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Colorado schools earn C in nationwide report card

State ranks 38th in U.S.; low teacher pay hurts score

By [Berny Morson](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/berny-morson/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/berny-morson/>> , Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/berny-morson/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/berny-morson/contact/>>)

Colorado schools rank 38th among the states in a nationwide report card released Wednesday by the newspaper *Education Week*.

Colorado's overall grade was a C, matching the national average. But Colorado was 18th among the 19 states that also received C's.

Drawing down Colorado's score in the 12th annual "Quality Counts" report were low teacher salaries and a lack of coordination between public school programs and college admission requirements.

The state received a D-plus on the teacher issues and a D on the coordination issue.

Colorado education officials and Gov. Bill Ritter have targeted the same problems.

"We're not defensive about this. We find it interesting and rather helpful," said Jo O'Brien, assistant education commissioner for standards and assessment, of the report.

"When we saw we got a D (in one category), even though you want to cringe, we kind of want to say, 'You know what? This is helpful. This is a report that we think has integrity,'" O'Brien said.

"And we would agree it is commensurate with where state legislators and policymakers - and where the Department of Education and the state board (of education) - think we also need to get to work."

"Quality Counts" was prepared by *Education Week*, a national trade journal for school officials, along with the Maryland-based nonprofit Editorial Projects in Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

This year's report places more emphasis on factors involving teacher training and salary - the area in which Colorado received a D-plus - because "we have lots of

research now indicating that high-quality teaching matters more to student achievement than anything else schools do," said Lynn Olson, the *Education Week* editor who headed the "Quality Counts" project.

Because so many categories were revised, this year's grades are not comparable to rankings on previous "Quality Counts" reports, Olson said.

New York, Massachusetts and Maryland led the nation, earning overall grades of B.

At the bottom with grades of D-plus were Nevada, Nebraska, Mississippi, Oregon, Idaho and the District of Columbia.

Colorado received a B - the state's highest grade - in a category called "Chance for Success."

The category includes data on family income, parent education and parent employment, as well as the availability of school programs such as preschool.

But the high rating in that category didn't translate into actual success in the next category - results on national achievement tests. Colorado received only a C-minus for its test results.

That was above the national average in the test results category, which was a dismal D-plus.

Colorado lost points because of the continued gap in test scores between white students and minorities. That problem, too, has been under discussion by state officials.

Colorado ranks 44th in teacher salaries as compared with 18 other professions that require similar levels of education, such as nurses, accountants and technical writers.

Teachers nationally earn 88 cents for every dollar earned by members of the other professions. In Colorado, the figure is 82.8 cents.

"That's not a surprise at all," said Beverly Ingle, president of the Colorado Education Association.

Amendment 23, passed in 2000, guarantees funding increases for education of inflation plus 1 percent. But other states are seeing higher increases, Ingle said.

In addition to salaries, the state's D-plus grade on teacher-related issues was based on a checklist of 50 items, including incentive pay and professional development for teachers already on the job.

Colorado was graded positively on only 18 of the 50 items.

The grade is a measure of state policies, not the competency of the teachers.

For Colorado schools to improve, professional development must be targeted to show teachers how to reach specific groups of students who are failing, Ingle said.

Development must also be specific to the teacher's subject and demonstrate how to use technology to get lessons across, she said.

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Denver Post

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Give our young mothers every chance with school

Editorial

By The Denver Post Editorial Board

Article Last Updated: 01/09/2008 05:57:55 PM MST

Statistics paint a troubling picture of the prospects for a pregnant teenager, particularly where education is concerned.

Only 40 percent of girls who have a child before age 18 will graduate from high school, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

That's why it's so important for Denver Public Schools to develop clear rules about post-partum absences for these vulnerable young women.

The goal should be to give the new mothers time to recover and bond with their babies, but get them back to class in a reasonable time frame.

A Denver Post story by reporter Jeremy P. Meyer said students at East High School presumably are expected at school the day after being released from the hospital. If they stay home, they're given unexcused absences. That's a pretty harsh penalty for young women who are already in a difficult situation.

Last month, two counselors who are University of Colorado students interning at East, and a pregnant teen appeared before the school board to ask for a maternity leave policy for students. They talked about four to six weeks of excused absences, a reasonable time frame.

We would hope to see school administrators do everything possible to bring these girls back to classes so they have a fighting chance of graduating, not painting them as truants.

The further these women go in pursuing an education, the better off their children — and taxpayers — will be. A 2004 study showed teen pregnancy cost taxpayers \$167 million in Colorado. Most of the cost is associated with caring for the children of these young mothers. That includes public health care, child welfare and the criminal justice system. As you might expect, young dropout mothers have lower earning potential in the workforce.

Denver has a distressingly high rate of teen pregnancy. Statistics show that about 55 girls of every 1,000 ages 15 to 17 will become pregnant. Statewide, that number is 24.

Denver's alternative school for seventh to 12th grade girls who are pregnant or are new mothers, Florence Crittenton School, is full and has a waiting list. Given the amount of empty classroom space in DPS, we wonder whether it's possible to use some of the district's surplus space to meet this need.

Superintendent Michael Bennet has asked administrators to look at DPS policies and practices regarding student absences for new mothers. His spokesman said the goal is to devise a policy that spells out how each school should handle such absences.

We look forward to seeing guidelines that are sensitive to the difficulties that come with motherhood, but clearly encourage these young women to return to school. It's good for them, their children and society.

Atlanta Journal

Constitution

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Maternity leave for high school students?

Do absences really matter when there's a child at stake?

By [Theresa Walsh Giarrusso](http://www.ajc.com/health/content/shared-blogs/ajc/parenting/entries/2008/01/10/%09/health/content/shared-blogs/ajc/parenting/entries/2008/01/10/maternity_leave.html) <http://www.ajc.com/health/content/shared-blogs/ajc/parenting/entries/2008/01/10/%09/health/content/shared-blogs/ajc/parenting/entries/2008/01/10/maternity_leave.html> |

Thursday, January 10, 2008, 07:05 AM

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Pregnant students in Denver have asked their high school for at least four weeks of maternity leave “so they can heal, bond with their newborns and not be penalized with unexcused absences,” reports the Denver Post. ([Here is the full story.](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_7899096)) <http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_7899096>

The paper explains that normally Colorado public schools use specialized programs or individual education plans to deal with pregnancy.

“Two counselors from East High School approached the school board last month, saying the policy at their school is unfair and inconsiderate because it forces new moms to return to school the day after being discharged from the hospital or face being charged with unexcused absences,” reports the Post.

“East High School administrators could not be reached for comment over the winter break, but district officials say they are reviewing the policy on absences to make it ‘friendlier’ to new moms, said DPS spokesman Alex Sanchez,” the article says.

The more I thought about this, the more it angered me. Can you imagine being asked to return to an 8-hour day of work after leaving the hospital after giving birth?

First off, you're generally bleeding heavily and your uterus is still contracting. Your breasts are leaking milk. You're exhausted and freaked out. And this little person needs round-the-clock care. Who do they think is going to take care of that baby if the mother goes off to P.E.?

We, as mothers, know how physically and emotionally tough the transition can be after giving birth — much less for a young girl who has no idea what she has gotten herself into.

It's a terrible situation. We need to prevent teen pregnancy, but once it's happened we have to help these young women take care of themselves and their newborns. And I don't think giving them some time off from school to recover and bond with their infant is going to encourage some girl to go out and get pregnant.

So now you know where I'm standing on this. Tell us what you think? Should

schools give maternity leave? How much time?

7 News

Wednesday, January 9, 2008

Convention May Mean Longer Summer Break For Students

Jury Trials Put On Hold For Convention Week

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7NEWS Anchor

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<http://www.newsvine.com/_tools/seed?popoff=0&u=http://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/15016512/detail.html>
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DENVER -- The Democratic National Convention could delay the start of classes for Denver public school students.

The district is examining a proposal that would push the start date back to after the Labor Day holiday.

It would be the first time in seven years that the start date has been pushed back to September.

School officials are conducting an [online survey](http://www.dpsk12.org/calendars/index.shtml) <<http://www.dpsk12.org/calendars/index.shtml>> to see which start date parents, students and teachers like best.

Spokesman Alex Sanchez told 7NEWS that several hundred people have already responded to the survey. The deadline to vote is Friday.

A decision could come next week after the Board of Education hears public comment and receives a briefing from the districts security expert.

The convention is scheduled for Aug. 25-28 at the Pepsi Center in Denver.

An estimated 35,000 people are expected to come to Denver, including thousands of protesters who could clog the streets and stretch the resources of Denver police.

Option one is for classes to resume on Aug. 18 with the school year ending on May 28.

Option two would have students return to class on Sept. 2. The school year would continue until June 9.

Denver County and District Courts have already decided to not schedule jury trials during the week of the convention.

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CNN

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Maternity Leave?

Student News Transcript

AZUZ: Shifting gears a bit now, a small number of people will go from kindergarten through 12th grade with perfect attendance. But for the rest of us, absences abound. Sick days, holidays, field trips and family vacations: Time out of class requires an excuse. Well, one school board in Colorado is considering another situation that could merit an excused absence: having a baby. Colin Campbell of affiliate KWGN looks at the issue of maternity leave for teenage moms.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

COLIN CAMPBELL, KWGN REPORTER: In the working world, it's not considered controversial; it's law: Women often receive up to six weeks' maternity leave after childbirth. Now, some ask for the same consideration for high school students.

LAURIE GREEN, CASE MANAGER, PARENT PATHWAYS: I feel like they need it for the bonding with their child. I feel like the child needs it back from their mom.

CAMPBELL: Laurie Green is a case manager who works with at-risk teens.

GREEN: A lot of these girls are there to get their education, and unfortunately, you know, they ended up pregnant. And they did the right thing and had their child, and now they end up being penalized.

CAMPBELL: The proposal, brought up by an East High School student, also seems to be winning the support of her peers.

MARISSA LATTA, STUDENT: I know there are a number of girls at East who have dealt with pregnancy. And I would assume that it's a difficult situation when they have to juggle both school and what they're going through.

CAMPBELL: This issue is of particular concern to Colorado educators and legislators. That's because, according to health statistics, out of 1,000 girls between the ages 15 and 17 here in Denver, 55 of them will end up pregnant. That number drops to 24 in a statewide comparison. Denver Public Schools says girls are given time off in accordance with a doctor's note.

ALEX SANCHEZ, DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS: And those are excused absences. What we are looking at as a district is looking at the interpretation of a policy, and making sure that it is a little friendlier to some of these students' concerns.

CAMPBELL: The idea is still under review, but soon could bring up another interesting debate of paternity leave.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

Fox 31

Wednesday, January 9, 2007

Colorado Schools Get Low Ranking

Colorado falls to lower third in US

Last Edited: Wednesday, 09 Jan 2008, 5:04 PM MST

Colorado schools rank in the bottom third of the country when it comes to overall quality.

The state ranks 38th among states on the nationwide report card.

The Rocky Mountain News reports Colorado's overall grade was a "C." Low teacher salaries played a part in the low grade.

"Education Week," a nationwide school journal, released the report.