



*Harnessing the Power of Partnerships for a Prosperous Colorado™*

## 2008 BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

*Closing the Achievement Gap*

Publication and production sponsored by



DONNELL-KAY FOUNDATION

For more information, or to order additional copies of this DVD and resource guide, please visit [www.colegacy.org](http://www.colegacy.org).

**Colorado Legacy Foundation**

201 E. Colfax Avenue, Suite 515  
Denver, CO 80203-1799  
Phone: 303-866-6193



Presented By



Colorado Legacy Foundation

As part of the Colorado Department of Education's “Forward Thinking” plan, the **Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF)** is a new, privately funded, nonpartisan 501(c)(3) that seeks to build ongoing statewide leadership capacity and support for aligning Colorado's P-20 education delivery system to meet the global demands of today's rapidly expanding, knowledge-centered economy. The foundation's mission is to accelerate improvements within the P-12 education delivery system through strategic, statewide public-private partnerships that prepares an increasing number of college-ready students for an economically and socially vibrant Colorado.



Colorado Department of Education

The **Colorado Department of Education (CDE)** is the administrative arm of the Colorado State Board of Education. CDE serves Colorado's 178 local school districts, providing them with leadership, consultation and administrative services on a statewide and regional basis.



Donnell-Kay Foundation

The **Donnell-Kay Foundation** is a private family foundation that operates as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization and was incorporated in 1965 in Florida through a trust by the Kay family. The board of trustees is led by Allen Dines, a former Colorado state legislator, who has an abiding interest in improving public education. The Donnell-Kay Foundation improves public education and drives systemic school reform in Colorado through solid research, creative dialogue and critical thinking.



Augenblick, Palaich & Associates

Founded in 1983, **Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc (APA)** is a privately owned company with extensive experience analyzing public education systems and policies. It’s mission is to help clients solve problems so they can meet student performance goals and improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the nation's public schools. APA also helps clients understand the fiscal, legal, and policy implications of implementing education reforms, including both short-and long-term impacts. Staff accomplish this mission using a variety of research techniques, including education data analysis, literature reviews, interviews, surveys, panel or focus group discussions, and statistical analyses.



The Piton Foundation

The **Piton Foundation** is a private, operating foundation established in 1976 by Denver oil man Sam Gary. The foundation is supported principally by contributions from Gary-Williams Energy Corporation and is considered the community investment division of the oil company. Piton’s mission is to provide opportunities for children and their families to move from poverty and dependence to self-reliance.

2008 Best Practices Guide

*Closing the Achievement Gap*

DVD and Resource Guide

Presented By

Colorado Legacy Foundation  
Colorado Department of Education  
Donnell-Kay Foundation  
Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc.  
The Piton Foundation

Publication and production sponsored by

Donnell-Kay Foundation

Table of Contents

	Page
Closing Colorado's Achievement Gap: A Statewide Imperative	6
Executive Summary	10
Study Methodology	13
10 Best Practices Topics	14
School Profiles	
South Park Elementary School	15
Valley View K-8	17
Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences	19
Cedaredge Middle School	21
Carson Middle School	23
Janitell Junior High School	25
Hotchkiss High School	27
Cesar Chavez Academy K-8	29
Notes	31
List of Profiles of Success Schools (APA Study)	32
Additional resources	33
Acknowledgements	35



Closing Colorado's Achievement Gap: A Statewide Imperative

*“We know success for students begins with commitment from the entire school community, as solid as a promise, to bring every student to proficiency. It takes teamwork, retraining in some cases, and a relentless focus on the needs of students. It is our assurance from the department of education that school districts will feel every ounce of support and leadership that we can provide.”*



Dwight D. Jones, Commissioner  
Colorado Department of Education  
June 29, 2008

In September 2007 CDE and the Colorado State Board of Education jointly announced the launch of “Forward Thinking,” an ambitious plan “to create a purpose-driven and dynamic system of educational leadership, service and support that relentlessly focuses on the learning of ALL students.”

One of the many “Forward Thinking” efforts identified was the creation and dissemination of a “Best Practices Guide” in partnership with the newly created Colorado Legacy Foundation, a state-level nonprofit founded by the CDE to help advance school reform efforts. Perhaps the most critical school reform effort continues to be closing the achievement gap across Colorado. This guide is the first of several initiatives to focus attention on and help share lessons learned from the field.

A 2005 study by the Colorado Children's Campaign (CCC) reported that nearly 400,000 students, on average, were below proficient on CSAP assessments. The report also found that academic gains over time among poor students were not keeping up with those of their more affluent peers. Despite this finding, the report identified several schools in Colorado that were making significant progress in closing the achievement gap. These schools have been able to “beat the odds” in terms of their ability to educate economically disadvantaged students.

Although the CCC report discussed these schools, it did not provide detail on the types of strategies or programs that made them successful in educating their students. With support from the Donnell-Kay and Piton Foundations, (APA) was tasked with analyzing all schools in the state, identifying those whose performance beats the odds, and providing insight and information regarding the types of programs, services and resources which these schools employ.





The 2008 statewide CSAP and new Colorado Growth Model results show substantial gaps in the academic growth of poor and minority students and boys in general. These gaps were most pronounced for poor and minority students in the early elementary grades and diminished somewhat in higher grades. Gaps in reading growth closed most quickly. Gaps in mathematics growth diminished most slowly and were more persistent than in reading and writing.



The Colorado Department of Education, in collaboration with public and private stakeholders, continues to focus on solving the greatest educational challenges, as well as share great success stories from across Colorado. “2008 Best Practices Guide: Closing the Achievement Gap,” in collaboration with the Colorado Legacy Foundation, the Donnell-Kay Foundation, and Augenblick, Palaich & Associates focuses on the successful strategies in 39 Colorado schools that have outperformed their peers, in closing achievement gaps associated with poverty and race.



The independent study uncovered a series of promising practices including setting a culture of high expectations and accountability for students, using targeted assessments and intensive use of data to guide instruction, individual support for struggling students, active engagement of teachers in school leadership, and more. Colorado’s many standout schools are helping all students achieve at high levels. This guide shines a light on their successes and spreads the word about strategies that work.



At a very minimum, students must be able to read, write and do math at grade level. More is needed though, especially given the rapidly advancing pace of life and commerce. Educators must be able to equip young people for success in life, work or the next level of schooling. Students must be prepared to compete in an international marketplace.

As the global economy continues to accelerate there is no more important commitment (or investment) than making sure all of Colorado's children are ready for the world ahead.



Photo taken at Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences  
Student artwork in Art and Humanities,  
one of several best practices discussed to help close the achievement gap.





Photo taken at Valley View K-8.

Student artwork in Art and Humanities, one of several best practices discussed to help close the achievement gap.

## Executive Summary

---

Across the nation, a significant share of poor and minority students are failing to achieve at the same levels as their more affluent peers. This disparity in academic performance has been labeled the "achievement gap." Studies have found that this gap also exists in Colorado, and that academic gains over time among poor students are not keeping up with those of their more affluent peers. At the same time, however, there have been indications that some schools across the state are making significant progress in closing the gap. These schools could be considered to be "beating the odds" in terms of their ability to educate economically disadvantaged students.

In early 2008, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA), the Piton Foundation and the Donnell-Kay Foundation released a study in cooperation with the Colorado Department of Education called "Profiles of Success: Eight Colorado Schools That Are Closing the Achievement Gap." This study identified schools around the state whose performance is already "beating the odds." Eight schools were then studied in-depth, and principals and teachers were interviewed to identify what makes them successful in closing the achievement gap.

Out of the Profiles of Success work, 10 common best practices were identified, including:

- Culture of high expectations and accountability for all students
- Targeted assessments and intensive use of data to guide instruction
- Individualized support for struggling students
- Active engagement of teachers in school leadership and decision-making
- Substantial time for collaborative planning and options for professional development
- Commitment to core academics and standards but not at the expense of other important learning in the arts and humanities
- Stable and consistent leadership
- Small learning communities
- Flexibility to use resources to support student needs and reinforce school culture
- Economically integrated student bodies

---

This best practices guide includes short profiles of the eight schools featured in the Profiles of Success report along with a DVD that includes interviews and highlights from each school. Elements of each of the 10 best practices were found in all of these schools. In fact, a combination of these practices working together is clearly required to generate positive results in closing student achievement gaps. For purposes of presenting this guide, we choose to focus on a specific best practice for each school. In this way, we can offer examples of how a particular practice plays out at an individual site.

In addition to the school profiles, the guide includes resources based upon local, regional and national sources, providing more information on a given best practice. Finally the guide and DVD are intended to complement one another. The DVD provides the personal stories of those in the trenches helping do the work, while the guide flushes these stories out and includes links to additional resources. Powerful outcomes will result from using the guide and DVD together.



Some of the key findings across schools reviewed include:

• Culture of high expectations and accountability for all students.

The message in every school is that all kids are capable of meeting high expectations and when some begin to fall short, resources and support are leveraged to help them get back on track. Most schools implement (carrot and stick) techniques to reward students who complete their work on time and demonstrate academic progress and good character. Those who fail to demonstrate these traits are required to do homework during their lunch period, to report for mandatory tutoring, to attend a Saturday school program, or to give up an elective class period to finish work in core academic areas. Finally, teachers are held to high standards and strive to reach goals as a team, supporting and encouraging each other along the way in small, professional learning communities.

• Targeted assessments and intensive use of data to guide instruction.

These schools love data from the principals down to the students. In fact, they embrace the notion that thorough collection and analysis of student assessment data is central to their success.

• Individualized support for struggling students.

The approaches used can be summed up in two key ways: 1) A focused use of data to identify particular areas of academic deficiency; and 2) the mandatory nature of prescribed interventions for students, which often involve the student having to forego a more enjoyable elective class. Failure is not tolerated, and those who fail will have to miss popular activities until they can demonstrate required academic proficiency.

• Active engagement of teachers in school leadership and decision-making.

Teachers are leaders in every school visited. They are involved in key aspects of decision-making, such as hiring and training new staff members, reviewing data and designing intervention strategies, prioritizing professional development needs and taking responsibility for defining and carrying out the school's educational vision.

• Substantial time for collaborative planning and options for professional development.

A strong commitment to ensuring that all teachers have time to work collaboratively to review data and to discuss curricular requirements and lesson planning strategies to ensure that performance objectives are met. To provide teachers common time to plan together, school leaders are willing to use whatever creative means that are at their disposal - from "early release Fridays" at South Park Elementary School to establishing "duty free" rules at Hotchkiss High School so that teachers can use time that might otherwise be spent monitoring the lunchroom to plan in teams.



• Commitment to core academics and standards but not at the expense of other important learning in the arts and humanities.

A common complaint about schools today is too much "teaching to the test" and not enough opportunity for kids to learn through the arts and humanities. While it is evident that each of these schools takes the CSAP very seriously and focuses considerable time and attention to ensure that kids are prepared for such tests, they also noted the importance of other types of learning.

• Stable and consistent leadership.

Principals in most of these buildings have been leading their schools for at least five years. This has given them an opportunity to hire and train staff members who are aligned with their vision. It also means that the school leaders have the institutional knowledge to understand what has and has not worked in the particular school setting, and to implement and sustain reforms over time.

• Small learning communities.

Most of the schools are very small, and the ones that are somewhat larger have organized themselves into smaller learning communities. Smaller schools and learning communities allow students, teachers and school leaders to get to know each other well.

• Flexibility to use resources to support student needs and reinforce school culture.

A majority of these schools are given a significant amount of resources over which the principal has discretion. While there is considerable variation in how schools allocate their resources, all are achieving success. In other words, there is not necessarily a single "recipe" for how to organize a school in order to achieve positive student outcomes. However, the more flexibility school leaders have over discretionary dollars, the better equipped they are to meet student needs.

• Economically integrated student bodies.

High performance was more likely to occur in economically integrated schools than it is in schools with higher concentrations of poor students. In the schools studied, the average percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch was around 65% in the elementary schools, 35% in the middle schools, and around 40% in the high school.

APA analyzed reading, writing and math scale scores\* on the Colorado CSAP from 2004-2006 and then ranked students' average three-year results by school. In order to determine which schools were closing the achievement gap, APA examined the scores only for students who qualified for free or reduced price lunch and ranked these students' three-year averages by school. In a select group of schools, the FRL population beat the state average for three years running in at least two grades and subject areas (these schools are listed at the end of the guide). In other words, these were schools that had not only closed the achievement gap, but reversed it.



Students from lower socio-economic homes were scoring higher than the "average" Colorado student.

Schools that did not have three consecutive years of data were not included in this study (e.g., schools that opened in 2006 or 2007). And schools that didn't have data for a particular grade or subject area were also eliminated (e.g., the number of students who took the exam was so small the data is not shared for privacy purposes).

Once the eight sample schools were identified, site visits were conducted at each school, which included interviewing school leaders and other key staff members.

A copy of the full report, "Profiles of Success," can be found at [www.dkfoundation.org/reports](http://www.dkfoundation.org/reports).

\* A scale score is the actual score that a student received on the CSAP not to be confused with the proficiency level that a student reaches. Scale scores are typically converted into proficiency scores for the purposes of public reporting (e.g., proficiency scores are reported as advanced, proficient, partially proficient, etc.).  
Note: 3rd and 4th grade students did not take the math CSAP in 2005 so results for those grades are for reading and writing only.

School Profiles

Introduction

Following are short profiles of the eight schools featured in this best practices guide. Elements of each of the 10 best practices identified in this guide were found in every school. In fact, a combination of these practices working together is clearly required to generate positive results in closing student achievement gaps. For purposes of the following profiles, however, we focus on a specific best practice for each school. In this way, we can offer examples of how a particular practice plays out at an individual site. We also offer links to further research, data and information about the best practice.

10 Best Practices Topics

- 1.) Culture of high expectations and accountability for all students**
  - Determine what high expectation means for your school
  - Hold yourselves and students accountable
  - Do what it takes to perform at your highest level
  - Accelerate student learning whenever possible
  - Meet with parents and students to engage them in desired learning outcomes
  - Create family support teams - teachers with parents as a team on interventions
  - Develop multiple interventions
  - Recognize students when they do well
- 2.) Targeted assessments and intensive use of data to guide instruction**
  - Don't make excuses, look for reasons
  - Compare assessment data by and between teachers
  - Review multiple sources of data to build assessment portfolio
  - When a student is struggling, create personalized intervention plan
  - Use early screening to determine student learning baseline and possible deficits
  - Share student test scores with them so they know how they did
- 3.) Individualized support for struggling students**
  - Engage every student in the school regardless if you have that student in your class
  - Believe in your students
  - Understand what makes a student tick and what gets them excited about learning
  - Give students multiple extended learning opportunities to master skills
  - Tailor interventions to each students needs
  - Pair struggling students with students who are successful in that subject
  - Organize students in small learning groups
- 4.) Active engagement of teachers in school leadership and decision-making**
  - Recognize that all teachers are leaders
  - Form a leadership committee and meet frequently. Meetings should provide direction and feedback on school's achievement efforts
  - Create a professional learning committee to master plan concentrated periods of time for teachers to work collaboratively
  - Create small working teams and team leaders who can make decisions on targeted student interventions
  - Have veteran teachers mentor new teachers
  - Have various ways to communicate with staff and students on achievement

- 5.) Substantial time for collaborative planning and options for professional development**
  - Create a common plan time when teachers can meet
  - Establish duty free school - the only duty the teacher has is to work with the kids during school hours
  - Use flexible school days - extended after school hours so students have extra time to work with teachers
  - Use early release days to give teachers extra time for teacher enrichment and collaboration
  - Create dedicated professional development days for teachers to learn new teaching techniques
- 6.) Commitment to core academics and standards but not at the expense of other important learning in the arts and humanities**
  - Incorporate a strong elective program which may include AG, music, performing arts, language, fitness, etc. to keep kids engaged
  - Give students an opportunity to get to know each other through arts and humanities classes
  - Integrate arts and humanities into the core curriculum
- 7.) Stable and consistent leadership**
  - Have a committed group of successful teacher leaders that have the resources to serve kids well
  - Create a mission, then support that mission relentlessly
  - Take ownership in the school and its students
- 8.) Small learning communities**
  - Break down large classrooms into small groups based on student needs
  - Be prescriptive to tackle student weaknesses
  - Invest yourself in the kids and they will invest in their learning
- 9.) Flexibility to use resources to support student needs and reinforce school culture**
  - Use schools funds in a way that best supports your students
  - When budgets are tight, work with what you have and concentrate on the core values
  - Create community partnerships with area businesses. Ask them to donate resources, time and other needs your school might have
  - Apply for grants
- 10.) Economically integrated student bodies**
  - Mix struggling students with advanced students. They will learn from their peers
  - Pair older students with younger students for different learning environments and discussion groups
  - Look for opportunities to blend students to create extended learning between students
  - Everyone's perspectives and experiences are appreciated



# South Park Elementary School

Pueblo, Colorado

Profile: South Park Elementary School  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 68%  
Number of Students Served: 378  
School District: Pueblo City Schools



## South Park Elementary: A Small School with Big Results

South Park Elementary is a small neighborhood school in Pueblo City Schools serving 378 children in grades Pre-5. Located in southern Colorado, Pueblo has an estimated population of just under 104,000 people. Pueblo City Schools district serves approximately 18,000 students in the city of Pueblo, and South Park is one of 22 elementary schools located in the district.

The school follows the district's curriculum, and teachers describe the educational program as "traditional" with a focus on teaching students what they need to know to reach state standards and expectations. What helps facilitate the school's success, however, is its ability to take advantage of its small size to identify and create tailored interventions to meet specific student needs.

In fact, teachers use early dismissal days each Friday to review data and identify kids that need extra support. A variety of assessments are used to gauge student learning in both literacy and mathematics (e.g., DIBELS, Lindamood-Bell, Successmaker) and every two weeks data is reviewed to examine student progress and make adjustments to student interventions. This emphasis on data along with the small size of the school mean that South Park teachers are keenly aware of each student's academic progress throughout the school year. For those who struggle, teachers are able to effectively prescribe and execute appropriate interventions.

The school is also strengthened by offering additional programs and services to its students. For instance, a half-day preschool program for four-year-olds and funding for a full-day kindergarten program help prepare students for school at the front-end, and an after-school program now offered through teacher volunteers provides additional focused support for those falling behind. By offering such programs along with an intimate, data-driven student focus, the school further promotes the idea that when it comes to education, bigger is not always better.



Cary Palumbo, Principal

"We don't care who they are, we don't care if they're low socioeconomic or higher socioeconomic, we're prescriptive to whatever their needs are. So every kid gets what they need."



## Additional Resources on Small Schools:

### Small School Cost:

The "Dollars & Sense II" report from the KnowledgeWorks Foundation makes the case that small schools can improve student performance and be cost effective at the same time. It also offers an analysis of the budgets of 25 effective small schools from across the nation with various education styles and diverse student populations.

[http://www.goodsmallschools.org/resources/dollars\\_sense2.pdf](http://www.goodsmallschools.org/resources/dollars_sense2.pdf)

A Web site designed as an accompanying piece to the Dollars and Sense report allows users to search content online by specific school or strategy and provides original school site visit reports.

<http://www.goodsmallschools.org/>

### Lessons From Leading Small Schools:

This report from Education Resource Strategies summarizes key findings from case studies of nine small urban high schools across the country. The report explores how these high-performing schools organize their resources and money, and how they take advantage of their small size to improve student performance.

[http://www.educationresourcestrategies.org/documents/FINALREPORTSTRATEGICDESIGNERS\\_5-19.pdf](http://www.educationresourcestrategies.org/documents/FINALREPORTSTRATEGICDESIGNERS_5-19.pdf)

## Key Elements to their Success:

- "Data Fridays" (early dismissal each Friday) are used to identify students needing extra support and services.
- Staff review data every two weeks to examine progress and make adjustments to interventions based on what the data show.
- Value-added assessments are used by teacher cohorts to determine connections - and disconnections - between teachers and student results.
- Teachers use a variety of assessments to gauge student learning in literacy and mathematics (e.g., DIBELS, Lindamood-Bell, Successmaker).
- A half-day preschool program for four-year-olds and funding for full-day kindergarten helps prepare kids at the front end for school and the after-school program provides additional focused support for those falling behind.

## Other Resources on School Size:

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has funded numerous projects to support the development of small schools across the country. Research and lessons learned from this work are provided on the foundation's Web site.

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/Education/ResearchAndEvaluation/Research/SchoolSize.htm>

The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities has a Web page dedicated to providing resources on school size and small schools.

<http://www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm>

A Web site from Education Commission of the States offers links to a series of data and other publications that address school size policy issues.

<http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=105>





# Valley View K-8

Mapleton, Colorado

Profile: Valley View K-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 62%  
Number of Students Served: 434  
School District: Mapleton Public Schools



## Valley View K-8: Encouraging Teachers to be Leaders

Valley View is a K-8, 434 student school in the Mapleton School District (a 6,000 student school district located on the outskirts of Denver). Since its inception, the school has been known as the "back to basics" school in the district. It provides a "traditional, structured environment that emphasizes discipline, academic achievement and personal integrity." Students recite the pledge of allegiance every morning and the same structure and routines are present across all grades and classrooms.

One of the key elements to the school's success is its long history of involving teachers in key aspects of operating the school. In fact, the school was started by a group of teachers and continues to be run for the most part by teachers, some of whom have been around for about a third of the school's 60-year existence. This history manifests itself in the creation of a strong culture of including teachers in important school programs and decision making.

For instance, teachers at Valley View are given wide latitude and control over the school's induction program for new teachers. As a result, all new hires go through an extensive induction process designed and run by veterans in the building. This program quickly and effectively initiates all new hires into the culture and expectations of the school, and provides them with a built-in network of experienced teacher support.

The emphasis on shared leadership now permeates the fabric of the school, and teachers continually emphasize their sense of responsibility not just for students in their own classes, but for all students in the school. Teachers also emphasize the importance of personal relationships with students and colleagues, and a shared sense of responsibility with the principal for ensuring the smooth operation of the school. This strong feeling of ownership over the success of the school provides Valley View with an exceptionally motivated group of educators who have found ways to continually replenish their ranks with new teachers who uphold similar educational values and ideals.



Susan Gerhart, Principal

"When they come to our doors, the playing field is leveled for them. We do whatever it takes to ensure every student's success."

## Additional Resources on Engaging Teachers in School Decision making:

### Articles and Essays:

The September 2007 issue of *Educational Leadership* from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development offers a series of articles and essays on the role of teachers as leaders in their schools.  
<http://ascd.typepad.com/blog/2007/09/september-el.html>

This article from *Education Administration Quarterly*, discusses research around teacher empowerment in the context of an evaluation study of student achievement in select middle schools.  
<http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/whoy/empowerment.pdf>

### A Toolkit for Empowering Teachers:

A "Teacher Working Conditions Toolkit," organized in part by the Center for Teaching Quality, contains a section on empowerment that focuses on providing information and recommendations designed to help schools and districts engage and empower their teachers.  
<http://www.teacherworkingconditions.org/empowerment/index.html>

### Lessons from a National Study

The U.S. Department of Education put forth several suggestions for building a school culture that nurtures staff collaboration and participation in decision making.  
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reform/pt2d.html>



### Related Book Titles

*Who Controls Teachers' Work? Power and Accountability in America's Schools.* This book by Richard M. Ingersoll draws on large national surveys as well as wide-ranging interviews with high school teachers and administrators to probe the degree to which teachers feel they have control over their own work.  
<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog/INGWHO.html>

*Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Helping Teachers Develop as Leaders, Second Edition.* This book presents research and examples of teacher leadership offering practical tips for educators and tools for self-assessment.  
<http://www.corwinpress.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book19240>

### Key Elements to their Success:

- Valley View was started by a group of teachers and continues to be run for the most part by teachers, some of whom have been around for about one-third of the school's 60-year existence.
- All new teachers go through an extensive induction program run by veteran teachers in the building which quickly initiates new hires into the culture and expectations of the school.
- The school's vision, culture and expectations for all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers and administrators) are clearly laid out in the school's handbook.
- Extended-day programming is offered for students who are falling behind.
- All staff members have been trained on Alpine Achievement and "look at data constantly."
- As a school of choice, Valley View has had autonomy over such things as curriculum and school day. Autonomy to choose and stick with the curriculum and instructional strategy that supports the school's vision and culture was unanimously seen as the key to their success.



# Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences

Pueblo, Colorado

Profile: Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences K-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 67%  
Number of Students Served: 350  
School District: Pueblo City Schools



## The Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences: Melding Academics, Arts, and Humanities

With more than a decade in operations, the Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences (PSAS) is one of the oldest charter schools in Colorado. Chartered by Pueblo City Schools and run in partnership with Colorado State University, PSAS currently serves around 350 students in grades K-8.

As the school's moniker suggests, PSAS has built a name for itself by emphasizing not only core academics, but also by placing a strong emphasis on the arts. In fact, the school's educational program emphasizes teaching via seminars that integrate the arts, foreign language and humanities with core academic subjects. To support this work, the school has put together a strong team of experts who focus on core academics such as reading and math as well as a rich variety of arts and humanities such as foreign languages, performing and visual arts and instrumental and choral music. To be sure, integration of the arts into the school's central curriculum is not the only secret to PSAS' success in closing the achievement gap. School leaders cite a variety of factors for their school's effectiveness, including reliance on a national Paideia educational program that provides support and training for teachers; the provision of up to two hours of teacher planning time per day, including time to work jointly with grade and content-level peers; a commitment to community service; and a consistent focus on student assessment data. However, the school's strong emphasis on ensuring all students are fully exposed to the arts is clearly a defining trait and is a key reason for its success in educating students to reach state performance expectations.



Cheryl Gomez, Principal

"Everything that we are doing right now is completely research-based, including the Paideia philosophy, which is out of the University of North Carolina."

## Additional Resources on Arts in Education:

**Arts Policy Database:** The Arts Education Partnership has developed an online database containing the latest information on arts education state policies and practices. Using an annual survey of arts education personnel in state education agencies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the database allows users to research and compare state policies on eight key policy topics, including: 1) arts education mandates; 2) arts education state standards; 3) arts education assessment requirements; 4) arts requirements for high school graduation; 5) arts requirements for college admissions; 6) licensure requirements for non-arts teachers; 7) licensure requirements for arts teachers; and 8) continuing education requirements for arts teachers.  
<http://www.aep-arts.org/database/index.htm>

**The Impact of the Arts on Student Achievement:** The report "Critical Evidence: How the ARTS Benefit Student Achievement," discusses what current research has to say about the impact of arts exposure on student achievement. According to the report, multiple studies have shown a correlation between increased exposure to arts courses in school and higher SAT verbal and math scores. The report also outlines research findings linking arts exposure to increases in student reading and language skills, math skills, general thinking skills, social skills and motivation to learn.  
<http://www.nasaa-arts.org/publications/critical-evidence.shtml>



The Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Council on the Arts have conducted a first-of-its-kind, statewide study that sheds new light on what public schools are doing well in the area of arts education and where they must improve. The results will benchmark progress in years to come. Colorado is one of the only three states that have conducted similar comprehensive studies of arts education in public schools. The study, which will be released in late September 2008, explores the link between the arts in public schools and student achievement.  
<http://www.coloarts.org>

**More information:**  
Further information, research and materials on the arts in education are available through the Arts Education Partnership Web site at:  
<http://www.aep-arts.org/>

## Key Elements to their Success:

- All faculty members and families have a voice about important decisions affecting the school community. A representative group of stakeholders (parents, teachers, school leader and support staff) participate in all hiring decisions.
- PSAS has a strong team of experts who focus on core academics (reading, math) as well as the arts and humanities (e.g., foreign language, performing and visual arts, instrumental and choral music, community service).
- Students take Success for All testing every eight weeks. Four full-time specialists examine these data results and design individualized plans for kids who are below grade level or on the bubble (close to jumping from one proficiency level to the next). Specialists teach small groups of kids, work with teachers to share data and discuss instructional strategies, and conduct professional development.
- The school day is up to two hours longer than in other district schools.
- Students receive additional tutoring in whatever subject necessary (core subjects and electives). Tutoring may occur during the day, after school or before school. Teachers work on a staggering schedule to cover the longer day (different start and finish times).
- All teachers get 80 to 120 minutes of planning time each day, including joint planning time with their grade and content-level peers. Staff development and common time for planning is a central component and large budget item for the school.
- PSAS also raises a significant amount of funding on top of their regular per pupil operating dollars. Through student fees, grant raising and other contributions, the school raised an additional \$500 per student in 2007.



# Cedaredge Middle School

Cedaredge, Colorado

Profile: Cedaredge 6-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 45%  
Number of Students Served: 226  
School District: Delta County Joint School District



## Cedaredge Middle School: Autonomy Enhances Flexibility and Performance

*Cedaredge is a small middle school of 226 students, grades 6-8, in Delta County, a rural community on Colorado's western slope, 300 miles southwest of Denver, comprised of about 30,000 people.*

*A key aspect of the Delta County Joint School District's philosophy is to provide principals with autonomy over a number of key decision-making areas, and to expect positive results in return. Individual schools are, for example, responsible for choosing their own curriculum and hiring their staff. The three schools in Cedaredge respond to this freedom by working together to decide on the best curriculum to meet their needs and by developing their own scope and sequence for delivering curricular materials.*

*Beyond curricular decisions, school principals in the district also are given significant discretion over their budgets and hiring of staff. At Cedaredge Middle School, the school is given between \$50,000 and \$60,000 in discretionary dollars that the principal uses to meet specific school-level needs.*

*With regard to hiring, Principal Todd Markley has developed his own strategy for finding candidates that best meet the needs of his staff and he often attends job fairs in other states looking for the best possible match. Because the district also gives schools the primary responsibility for mentoring new teachers, Cedaredge has developed its own mentoring program, which Markley credits as a key reason for his teachers' and students' success.*

*The atmosphere of autonomy extends to the classroom level at Cedaredge where instead of micromanaging, the principal's philosophy is to lay out clear expectations and allow teachers to get their work done. Teachers are also given the opportunity to prepare classroom budgets and to make requests to the principal that justify these budgets. These requests help Markley make informed decisions about how to best utilize his discretionary dollars. Working together in this fashion, the school is able to maximize the flexibility provided by the district, and to encourage high performance and accountability from its staff and students.*



Todd Markley, Principal

“Relationships are huge in middle school. It's not about standardized testing. It's about building relationships with students.”

## Additional Resources on School-Level Autonomy:

### Articles and Papers:

This paper from the RAND Corporation argues that the time is ripe for districts to work towards providing schools with higher levels of autonomy, including decision-making authority over curricular choices and budgeting.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2005/RAND\\_OP\\_153.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2005/RAND_OP_153.pdf)

This article from Education Week addresses the role that autonomy plays in school improvement after Massachusetts' decision to offer charter-like freedom to four of its lowest-performing schools.  
<http://www.ccebos.org/edweek.autonomymovement.3.16.07.htm>

This working paper examines what both research and experience say are the eight key elements of a successful school-based management strategy.  
[http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/publications/brigg\\_sandwohlstetter1999.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/cegov/publications/brigg_sandwohlstetter1999.pdf)



### Case Study:

This paper from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education provides a detailed case study of the efforts of a 13,000-student district in the Pacific Northwest to move from a system of centralized budget management to one reliant on school site-based budgeting.  
<http://cpre.wceruw.org/papers/Cordell%20Place%20SF%203-00.pdf>

### Other Resources:

The North Central Regional Education Laboratory offers several links for more information about site-based decision making, as well as case examples of school districts that have implemented this model.  
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go100.htm>

## Key Elements to their Success:

- The district gives the principal considerable flexibility in hiring staff and allocating discretionary dollars (between \$50,000-\$60,000) towards specific school-level needs.
- The school is small and has an intimate, family-style atmosphere where everyone knows each other. Teachers know their students well and have a manageable group of kids to work with each day.
- Instead of micromanaging, the principal's philosophy is to lay out clear expectations and to give teachers autonomy to get the work done. The principal does spend time in new teachers' classrooms several times per week coaching and supporting them.
- The school's motto is "stay on track 10 out of 10," which means, plan for 10 days, teach 10 days, no days off, no breaks." This motto applies to students as well, and those who receive low grades (Ds and Fs) are required to opt-out of an elective and report for tutoring.
- About 10% of students participate in a reading enrichment program focused on vocabulary and reading comprehension. Once these students are back at grade level, they can return to their elective classes. For advanced students, an accelerated, computer-based math program provides opportunities to properly challenge themselves.



# Carson Middle School

Fort Carson, Colorado

Profile: Carson Middle School 6-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 35%  
Number of Students Served: 520  
School District: Fountain-Fort Carson  
School District Eight



## Carson Middle School: Focused on Using Data to Drive Improvement

Carson Middle School is located on the grounds of the Fort Carson military base near Colorado Springs and serves 520 students in grades 6-8. It is part of the Fountain-Fort Carson School District which serves about 6,000 students, K-12. Carson is a liberal arts school that teaches core academic subjects in conjunction with the arts and humanities. A standards-aligned curriculum guides the content to be covered in each class.

One key reason for the school's success in closing the achievement gap is its emphasis on data and assessments to measure progress and gauge results. Students participate in monthly assessments that are correlated with the CSAP. "Response to Intervention" and leadership teams meet regularly with teams of teachers to share assessment data and to develop plans on how to respond to individual students' needs and/or modify instruction in order to improve performance.

But the emphasis on data does not stop with just the teachers. At Carson, students are also responsible for setting personal performance goals and for keeping a data book that tracks their performance over the school year. Students check in every one to two weeks with teachers on progress in meeting their goals and share this information with parents at conferences. Those who are falling behind are required to attend mandatory after-school tutoring. This after-school tutoring is further supported by using discretionary funding to pay for a bus to transport students home after the tutoring is finished.

Despite its high performance, the school continues to innovate and find new ways to use data to improve itself. This past year a new pilot project was started using writing as a litmus test to track longitudinal academic growth for about 20 students per grade. If successful, this program will be expanded to the entire student body.



Steve Jerman, Principal

"You first have to decide and come together on a common vision, a denominator about what high expectation is."

## Additional Resources on Use of Data to Improve Performance:

### Using Longitudinal Data to Improve Performance

This policy brief examines ways that school and district leaders can use longitudinal data systems and specific types of assessments to improve overall performance. It also provides several case studies of school districts which have implemented such systems.  
[http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/MeetingsDQC\\_Quarterly\\_Issue\\_Brief\\_092506.pdf](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/MeetingsDQC_Quarterly_Issue_Brief_092506.pdf)

### Data Systems Guide for School and District Leaders:

This guide written by Learning Point Associates provides information and advice to district and school-level education leaders who are thinking about acquiring an electronic data system. The guide also offers a series of questions to consider before designing a data system that can be best tailored to a district's specific performance goals.  
<http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/datause/DataReadinessTool.pdf>

### Lessons Learned From Districts:

This book from the American Association of School Administrators provides insights into the challenges and successes of educators in districts of all sizes that are working to improve how data is used to promote student achievement.  
<http://www.aasa.org/files/PDFs/Publications/UsingDataToImproveSchools.pdf>

### Other Resources on Using Data to Guide Instruction:

The Data Quality Campaign is a national effort to support the use of education data and to implement state longitudinal data systems to improve student achievement. The campaign's Web site offers a variety of resources on this topic.  
[http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/about\\_us/](http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/about_us/)



The American Association of School Administrators' Web site on assessment and accountability offers links to numerous articles and reports on the use of data to improve performance.  
<http://www.aasa.org/edissues/content.cfm?ItemNumber=968&snItemnumber=2132>



### Key Elements to their Success:

- Teachers are provided with pacing maps and specific objectives to cover each quarter. They are held accountable for covering this content by the school principal who conducts about 30 informal "spot observations" (walkthroughs) in each classroom per year and provides immediate feedback to teachers following the observation.
- Response to Intervention and leadership teams meet regularly with teams of teachers to share assessment data and to develop plans on how to respond to individual students' needs and/or modify instruction in order to improve performance.
- Students are responsible for setting goals and keeping a data book that tracks their performance over the school year. They check in every one to two weeks with their teacher on progress in meeting their goals and share this information with parents at conferences. Students who are falling behind are required to attend mandatory after-school tutoring.
- Discretionary funding pays for a bus to transport students home after their tutoring. About 30 students at a time with learning gaps are identified to attend a mandatory academic support class instead of an elective.



# Janitell Junior High School

Widefield, Colorado

Profile: Janitell Junior High School 7-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 30%  
Number of Students Served: 494  
School District: Widefield School District 3



## Janitell Junior High School: A Core Philosophy of Teacher Collaboration and Professionalism

Janitell Junior High School serves 494 students in grades 7-8. It is one of three junior high schools in Widefield School District 3. Janitell is a traditionally organized junior high school where students attend a series of 50-minute classes each day. The school uses the district's standards-based curriculum and the district provides each school building with scope and sequencing calendars that detail the standards to be covered each month over the course of the year.

A top reason cited by school leaders for Janitell's success is the high level of collaboration which takes place within the school's departments and the ability of teachers to work together collaboratively to build instructional strategies around the needs of specific students. To facilitate this collaboration, teachers are organized into grade-level professional learning communities and meet daily during common planning times to examine data, discuss individual students and plan lessons. To facilitate these learning communities, the school's schedule is organized so that teachers of the same subject have the same off period each day. The result is that teachers learn to work effectively in teams and are on the same page with regard to lesson planning and design. Teacher teams are also used to provide input on key school decisions, including participation in departmental hiring.

Teachers also have the opportunity for input into their own professional development. In addition to providing nine development days throughout the course of the school year, teachers can sign up for summer professional development projects tailored to their individual needs. After presenting their work on these projects, teachers can earn credits both towards recertification and salary increases. This process helps reinforce the school's and district's vision for treating teachers as professionals who are in control over their careers, and it strengthens the overall capacity of the school's staff to deliver more effective instruction.



Aaron Hoffman, Principal

"We offer lots of electives for kids to buy into and find some different forms of excitement in education."

## Additional Resources on Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development:

### Background and Overview of Professional Learning

**Communities:** This article from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement provides an overview of professional learning communities, how they can be created, and roadblocks to their successful implementation.

[http://www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=436&Itemid=5](http://www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=436&Itemid=5)



**What the Research Says:** This report from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University provides information on what current research says about the characteristics of effective professional development and professional learning communities for teachers.

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/ProfLearning.pdf>

This publication from the SEDL (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) includes stories and reports of research on how teachers and principals organize as a learning community.

<http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/plc-cha34.pdf>

### Other Resources on Professional Learning Communities:

This Web site provides a variety of resources on the development and implementation of professional learning communities. It also allows the user to find and compare statistics with other schools around the country that have implemented such communities.

<http://www.allthingsplc.info/>



### Key Elements to their Success:

- Teachers are organized into grade-level professional learning communities and meet daily during common planning times to examine data, discuss individual students and plan lessons.
- Either the principal or the assistant principal spend time in each class daily and provide teachers with input and feedback on their observations.
- Students take the Tungsten assessment monthly to measure progress in learning material required by the CSAP. Data from these tests are used to design whole-class interventions when necessary.
- Students are also given "no fail" tests which, if they do not pass, they are required to attend a lunch-time remediation program. Students are not permitted to return to their regular lunch period until the test is passed.



# Hotchkiss High School

Hotchkiss, Colorado

Profile: Hotchkiss 9-12  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 38%  
Number of Students Served: 259  
School District: Delta County Joint School District



## Hotchkiss High School: Leadership Stability Enhances Success

*Hotchkiss High School serves 259 students in grades 9-12 and is located in Delta County, a rural community on Colorado's western slope, 300 miles southwest of Denver, comprised of about 30,000 people.*

*With nine years of experience leading Hotchkiss High School, Principal Michael Beard provides the school with almost a decade of leadership stability that manifests itself in numerous positive ways. He has, for example, hired almost every teacher in the building and, when he interviews prospective new candidates, now knows what to look for to ensure a best fit with the established culture and expectations of his school. This has helped build a strong, positive working relationship across the staff and has led to the creation of an experienced cadre of teachers who feel empowered to work cooperatively with their school leader.*

*For example, working in partnership with teachers, Beard helps decide the focus of each year's professional development program. This ensures that teachers have significant input into the type of training they are given. As a result, staff members are enthusiastic about their training opportunities, and donate several days of their time unpaid each summer for professional development. The stability in leadership and the school's small size also enhance the capacity of the principal and his leadership team to spend significant time working with teachers to analyze student performance data, to visit classrooms every day to provide constructive informal feedback and to cultivate strong, ongoing relationships with students. Taken together, this close interaction between teachers, students and an experienced leader have helped the school forge a consistent culture of high expectations and success.*



Mike Beard, Principal

*"If our teachers need something, all they have to do is come and tell me how this is going to be good for kids?"*

## Additional Resources on Leadership:

### The Impact of Leadership on Student Achievement:

The Education Commission of the States' "Progress of Reform: District and School Leadership," summarizes several reports that address key leadership issues including the impact principals and superintendents have on student learning and the effectiveness of existing professional standards for school leaders. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/58/30/5830.pdf>

### Resources on Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Principals:

The Wallace Foundation has for several years devoted significant resources studying how to develop highly effective school leaders and how to retain such leaders over time. The foundation's leadership Web site provides links to numerous research and analyses of these topics. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/GrantsPrograms/FocusAreas/Programs/EducationLeadership/>

### Leadership Technical Assistance:

The Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform attempts to provide assistance to school and district leaders in developing policies that, among other key priorities, foster leadership stability. The Center provides strategic consultation and targeted advice to district leaders, technical assistance and training to school boards and educators at all levels. <http://www.schlechtycenter.org/index.asp>

## Innovations in Principal Recruitment and Training:

The U.S. Department of Education's "Innovative Pathways to School Leadership" publication examines six programs around the country that recruit and prepare principals in inventive ways. <http://www.ed.gov/admins/recruit/prep/alternative/report.pdf>



## Key Elements to their Success:

- The district gives the principal of Hotchkiss considerable flexibility in hiring staff and allocating discretionary dollars (between \$50,000- \$60,000) towards specific school-level needs.
- Each teacher knows what is expected and visibly identifies in their classroom the outcomes they expect to achieve daily.
- The school's small size allows the principal and assistant principal to spend time in classrooms each day, providing informal feedback to teachers and cultivating strong relationships with students. In partnership with his leadership team (which includes several experienced, lead teachers) the principal decides the focus of the professional development program each year.
- Data plays a central role in the school's planning and all staff members play a role. The school's counselor analyzes assessment data, the principal and teachers meet to review the data and make decisions about extra supports needed for individual kids.
- All students take benchmarking tests in both the fall and spring (MAPs tests) and those who were below grade level in the fall take the test again in the winter. Interventions are weighted toward freshman and sophomore students to ensure that problems are addressed as early as possible in the high school experience.
- Several teachers tutor students who are falling behind, and this tutoring takes the place of an additional class. Selected students are required to attend tutoring in place of an elective.



# Cesar Chavez Academy

Pueblo, Colorado

Profile: Cesar Chavez Academy K-8  
Free & Reduced Lunch: 63%  
Number of Students Served: 1100  
School District: Pueblo City Schools



## Cesar Chavez Academy: Targeting Resources to Help Struggling Students Succeed

*Cesar Chavez is a K-8, 1100 student charter school in Pueblo City Schools. The school is run by a for-profit education management organization (EMO) that also runs a charter high school in Pueblo and two charter schools in Colorado Springs. Like the other schools described in this guide, Cesar Chavez incorporates elements of each of the 10 best practices that contribute to closing the achievement gap for disadvantaged students.*

*One of the school's secrets to success, however, is that it is constantly on the lookout for top-notch teaching talent. And thanks to aggressive and successful fundraising efforts, the school has placed itself in a position where it can afford to hire promising new professionals even when there is no teaching position currently open. Instead, the school has developed a core philosophy of hiring and finding use for new talent whenever it becomes available. When a teacher candidate appears to be a good fit for the school, their talents are immediately put to good use in helping implement one of the school's primary goals: tutoring struggling students to help them succeed academically.*

*Such tutoring plays an essential role in the school's success and has become a mandatory intervention for all students that struggle. To implement this intervention effectively, designated assessment coordinators are responsible for analyzing and sharing data at the beginning of the year and every eight weeks thereafter. Students who are found to be below grade level receive extensive one-on-one tutoring. Those who do not pass assessments are not allowed to attend elective classes until they receive passing grades.*

*Having to forego an enjoyable elective class in this manner acts as a strong incentive for students to work hard during their individual tutoring sessions to get back on track academically. This incentive is made even stronger at the school since many electives, including Mariachi, art and computer classes are created based specifically on parent and student input and interests.*

*By combining tutoring with a variety of other programs including after school activities, curriculum and instructional programs that allow students to work at their own pace, and programs designed to bring the community into the school, Cesar Chavez has found a prescription for helping all its students find success.*

### The Cesar Chavez Academy Educational Philosophy

*"All children come into the world with a unique set of talents and resources that should be built upon to enhance learning."*

## Additional Resources on Programs Targeted to Help Struggling Students:

### Intervention Strategies:

This publication offers a guide to school principals for implementing interventions for struggling readers.  
[http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/34/e9/7a.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/34/e9/7a.pdf)

### Extended Day/Year Programs:

This report from the Council of Chief State School Officers profiles five summer school programs that have contributed to improved student achievement in high-poverty schools. The report shares common elements of success that states and districts should consider when implementing summer programs.  
<http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDFs/Summer%20Learning.pdf>

### Tutoring:

This study reviews the effectiveness of five different one-to-one tutoring programs designed to prevent early student reading failure.  
<http://www.successforall.net/images/pdfs/tutoring.htm>

### Other Resources:

The Afterschool Alliance provides a variety of information about the positive benefits of after-school programs.  
[http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after\\_out.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/after_out.cfm)

The Education Commission of the States provides extensive resources on its Web site devoted to extended day programs, mentoring, tutoring, and summer school.  
<http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=43>



## Key Elements to their Success:

- The school has a charismatic leader who has hired a very talented, devoted group of teachers and teacher leaders. The Cesar Chavez approach to staffing is that it is "always hiring" - if they find a teacher who appears to be a good fit for the school, they find a place for that person regardless of whether a position is currently open.
- Cesar Chavez has created smaller learning communities within the school that are led by experienced instructional leaders. Within each of these learning communities, teachers work together under the leadership of their academic director to achieve individual and school-wide goals.
- Teachers have two planning periods and an hour lunch per day.
- Assessment coordinators are responsible for analyzing and sharing data at the beginning of the year and every eight weeks thereafter.
- Students who are below grade level receive extensive one-on-one tutoring. Those who do not pass assessments are not allowed to attend electives until they receive passing grades.
- The school also operates under a different calendar than others in the district and has a 210-day school calendar (175 teaching days, 35 professional development days).
- Teachers work about 30 more days a year than other district teachers, and the added time is mostly devoted to professional development over the summer.

Schools where students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch closed the achievement gap across three consecutive years in at least two grades (2004-2006)

School District	School	Percent of Population Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch
Academy	Mountain Ridge Middle School	12%
Archuleta County	Pagosa Springs High School	27%
Delta County	Cedaredge Middle School	45%
	Hotchkiss High School	38%
Denver County	CEC Middle College Program	67%
Falcon	Ridgeview Elementary School	15%
	Stetson Elementary School	12%
Fountain - Fort Carson	Aragon Elementary School	61%
	Jordahl Elementary School	27%
	Carson Middle School	35%
	Fountain Ft. Carson High School	23%
Garfield RE-2	Cactus Valley Elementary School	43%
Harrison	James Irwin Charter Middle School	21%
Jefferson County	Bear Creek Elementary School	19%
	Falcon Bluffs Middle School	9%
Mapleton	Valley View K-8	62%
Mesa County Valley	Orchard Ave. Elementary School	41%
	Taylor Elementary School	41%
Monte Vista	Monte Vista Senior High	61%
North Conejos	La Jara Elementary School	67%
	Manassa Elementary School	72%
Pueblo City Schools	Belmont Elementary School	61%
	Beulah Heights Elementary School	75%
	Carlile Elementary School	77%
	Cesar Chavez Academy	63%
	Columbian Elementary School	91%
	Goodnight Elementary School	63%
	Heritage Elementary School	64%
	Highland Park Elementary School	55%
	Minnequa Elementary School	89%
	Pueblo School for Arts & Sciences	67%
	South Park Elementary School	68%
	Sunset Park Elementary School	40%
Pueblo District 70	Sierra Vista Elementary School	29%
	Sky View Middle School	23%
	South Mesa Elementary School	49%
Trinidad	Trinidad High School	43%
Widefield	Janitell Junior High School	30%
Woodland Park	Woodland Park Middle School	21%

Featured in the report

School District Breaks

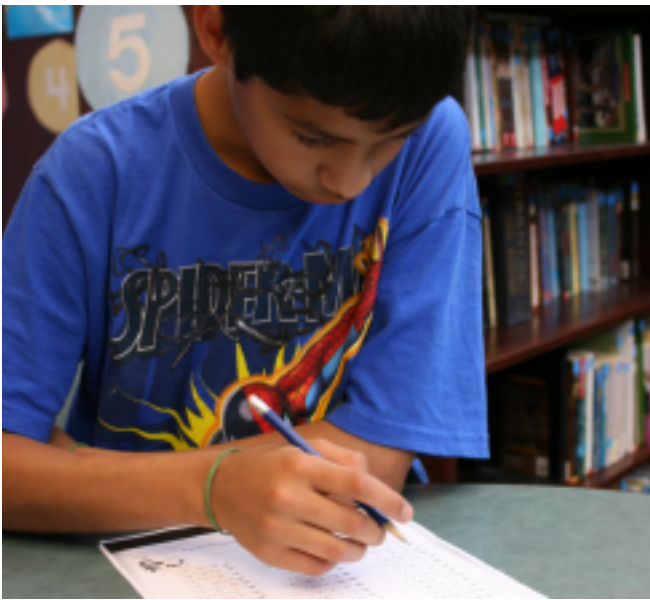


**The Center for Education Performance Assessment**

The Center for Education Performance Assessment's work in schools with 90% proficiency, 90% poverty and 90% minority students found common principles across these schools. Common principals include a laser-like focus on academic achievement through the use of data, intervention strategies and multiple opportunities for improvement; clear curriculum choices (often core subjects being taught in place of electives), emphasis on non-fiction writing (because writing crosses curricular areas), and teacher collaboration (with a specific focus on collaborative scoring of student work to ensure accuracy/validity).

**The Century Foundation**

The Century Foundation's work on economically integrated schools indicates that low income students perform better in schools that are majority middle-class populations than they do in schools with high concentrations of low-income students due to positive influences of peers, parents and teachers in higher socio-economic schools. The U.S. Department of Education identified similar results in its "Condition of Education" report (2002). When APA conducted its analysis to identify schools in Colorado that had closed the achievement gap, none of the schools in the state with high concentrations of poverty emerged as having closed the gap for at least three years. Among the schools that did make the cut, APA chose those with the highest concentrations of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch.



**WestEd**

WestEd found common elements across a group of charter schools they studied that were closing the achievement gap, including a shared vision and mission among all stakeholders; use of data to ensure students understand and master content; clear expectations and roles for parents; strong leadership and accountability; flexibility to innovate and allocate resources to meet school-level needs; and ongoing professional development of teachers. These findings are very consistent with APA's. One exception is that a few of the school leaders in APA's sample did not have a large degree of autonomy over their resources and indicated the challenges this raised a desire to have more flexibility to utilize resources in ways that better meet the needs of their students.

**McRel**

McRel did an extensive review of the literature on high performing, high-poverty schools and a study on elements found in high poverty, high performing schools compared to high-poverty, low performing schools. They found that high-performing schools were more likely than low-performing schools to possess the following characteristics: teachers with a high sense of responsibility for student learning, including an expectation that all students will achieve at high levels; engagement of teachers as leaders and decision-makers who work in a highly developed work culture focused on continuous improvement; focused professional development on meeting the needs of diverse learners and in core content areas; use of multiple assessments and data to inform adaptive and individualized instructional practices to meet students' needs; clear goals and expectations for students with consistent rewards and punishments for student behavior; highly challenging content and cognitive demand in class work; clear expectations for parental involvement; and an effective instructional leader.



**The Donnell-Kay Foundation**

The Donnell-Kay Foundation conducted an in-house synthesis of selected literature on high-performing, high-poverty school models operating multiple schools in urban communities (e.g., charter management organizations, school networks). This review of the literature highlighted key attributes of these schools, including schools that were small, safe, and personalized; school cultures focused on academic achievement and high expectations; rich (standards-based) curriculum delivered through rigorous instruction; strong instructional leadership; extensive professional development for teachers and principals; more time on task including longer school days/years; meaningful assessments and use of data to drive instruction; flexibility over resources at school sites and more dollars directed into classrooms; partnerships with parents and caregivers; and student voice and participation. The only finding here that did not surface much in APA's work was the last one addressing student voice.

**Educational Policy Improvement Center  
(University of Oregon)**

As part of a recent APA costing out study for the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) located at the University of Oregon conducted a comprehensive review of education research literature from across the country. This review was designed to identify educational strategies that are likely to be effective in schools and to improve student performance. Several strategies identified by EPIC match directly with "The Profiles of Success" findings. These include providing extended-day programming, such as summer school, specifically targeted at students that are not meeting academic standards; adding additional time for teachers to engage in professional development, improve content knowledge and improve teaching strategies; offering a variety of activities, including music, art, school clubs and other activities to keep students engaged in school; ensuring that administrators have the tools they need to effectively run schools; and providing targeted tutoring services, either during or outside of school hours, to ensure that struggling students have additional direct access to instructional support.

High performance in high-poverty schools: 90/90/90 and beyond (D. Reeves, Center for Education Performance Assessment, 2003); Final report; High needs schools, what does it take to beat the odds? (McREL, 2005); K-8 charter schools: Closing the achievement gap (WestEd, 2007); Attributes/elements of high performing schools (research synthesis by K. Knous-Dolan, Donnell-Kay Foundation); Economic school integration: An update (R. Kahlengerg, The Century Foundation, 2002); Pennsylvania State Board of Education Costing Out Study: Evidence Based Method (Research review conducted for APA by the Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2007).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Amy Berk Anderson, Donnell-Kay Foundation  
Susanne Arens, Crystal Peak Design Ltd.  
Dale DeCesare, Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates, Inc.  
Dwight D. Jones, Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education  
Tony Lewis, Executive Director, Donnell-Kay Foundation  
Megan McDermott, CDE Communications Office  
Tanya Price, CDE Chief of Staff  
Mark Stevens, CDE Communications Office

*Special thanks to the Denver Public Library for use of their central library facility.*

Photography/Creative Design: Crystal Peak Design, Ltd.  
Video: Crystal Peak Design, Ltd., and I25 Productions, Inc.

© Colorado Legacy Foundation 2008. All rights reserved.