



Jazz singer Tina Phillips, whose time is provided through the Harmony Project, leads students at Remington Elementary School in song — and integrates a lesson in English language sounds as she leads her young chorus.

Harmony Project Finds Right Pitch For Link To Arts

Jazz singer Tina Phillips croons in the city's top jazz clubs — and in Room 102 for 23 English language learners at Remington Elementary School.

One recent day, she led the students through "Inch Worm" and some traditional songs for a holiday show, working on clear pronunciations of English sounds throughout. The language instruction was infused, essentially, into the music lesson. The students were rapt.

"They are very confident with singing," said teacher Monica Wendelin. "They feel part of the group. Sometimes, I think they feel more confident singing than speaking." This is especially true for the 5 or 6 students in the group who are recent immigrants from Mexico, said Wendelin.

Under a developing relationship with the Denver Musicians Association and the Langberg Foundation, Phillips is just one of a cadre of artists who are part of a plan to help transform Remington through the music and arts.

Remington principal Susana Cordova agreed last year to explore a limited partnership with the Harmony Project, a joint effort of the Langberg Foundation and the Denver Musicians Association. In the spring semester of 2001, three classroom teachers each volunteered to team with a professional artist for one hour, four days

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Homeless Kids Find Help Through The Educational Outreach Program

By Katie Jones, South High School, Public Information Intern

When walking in to the crowded lunchroom at Ebert Elementary, full of tables of lively kids talking and eating their afternoon snack, no one would ever suspect that these kids have any less than any other elementary school students.

What you may not realize as you look around the school is that a student eating a snack could be having his last meal of the day or that the eight-year-old girl sitting across the table doesn't know where she is going to sleep tonight. Homelessness is a reality for many children in the Denver area and Denver Public Schools is taking steps to try and help.

The Educational Outreach Program (EOP) at DPS is an after school program designed to help meet the basic needs of the children of homeless families attending Brown, Ebert, Whiteman, and Teller elementary schools and Morey Middle School. The program also aids families by providing connections to local area shelters and medical care. A big part of the program helps keep the students at their "home school" by providing RTD bus tokens for the ride to and from school if they live outside of the school's boundaries.

"For some kids in the program, school is the only stable and secure part of their lives," said Kim Miceli-Vela, homeless liaison for DPS. "If we didn't provide students a way to get to school outside

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Sponsorships Help Keep Special Programs Alive

For as long as one can remember, Denver Public Schools fifth-graders have traditionally had the opportunity to experience the outdoors through the Balarat Outdoor Education Center. But four years ago, the program was in jeopardy due to a lack of funding. That's when DPS administrators and educators developed an idea to involve private business in providing funding for specific school programs through sponsorships.

Through this unique alliance, Verizon Wireless, a wireless service provider to DPS, makes annual contributions to the Balarat Scholarship Fund and quarterly donations to the Balarat Outdoor Education Center. Since 1998, Verizon Wireless has donated more than \$200,000 in funding to these programs, including a \$70,000 donation in 2000, to build a cabin used as a center for the study of pioneers.

"We enjoy serving DPS and are proud to have played a part in providing an enriching outdoor experience for today's school children and for the thousands that will follow them," said Marni Walden, Mountain Region President for Verizon Wireless. "We hope that participating in programs like Balarat will encourage young people to value their environment and help them develop a love for the outdoors."

Verizon Wireless makes its annual and quarterly donations based on a percentage of revenue generated by DPS wireless phone users. Parents, teachers and students that use Verizon Wireless service indirectly contribute to keeping the Balarat programs alive for all fifth graders.

For more information or to learn how you can participate in this program, please contact Dana Diedrich, Verizon Wireless account executive, at 303-909-8600.



A guest (far left) is greeted by Welcome Center employees Lynn Curry, Francie Starke, Debra Chacon and Leota Kelsey.

December, business for the Center has grown steadily. Hundreds of job seekers and test takers flow through the small space getting answers to questions delivered with a warm smile. Proposed plans are currently being drawn to enlarge the space to accommodate the growing number of visitors and the future addition of DPS kiosks for visitor self-service.

The Welcome Center was established in 1996 when the reception desk in the front lobby at 900 Grant Street was expanded to deliver more services. Since then, the staff has grown to three with an additional person provided by Human Resources. Our thanks to Francie Starke, Lynn Curry, Debra Chacon and Leota Kelsey for taking such good care of our guests

MLK Student Receives \$2000 Scholarship For Excellence

Congratulations to seventh grader Niq' Terre D. Smith for receiving a \$2000 Colorado Avalanche Seagate Technology Scholarship. Niq' Terre, who attends the Martin Luther King Jr. Efficacy Academy, is one of only six middle school students to be chosen from the hundreds of applicants. Niq' Terre and her father were presented with the scholarship at the Avalanche home game on Wednesday, November 14, 2001.

Niq' Terre has won numerous achievement awards and is active within the community. She has maintained a 4.0 grade point average in her school's rigorous Gifted and Talented program and is a valuable part of her school's track and basketball teams. Niq' Terre is a leader within her school and positive role model for her fellow students.

"The needs of all students can be met in DPS," said Marcy Stoddard, MLK Assistant Principal. "We not only help special education students but we meet the needs of highly gifted students."

The Colorado Avalanche Seagate Technology Scholarship is awarded to students who excel in academics and extracurricular activities. An additional five scholarships will be awarded on a monthly basis through April 2002.

DPS Welcome Center

When you enter someone's home, you feel comfortable and welcome as you are greeted at the front door. Visitors to the Denver Public Schools Administration Building at 900 Grant Street are met in that same friendly style by Francie Starke, Welcome Center Supervisor and her friendly staff. Each is quick to offer assistance with employment applications, explanations of job opportunities and hiring processes. DPS employees that need to change their address or fill out a benefit form get fast, efficient service. Should an employee or visitor need more detailed information or assistance with a complicated problem, the Welcome Center staff will assist them in getting in touch with a DPS staff person to help out.

The Welcome Center was designed to provide quick access for visitors to a variety of DPS services and information. Since moving Human Resources reception from the 5th floor of the Administration Building to the Welcome Center in early

Denver Nugget/Avalanche Middle School Athletic League Enters Fifth Year Growing Strong

The Denver Nugget/Avalanche Middle School Athletic League offers sports in 21 schools with the newest members being Grant Ranch, Slavens, and Moore. The league's primary emphasis is placed on "encouraging all students to succeed in the classroom and to demonstrate good sportsmanship in every school."

All 925 student athletes are required to maintain a minimum of a "C" average in every class in order to compete. Students participate in cross-country, volleyball, basketball and football. The teams are split into two groups, ten teams in the Eastern Division and eleven teams in the Western Division.

Here's how this fall's coaches and teams stacked up: Coaches of the year were Tim Owens, Merrill Middle School and Pat Beck, Rishel Middle School for flag football; Steven Kohuth, Rishel Middle School and Dan Cornell, Hamilton Middle School for cross-country, and Paulette Jagoe, Merrill Middle School and Verniece Vafeades, Moore Middle School for volleyball.

Eastern Division Champions: Hill Middle School for flag football, Merrill Middle School for volleyball, and Hamilton Middle School for cross-country. Western Division Champions were: Kepner Middle School for flag football, Kunsmiller Middle School for volleyball, and Rishel Middle School for cross-country.

District Championship Teams include: Flag Football — Merrill Middle School; Volleyball — Slavens Middle School; Cross Country — Hamilton Middle School

**Basketball is in progress. The championships are scheduled for February 19th, 2002 at 3:30 p.m. at the Pepsi Center.*



Montbello High School students and a Denver Police Resource Officer defend Montbello's reputation to 7News Investigative Reporter Tony Kovaleski. In November, Kovaleski aired a story on weapons incidents at DPS Schools which Montbello students called "one-sided." On December 4, Kovaleski accepted an invitation to witness the positive changes at the far northeast Denver school.

"There's A World Of Choice In DPS"

Campaign Urges Families To Take A Closer Look At DPS

The window for parents to enroll their children in a "choice school" begins January 15th and ends February 15th. Choice enrollment forms must be completed by that date for a family's best chance of securing a seat in their "choice" school. After February 15th, remaining seats are filled on first-come, first-served bases until the 2002-2003 school year begins.

In an attempt to raise awareness of these deadlines and options, Denver Public Schools will be conducting the "World of Choice" bus tour. A bus containing enrollment information

and details on individual schools will be stopped at 12 key locations on the weekends throughout most of January.

Also, you'll find that bus parked outside the annual School Fair at the Pepsi Center on January 19th, where DPS will have a stronger presence than ever before. 26 schools have already signed up for the event.



Lastly, look out for this

year's new Resource & Enrollment Guide, due out the first week of January. The guide will include details for the 2002-2003 school year and descriptions of school programs and choices available, including magnets and charters. Lastly, remember to pass on the word: "There's A World Of Choice In Denver Public Schools!"

UPDATE!

The December issue of InsideDPS mentioned that the writings of twelve students from Gove Middle School were selected to appear in a book entitled "Tears Are Wept, Memories Are Kept; A Remembrance Book for Bereaved Children and Families." Several other schools are also included in the book. They are: Edison, Knight, Mitchell, Centennial, Garden Place, Denver Arts and Technology Academy, Denver School of the Arts, and the Career Education Center.

The book, is a compilation of letters of condolences to people who lost loved ones in the September 11th tragedy. Forty percent of the proceeds from this book published by Mavel Publishing will go to the Red Cross to help the families that were affected by the attacks.



Appointments

Ron Nordin: Principal, Lowry
Cheryl M. Nobles: Nurse, Kunsmiller
Andrew Salazar: Social Worker, Education
Amy Ball: Teacher, Castro
Kirsten L. Carlson: Teacher, McMeen
Richardo Chavez: Teacher, Amesse
Brenda S. Cudworth: Teacher, Columbine
Elaine Dickinson: Teacher, Grant
Donna R. Harrison: Teacher, Martin Luther King Jr.
Laura Kenyon: Teacher, Gove
Frankie A. Law: Teacher, North
Courtney Leyba: Teacher, John F. Kennedy
Scott Lubinski: Teacher, Valverde
John McCall: Teacher, South
Carmela A. Mezquita: Teacher, Green Valley
Stacy M. Murphy: Teacher, Harrington
Olivia J. Newby: Teacher, Martin Luther King Jr.
Carolyn Reed: Teacher, West
Carlos Reyes: Teacher, Newlon
Cristye L. Rhodes Sullivan: Teacher, Force
Jeanne M. Rothert: Teacher, Lake
Kristoph Rousselot: Teacher, South
James A. Rutter: Teacher, Green Valley
Andrea C. Scott: Teacher, Greenwood
Jeanette Sculley: Teacher, Columbine
Paula D. Shaw: Teacher, Maxwell
Sylvia Trujillo: Teacher, Doull
Kelly Yapp: Teacher, Cowell
Anna Ross: Bookkeeper I, Emily Griffith Opportunity School
Ann Marie Stokes: Bookkeeper I, Operations
Carmen Flores: Custodial Helper, George Washington
Rudy Padilla: Custodial Helper, George Washington
Marty L. Villegas: Custodial Helper, Hill

Ronald L. Degarmo: Network Technician I, Administration
Armando Dominguez: Las Tester, Education
Allen D. Halingstad: Security Systems Tech. II, Safety And Security
Carmen E. Linnebur: Programmer II, English Language Acquisition
Phil R. Moorehead: Tech. Services Supervisor, Transportation
Todd J. Reese: Network Technician I, Administration
Mira A. Morton-Lyna: Supervisor, Northwest Coalition Education
Ronald W. Jensen: Parts/Tool Room/Counter Clerk, Operations

Change in Assignment

Jacqueline Gonring: Interim Assistant Principal, Tech. Academy MLK/Montbello
Wil Minor: Principal, Gateway
Nancy L. Werkmeister: Assistant Principal, Martin Luther King Jr.
Carol Wilcox: Assistant Principal, Green Valley
Larry Williams: Manager Facility Planning, Operations
Jerry A. Lindeman: Crew Chief, Operations
Marsha Watson: Facility Manager I, Whittier
Michael L. McClain: Custodial Helper, Montbello High
Rose Mock: Custodian Assistant II, Operations
Patricia M. Montoya: Custodian Assistant II, Operations
Ronald E. Tate: Custodian Assistant IV, John F. Kennedy
Robert J. Khan: Senior Project Leader, Education

Reappointments

Anne Carlisle Wheeler: Teacher, Smith
Daniel J. Garcia: Teacher, Valverde
Tara B. Savage: Teacher, Centennial

Michael P. Reinert: Custodial Helper, George Washington
Ronald Buckner: Furn., Fixture & Equip. Spec, Administration
Richard M. Carter: Educ. Tech Specialist I, Montbello
Darius L. Smith: Curriculum Specialist, Education

Retirements

Gene A. Burdick: Military Instruction, Education
Deanna Dwyer: Teacher, Administration
Gretchen K. Hove: Teacher, Centennial
Carol Langhardt: Teacher, Morey
Jacquelyn K. Mohr: Teacher, Education
S. Elaine Moore: Teacher, Holm
Arlene M. Noguchi: Teacher, Thomas Jefferson
Elaine J. Rains: Teacher, Grant
Kathleen A. Stephens: Teacher, John F. Kennedy
Dora Suazo: Teacher, Barnum
Nicanor Garcia Jr.: Director, Human Resources
Nancy E. King: Assistant Principal, Kunsmiller
Jacqueline G. Aymami: Social Worker, Martin Luther King Jr.
Carol L. Chambers: Secretary, Administration
Betty Z. Collier: Secretary, Stedman
Nellie J. Parker: Office Support, Administration
Mary Jane Rodish: Secretary, South
Eugene Arnold: Facility Manager, Rishel
Lonzell Evans: Facility Manager, Ford
Jesse J. Wehde: Shipping & Receiving Clerk, Operations
Joe N. Chapman: Custodian Assistant, Ford
Donna L. Lucero: Supervisor, Northwest Coalition, Smedley
Dennis V. Flesner: Bus Driver, Transportation
Dolores A. Lakers: Bus Driver, Transportation

The River Runs Through Us

By Paula Montojo, McKinley-Thatcher Elementary School, Teacher

When you find yourself talking about the South Platte River in Denver, the topics usually center around things such as water quality, flooding, and recreational use. It's important to add that the South Platte River, as a "living classroom," is a concept that is rapidly capturing the attention of Denver's educational community.

Since 1975 over 65,000 students, teachers, and parents have participated in numerous river activities. Under the direction of Mr. Carl Crookham, The Greenway Foundation, the mayor's South Platte River Commission, and the Denver Public Schools, S.P.R.E.E. (South Platte River Environmental Education) has dramatically increased the educational opportunities for the students of Denver.

For nearly three years, McKinley-Thatcher School has been the DPS pilot school for S.P.R.E.E. Not only are students and parents taken to the river for incredible experiences, the river has been brought into the classrooms. The theme of "The River Runs Through Us" is very evident throughout the school. The school's staff is actively involved in designing a school-wide curriculum that blends the historical, environmental, and recreational aspects of the South Platte River with our classroom studies in reading/writing, history, math, science, civics, physical education, art, music, and drama.

Additionally, the PTA has adopted Grant-Frontier Park, located at Evans Avenue and Platte River Drive, as the school's community service project. Families and teachers participate in monthly clean-up activities. This cooperative effort has instilled a sense of community pride and the need to give back to the environment.

On November 13th, at Ocean Journey, McKinley-Thatcher School was awarded the S.P.R.E.E. School of the Year at the 2001 Friend of the River Award Dinner. Mr. Jeff Shoemaker, Executive Director of the Greenway Foundation, presented the school with a beautiful plaque honoring the school's educational efforts and endeavors.

Congratulations to the students, staff, and parents of McKinley-Thatcher School for this well deserved recognition. For further information about the S.P.R.E.E. program, contact Carl Crookham at 303-778-6558 or check out McKinley-Thatcher's web site at <http://mckinleythatcher.dpsk12.org>.

Pay For Performance Pilot Shows Promising Signs Of Impacting Student Achievement

Denver Public School's groundbreaking Pay for Performance Pilot shows promising signs that it may have a positive impact on student achievement in the Pilot schools, according to Bill Slotnik, executive director of the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) in Boston.

During a presentation to the Board of Education at its December 6 meeting, Slotnik said students in pilot schools are scoring higher on both the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests and some of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Iowa) assessments than students in similar control schools.

Total CSAP reading scores for third and fourth graders are higher at pilot schools than for students at control schools, according to an analysis by CTAC researchers. The pilot middle school outperformed 10 of the 17 control middle schools on the Iowa reading test and outperformed 15 of the 17 control schools on the Iowa language test.

The pilot awards extra pay to teachers based on successful completion of two objectives tied to increases in achievement by their students. "Having teachers set measurable objectives is the linchpin of the pilot," Slotnik said. "Students whose teachers developed the highest quality objectives average greater gains in achievement on both the Iowa Test and the CSAP, regardless of whether the teachers met their objectives for compensation purposes."

Slotnik also noted that the pilot faces three significant challenges: 1.) finding appropriate assessments for certain subject areas; 2.) building district capacity to provide timely and meaningful data for decision-making; 3.) addressing teacher concerns about fairness. Many subject specialists and non-instructional specialists, such as nurses and librarians, do not have adequate tools to measure student growth.

CTAC made 19 recommendations to the Board to consider for the remaining two years of the pilot and beyond. They were grouped into seven broad areas of objectives, data capacity, assessment, professional development, new salary structure, the approaches being used in the pilot, and financial forecasts. The CTAC report, Pathway to Results, noted that the pilot "has brought many of the core elements of systemic reform into focus." Key recommendations included the following:

- Provide teachers with more support and options in objective writing.
- Address fairness concerns related to special subject teachers, special education teachers and specialists.
- Make learning content the focus of the objectives.
- Establish a direct relationship between teacher objectives and the school improvement plan.
- Build an integrated data system and broaden access to the system at various sites in the district.
- Develop a means for using multiple measures at the classroom level.
- Select and align assessments by grade, level and subject.
- Provide expanded professional development for pilot teachers and principals, and establish district leaders for professional development.
- Consider basing a portion of a new salary structure on pay for performance over multiple years.
- Begin to integrate the three approaches currently being used.
- Project implementation costs over the next two years and five years out.

A joint Denver Public Schools — Denver Classroom Teachers Association task force has been created and already is examining how to fairly link compensation to student performance.

CTAC's report was based on a thorough analysis of the pilot, teacher objectives, student performance results, as well as surveys of teachers, administrators and parents on their perceptions of the pilot.

"Denver's approach to raising student achievement is unlike any other in the country. The district, teachers' union and pilot leadership deserve considerable credit for initiating and moving forward this complex and groundbreaking initiative," Slotnik concluded. "Our study shows both that the pilot has made immense progress and that it has many additional challenges to meet before it concludes."

Rishel Calls In Back-Up To Battle CSAP

More than 60 volunteers will be helping students during the day and after school to prepare for CSAP at Rishel Middle School. Through Beacons, the school's after school program, dozens of community volunteers have been and will be trained to prepare the school for the statewide assessment test.

Social Studies teacher, Allen Potter, hopes that the program will accomplish several goals. "First, and most important, we have to rid ourselves of the terrible stigma of being an 'unsatisfactory' school," said Potter. "Raising CSAP scores will do this. Second, I hope that student and volunteers will be able to make personal connections that will enrich each of them. Every child can use one more positive role model in their life. Third, I hope that neighborhood consciousness about Rishel will be raised to the point where volunteers will continue to help us with all kinds of things in the future."

The volunteers are coming from two sources. One is the community. "We went around the neighborhood with students knocking on doors to find these people," said Potter. "The other source is the West Denver office of Catholic Charities, who are being given flextime pay to participate. We're very grateful to both groups for helping us out."

Catholic Charities and the Department of Community Education administer the Beacons Project which has offered academic and fun activities to Rishel for the last four years. They have agreed to give employees an hour a week during the workday to go to Rishel and tutor. "They have been instrumental in getting volunteers and organizing training for this project," adds Potter.

Volunteers will be working with students one-on-one on specific CSAP reading, writing and math and science needs. Workbooks of CSAP-like questions are used to help tutor students. Potter hopes that volunteers will not only support these children academically but simply connect with students and give them some individual attention that might motivate them to succeed in all their classes. Also, Potter says special thanks should go to Jose Piza from Beacons who played an important role in the success of this program.

Rishel is still seeking volunteers! For more information, please contact Allen Potter at allen_potter@dpsk12.org or call the Beacons office at Rishel, 303-778-8364.



"Skillful Teachers" throughout northwest Denver were recognized recently by Area Superintendent Joe Sandoval and Assistant Area Superintendent Dave Debus. Board member Lucia Guzman and Superintendent Jerry Wartgow also congratulated those who were honored, based on classroom observations. The selected teachers were asked for one small favor in return: to allow other teachers — and principals — to visit their classrooms to study good teaching techniques. Those honored included Susan Cesario (Baker), Arby Martin (Barnum), Jeanette Vigil (Beach Court), Kristin Lavery (Brown), Tami Baker and Cindy Ziegler (Bryant Webster), Susan Varner (Centennial), Stephane Schlachtenhaufen (Cheltenham), Christina Schott (Colfax), Doug Clark (Columbian), Norma Romero and Emily Pulver (Cowell), Tracy Hall and Suzanne Schodolksi (Del Pueblo), Devin Auble, Nancy Schultz and Jessica Rehnberg (Eagleton), Joanne Stroud and Mariana Wing (Edison), Jessica Gillesby (Fairmont), Keith Grace-Mullet (Fairview), Brandon Birdwell (Greenlee), Amy Harold (Horace Mann), Brian Lambert (Lake), Jennifer Wilson (Remington), Kelly Bodke (Sandoval), Michelle Barnard (Skinner), Evelyn Gonzales and Erika Gustine (Smedley), David Baird (Valdez), and Julia Fliss (West).

Harmony Project...continued from page 1

a week, for five weeks. One hour on the fifth day was reserved for mutual planning time for the teachers and their artist/partners. These partnerships were so successful that a second five-week "gig" was arranged.

The one-semester experiment is now school-wide. This year, artists — musicians, dancers, actors, painters, and others — are being paired with all the teachers at Remington for five-week sessions. So, a music teacher can work on rhyming. A dance instructor on counting. An actress on enunciation. And so on.

The effort is clearly designed to support the existing curriculum and culture — not supplant it.

"The current pressure for high test scores has led to an imbalance in their daily activities, with the 'heart' being slighted in favor of the 'brain,'" said Hank Troy, education outreach coordinator for the Denver Musicians Association. "The Harmony Project is an attempt to reestablish a more appropriate balance."

The project has also brought additional, supporting staff development to the school for teachers and a visit by Don Campbell, author of "The Mozart Effect For Children."

Remington principal Cordova said the project reaches "a population of students who may not have access to cultural events that many of us take for granted. It's really exciting to think about integrating arts into our classrooms. We want to make sure that our students are able to enjoy school, to find joy in learning, to learn more about the things that make us richer as people. The Harmony Project does that."

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Some notes on recent Board of Education meetings:

Two new charter schools were recently given the green light, Denver School of Science and Technology and KIPP: Sunshine Peak Academy; DSST doesn't plan to open until 2003. KIPP will be located somewhere in southwest Denver....A proposal to add 15 minutes of instructional time and one additional school day to the yearly calendar is before the Board of Education. Teacher days would be increased by 2.5 days over the current schedule, with more time for staff development...The first semester would end before the winter break and school would start about the same time it did this school year, mid- to late-August...Final adoption on the calendar is possible in January....Also, a rolling three-year calendar (so teachers and parents can plan their family schedules and needs) would be maintained....A series of boundary changes are being considered. Schools impacted include Greenwood,

Oakland, Martin Luther King Middle Jr., Gove, Baker, Morey, Cole, Grant, Kunsmiller, Whiteman and four new schools opening next year – Gateway Elementary, Parkfield Middle, Lowry Elementary, and North Central Middle....A proposal to start the new school at Stapleton with the "Core Knowledge" approach to learning is under consideration....That school will share school space with Odyssey Charter once it opens in 2003...Beginning in January, a change in its by-laws will allow the Board to take action every time it meets (usually twice a month on the first and third Thursdays of the month)....A cafeteria plan for health insurance benefits will be designed and presented to the Board later this year.

More detail is available on the district's web site or by calling the Public Information Office, 303-764-3414.



The Tri School Geography Bee engaged students from McKinley-Thatcher, Asbury and Rosedale elementary schools November 29. Teams of students from second-grade through fifth-grade were quizzed on cites, states, countries, oceans, rivers, and map-reading skills.

Three DPS Schools Win Family Involvement Grant; Only 20 Schools Chosen To Participate Nationwide

Representatives from Abraham Lincoln High School, North High School, and Morey Middle School will be packing their bags for a trip to Washington D.C. February 8th through the 10th for the Met Life Foundation Institute for Family Friendly Schools. Just 20 schools were selected from across the nation.

This one time grant is administered by The Trust to Reach Education Excellence (TREE), and the foundation of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). The three-day Institute, based on a model created by Family Friendly Schools, trains the school community to engage underrepresented families in their children's education.

"The Institute was created for each school to develop an individualized plan of action to involve more parents in the life of the school," said Rosa Aronson, NASSP-TREE.

Each school will be able to send ten members including principals, assistant principals, teachers, parents, students and board members. This team will learn how to engage hard-to-reach groups, create a climate for cooperation and collaboration, communicate effectively, understand the role of student leadership and activities, and establish non-English speaking parent ambassador programs.

TREE was established in 1997 to assist NASSP in addressing the unique needs of disenfranchised youth and the needs of schools located in urban centers.

For more information about TREE, visit its website: <http://tree.principals.org>.

Ruth Fouts Mathers

Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Years with DPS: 11

Latest Accomplishment: Recipient of the Families First Award 2001. This award is given to an individual who exhibits "commitment, excellence, and passion" for deaf children and their families. I received the award at The Colorado Symposium on Deafness, Language, and Learning. It was awarded by the Colorado Hands and Voices which is a State level group that addresses the needs of deaf children, their families, and their education.



The Most Challenging Part About My Job: Making sure deaf and hard of hearing students receive quality educational services.

The Most Rewarding Part About My Job: watching deaf students succeed by their own efforts.

I've also worked as: a custodian, a truck driver, and a store clerk.

When I'm not working I am usually: spending time with my family or reading

Hometown: Denver

Favorite movie: Mr. Holland's Opus

Favorite restaurant: On the Border

Favorite book: The Right to Learn, by Linda Darling-Hammond

Family: My husband of 29 years and a daughter who is a junior in college.

Philosophy for life: Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise; risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible.

The most useless thing I ever bought: a kit for designing and sewing my own clothes.

Homeless Kids...continued from page 1

the busing area, many would have to switch schools several times in one school year or not attend school at all."

Outside of school, family life is unstable. Many of the students in the EOP are coming from situations where the family is forced to live in a shelter, a motel, a car or on the streets. Others live with two or three other families. Some are exposed to serious drug, alcohol and physical abuse on a daily basis and have nowhere to turn for help.

"It is impossible for a student who is exhausted, hungry and scared to focus on school work," said Ethan Hemming, Research Planning & Special Programs. "The best way to help these students is to help them in any way possible, and listen to them when they need someone to talk to."

The multi-focused after school program emphasizes building social skills, academic help, art projects, games and organized sports. More importantly, it serves as a nurturing environment so children can feel safe. Building self-esteem and a sense of trust are key to achieving in school and breaking the chains of poverty that many of these kids face.

The fastest growing portion of the homeless population is families with children. In the October student count for the 2000-2001 school year, DPS counted 407 homeless students. In this year's 2001-2002 count, 644 students were counted. The number of homeless kids has been greatly underestimated in the past because although there are kids out there, they are hard to identify.

The EOP uses the October student count to decide where the programs are located, usually in the areas with the greatest need. Changes in the demographics can effect where the program will be located in the following year. There are always new needs to be met and the program is always improving.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Educational Outreach Program or would like to volunteer at one of the program sites, please call Kim Miceli-Vela at (303) 764-7650.

insideDPS is a newsletter for and about Denver Public Schools employees. It is published monthly during the school year.

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