



**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Reyna Perez-Oquendo  
Donnell-Kay Foundation  
720.932.1544  
[rperez@dkfoundation.org](mailto:rperez@dkfoundation.org)

Amanda Brannum  
GroundFloor Media  
303.865.8143  
[abrannum@groundfloormedia.com](mailto:abrannum@groundfloormedia.com)

## **New Report Encourages Denver Public Schools to Implement Alternative Education Strategy to Meet Needs of Thousands of Students**

*The Donnell-Kay Foundation's report highlights Denver Public Schools' need for more alternative education options and calls for the district to make focused improvements in the next two years*

**Denver (Oct. 29, 2009)** – The Donnell-Kay Foundation issued a report today encouraging Denver Public Schools to better serve its thousands of dropouts and students at risk of dropping out. It recommends that the district create a comprehensive strategy to meet these students' needs, including developing new, high quality alternative schools. The report also emphasizes the importance of nonprofits, government agencies, businesses and communities joining with the district in this effort.

"A Call to Action: Getting Denver Public Schools Students Back on Track to Graduation" finds that more than 7,500 students in school – 42% of the high school population – are off track to graduation, and more than 3,600 students drop out of school each year. It affirms that these students, particularly dropouts and students over the age of 17 with few credits, need alternative options. The report identifies several areas for improvement in Denver Public Schools' existing alternative education programs, including the need for a greater number and variety of high-quality alternative schools in locations that are more congruent to students' needs.

"Most people don't realize that the dropout issue is not necessarily a problem with our young people. In many ways, it is a symptom of a broken school system," says Steve Dobo, executive director of Colorado Youth for a Change, an organization that works to get high school dropouts back in school. "Many students who have dropped out are ready and willing to come back, but Denver Public Schools needs a greater number of high quality alternative options where these students can succeed."

"A Call to Action" recommends the district focus on a two-year strategy, which includes an immediate plan to expand successful local alternative education options to parts of the city that

currently have few to none. Key to Denver's long-term success, the report argues, is the creation of a comprehensive strategy based on a data analysis of the needs of Denver's off-track youth.

"While recent studies help us prevent students from falling off track in grades 6-9, we don't know enough about those students already off track to graduation and their educational needs," says Tony Lewis, executive director of the Donnell-Kay Foundation. "The district must collect and use comprehensive data to create a high quality portfolio of schools specific to student needs."

The report points to the work of other cities, including New York City, Chicago and Philadelphia, as examples of success and makes suggestions for high quality national alternative education models that could meet the needs of Denver students.

The Donnell-Kay Foundation compiled this report with the guidance of local leaders and national experts to draw attention to a population that it believes can succeed with an enhanced alternative education program and the support of concerned community partners.

For more information or to access the report, please visit [www.dkfoundation.org](http://www.dkfoundation.org).

**About the Donnell-Kay Foundation**

*The Donnell-Kay Foundation is a Denver-based private family foundation focused on improving education in Colorado. For more information, please go to [www.dkfoundation.org](http://www.dkfoundation.org).*

###