



The Freedom to Learn Campaign

The Freedom to Learn Campaign is based on the idea that *all* students, regardless of race, income, or immigration status, deserve a high-quality education. Padres and Jovenes Unidos, through both school-based and community organizing, work to dismantle educational barriers for youth of color and low-income youth by working on issues such as educational quality, curriculum, discipline, and access to higher education. Our members come from across the metro Denver area, including North High School, Abraham Lincoln High School, West High School, Denver School of the Arts, P.S. 1, and Northglenn High.



North High Reform: through the implementation of an inclusive and democratic reform planning process, Padres and Jovenes Unidos is transforming North High School into an institution that provides opportunity and educational equity to all low-income students of color. Based on the release of a report in March of 2004 calling for the reform of North High School, over 70 administrators, staff, parents and students came together to form the Committee to Reform North High School and developed the following strategies:

- Align curriculum with the high college preparatory standards
- Adjust the master schedule to see that all students are offered challenging classes
- Identify and utilize key data to analyze North (District, Principals, Departments, Teachers)
- All students will be tested to establish an academic baseline from which their needs, progress and achievement can be evaluated
- Evaluate students, classes and departments every three to four weeks
- Utilize end of course exams to ensure all students are becoming proficient in the curriculum
- Focus on Professional Development to of entire staff to improve the quality of teaching
- Transforming the Counseling Department to promote college prep

Education Not Incarceration: through the use of oppressive zero tolerance policies, high school students of color are tracked into the Colorado prison system. The concrete results of this campaign are the eradication of the harsh, punitive disciplinary codes that establish the school house to jail house trend. Our goals:

- Designing and implementing a just discipline code through the creation of a community-based discipline advisory board
- Amending the intergovernmental agreement between DPS and the Denver Police to cut the number of police tickets issued to students for minor things
- Implementing district-wide suspension and expulsion prevention programs, such as restorative justice

Achieving the Dream: due to their legal status and lack of papers, undocumented students who grow up in and graduate from Colorado high schools are not eligible for financial aid or in-state tuition rates. Padres and Jovenes Unidos have worked for passage of the national DREAM Act and an in-state tuition bill in the Colorado Legislature. We are beginning support work for innovative programs such as the College Now program at Lincoln High School.

College Prep for All: students of color in DPS are congregated in the lowest performing schools. Many either "vote with their feet" and skip classes or drop out. We are working to make a curriculum which prepares *all* students to go on to college a key part of the DPS strategic plan.