

# Black Excellence Plan

## Columbine Elementary School

### Denver, CO



Columbine Elementary School has a long history in Denver educating Black students with its first building, a one room schoolhouse, built in the 1880s. Now one block south of the original location, the school honors its legacy of educating Black students through the Black Excellence Plan. The goal of the [Black Excellence Plan](#) was to ensure Black students at Columbine felt a sense of belonging and empowerment throughout their academic and social emotional learning. This will lead to a decrease in chronic absenteeism among Black students.



## Black Excellence Plan

### OUR AIM

To create the conditions in which our Black students experience belonging and feel empowered by the explicit evidence of Black Excellence throughout their academic and social emotional learning. This will result in our Black students decreasing their percent of chronic absenteeism to 50%. By creating this sense of belonging, all of our Black students will be able to identify positive relationships with staff members.

To ensure rigorous and relevant instruction that builds Black student agency in growth and data. By creating this agency, our Black students in K-3 will increase their percent meeting or exceeding expectations by 10% from 22-23.

This plan was developed by school staff members, parents, community members, and students and led by the principal. The initial plan was started in 2022. Prior to the start of the school year the principal held a meeting open to the community to develop a plan. School history, neighborhood history, the DPS Black Excellence Resolution, and School performance stats, were reviewed and evaluated to create a plan tailored to Columbine's needs and goals. This plan was refined in 2023 by parents, community members and staff. It was then taken to the 4th and 5th graders for input and buy-in. Columbine partnered with an East High School Black Men/Students group to come and meet with

students and discuss concerns. The school held multiple meetings for students and parents to attend and discuss issues and a plan.

The plan stated that Black families will have a voice in policy and decision-making systems by ensuring the school is eliciting Black family representation in all stakeholder groups. Events will be planned with accessibility of time, childcare, and communication preferences in mind. To support an atmosphere of belonging for Black students, students will have access to content that represents Black leaders and Black excellence. School leaders will support ongoing professional learning of restorative practices as a response to behavior and discipline. Teachers will be given strategies to encourage belonging of Black students, including pronouncing names correctly, getting to know Black students in their class, presenting Black history and culture in ways that are affirming, presenting diversity within the Black aesthetic, and ensuring Black students are not the spokespeople for the Black community. By uplifting Black students so they feel seen, heard, and valued, Black students will identify positive relationships with staff members and attend school regularly. The Black Excellence Plan provided guidance on creating conditions and mindsets that support this.

A major challenge to developing this plan was reaching family members to ensure representation in meetings where the Black Excellence Plan at Columbine was being developed. To replicate this practice, schools must meet the challenge of representation with determination, care, and personal outreach.