendance expectations
 - Committee assignment(s) and information about committee duties
 - Personal financial pledge

- Personal commitment to assist with fundraising in other ways such as donor solicitation or event leadership
- Personal commitment to contribute to the organization in other ways
- Meet individually with each Board member to discuss interests and commitments for the coming year and to finalize agreements
- Create a process for reviewing Board commitments and progress toward goals mid-year and at year end

Timeline: 3rd Quarter 2021

Strategy: Document and measure clear CEO annual goals

Leader: Executive Committee

Key Steps:

- Work with the CEO to develop written performance goals for the year
- Identify any gaps in skills needed to achieve goals and develop/implement a professional development plan
- Conduct an informal review after six months to identify any potential areas of challenge and intervene quickly
- Annually conduct a comprehensive review that includes CEO self-assessment, 360-degree staff and board survey, and data related to quantitative goals
- Annually document performance review outcomes, adjust salary to reflect performance and set goals for the next year

Timeline: 4th Quarter 2021

Conclusion

Denver Kids is an invaluable resource for students in Denver Public Schools. Because of the passion and dedication of DK's staff, board and donors, thousands of students have improved their academic proficiency, gained social and emotional skills, and beaten the odds to graduate

from high school and pursue meaningful post-secondary options. The organization now has an opportunity to offer its services in a more efficient manner, which will allow it to serve even greater numbers of students. As DK continues its integration with Denver Urban Scholars, it must closely examine which aspects of the two programs are most impactful and create a single effective and sustainable program. Going forward, DK will also foster a culture of inclusion, based on shared values, high expectations and an ardent commitment to equity. Improved use of data will support these changes, as will the reaffirmation of the board's commitment to effective governance. While the work to be done is substantial, DK can draw on its past track record of resilience and diligence. The adversity faced by the students DK serves is as significant now as it has been at any time in recent history. Denver Kids stands poised to be an active partner with Denver Public Schools and to meet the needs of thousands of children.