

## Jared Polis Foundation Update

In 2005, the Jared Polis Foundation continued to serve Colorado communities by supporting, encouraging, and pursuing innovation in education and technology throughout the state. Here are a few examples of the foundation's commitment to Colorado and our education system:

The *New America School*, with campuses located in Thornton and Aurora, is a public high school devoted to providing intensive English language instruction to non-native English speaking young adults, ages 16 to 20. Through a liberal arts education, students have the opportunity to work for a high school diploma or prepare for the GED. Our schools are open from 10am to 10pm, Monday through Friday, and from 10am to 4pm on Saturdays. Significant progress has been made at the Thornton Campus. Enrollment has increased from 76 students to 240 students in less than one year. To better suit students' needs and accommodate their non-traditional schedules, Friday and Saturday classes have been incorporated into the school's curriculum. To provide a more fulfilling learning experience, class length was increased to 90 minutes and guest speakers were added to the yearly curriculum calendar. At our Aurora campus, enrollment has increased to 425 students. In addition to an intense focus on academics, the Aurora campus highlights the importance of extracurricular activities that encourage personal growth, foster leadership, and nurture the social skills necessary for students' success. In December, members of the school's theater group performed *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, students came together to sponsor a yard sale and successfully raised \$300 for hurricane evacuees. For more information please call 303-320-9854 (Aurora Campus) or 303-991-0130 (Thornton Campus), or visit [www.newamericaschool.org](http://www.newamericaschool.org)

The *Academy of Urban Learning (AUL)* opened on August 15 and is located in Denver. The school serves students who are homeless, runaway, or highly mobile, and already has approximately 45 students. The staff team includes a humanities teacher, a science teacher, a life skills teacher, and a principal who also teaches math. The school will remain small so teachers can better understand students' academic strengths and challenges and assist each student in progressing toward high school graduation and post-secondary readiness. It will eventually serve 200 students. For more information please call 303-282-0900 or visit [www.academyofurbanlearning.com](http://www.academyofurbanlearning.com)

The *Community Computer Connection (C3)* team refurbishes computers that are donated from corporations, organizations, and individuals and provides them for free to qualified non-profit organizations and schools throughout Colorado. In September, C3 partnered with the Denver Public School District to refurbish all of the district's Dell TechKnow computers. In addition, C3 will participate in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts by donating computers to individuals in need. As of December, C3 is expected to exceed its targeted goal of donating 3,000 computers. For more information, or if you have or need computers, please contact Yolanda Innis at [yolanda@jaredpolisfoundation.org](mailto:yolanda@jaredpolisfoundation.org) or call 303-530-3561.

**Thanks to:** Marilyn Chappell, Janine Erickson, Scott Groginsky, Travis Leiker, Sara Mackey, Susan Mund and Spiros Protosaltis



### Did you know...

The ACT Assessment Testing Program is administered to all 11th graders in Colorado and includes multiple-choice tests in four areas: English, Math, Reading and Science. The ACT provides an overall composite score (highest score is 36) and an average score for each skill area. Colorado's 2005 statewide results showed improvement from 2004 in the composite score and in all areas except Math.

Source: Colorado Department of Education

Fast Fact!



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### IN THIS ISSUE:

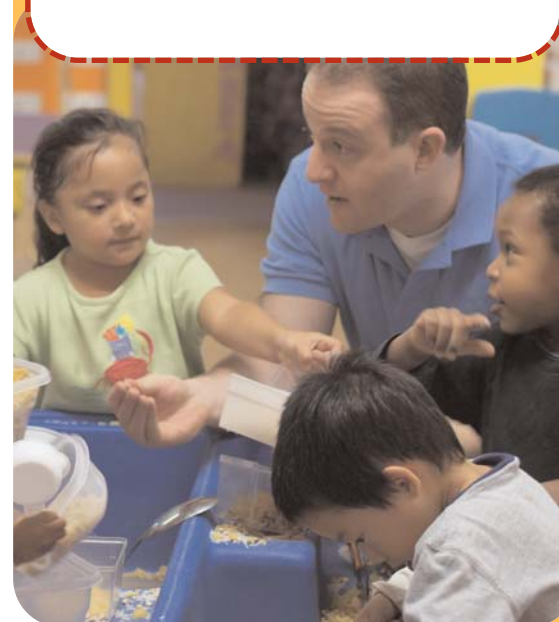
Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Education, Gifted and Talented Education, and more!

### Fast Fact!

#### Did you know...

Colorado's average per-pupil funding is \$700 below the national average and the state ranks 40th in the nation in average per-pupil spending.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and *Education Week*



# Jared Polis Education Report

W i n t e r 2 0 0 6

Dear Coloradans,

I am excited to share with you the Winter 2006 issue of the Jared Polis Education Report. This report includes important information on gifted and talented programs, the Year of Languages, and a creative program that strengthens public schools through a public-private partnership. It also discusses dual language learning opportunities and the economic benefits of early childhood education. I invite you to share your thoughts with me at [jpolis@jaredpolisfoundation.org](mailto:jpolis@jaredpolisfoundation.org) or by mail at P.O. Box 4659, Boulder, CO, 80306. Happy New Year!

*Jared Polis*

Jared Polis  
Vice-Chairman and Member-At-Large  
Colorado State Board of Education

W i n t e r 2 0 0 6

Jared Polis Education Report

Not Paid for by Tax Dollars

## Why is Gifted Education Important?

Each child is unique. Even children from the same family can be quite different from one another. One important difference among children is how they learn.

The learning needs of gifted children differ greatly from those of other children. As recognized by Colorado law, "Gifted and talented children [are] those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs." Thus, gifted children frequently cannot achieve to the level of their abilities unless their needs are met through special provisions.

Gifted learners can learn up to four times faster than typical learners, so they must be taught at a pace that is appropriate for them. For example, gifted students are much more likely to retain science and math instruction in class when taught two to three times faster than the "normal" pace. In addition, gifted students need one to two repetitions to solidify learning rather than the six to eight repetitions that most students need.

Because of their learning speed, advanced classes, early college, and career planning can be helpful. Gifted learners thrive on complex ideas and need to explore topics more deeply than other students. This is important in planning their coursework. When they are not sufficiently challenged, gifted learners frequently have behavior problems and are at risk of dropping out. Gifted students also benefit academically, socially, and emotionally when they interact with peers of similar abilities. This interaction provides a supportive environment that allows them to be themselves and perform well.

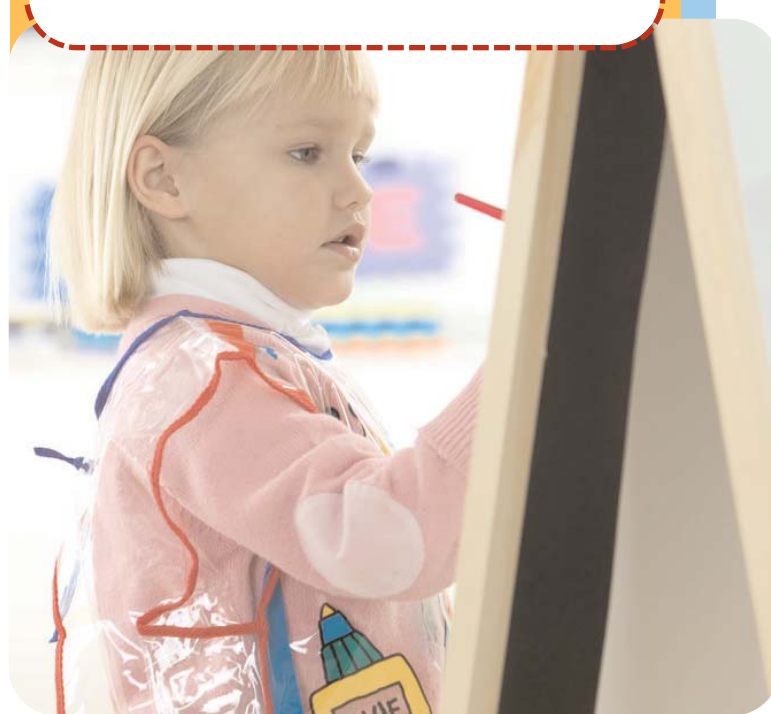
We must continue to meet the learning needs of all students, including gifted learners, and provide opportunities for advanced study so they can realize their potential and grow up to be productive members of our society.

### Did you know...

In 2003, there were 1,161,612 children under the age of 18 living in Colorado. That's more than 25% of Colorado's total population!

Source: Colorado Children's Campaign

Fast Fact!



## VISION Program

Education reform is taking place all across Colorado, thanks to new and entrepreneurial leadership that turns fresh ideas into action. An example is the five-year-old VISION initiative of the Delta County School District, which includes the "VISION Home and Community Program" and three public contract schools - independent schools that provide an education under contract with the district. One of the schools offers an experiential learning and arts emphasis and operated as a private school before contracting for the district.

VISION's architect is Dr. Laddie Livingston, former Superintendent, who believed that the future required meaningful choices within the public school system. For students pursuing homeschooling and private school

options, state waivers from local school board policies allow each VISION school and program to control program design, teacher hiring and dismissal, and salary policies. To ensure accountability, all VISION students participate in the Colorado Student Assessment Program.

The Home and Community Program (HCP) "allows students and parents to choose what kind of an education program is best suited for them and receive some financial support," says Livingston. Students and parents create, with a district employee, an individualized education program and the district allocates funds to each full-time student. At least 180 of the required 720 hours of annual learning take place outside the home with an educator, who is an approved community member

teaching or tutoring in a subject area, while the rest of the time students may study at home. Classes and tutoring are available to all Delta students.

"The cornerstone is the relationship of trust between students and parents and the school system," according to Livingston. "Trust made this possible." Serving nearly 15% of the district's students, VISION provides flexible public education choices and assistance to homeschool families.

Based on the principles of partnership, trust, flexibility and choice, VISION is an encouraging example of a creative public-private partnership that other districts can explore, so that every child can learn and thrive.

## Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Education

Preventing a problem is more effective than searching for solutions after the problem occurs. High-quality early childhood education and care programs - including pre-school, Head Start, and child care - create huge savings for taxpayers and society, estimated between \$3-\$9 for every \$1 invested. According to several studies, the savings result from lower costs for corrections and other public services, improved education outcomes, and higher incomes compared to those without access to good preschool programs. Specifically, the evidence shows that

children in early care and education have:

- ♦ Lower crime and delinquency rates
- ♦ Higher employment, earnings and productivity
- ♦ Less welfare dependence
- ♦ Higher high school graduation rates and test scores
- ♦ Better school attendance and less grade repetition
- ♦ Stronger social and academic skills
- ♦ Higher college attendance rates
- ♦ Fewer special education needs, and
- ♦ Better parenting skills later in life.

High-quality early childhood education and care means well-trained teachers and providers, meaningful curriculum, parental involvement, access to health and social services, and safe and stimulating environments. Many studies show that quality preschool is very important for children from low-income families.

See [www.jaredpolisfoundation.org](http://www.jaredpolisfoundation.org) for a list of research citations.

## Unique School Draws Students to Boulder

Right next to the Boulder campus of the University of Colorado resides a small educational treasure, the University Hill Elementary School. With 391 students, this unique K-5 school has a very diverse student body. While Boulder's population is over 80% Anglo, its students are 28% Anglo and 65% Hispanic.

So what attracts such a diverse student body to University Hill? Among the school's several unique qualities, its integration of a Dual Language Curriculum provides both English Language Learners and Native Language students the opportunity to become literate in both English and Spanish. The program provides a great learning experience and draws students to the school. Also, its English Literacy Program for English instruction emphasizes experiential education - learning by doing.

Several studies have shown that single-language and bilingual students learn and understand information differently, and that speaking two languages offers significant benefits across a range of complex mental tasks. For example, both younger and older bilinguals are better able to respond to rapidly changing mental tasks compared to those who only speak one language.



### Did you know...

92% of Colorado's children are educated in public schools.

Source: Public Education & Business Coalition

Fast Fact!

## 2005: The Year of Languages

This past summer, the Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Legislature passed a resolution establishing 2005 as the Year of Languages in Colorado to stress the critical importance of language education for the state's future. Led by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, this initiative urges students, parents, businesses, public officials and communities to embrace the importance of language learning and cultural understanding.

The Year of Languages is an opportunity to focus attention on the academic, social and economic benefits of studying other languages and cultures from around the world. Learning another language is not just for diplomats, international businesses and travelers anymore. Studying another language and culture makes students more qualified and competitive in today's global economy, and also helps them develop better relationships within their own community and with the rest of the world.

Colorado's language teachers hope that this initiative captures the public's attention and interest, and builds awareness and support for language programs. For example, the University of Northern Colorado dedicated its annual summer institute to the initiative and the local public broadcasting station (KUNC) made weekly announcements about the importance of language education. Throughout the school year, teachers have organized poster and essay contests and world language hallways; participated in panel discussions, symposia, dance workshops, reading programs, and international festivals; and have educated communities about foreign language education in Colorado.

The enthusiastic participation in the Year of Languages shows the tremendous support for language education throughout our state, and surely Coloradans will also show their support during the next phase of the campaign, Discover Languages, which runs through 2006. For more information visit [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)