

insideDPS

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS / FEBRUARY 1, 2003 / ISSUE NO. 7

new school reports make searches a snap



The new report card graphics on the district's web site include pie charts and bar charts that make it easy to see a snapshot of school performance data. The web site also includes a powerful ability to search for schools based on personal preferences or student needs.

The district's school reports are sporting a new look — and new, powerful capabilities. The data is very much the same and so are the unique narratives, written by each school.

But the new report, engineered by the non-profit group GreatSchools, provide parents and students with an easy way to use their personal preferences to find their ideal school.

The new web site dps.schools.net allows parents to choose a grade level (elementary, middle and high), enter their home address, and begin searching the entire report data

base and the variety of school offerings and programs that are out there in search of the best fit possible.

The web site allows parents to search within a certain radius of their home — beginning with a five-mile sweep of schools.

Is a magnet or charter school preferred? Are English Language Acquisition programs important? What about special education centers or a certain calendar type (year-round or regular)? Is all-day kindergarten a must-have? The web site allows parents to search for the right combination of important elements that meet their definition of complete school.

"We believe well-informed parents are the most effective advocates to drive high standards and achievement," said GreatSchools' president Bill Jackson.

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A Day In The Life...



...Of Teacher Karen Libby,

Certified By National Board For Professional Teaching Standards

At Hamilton Middle School, there is no teacher with deeper roots. Karen Libby is well into her 33rd year of reaching students — at Hamilton. "I'm getting kids now saying 'you taught my mother' or 'you had my dad,'" she says, laughing modestly. She lives just five minutes away. She is part of the community fabric.

Hamilton, in fact, is her second school. She taught briefly at Thomas Jefferson High School (beginning in 1967) at a time when the school was so full students attended either a morning or afternoon session.

But the excitement of teaching shows no sign of wear. In fact, for this dedicated lover of reading and writing, it's all about reinvigoration. Age doesn't matter. The number of years on the job is irrelevant. For Karen Libby, the job is rich and rewarding when there is self-analysis and personal growth.

"When I learn new things, when I learn new techniques," she says, "I am energized."

During a first-period class on a cool Monday morning recently, she has no trouble transforming yawning faces into looks of interest. Hands shoot up all over the classroom. "What kind of lore is this?" asks Libby. "Who can tell me how ghost stories played a role in something we read?" "What's the definition of legend?" Libby connects John Henry with Johnny Appleseed and Johnny Tremain, probing and looking for students to make connections between fables and fantasy and fairy tales — and fiction.

Perhaps Libby is closer to the finish line of her career than her status as rookie, but just because

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The National Renewable Energy Laboratory's Office of Education Programs and Denver Public Schools, were recognized for CLOUT (The Coalition for Learning Opportunities and United Tutors) Program, an after-school reading and "hands-on" science program, at the 24th Annual Colorado Association of Partners in Education's (CAPE) Awards Luncheon. To learn more about the CLOUT Program, contact Estevan Duran 303-764-3395 or Estevan_duran@dpsk12.

MILK celebration at barney ford

Barney Ford Elementary School was among many schools that offered organized events around Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Ford celebrated with great joy on Jan. 17. The second-graders read excerpts from Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech (delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 6, 1963). The audience heard the sound of the Liberty Bells and joined in paying tribute to Dr. King's leadership by singing "We Shall Overcome," a song still heard in today's civil rights demonstrations.

The second-graders also shared some readings from the book "To Be A Drum." The celebration continued with students singing, dancing and drumming an African song called "Al-O-Day" from the Yoruba people of West Africa. The professional dancing and drumming group "Heritage African Drum And Dance" also joined the second graders in their Yorubian dance. ■

Feeling Comfortable About CSAP At Cole

If you happen to walk into Cole Middle School and you see empty hallways, students sitting in their seats working silently with number two pencils in hand, and classrooms doubled up with teachers and support staff, you'll know that it is a CSAP practice period.

"Twice a month, students are given the opportunity to experience a positive testing environment and to practice their test-taking strategies on reading, writing, math, and science tests," said Principal Nicole Veltzé. "We want to help students build their testing endurance, as well as gain an understanding for the importance of the CSAP test."

Five minutes before the test begins, Principal Veltzé's voice is heard over the intercom encouraging students and teachers to begin preparing for the start of the test and reminding students that they should have at least three number two pencils in front of them and a book to read if they finish early. Students are also reminded that if they have a question they need to raise their hands, that no one is allowed to leave the classroom during the testing period, and that everyone needs to respect the rights of their peers to experience a silent testing period.

At the end of each testing period, teachers and students review the answers to each question and discuss strategies such as process of elimination and going back to the text to find the correct answers. Teachers also model how to fill in graphic organizing questions and responding to critical response questions.

"Students appreciate the support they get in preparing for tests. They like to know what to expect on tests, so they can do their best thinking," said Sallie Baker, sixth-grade Studio teacher.

The first two school-wide testing periods proved difficult for the students. By the third test, the majority of students appeared to take the test seriously and to enjoy it, said Ms. Veltzé.

"With practice, you get better," said eighth-grader Mayra Mena. "The more we practice answering the questions and learning how to answer them, we are going to feel more comfortable and ready when we take the real CSAP test."

Students and teachers receive instruction and other opportunities to prepare for CSAP everyday. At the end of each staff meeting Principal Veltzé and Assistant Principal Jennifer Barton model for teachers ways in which they can incorporate teaching CSAP skills such as sequencing, summarizing, and inferring with the use of graphic organizers. They also use multiple choice questions to summarize the meeting's main topics



At Cole Middle School, studio course teacher Sallie Baker watched sixth-grader Ricardo Rocha as he concentrated during a recent CSAP practice period.

and model teaching test-taking strategies.

"We have also revamped our student Refocus Form so they look like the CSAP test," said Barton. "The first question on the Refocus Form requires students to bubble in next to the behavior they were displaying in the class. They then fill in a web to show possible strategies they will use to avoid displaying the behavior again. The last question on the form requires the students to use the information in the web to write a paragraph."

At the beginning of the year students attended a CSAP grade-level assembly, where Ms. Veltzé and Ms. Barton talked to students about what a positive testing environment looks like, the types of questions they are required to answer on the CSAP, and the month and duration of the test.

"Through intentional instruction and test practice we are going to offer our students every opportunity to do their very best on the CSAP test. Those students who complete every section of the test will be invited to attend the best celebration ever," said Principal Veltzé. "We are going to have a social with a disc jockey, smoke machine, door prizes, and a spread of food." ■

denver public schools
**millionaire
minutes**

Columbine Elementary School's Million Words Campaign is "Read A Million Words, Travel A Million Miles." Classrooms that met their goal of 250,000 words per student were able to "travel" to Hawaii at the end of the second quarter. "Our students were up for the challenge and read non-stop for eight weeks — during lunch, at recess, and even during bathroom breaks," said Library Media Specialist Robin Jones. The reward for 17 of 19 classrooms was a Luau Bon Voyage Party — every student in the class had met the 250,000-word goal! The party started with a festive assembly that featured Hawaiian musicians (Marsha and Siosi Talitimu) and a very talented hula dancer. Students then dispersed to centers to learn such things as the limbo, hula dancing, and hula hooping. The event also featured live exotic birds from the Hawaiian Islands. "The birds were a big hit," reports Jones. The third quarter "excursion" is to Africa. Students have eagerly begun reading their next 250,000 words so that their class can make it to the African Safari Bon Voyage Party. We will be at a million in no time!...**Dora Moore K-8 School** continues to recognize its million word readers, including eighth-grader Chrystal Ozor, who exploded the million word reading challenge set by principal T. Jason Martinez by reading four million words and sixth-grader Shiloh Drake, who is nearing three million words. In all, 13 students have reached the million-word mark....At **Wyman Elementary School**, all the students met Jan. 13 (they'll meet on the second Monday of every month) to celebrate the top five readers of every class and honor the top reader with a certificate for a book. The first student to reach a million words will be rewarded with a medal, a trip to a bookstore, and lunch with the principal, librarian and literacy coach. "We are really excited and well on our way," reports Wyman principal Delores Manns-Martin. "We have a beautiful display here of the mountains and our journey to the top." ■



The Luau Bon Voyage Party transformed the Columbine Elementary School gymnasium with some tropical flair as students were rewarded for their efforts on the Million Word campaign.

**Chuck's Kids Bring Holiday
Joy to 94 Families At Smith
Renaissance School of the Arts**

For the sixth year in a row, Chuck's Kids purchased gifts and food for needy families over the holiday season. Each family member received gifts, a ham, potatoes, milk and a box of nonperishable food. On Dec. 21, volunteers came together to deliver items to family homes. Chuck Woodring — a private individual who raises money all year for such charitable purposes for students — organized some of the volunteers. Other volunteers included Smith staff members, Board of Education member Sue Edwards, Assistant Area Superintendent John Youngquist, Dr. Oscar Joseph from the University of Denver and Troy Garner special projects manager with the Department of Facility Management. "This was a great day for all involved — the 200 children and 94 families were very appreciative of the help," said Smith principal Joyce Simmons. "For many of them, this would have been a very bleak Christmas without the generosity of Chuck's Kids." ■



Over the holidays, students at Fairview Elementary School — a school in one of the state's poorest neighborhoods — showed their spirit of sharing by gathering hundreds of cans of food for a food drive to help others in need.

PAF Fund Drive A Huge Success

The Pupil Assistance Fund Christmas Drive sponsored by the Department of Human Resources was a huge success. Participants included the Administration Building, Department of Technology Services, employees at 770 Grant Street, Fox Street, Service Building, Food Services, Retirement Office, DPS Credit Union and Crofton Elementary School Student Council. The Fund received \$800 in cash, approximately \$700 worth of clothes and tons of toys. Human Resources would like to thank all involved for their generosity. ■

Comings & goings

APPOINTMENTS

Jacqueline E. Meadows: Director Human Resources, Administration
Bart G. Muller: Director Human Resources, Administration
Lee J. Renfrow: Director Human Resources, Administration
Olusegun Adenowo: Teacher, West
Patricia Kreinbrink: Occupational Therapist, Education
Eugene Gallant: Teacher, Fallis
Suzanne B. Hunting: Teacher, Columbine
Stephanie G. Pfeifer: Teacher, Valverde
John S. Weber: Teacher, Gove
Rocio Alarcon: Secretary I, Fred N. Thomas Career Ed Center
Maria M. Corral: Secretary I, Horace Mann
Ronda L. Davis: Secretary I, Abraham Lincoln
Cynthia Holland: Secretary I, Lincoln
Maria A. Lomeli: Secretary I, Gilpin
Claudine R. Ruiz: Secretary I, Bryant-Webster
Maria C. Saa-Trujillo: Secretary I, Del Pueblo
Robert Caldwell: Custodial Helper - Day, Montbello
Rudy O. Gonzales: Custodial Helper - Day, George Washington
Kevin F. Hollingsworth: Custodial Helper - Day, George Washington
Jeremy P. Langdon: Custodial Helper - Day, Place
Santiago J. Martinez: Custodial Helper - Day, Grant
Shirley R. McLaughlin: Custodial Helper - Day, John F. Kennedy
Donee L. Sanders: Custodial Helper - Day, George Washington
Will M. Blacklock: Library Tech I, Brown

Thomas D. Frazier: SFPC Liaison Specialist, Alternative Placement Services
Katie J. Himes: Specialist, Human Resource, Administration
Verla J. Howell: SFPC Liaison Specialist, Education
Michelle Lampkin: SFPC Liaison Specialist, Alternative Placement Services
Carla Lawson: Interim Executive Secretary I, Administration
David H Lusk: Security Patrol, Operations
Melanie Rios: SFPC Liaison Specialist, North
Tenley K. Stillwell: Community Programs Supervisor, Education
Scott V. Burgason: Bus Driver, Operations
Bill D. Collins: Bus Driver, Operations
Norbert F. Deherrera: Bus Driver, Operations
Venita A. Lewis: Bus Driver, Operations
Robin A. Banks-Hnatkowycz: Teacher, Horace Mann
Matthew A. Orrin: Teacher, CLA
Cora Woogen: Teacher, Special Education

CHANGE IN ASSIGNMENT

Laura Gallegos: Assistant To Superintendent, Administration
Catherine Mackin: Teacher, Munroe
Laura C. Blancas: Office Support I, Horace Mann
Barbara L. Evans: Secretary II, Administration
Jessica Zubiate: Secretary I, Manual/Arts & Cultural
Manuel Z. Chavez: Facility I Manager, Remington
Anthony R. Carey: Journeyman Plumber, Service Building
Arthur F. Mahoney: Custodian Assistant I, Lowry
Anthony D. Thomas: Custodian Assistant I, Fallis
Alan Williams: Custodian Assistant II, Operations

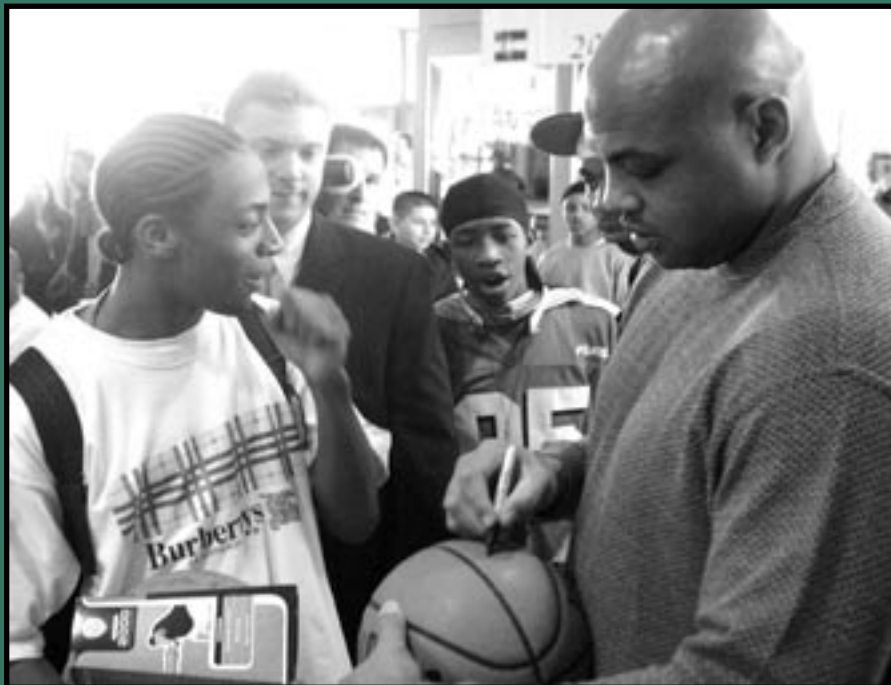
Eliza M. Armijo: Human Resource Specialist, Administration
Ronald E. Bucknerfurn: Project Manager, Administration
Edna Howell: Dispatch II, Transportation
*** Correction to Comings & Goings January issue ***
Cesar Cedill: Assistant Principal, Morey

REAPPOINTMENTS

Cheryl Caldwell: Director, Early Child Education
Christina E. Bergstrand: Teacher, Whittier
Daniel J. Garcia: Teacher, Traylor
Rita G Mosman: Custodial Helper - Day, West

RETIREMENT

Mary D. House: Director, Emily Griffith Opportunity School
Cynthia Rundstrom: Assistant To Superintendent, Administration
Barbara A. Fast: Teacher, Abraham Lincoln
Jerome L. Blamey: Teacher, Place
Gilbert W. Chavez: Teacher, Baker
Wendy C. Cohan: Teacher, North
Mary L. Lyng: Teacher, McGlone
Susan H. Peterson: Teacher, Ellis
Regina L. Shelton: Teacher, Force
Mary L. Waits: Teacher, John F. Kennedy
Gery M. Farrar: Psychologist, Education
Julie K. Keller: Secretary, Abraham Lincoln
Theresa Barcelona: Food Service, Operations
Ronald S. Shannon: Painter, Operations
Virginia Martinez: Parking Control, Operations
Gayle K. Dantes: Driver/Route Supervisor, Operations
Regina Shelton: Teacher, Force
Mary Waits: Teacher, John F. Kennedy



Former NBA star Charles Barkley visited with students at the Manual High School Complex during his visit to Denver for the KeyBank Distinguished Lecture Series. During an assembly with Leadership High School students, Barkley was predictably blunt. On racial issues, Barkley urged students to “make a choice in your heart and your mind if you’re going to be part of the problem or part of the solution.” He urged students to think for themselves and not depend on sports as a means to financial success. There are many more successful doctors and lawyers, he said, than professional athletes. Barkley endorsed the simple concept of hard work. “You’ve got to push yourself,” he said, “you never know what’s going to happen.”

Following are teachers in Denver Public Schools who have successfully completed National Board Certifications:

November 1999 and earlier awards:

PAIGE DERSHAM,
Middle Childhood/Generalist
(Curriculum & Instruction)
MARY ANN GARCIA-PETTIT,
Middle Childhood/Generalist (Newlon)
DONNA HOLMES,
Young Adult Science (George Washington)
STEPHAN LACKS,
Early Adolescence/Generalist (George Washington)
CARRIE OLSON,
Middle Childhood/Generalist (Kepner)
RHONDA URBACH,
Young Adult Science (Manual)
KIMBERLY URSETTA,
Middle Childhood/Generalist (Newlon)
JENNIFER WILSON,
Middle Childhood/Generalist (Newlon)
KATHI MCLAUGHLIN
(Odyssey Charter)

November 2000 Awards:

STEVE CODDINGTON,
Mathematics (Manual)
CATHY DOWNEY,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Steck)
KEVIN LINDAUER,
Science (Kennedy)
MAUREEN PORTER,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Southmoor)
KERRIE SCHULTZ,
Mathematics (Manual)
JOY WARNER,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Park Hill)
CONNIE WHITE,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Fairmont)

November 2001 Awards

DONNA HAMILTON,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Steele)
JEANNE JESSUP,
Early Adolescent Math (Hamilton)
KAREN ANN LIBBY,
Early Adolescent English/Language Arts
(Hamilton)
PAULA MARTINEZ,
Early Adolescent Social Studies/History (Kepner)
LINDA MITCHELL,
Early Childhood Generalist (Grant Ranch)
REBECCA ROBERTS,
Early Childhood - Young Adult
Exceptional Needs Students (Fairmont)
HEATHER SHEETS,
Adolescent/Young Adult
Social Studies/History (Abraham Lincoln)
LESLIE STAHL,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Southmoor)
LINDA THAT,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Centennial)

November 2002 Awards

KELLY BABCOCK,
Middle Childhood Generalist (Martin Luther King)
SUSAN CAREY,
Adolescent/Young Adult
English/Language Arts (Abraham Lincoln)
ROBERT KATZ,
Early Adolescent
Social Studies/History (Hamilton)
PRISCILLA SHAW,
Early Adolescent/Young Adult Music
(George Washington)
WENDY WARD,
Early Adolescent Generalist (Odyssey Charter)

she's been around the track once or twice doesn't mean she's not interested in learning new things. Just over a year ago, Libby accomplished something more daunting than the twin tasks of finishing a master's degree and handling a new baby – a feat she tackled in 1980. In November of 2001, Libby learned that she had successfully completed the task of earning certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Her certificate is for Early Adolescent (ages 11-15) English Language Arts.

As described on its web site (www.nbpts.org), National Board Certification "is a demonstration of a candidate's teaching practice as measured against high and rigorous standards. It is a symbol of commitment to excellence in teaching. When a teacher achieves a National Board certificate, it's a credential attesting to the fact that teacher has been assessed by his or her peers as one who is accomplished, makes sound professional judgments about student learning, and acts effectively with those judgments...It is a professional certification increasingly used by states as an option for advanced licensing status."

For Libby, the process was fruitful.

"It was truly an amazing experience," she says, retrieving from her classroom desk an enormously thick three-ring binder chock full of self-analysis of her classroom techniques and style. "This was very hard, especially if you think you're pretty much set in your ways. But I really discovered some things."

She conducts fewer teacher-directed classes now. With every assignment, Libby first determines the reason to give it. There's more work from students in small groups, giving students a chance to analyze material and lead a presentation.

And there's more use of the Socratic Method – although that was inspired more by the International Baccalaureate program at George Washington High School. Her Hamilton students, after all, are in the International Preparatory Magnet (IPM) and they need to be ready for the challenging level of thinking that's ahead.

So no matter today whether students are reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, or *Cheaper By The Dozen*, there are guiding questions that help shape the discussion. For Shane, the question is straightforward: "How did the United States government attempt to influence people to move west – and what effect did this have on all that was there before?" The "Shane" discourse becomes a discussion about Manifest Destiny.

The National Board Certification process was grueling. First came writing the materials that comprised her extensive portfolio – sections on how she approaches whole group learning, small group learning, reading, writing, best practices and her work with the community. Essentially, she had to hold her teaching style up to a deep, dark truthful mirror and write down what she saw.

Then came the assessment – an eight-hour day of writing. The assessment was going to be conducted in late June 2001. On April 15 – yes, that April 15 – she turned in her portfolio and opened her reading list to prepare for the assessment eight weeks hence. On the list were 49 novels – four dozen (plus one). And some poetry and essays just to round things out.

"I read at the dinner table, I read on the couch," recalls Libby. "I read at my son's graduation from college." Forty percent of her final evaluation depended on her performance at the assessment; she had no choice.

Libby made it, although she didn't quite have time to brush up on three or four books on the list she had read long ago that turned out to be pivotal in the opening essay. Nonetheless, she passed.

Libby's not done. She still looks forward to her annual refresher work at the Colorado Language Arts Society Conference in Colorado Springs and enjoys her role as a consultant with Step Up To Writing.

She is still working to produce students who can write in an "organized, fluent and creative" way. If her love of reading is any indication – books from such varying authors as Patricia Cornwell and Barbara Kingsolver still pique her interest – there's no shortage of energy and enthusiasm for the job.

"Even though I'm a relic around here," she says, "I do think I'm good for several more years. I love it. I'm excited about it. That's what counts." ■



Teachers who have earned their National Board Certification were honored by the Denver Board of Education at the Jan. 16 meeting. The group included (left to right) Kelly Babcock (Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School), Wendy Ward Hoffer (Odyssey Charter), Priscilla Shaw (George Washington High School) and Susan Carey (Abraham Lincoln High School). Robert Katz (Hamilton Middle School) was unable to attend. In all, 30 DPS teachers now carry National Board Certification.

Brian Eichenberger

Teacher, Vocal Music
West High School



Years with DPS: 7

Greatest or Latest Accomplishment:
The West High School Choirs performing jointly with The Columbine Chorale in Musica de las Americas, a concert of choral music by Latin American composers.

The Most Challenging Part About My Job: Finding choral literature that has musical value, yet simple enough for entry-level teenage singers.

The Most Rewarding Part About My Job: The smiles, the hugs, their faces when they perform, and finishing another Singing Christmas Tree.

I've Also Worked As A: Hotel desk clerk, oil-field roustabout.

When I'm Not Working I Am Usually: Spending time with family and friends; listening to and discovering new music.

Hometown: Denver

Favorite Book: Lord of the Rings (recently rediscovered)

Favorite Movie: Groundhog Day

Favorite Restaurant: McCormick's Fish House

Family: Wife, Katherine, music teacher at Steck Elementary; sons Christopher, 19, a Freshman at Adams State, and Jason, 17, a Junior at GW.

Philosophy For Life: Life's awfully short to be taken too seriously. Find time to laugh. With the right perspective, this world's pretty funny.

Final Words: We must not neglect the essential presence of a strong arts curriculum as we endeavor to "leave no child behind." Without the arts, we leave them all behind.



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Public Information Office:
900 Grant Street, Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303-764-3414 Fax: 303-764-3413

Montbello Academic Excellence Ceremony is February 9

Montbello High School honor students will be recognized for their academic achievement during the annual Academic Excellence in the 21st Century Awards Ceremony. The event will be held on Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m.

The effort is designed to shed positive light on the high school and the many outstanding students it produces.

The presentation of awards will occur in the school auditorium. Recipients and their guests will attend dinner immediately following the awards ceremony. The catered affair will occur in the school gymnasium and requires an RSVP.

For more information, please call the school – 303-375-5700. ■

REPORT CARDS from page 1

"We are happy to be partnering with Denver Public Schools in this effort to provide school performance information in such a useful way."

Once parents have identified a few schools that might be of interest, they will find the same information that has been available on district report cards for the past three years:

- Overall and disaggregated information on CSAP scores
- Information about the school faculty's experience and preparation
- Background on the principal's experience level
- Student demographics including ethnicity and number of English language learners

On the new versions, however, much of the data is displayed with colorful bar charts and pie charts that are easy to digest. The entire site will have a mirror version in Spanish.

Based in San Francisco, GreatSchools is a non-profit organization that provides free online K-12 school information to help parents make informed decisions when it comes to supporting their children's education. GreatSchools has worked closely with parents to create a highly regarded, user-friendly online school guide that has won accolades from parents and the media.

GreatSchools served over 3.5 million parents in 2002 and is the school information provider for AOL, MSN, Knight Ridder, Univision.com, as well as newspapers and television stations throughout the United States. ■