

# Stapleton High School

## Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colorado

**Location type:** Large city

**District enrollment:** 86,046 students

**School enrollment:** 508 students

**Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals:** 45

### Key Takeaways

Stapleton High School participated in the 2012 pilot for the OECD Test for Schools and again during the 2013-2014 school year. The OECD Test for Schools data, in conjunction with information from other assessments, has been used to reaffirm the success of practice shifts made in a number of areas.

### Actions Taken

- ✔ From 2012 to 2014, the school made a number of changes to strengthen the school culture, including the following:
  - Teachers now have more ownership over advisory so that they can design it to best meet the needs of their students;
  - While morning meetings used to focus on recognition of academic excellence, they now also recognize students who demonstrate the school's core values;
  - Making up incomplete or missing assignments is now optional, thereby giving students more ownership over their education; and
  - The school built in more community-building events to create opportunities for teachers and students to spend time together outside of class, including outings to Denver Nuggets games and class trips.
- ✔ The school has also worked to improve student reading skills in a variety of ways:
  - The school began a literacy initiative that included professional development sessions regarding Common Core English language arts instructional shifts with a focus on close reading and text-dependent questions (TDQs).
  - Teachers have incorporated close reading and TDQs into classroom instruction and receive ongoing feedback and support from instructional leaders and administrators.
- Instructional leaders engage in classroom walkthroughs where they observe teachers using close reading and text-dependent questions in their classrooms. The school now uses a document to support these classroom walkthroughs; this document outlines the classroom "look fors" when students are engaged in close reading.
  - Additionally, there is a celebration of literacy within the school through book talks during morning meetings, a book drive, and a book club elective.
  - Looking forward, Stapleton is exploring the possibility of building time for student independent reading into the school day to further encourage students' love of reading.
- ✔ Stapleton also participated in the 2014 Convening of World-Leading Schools, where it had the opportunity to collaborate with peers around analyzing results and discussing best practices.
 

Between the pilot and the 2013-2014 administration, Stapleton made great gains. Teacher-student relations improved. Most notably, the number of students reporting, "If I need extra help, I will receive it from my teachers," increased from 83 percent in the pilot to 100 percent in 2014. In addition, the school's mean reading score increased by 42 points and the number of students performing at levels 5 and 6 in reading increased by 7 percent.

*Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Stapleton High School may visit the school's website [here](#).*