

Jared Polis Foundation Education Report



2006 graduates of the Academy of Urban Learning celebrate at the Auraria Campus in Denver. See page 4.

Summer/Fall 2006

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Dear Coloradans,

I am pleased to share with you this issue of our Foundation's Education Report. As you will notice, we made several changes to the report's format, in an effort to offer you a more informative and engaging publication. We expanded the number of pages, to allow for additional updates and coverage on educational developments, and also improved the report with photos and other graphics to make it more reader-friendly.

This issue includes important information on financial literacy and the impact of after-school programs; an overview of the 2006 legislative session, and news from the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on High School Improvement; profiles of outstanding individuals and of a very unique school in our community; and updates from the programs and activities of the Jared Polis Foundation, including the 2006 Teacher Recognition Awards and the opening of a third New America School campus.

I hope that you will enjoy this new version and I invite you to share your thoughts with me at jpolis@jaredpolisfoundation.org or by mail at P.O. Box 4659, Boulder, CO, 80306. Have a Great New School Year!

Jared Polis

Jared Polis Foundation Education Report
Summer/Fall 2006

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Parent Profile: Haleh Wolfe, High Peaks Elementary

• **Strong schools require active parental and community involvement** and Haleh Wolfe has demonstrated the tremendous difference that such involvement can make. Wolfe is the mother of seven-year old twin girls who attend High Peaks Elementary School in south Boulder, a K-5 school with 268 students. She chose High Peaks for her girls because of its solid academic program, core-knowledge focus, and caring community. Wolfe is a former attorney who worked in education administration in the past and was a board member for two years at the Family Learning Center in Boulder. When her daughters enrolled at High Peaks, she decided to play an active role in her children's school. She is the parent representative for de-stratification at High Peaks, which was one of the first elementary schools chosen to implement the Boulder Valley School District's policy to enhance socio-economic diversity in schools. Wolfe believes strongly in

destratification and has taken a lead role in the process at High Peaks to help make the program a success. Haleh and other parent volunteers negotiated aspects of the school's plan with the district, which states: 20 percent of High Peaks' student population will qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program; the school will enroll students with a diverse background who live within a close radius of the school; the school will provide transportation for students who live farther than 1.5 miles from the school, but within a greater geographical boundary; and the school will have an English as a Second Language (ESL) program as well as a Community Liaison. The implementation of the plan will begin in the 2007-08 school year with the incoming kindergarten class.

As a first-generation immigrant whose family came to the U.S. from Iran, Wolfe understands the critical importance of mean-



New America School



- The New America School, a public charter high school that serves English language learners, honored 65 graduates from its Aurora and Thornton campuses on June 9th at its second graduation ceremony held at the Johnson and Wales University’s Outdoor Amphitheatre in Denver. The New America School supports recently arrived immigrants, ages 15 to 21, who want to learn English and earn their high school diplomas. The model is designed to be accessible to working students and students with families of their own, and the two operating campuses offer both day and evening programs. Jim Polsfut, a New America School board member and President of the First Western Development Corporation, delivered the keynote address to the graduating class. Seven students who were chosen by their principals and teachers for their outstanding academic performance received college scholarships from the New America School Student Scholarship Fund.

The New America School’s third campus is opening its doors for the 2006-2007 academic year. The campus is located in Jefferson County on Wadsworth in Lakewood. The school’s first incoming class includes approximately 200 students and will eventually grow to 350 students by the second year of operation. Jon Berninzoni is the principal of the new Lakewood Campus. Jon’s background includes twelve years as a teacher and principal at the International School in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The New America School’s Thornton campus has moved to Northglenn. The Aurora campus will remain located at the Community College of Aurora at Lowry.

Links

www.newamericaschool.org and www.jaredpolisfoundation.org.

ary School

ingful and high-quality education options for all students: “We want families to dream for their children—to dream that their children can get the best education available regardless of their socio-economic status,” Wolfe says. “Wanting the best for your child goes beyond all socio-economic, religious, ethnic, and nationality lines. That’s the common denominator at High Peaks—the glue that binds us all together.”

With the help of High Peaks teachers, she organized a student-led fundraising effort to raise money for Asia’s Tsunami, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita victims. Wolfe placed empty one-gallon water bottles in each classroom as a symbolic gesture illustrating the lack of clean water in these devastated areas. Students then filled the bottles with their own coins, raising nearly \$2,000 for the Tsunami victims, which was donated to the UNICEF Tsunami Education Fund. High Peaks students also

raised \$1,400 for hurricane victims and the funds were donated to Beaumont Charter School, a K-8 school with 50 students who moved to Beaumont, Texas, from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. High Peaks students also sent to these students in Beaumont, backpacks, school supplies and money for school uniforms. When Hurricane Rita hit Beaumont, it destroyed the school’s elementary building and, since then, all K-8 students have shared the middle school space.

The Jared Polis Foundation applauds Haleh Wolfe’s community leadership and her dedication to our schools and students.





Community Computer Connection

• Since July 2001, Community Computer Connection has refurbished and distributed 13,000 computers to underserved communities throughout Colorado. The Community Computer Connection team refurbishes computers that are donated from corporations, organizations and individuals and provides them for free to qualified nonprofit organizations and schools in Colorado.

The Community Computer Connection and Dell TechKnow, a Dell Corporation program that provides technology training to disadvantaged at-risk middle school students, have partnered since January 2005 to provide complete refurbishment services to Denver Public Schools. The Dell TechKnow program is a 40-hour, self paced, hands-on, after-school based curriculum that gives low-income middle school students a chance to earn a free home computer. Students work on a refurbished desktop computer in teams and learn how to take apart and reassemble a computer, load software, upgrade basic hardware, and also become familiar with the Internet, among other skills. Upon completion of this program, students who successfully demonstrate curriculum-based competencies are awarded a refurbished computer at no cost. In addition, students sign a contract committing to good school attendance, demonstrated improvement in grades and good citizenship. The two organizations hope to expand their partnership in the future.

The Community Computer Connection has also partnered with NPower, a program of the Community Resource Center

in Denver. NPower provides cost-effective solutions to address nonprofit organizations' technology needs through consulting, training and installation. The Community Computer Connection and NPower are working together to provide support to refurbished computer recipients who need assistance with installation and set-up in their schools or organizations. NPower is also working on an evaluation of the Community Computer Connection by surveying recipients on the efficiency and effectiveness of its refurbishment program. NPower will provide its evaluation report to the Community Computer Connection at the end of 2006, to help the organization work even more efficiently and effectively.

This summer, the Community Computer Connection was part of the Governor's Summer Job Hunt and worked through the Denver Office of Economic Development to hire paid summer interns who were either recent high school graduates or high school students from the Denver Metro area. These student interns gained useful experience and valuable skills in computer troubleshooting and computer refurbishment. The students worked 20 hours per week for eight weeks this summer. The Community Computer Connection is located at 14200 E. 35th Place, Suite 105, in Aurora, CO 80011, and is open 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Links

To donate computers:

www.jaredpolisfoundation.org/donatecomputers.shtml

To receive computers:

www.jaredpolisfoundation.org/receivecomputers.shtml

NPower: www.npowerco.org.

The Academy of Urban Learning

The Academy of Urban Learning (AUL)—a small charter high school in Denver that serves youth who are homeless, in unstable living situations or face other at-risk factors—graduated its first class in 2006. The graduation ceremony took place on May 20th at the Tivoli Student Union of the Auraria Campus in Denver. Lisa Duran, executive director of Rights For All People, delivered the keynote address. The graduates overcame tremendous obstacles to obtain their high school diplomas. In order to graduate, they had to meet AUL's academic competencies in reading, writing, math, speaking/listening, creative thinking, decision making, and reasoning. In addition, the AUL graduates met their portfolio requirements and completed their Presentations of Learning.

AUL, which was co-founded by the Jared Polis Foundation, also hosted a fundraiser at Strings Restaurant in Denver on April 27, 2006, to honor Jerene Petersen, former executive director of Urban Peak Denver and former board member of the school, as she left Urban Peak Denver to pursue other career opportunities. More than 50 people gathered to honor Jerene and celebrate the first year of AUL and donated over \$1,900 to support postsecondary education opportunities for its students.

AUL is expected to grow its student body for the 2006-07 school year and has moved to a new location at the corner of 18th and Emerson in central Denver. The new site is much larger and its central location is more easily accessible for students.

2006 Legislative Update



• In the 2006 session, the Colorado legislature considered a wide range of public education bills. Using state revenues that voters approved last fall by passing Referendum C, the legislature increased state support for preschool, supplemental online education programs, school facility construction, and special education. Defeated proposals included better access to after-school programs for low-income students, online schools, and early college programs. Several bills to increase school accountability were enacted, but the governor vetoed legislation that would have improved standards for healthy school snacks and school facilities, a bill that would have allowed voting for full-day kindergarten funding, and a bill that would have helped pay for school construction.

The following are some of the bills that passed and became law:

- **Senate Bill 55: School safety reporting** (Sen. Jones, R-El Paso; Rep. Garcia, D-Arapahoe). Establishes a new School Accountability Report (SAR) category that includes third degree assaults, vehicular assaults, and disorderly conduct involving fighting, and creates a category for felony assaults.
- **Senate Bill 73: Compulsory school attendance** (Sen. Tapia, D-Pueblo; Rep. Merrifield, D-El Paso). Raises the maximum age of compulsory public school attendance from 16 to 17, effective July 1, 2007.

- **Senate Bill 127: Fruits and vegetables in schools** (Sen. Sandoval, D-Denver; Rep. Madden, D-Boulder). Creates a two-year pilot program to make fruits and vegetables available in schools that volunteer to participate, and directs \$150,000 in breakfast funds to this program.

- **Senate Bill 130: Funding for BOCES** (Sen. Bacon, D-Larimer; Rep. White, R-Grand). Appropriates \$210,000 to pay for \$10,000 grants to each eligible Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

- **House Bill 1008: Supplementary online school subsidy** (Rep. Massey, R-Chaffee; Sen. Isgar, D-La Plata). Appropriates \$531,580 to reimburse eligible school districts with fewer than 3,000 students, as well as eligible charter schools, for purchasing supplemental online courses.

- **House Bill 1109: Academic growth calculation** (Rep. King, R-El Paso; Sen. Grossman, D-Denver). Requires the State Board of Education to measure which schools experienced the greatest longitudinal academic student growth and allows for funding awards to schools with outstanding student academic growth.

- **House Bill 1240: Remedies for “unsatisfactory” schools** (Rep. Marshall, D-Denver; Sen. Groff, D-Denver). Requires the State Board of Education to determine whether schools that received an “unsatisfactory” rating for three consecutive years from the Colorado Student Assessment Program must be converted into an independent charter school.

Links

www.academyofurbanlearning.org



An AUL graduate shares her joy with her sister.

Links

Colorado General Assembly: www.leg.state.co.us/
Governor Owens: www.colorado.gov/governor/index.html
For more information about the status of important education legislation in 2006, please visit www.jaredpolisfoundation.org/2006LegUpdate.pdf

Financial Education: More Important Than Ever

- Every day we use words like savings, interest, APR, stocks, bonds, debt, mortgage, refinancing, car loans, credit score, mutual funds, IRA and 401(k). They represent basic financial terms and concepts that are necessary for managing our personal finances. In today's increasingly complex economy and world of personal finance, it is essential that we have the knowledge and skills necessary to realize our financial goals and achieve financial security for the future.

However, many Americans do not manage their finances properly, leading to enormous consumer debt and a vicious cycle of financial dependence that starts early in life. Finances are not as clear-cut as they used to be. While today we have more choices than ever before, many individuals and families face tremendous challenges understanding economic issues and making wise financial decisions. More and more older workers are unprepared for a financially secure retirement, while a rising share of young adults begin their careers with significant college loan and credit card debt. Research shows that our nation suffers from pervasive financial illiteracy and poor financial management skills:

- More than half of Americans report living from paycheck to paycheck, and this share is much higher for families with lower incomes.
- Four out of ten Americans say that they live beyond their means.
- Almost half of all families report constantly worrying about the way they spend money and one in four Americans reports having a "precarious" debt situation.
- In 2005, total consumer debt reached \$2.161 trillion.
- Last year, for the first time since the Depression, the national personal savings rate was negative, which means that Americans spent more than all of their after-tax income and tapped into savings or debt.
- Most workers have not saved enough for retirement, while only four in ten have tried to estimate how much they will need in retirement savings.
- Only about half of full-time workers participate in their employer's retirement-savings plan.

Looking to the future, the picture is troubling. Today's children, and tomorrow's adult consumers, taxpayers, savers and investors, are spending at unprecedented rates and incurring debt at younger ages:

- Spending by children has approximately doubled every decade in the past 30 years and actually tripled in the 1990s. In 2003,

teenagers spent \$175 billion.

- One out of every three high school students uses a credit card, and teens as young as 13 now have one.

At the same time, the average high school graduate lacks basic skills for managing personal finances. About half of teenagers fail to pass a basic finance literacy test, according to a survey by Jump\$tart Coalition, a national group that promotes financial literacy in education. The lack of financial literacy leads to serious debt problems after high school graduation, in college.

- Almost 85 percent of undergraduate college students have a credit card.
- About half of college students are in credit card debt, with an average debt of over \$3,000.
- The number of 18- to 24-year-olds declaring bankruptcy has almost doubled in a decade and people under 25 are the fastest growing group filing for bankruptcy.



In response to widespread financial illiteracy, state legislatures and educational officials are increasingly worried about the financial future of children. Since most habits are largely shaped when we are young, it is crucial that sound financial management behavior is established at a young age, before students become adults and have access to even higher levels of credit. And that is why financial education is so vital.

Lack of information is behind most bad financial decisions and our education system can and must address the crisis of financial illiteracy. Clearly, schools must bring personal finance lessons into the curriculum and financial education should become an integral part in the education of our youth. All high school students need to learn certain core money management skills such as opening a bank account and balancing a checkbook, managing credit card debt and setting monetary goals, creating a budget, and saving and investing. Raising awareness early on and teaching students about the value of money and the consequences of financial decisions, as well as providing them with solid money management skills, will enable them to become financially responsible adults. By helping youth establish sound financial habits, they will be better equipped to handle their personal finances effectively and know how to live within their means, save and invest.

Financial Literacy and Education Resources

Numerous national and Colorado nonprofit organizations are dedicated to promoting financial education and literacy and offer a wealth of information and resources for parents, students, educators and the public:

Colorado Council on Economic Education:

www.ccee.net

Colorado Department of Education, Financial Literacy Resource Bank:

www.cde.state.co.us/action/Financial_Literacy/index2.htm

Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy:

www.jumpstart.org

Junior Achievement, Inc.:

www.ja.org

National Council on Economic Education:

www.ncee.net

National Endowment for Financial Education:

www.nefe.org

Young Americans Center for Financial Education:

www.yacenter.org

Colorado Department of Education Financial Literacy Resource Bank & Technical Assistance

In 2004, House Bill 1360 required the Colorado Department of Education to create a resource bank of financial literacy materials and provide technical assistance to schools for the design or implementation of a financial literacy curriculum. The legislation defined financial literacy as “knowledge of personal finances that is sufficient to enable a person to manage savings, investment, and checking accounts, to design and maintain a household budget, to manage personal debt, to understand consumer credit and finance, to manage personal credit options, and to understand and select among short-term and long-term investment options.” For the 2006-07 school year, approximately \$30,000 dollars is available for distribution to school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and public charter schools for technical assistance grants, which are distributed based on the recommendations of the Financial Literacy Review Committee.

Links

www.cde.state.co.us/action/Financial_Literacy/index2.htm

Financial education empowers students to provide financial stability for their families and strengthen their communities in adulthood. In a competitive global economy, educating young people to value economics and make sound financial decisions will get them on the right path with their finances so that they can achieve a high quality of life. Financial education provides access to opportunity for children and helps develop the leaders and entrepreneurs of the future.

But there is much work that needs to be done so that all students have access to financial education. While 38 states report personal financial literacy standards and 21 states require explicitly that standards be implemented, only nine states require testing, and only seven states make personal finance a graduation requirement. Colorado is not one of them. However, there are encouraging signs that districts are taking the lead to improve financial education. For example, beginning with the class of 2010, Boulder Valley School District students will be required to complete 12 hours of online course work in money management and personal finance in order to graduate. Hopefully, other districts will soon follow suit.

National Association of State Boards of Education

Jared Polis Chairman of Commission on Financial Literacy and Investor Education

Earlier this year, vice-chairman of the Colorado State Board of Education Jared Polis was named chairman of a new financial education commission of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). The Commission on Financial Literacy and Investor Education consists of members of state boards of education from across the country as well as financial education experts. The commission was established to review the status of financial education and current standards and curricula, and will present a comprehensive report with recommendations in October.



Links www.nasbe.org/projects/commission.htm

The 2006 Teacher Recognition Awards

• Teachers are the key to a great education, and there are many educators in our communities who are doing an excellent job in the classroom. On May 2nd, the Jared Polis Foundation held its sixth annual Teacher Recognition Awards Ceremony at the Butterfly Pavilion in Westminster. The foundation proudly honored 15 outstanding teachers throughout the Denver Metro area who have demonstrated innovative and effective ways to help students achieve and to strengthen their schools. Each teacher received a \$1,000 award and each of their respective schools also received a \$1,000 operating grant.



Nearly 250 people attended the 2006 Award Ceremony.



Honoree Tracy Huffman of Superior Elementary with her son Ethan.

Nearly 250 people, including awardees, nominees, and their families, friends and colleagues, attended the event and enjoyed a free tour of the butterfly pavilion. Jared Polis presented the awards to this year's teacher honorees and thanked them for their great contribution to their schools. "These

teachers stand out for their tireless and innovative efforts to improve student achievement," said Polis. "Through their remarkable dedication, they have impacted and transformed students' lives, and these awards represent the community's recognition of their creative and hard work helping kids realize their full potential."

Award recipients were recognized for demonstrating commitment to students, original and successful teaching methods, and the ability to work collaboratively with colleagues to create a focused and positive school environment. Award recipients were selected from more than 100 nominations submitted by colleagues, students, parents, and other members of their school communities, which were examined by an external review committee. "The tremendous response we received to our call for nominations shows that our communities recognize exceptional teachers and appreciate their commitment to Colorado's students," said Polis. "We were impressed by the number and quality of this year's nominees; every single one is a winner in the eyes of the community."

This year's group of outstanding teachers includes ten from the Boulder Valley School District, three from Denver Public

Schools, one from Jefferson County Public Schools, and one from the St.Vrain Valley School District. Seven recipients teach at elementary schools, five at high schools, two at middle schools and one teaches at a K-12 school.

For the 2006 awards, the Jared Polis Foundation partnered with Barbara Grogan, a Denver philanthropist who selected 16 outstanding teachers from Denver Public Schools. They were honored as well at the ceremony and received teacher recognition awards. The DPS honorees teach all grade levels in schools with high shares of low-income students.

"We are here because you are our heroes," Grogan said to the nominees and awardees. We couldn't agree more.



Honorees at the 2006 Teacher Recognition Awards

Links

www.jaredpolisfoundation.org/prog.celeb.shtml



Jared Polis with honorees Khoa Nguyen and Sandy Stokley of Elis Elementary, Denver Public Schools.

“These teachers stand out for their tireless and innovative efforts to improve student achievement. Through their remarkable dedication, they have impacted and transformed students’ lives, and these awards represent the community’s recognition of their creative and hard work helping kids realize their full potential.”

2006 Jared Polis Foundation Teacher Recognition Honorees

Dr. Leticia Alonso de Lozano

Spanish Language, Boulder High School

Andrew Aiken

Social Studies, Boulder High School

Tracy Huffman

First Grade, Superior Elementary

Doug Haley

Music, Superior Elementary

Sandy Stokley

Spanish Language, Ellis Elementary

Andy Matthews

World Language Dept. Chair, Peak to Peak Charter School

Ginny Vidulich

Language Arts, Louisville Middle School

Jolie Kasynski

Second Grade, Heatherwood Elementary

Scott Allen

World History and Geography, Monarch High School

Larry Runnels

History, Manhattan Middle School

Mary Jo Harper

Fourth Grade, Ryan Elementary School

Dale Peterson

First Grade, Niwot Elementary School

Ann Esser

English, Contemporary Learning Academy

Dawn Axelson

Third/Fourth Grade, Foster Elementary School

Regina Wagner

Special Education, Abraham Lincoln High School

2006 School Finance Act

The 2006 school finance act, House Bill 1375 (Rep. Pommer, D-Boulder; Sen. Windels, D-Jefferson) increased public education funding for Fiscal Years 2005-06 and 2006-07. This was made possible by Referendum C, which voters approved last November. Highlights of the school finance act include:

Base K-12 funding

- Increases the per pupil base funding amount by 2.1 percent to \$4,864.

Preschool and Full-day Kindergarten

- Allocates \$5 million to fund 2,000 additional slots for the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program for a total of 14,360 children.

School capital construction

- Appropriates \$19.25 million for school construction and renovation and \$5 million for school construction reserves in FY 2005-06.
- Assigns \$7.5 million for school construction and renovation



and \$7.5 million for school construction reserves in FY 2006-07.

- Provides \$10.6 million for charter school capital construction in FY 2006-07.

Summer school grant program

- Establishes a summer school grant program focused on reading, writing or math for students entering grades 4-8 who scored unsatisfactory on the Colorado Student Assessment Program in those subjects, and allocates \$1 million for FY 2006-07.

Special education

- Increases funding for special education programs for children with disabilities by \$20 million for FY 2005-06, and by \$25.7 million for FY 2006-07.
- Designates \$500,000 for special education programs for orphans in eligible facilities.

Tony Gramscas Youth Services

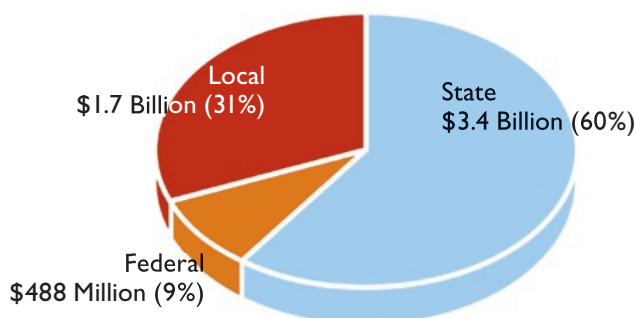
- Increases state funding by \$4 million in FY 2006-07 for the Tony Gramscas Youth Services (TGYS) program, which provides funding for after-school and other youth development programs. With the increase, total TGYS funding will be \$7.5 million.

Family Literacy

- Appropriates \$200,000 to the family literacy education grant program for FY 2006-07.

Education Funding in Colorado, by Source (2006-07)

Total: \$5,595,297,371



Numbers in chart are rounded.
Actual numbers:

- Federal • \$488,039,789
- State • \$3,363,741,319
- Local • \$1,743,516,263



The Many Benefits of After-School Programs

• **An increasing number of young people are unsupervised after school and exposed to various dangers and risks.** At the same time, our nation is searching for ways to raise academic standards and improve student achievement in schools. The combination of lack of adult supervision and poor educational outcomes underscores the critical need for children to engage in constructive after-school activities that help them improve their educational outcomes and offer personal enrichment opportunities.

High-quality after-school programs have an enormous impact on both the academic and non-academic aspects of children's lives. The lack of adult supervision has been linked to increased likelihood of accidents, injuries, lower social competence, lower academic achievement and test scores, and greater likelihood of

that while 6.5 million children attend after-school programs, more than 15 million children do not participate, although they would if appropriate and affordable programs were available to them. Access to after-school programs needs to be expanded both nationally and in Colorado, with the goal of enrolling as many students as possible and ensuring that all children are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

After-School Resources

Colorado's state-funded after-school program is the Tony Grampas Youth Services Program (TGYS), within the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. TGYS supports four funding categories: violence prevention, early

childhood care and education, mentoring programs, and student drop-out prevention programs.

In addition, the federally-funded Colorado 21st Century Community Learning Centers is a competitive grant program housed in the Colorado Department of Education and provides "students, particularly those who attend high-poverty and

low-performing schools, with academic enrichment opportunities along with activities designed to complement the students' regular academic program."

Links

Public After-School Programs in Colorado:

www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/tgys/index.html

www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/21stCentury.htm

Numerous national and state organizations offer information on after-school programs:

Afterschool Alliance: www.afterschoolalliance.org

The After School Project: www.theafterschoolproject.org

Colorado AfterSchool Network:

www.coloradoafterschoolnetwork.org

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids: www.fightcrime.org

Lack of adult supervision has been linked to increased likelihood of accidents, injuries, lower social competence, lower academic achievement and test scores, and greater likelihood of participation in high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sex.

participation in high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sex. According to the U.S. Department of Education, teens who are unsupervised during after-school hours are 37% more likely to become teen parents.

After-school programs represent a sound investment. For every dollar invested in such programs, the return to the public ranges from \$3-\$10 according to most estimates, through savings from decreased use of public services, and from increased earnings and productivity associated with better educational outcomes.

However, only 11 percent of the nation's K-12 youth are enrolled in after-school programs, according to the Colorado AfterSchool Network. In March 2006, *Education Week* reported

State Board of Education

During the past year, the Colorado State Board of Education (SBE) addressed important education issues, such as passing a rule on measuring and reporting high school graduation rates; adopting rules for the “Closing the Achievement Gap” assistance program; making changes to improve the state’s No Child Left Behind plan; directing funding to promote civic education; and re-evaluating restrictions against certain early college programs.

High School Graduation Rate Rule

In January 2006, SBE redefined high school graduation rates using a uniform statewide calculation to measure graduation with more consistency and accuracy. As required by a 2005 state law, the new rule (301-67) defines “on-time graduation rates” as graduation in four years. The rule also establishes the statewide formula for measuring such rates, as well as dropout rates, completion rates, and mobility rates.

The most significant change impacts how school districts identify and count student transfers among schools and students who participate in the General Education Development (GED) certificate program. The new rule ensures that school districts calculate and report on-time graduation rates more accurately by including students who have dropped out of school and GED students in the total number of students in a class. Previously, districts often artificially inflated graduation rates by excluding all students who left the school from the total number of students in a class and by counting GED students as graduates.



Vice-Chairman Jared Polis and Chairman Pam Suckla at the July meeting of the Colorado State Board of Education.

Closing the Achievement Gap Rule

At its January 2006 meeting, SBE adopted unanimously a new rule (301-69) to determine which schools may voluntarily receive help from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to close achievement gaps in standardized test scores for minority and low-income students. The new rule implements a state law, enacted three years ago, that authorized SBE to define eligibility criteria for schools that experience significant achievement gaps and are rated as “unsatisfactory.”

On average, the scores of minority and low-income students on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) are consistently well below average scores in all tested areas and across all grade levels. Specifically, CSAP results show that white and more affluent students score proficient or advanced 25 to 40 percent more often than their minority and low-income peers.

According to the new rule, schools eligible for state assistance are those with a gap above the state average in CSAP reading and math scores in both the current year and prior year. CDE will prepare and distribute an outline of different strategies that each eligible school may employ to improve academic achievement and decrease its achievement gap.

Early College Fifth-Year Programs

On a 4-4 vote, SBE failed to repeal the prohibition of state funding to students enrolled in a fifth-year high school program leading to both a diploma and an associate degree or community college credits. The September 2005 tie vote retained a SBE rule (Rule 301-39, Section 5.18) that was passed three years ago when CDE and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHHE) misinterpreted a 2001 state audit report and recommended the funding prohibition for fifth-year programs.

In the 2006 session, the state legislature ultimately failed to pass two efforts to allow funding for the programs. Lawmakers defeated a bill to fund a pilot fifth-year program for 500 students near the end of session, while a different effort to reverse the SBE rule was sidetracked by a fiscal note projecting costs of more than \$2 million.

No Child Left Behind

At its April 2006 meeting, SBE approved amendments to Colorado’s plan for No Child Left Behind to better serve the state’s education community by providing school districts with more useful resources, assistance and data. If approved by the U.S. Department of Education, these amendments will provide flexibility to school districts in implementing this federal law and make information more understandable to parents and the public.

Under the proposed changes, schools would miss Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements only when they fail to meet student achievement targets for two years in a row in the same content area and grade span, which will help schools identify where the need really is. Another change would distinguish districts that miss many student achievement targets for AYP and those that miss only a few targets. SBE may also weigh in on recommendations to change the federal law over the next year.

Colorado Commission for High School Improvement



• The Colorado Commission for High School Improvement has released its final report, *High School Reform in Colorado: Meeting the Expectations of a New Era*. The report offers concrete recommendations and strategies, and outlines the responsibilities of various stakeholders for a successful education system, including state and local policymakers, school and district administrators, parents, teachers, students, and community and business leaders. Some



of the report's recommendations generated legislative proposals that were addressed by the Colorado Legislature during this year's session (see page 5).

The commission was co-chaired by Jared Polis and University of Colorado Regent Pat Hayes, and included superintendents, school board members, school leaders, school

district organizations, a teacher organization, a parent organization, state legislators, researchers, advocates, and foundation representatives. The Colorado Children's Campaign staffed the commission, which met and worked for more than a year.

The report challenges Colorado's school boards and other education leaders to hold discussions in their communities on new and different programs that can help students succeed in high school, and includes four recommendations, each with a set of specific strategies:

Improving teaching and learning in high schools

Strategies:

- *Develop a strong culture in each school based on high expectations for all students;*
- *Recruit and train strong school leaders;*
- *Use student and classroom data to inform decision making; and*
- *Restructure failing schools.*

Improving student transition to and from high school

Strategies:

- *Take a P-16 (pre-kindergarten through college) approach to education;*
- *Provide in-state tuition and state financial aid to undocumented students who would otherwise qualify for in-state residency; and*
- *Empower students and teachers to make public school choices.*

Expanding school choice and alternatives

Strategies:

- *Identify and replicate high-performing schools;*
- *Establish broadly defined, high standards for high school performance and hold all schools to these standards;*
- *Create new small high schools; and*
- *Provide multiple ways to earn a high school diploma and earn college credits.*

Using existing and new resources and data more effectively

Strategies:

- *Invest in additional supports for low-performing students, and*
- *Improve the use and reporting of student outcome data.*

Colorado legislators enacted laws that support some of the report's major recommendations, such as providing more ways to fix "unsatisfactory" schools and establishing a uniform student identifier number from preschool through college to track academic progress. Bills to increase online education access and to fund fifth-year "early college" programs were defeated, while a bill to create a P-16 council was vetoed by the governor.

Links

Web Link to commission report:
www.jaredpolisfoundation.org/highschool.pdf

Principal Profile: Jeff Park, Skyview Big Picture High School



• As the school's chief administrator, the principal sets priorities and goals, and works with teachers, parents, students, and the local community to ensure that the school moves in the right direction. For Jeff Park, principal of Mapleton Public School District's Skyview Big Picture High School and Skyview Early College, creating an environment of collaboration is crucial for a school's success. And so is using new and promising academic models to support students' academic success.

Jeff has been heavily involved in the creation of small high schools in the Mapleton district that provide students with a high level of personal attention and emphasize interaction with peers and teachers.

Jeff believes that effective principals share several important qualities. "Good relationships with staff, a common vision with a clear distinction of roles, and communication are important," he says. "We must collaborate not just in name but in spirit, and we must do this all of the time."

Jeff has been heavily involved in the creation of small high schools in the Mapleton district that provide students with a high level of personal attention and emphasize interaction with peers and teachers. To create these small schools, the district utilizes several popular, research-based education models, including Big Picture, Early College and Expeditionary Learning. Skyview Big Picture High School, with 80 students in grades 9-11 during the 2005-2006 school year, and Skyview Early College, which enrolled 64 students in grades 9-10, are examples of implementing such academic models. Skyview Big Picture High School offers each student a personalized learning plan, the opportunity to actively explore their interests through a learning

internship, as well as project-based activities that demonstrate their learning. Skyview Early College students get an early start at higher education thanks to a partnership with Front Range Community College in Westminster, and can earn an associates degree or two years of college credit and a high school diploma through a blended program.

For Jeff, the schools' collaborative relationship and their focus on project-based learning creates a wonderful working environment for educators and an effective learning environment for students to thrive.

In addition to supporting these two schools, Jeff, along with Superintendent Charlotte Ciancio, is actively participating in the district's reform efforts in grades K-8. The small school model will expand in the 2006-07 school year, with the opening of new small elementary schools that will offer programs such as International Baccalaureate and Montessori. Jeff has been holding community meetings to explain to parents the benefits of each program and to help students and their families select the program that best matches their interests and meets their academic needs.

Thank you, Jeff, for your commitment and dedication to serving the students of the Mapleton School District.

Links

Skyview Big Picture High School:

www.mapleton.us/schools/skyviewbp.html

Skyview Early College High School:

www.mapleton.us/schools/skyviewcollege.html

Mapleton Public School District: www.mapleton.us

Student Profile: Jovan Quintana

- You can't help but be impressed by Jovan Quintana's remarkable accomplishments.

Chosen from among 200 applicants as the 2006 Student of the Year by the Latin American Educational Foundation, Jovan speaks with enthusiasm about her goals and aspirations. Jovan, who graduated from Horizon High School in Thornton as valedictorian in 2005, has just completed the first semester of her sophomore year at the University of Colorado at Boulder, thanks to a full semester of credit hours she obtained prior to starting college in the fall of 2005.

Jovan credits her parents for her outgoing personality and perseverance. She knows what she wants and says she never gives up, no matter how hard things may seem at times, and finds motivation in her daily life, which includes, in addition to school, a strong commitment to volunteer work and helping underserved populations. Her vision for her future after college drives her commitment and enthusiasm. "Medical school will be behind me and I'll be able to give back to the community which has given me so much," says Jovan.

Jovan, who is majoring in Psychology, first became familiar with her future alma mater in middle school while participating in the

University of Colorado's Pre-Collegiate Development Program. This program encourages middle and high school students to pursue an education beyond high school and focuses on first-generation college students—those who would be the first in their family to go on to college. Program participants meet several times each year on the college campus, and spend much of their high school summers living in dormitories and taking classes.

Once enrolled at CU-Boulder, Jovan was selected as a President's Leadership Scholar, and was offered an academic scholarship and the opportunity to work in small peer groups on leadership development. Jovan also volunteers at the University's Wardenburg Health Center as a peer educator, sharing information on a wide range of health topics such as nutrition, tobacco use, and stress, with other students. In addition, Jovan works as a tutor for children in Boulder Valley Public Schools.

The Jared Polis Foundation wishes Jovan Quintana all the best in her studies and future endeavors, both in her profession and in giving back to the community.

Jovan credits her parents for her outgoing personality and perseverance. She knows what she wants and says she never gives up, no matter how hard things may seem at times.

Links

Latin American Educational Foundation: www.laef.org

Horizon High School: www.horizon.adams12.org

University of Colorado at Boulder: www.colorado.edu

University of Colorado's Pre-Collegiate Development Program: www.cu.edu/diversity/precollegiate.html

Presidents Leadership Class: www.colorado.edu/academics/plc

Wardenburg Health Center: www.colorado.edu/healthcenter



School Profile: Pioneer Dual Language Elementary

Since 2000, Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer (Pioneer Dual Language Elementary School) has been helping students achieve proficiency in both English and Spanish. As a focus school in the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), parents can choose this school for their children or remain at their neighborhood school in Lafayette or in BVSD.

The bilingual education model used at Pioneer Dual Language Elementary has some unique characteristics. While all teachers are bilingual, the school has a team-teaching approach in which one teacher teaches exclusively in Spanish while the other teaches exclusively in English. Students rotate between the teachers for instruction, and they receive second language instruction every day. Students learn academic concepts in both languages in order to achieve the goal of becoming academically bilingual. Music and Art are taught in both English and Spanish and Physical Education is taught primarily in English.

The school is careful to maintain a 50/50 ratio of native English speakers and native Spanish speakers in each class. In the 2004-2005 school year, 91 percent of native English speaking students in the fifth grade scored in the top 25 percent for Spanish reading skills, using Aprenda 2, La Prueba de logros en español, a

Spanish language achievement battery. After leaving Pioneer, students may continue their bilingual education at Angevine Middle School in Lafayette, which offers a dual language program that builds upon the Pioneer program.

In its sixth year, the school continues to evolve. "We continue to grow and are always working on areas in which we need to improve," says Principal Sandra Mendez. "Next year we will be adding a third 5th grade classroom and a third 3rd grade classroom. Teachers are working together at their grade levels and on the overall model, and identifying ways to make our program more consistent."

Congratulations to Sandra and all the staff of Pioneer Dual Language Elementary for their successful implementation of this innovative dual language education model!



Links

Pioneer Dual Language Elementary School:
<http://sp.bvds.org/schools/Pioneer/default.aspx>
Boulder Valley School District: www.bvds.org



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