



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2012

**Contact:** Pam Benigno, Education Policy Center Director (303-513-0590, [pam@i2i.org](mailto:pam@i2i.org))

### **Denver Teacher Evaluations Need to Change Teachers Judged on Encouraging Students to “Challenge and Question the Dominant Culture” and “Work for Social Justice”**

DENVER – The Independence Institute is alerting parents and community leaders about alarming new language used to judge Denver Public Schools (DPS) teacher performance.

According to DPS’ newly-revised pilot evaluation framework for effective instruction, all district teachers will receive the highest rating for encouraging students to “challenge and question the dominant culture” and “take social action to change/ improve society or work for social justice.” Students are expected to “appear comfortable challenging the dominant culture in respectful ways.”

“What exactly does this language mean?” said Pam Benigno, director of the Independence Institute’s Education Policy Center. “Will 4<sup>th</sup> graders be taking field trips to Occupy Denver for extra credit? Will teachers make attendance at Tea Party rallies a class assignment?”

The story was broken yesterday by 9News education reporter Nelson Garcia (<http://t.co/oJfBfB2N>). DPS veteran social studies teacher John Peterson told 9News that encouraging students to engage in civil disobedience is not his professional role. Also cited in the story, a survey of Professional Association of Colorado Educators (PACE) members found more than three-fourths did not wish to be evaluated based on these controversial items.

In 2010 the Colorado General Assembly adopted Senate Bill 191, which establishes new evaluation requirements for teachers and principals. The bipartisan measure ties 50 percent of evaluations to measurable student academic growth.

DPS is designated as a “partner” school district with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide feedback on improving the quality of the state’s own model evaluation system. DPS piloted its framework in 16 schools during 2010-11 and 127 schools during 2011-12, but added the extreme language without any explanation before the current school year began this week. No other district is known to use such language in its evaluation framework.

“It’s absurd to tell teachers to push radical classroom agendas when so many students still can’t read and do math proficiently,” Benigno said. “DPS parents need to tell the district this language must go, and other parents should send the message they don’t want their district to be next.”

The language can be found on page 2 of the framework at <http://bit.ly/O3i81b>.

The Independence Institute is a non-partisan, non-profit public policy research organization based in Denver.

###