



PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Overview of School Choice Options Provided by Colorado's Douglas County School District

Summary

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee directed the Program Evaluation Division to examine Colorado's Douglas County School District (DCSD) to determine whether its approach to school choice can inform state education policy-making in North Carolina. The evaluation team traveled to Colorado in June 2013 to examine DCSD's implementation of school choice programs.

The Douglas County School District provides families or children with a variety of educational opportunities. Options for families include neighborhood schools, magnet schools, charter schools, online education, and home education. Other educational choices include intra- and inter-district open enrollment, as well as home education enrichment services. Additionally, DCSD designed and initiated a publicly funded scholarship program in 2011 to send some children to private schools.

The Program Evaluation Division identified strategies that DCSD has taken to improve and expand school choice in Douglas County. These strategies include

- expanding home education enrichment services;
- developing and implementing the Choice Scholarship Program;
- incorporating charter schools in school facility planning; and
- enhancing partnerships with locally authorized charter schools.

Colorado education law enabled DCSD's expansion of school choice options.

The General Assembly should consider several factors in determining whether to authorize local school administrative units to implement aspects of the DCSD approach to school choice. These factors include

- lack of student performance data measuring the effects of DCSD's home education enrichment services and the Choice Scholarship Program;
- differences between demographics for North Carolina and Douglas County, Colorado; and
- differences between education law, which would require changes to North Carolina education law to enable implementation of the DCSD approach to school choice.

If the General Assembly wants to further investigate implementation of the DCSD approach, it should consider establishing a statewide community engagement and strategic planning process and direct education policy-makers and community stakeholders to examine whether DCSD's approach provides opportunities for improving and expanding school choice options in North Carolina.