

# insideDPS

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS / MARCH 1, 2003 / ISSUE NO. 8

## for math <sup>• new</sup> rigor instruction

It's 8:45 a.m. and they're poised, pencils in hand. Students at Horace Mann Middle School greet each morning with the daily math problem broadcast into every classroom. This generates a lasting buzz as students vie for the correct answer and a chance to win the afternoon drawing.

Throughout the day, math classes are hopping with activity – no snoozers here – and after school, students stay late to work with teachers who provide extra math instruction twice a week, every week.

"There's a new rigor in math instruction this year," said Debbie Hearty, Math Curriculum Coordinator for DPS. "We're talking about math with consistency and comprehensiveness."

One of the new implementation guidelines calls for mathematical talk among students during at least 60 percent of class time, with about 10 minutes of teacher instruction at the beginning and another 10 minutes of large group discussion at the end to summarize and close the loop.

"There's a lot more talk in math classes now," said Hearty, "but they've typically been the quietest classes."

Students are asking questions, responding, and learning from each other and their teacher. They are grouped and regrouped flexibly, based on interests or needs.

"It says a lot about the culture in a classroom when students who are working alone get up to join classmates in problem solving instead of



*A student at Horace Mann Middle School explores her way through a math manipulative. Principal Jim Trevino says challenging students to use colors for values requires them to use a higher level of thinking.*

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### ...Of Special Education Teacher Critt McClendon, East High School

The instant Christine "Critt" McClendon steps through the front doors of East High School, everyone knows the Angels will play basketball that night.

"When I wear red and black, the girls' basketball team has a game," says Critt. "We're playing Kennedy tonight."

A special education teacher by day, Critt volunteers after school as the assistant coach to the girls' varsity basketball team. Tonight's game means that now, in the early hours of this chilly Tuesday morning, she's gearing up for another 15-hour day.

It's 7 a.m. and students are already waiting at her classroom door as she arrives at the school that is a home away from home for about 2,000 students. That's more people than the population of Critt's entire hometown of Hartshorne, Okla., where she grew up as the eighth of nine children. The youngest girl in the family, her brothers nicknamed her "critter"—a name that sticks with her still today.

"Miss Critt," says one, "Can you tell me what currency is?" hoping to get out of having to read the explanation in the textbook. Today's geography class is about communism in the eastern block countries, and students are buzzing with questions about what happened in Russia. She makes a point of linking facts in the book to her explanations.

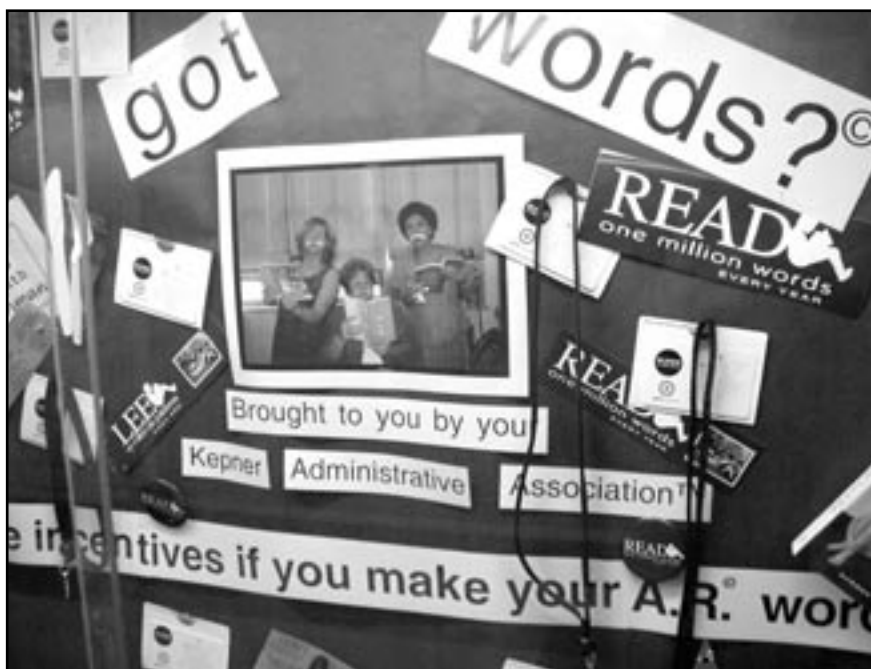
"You'd better read it," says Critt. "How else will you know it's right? You can't be sure it's right just because someone tells you."

See **A DAY IN THE LIFE** on page 7

# denver public schools millionaire minutes

**Kepner Middle School's** attractive "Got Words" display sets the tone for reading. At Kepner, 28 students have already read 1,000,000 words. In all, 81 students had reached the 500,000-word mark at the end of the first semester and 144 students reached 250,000-word goal for the second quarter. Every time a Kepner student reads a book, he or she gets a ticket to put in a bucket for drawings that are held every four weeks. Also, any student who reads 250,000 words per quarter receives a Kepner lanyard and certificate in the honor display. The school also posts graphs with total numbers of words read by classrooms.

In the second quarter alone, the school had 14.5 pounds of tickets. As Kepner principal Deborah Lanman says, "That's a lot of books!" Kepner students keep reading logs and are expected to read for a minimum of one-half hour per night. Parents sign the logs....**Dora Moore** K-8 School principal T. Jason Martinez has kicked off his new "Principal's Book Club" this year. The program, targeting every grade level and classroom, brings together the principal with both reluctant and competent readers in weekly sessions. Mr. Martinez or Assistant Principal Connie Cornelius hosts these sessions on alternate weeks. Students meet with the administrators in their offices for hot chocolate and discuss in depth the book they have been reading. The program has produced favorable results and will continue throughout the year....At **Centennial Elementary School**, the millionaire club includes third-graders Teagan Coviello and Myrissa Garcia and fifth-graders Jessica Blalock, Robbie Malina, Greg Basile, Brittany Sena, Ashley Berry, Brittany Quintana, and Maurice Cradle. These students were rewarded with an ice cream sundae party and received a gold Sacagawea dollar at a school assembly....**Whittier Elementary School** third-grader Gustavo Contreras is the first student at that school to reach the one million word mark. When asked by Whittier principal Jai Palmer about how it feels to read one million words, Gustavo replied: "Reading is good. The chapter books I have read have been quite interesting." Gustavo has read 30 chapter books so far. His teacher is Kathleen McCue. ■



## US Mint offers school tours, speakers bureau

**F**ree tours of the United States Mint in Denver are now available to school groups for students in grades 1-12. Guided tours are from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday and may be arranged through the Public Information Office at the Denver Mint. To schedule a group tour or learn more about this and other Mint programs, call 303-405-4759. Please allow 2-3 weeks advance notice for scheduling.



The Mint will also provide speakers at schools to speak about topics ranging from general Mint information to specific areas of interest. The program is free and offered during normal business hours. Other times may be arranged depending on time and location. To arrange for a speaker or to learn more about this and other Mint programs, call 303-405-4764.

### Tools for teachers

Take a peek at Mint's web site — [www.usmint.gov/kids](http://www.usmint.gov/kids) — to download the new 50 State Quarters® Program lesson plans. Created and reviewed by teachers to meet curricular goals, these plans will help inspire students to learn about the history in their pockets — along with math, social studies, science, language arts, music, art — through the fascinating yet familiar world of American coins. These lesson plans are designed to expand students' knowledge about the individual states, related history and geography, and the rich diversity of our national heritage. Meet the cast of coin-loving characters at the kids' site, the United States Mint H.I.P. Pocket Change. Visit the teachers' section to download lesson plans for grades K-6. ■

# original song unveiled at anniversary celebration

The following song was performed by students in the Denver Public Schools Citywide Choir at the district's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in January. Stephen Nye, vocal music, piano, drama and orchestra teacher at Rishel Middle School, composed the music and wrote the lyrics. To request the music, contact Stephen at Rishel Middle School, 303-727-5210. ■



## We Are Your Children

We came as children,

little ones with happy hearts and faces,  
making brand new friends in strange new places,  
learning our a, b, c's, our 1, 2, 3's,  
our x, y, z's, our do, re, mi's,  
all these to please our families and teachers.

As we grew taller, our worlds became much larger, and much smaller.

We listened to the stories you were reading us.  
You were leading us to see beyond our little space,  
to dream of how the human race could find each one a place  
to build the future.

We are the children you taught to believe and to dream.

We are artists and athletes and junior cadets.  
We are kids in your classroom you'll never forget.  
You are teachers who taught us and dared us to grow.  
We are learning,  
We are grateful,  
And we want you to know we are your children.

As we grow older, our voices and our choices become bolder.

No longer are we merely memorizing.  
We're realizing the choices we make today are what we'll use  
to live our way into the future we say you taught us.

We are the children you taught to believe and to dream.

We are artists and athletes and junior cadets.  
We are kids in your classroom you'll never forget.  
You are teachers who taught us and dared us to grow.  
We are learning,  
We are grateful,  
And we want you to know we are your children.

*In his classroom after school, Nye performs a solitary rendition of We Are Your Children.*

*“Imagine the voices of 200 children singing this. It's meant to be grand – to be big, boisterous, loud, fun – a joyful celebration of kids and teachers. I'm hoping the song will develop a life of its own at DPS celebrations. Some schools are planning to use it for spring concerts and festivals. That is exactly what I had in mind for the piece.”*

*– Stephen Nye*

## APPOINTMENTS

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Carolyn M. Ellison: Secretary I,  
Abraham Lincoln  
Maria A. Lomeli: Secretary I, Gilpin  
Sheri H. Niko: Secretary I, Brown  
Cheri Weitzer: Secretary II, Teller  
Haley E Brown: Educational Pro-Tech,  
John F. Kennedy  
Thomas D Frazier: SFPC Liaison Specialist,  
Emily Griffith Opportunity School  
Jon L. Gallegos: Educational Pro-Tech, Force  
Michelle Lampkin: SPPC Liaison Specialist,  
Alternative Placement Services  
Lisa Pisciotta: Educational Pro-Tech, Kunsmiller  
William D. Snyder: Security Patrol,  
Safety And Security  
Richard M. Thirouin: Security Patrol,  
Operations  
Eliza J. Kelly: Speech Language Specialist,  
Mitchell  
Jessica Abel: Teacher, Kepner  
Terri A. Goodspeed: Teacher, Samuels  
Kristin Jones: Teacher, McMeen  
Amy C. McShane: Teacher, Ellis  
Jill V. Valentine: Teacher, John F. Kennedy  
Lisa A. Yemma: Teacher, Cole  
Kathleen Zimmerman: Teacher, Crofton

## CHANGE IN ASSIGNMENT

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Thanh H. Nguyen: Facility Manager III, Place  
Ray A. Quintana: Custodial Helper,  
Thomas Jefferson  
Adrian A. Trejo: Custodian Assistant II,  
Operations  
Mark W. Williams: Custodian Assistant I,  
Operations  
Edward L. Santos: Educational Pro-Tech,  
Kepner  
Mary J. Wagner: Driver/Route Supervisor,  
Operations  
Amanda M. DeBell: Assistant Principal, Noel  
Roslyn Underwood-Dee: Director Curriculum/  
Instruction, Education  
Anita E. Venohr: Assistant Principal, Rishel  
Sandra E. Eckert: Teacher, Gilpin  
Jennifer A. Ferguson: Teacher,  
Thomas Jefferson

## REAPPOINTMENTS

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Freida A. Bustos: Secretary II, Merrill  
Bobby Garcia: Teacher, Montbello

## RETIREMENT

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Julie Keller: Secretary, Abraham Lincoln  
Virginia Maestas: Secretary, Smedley  
Arnold R. Burnette: Facility Manager, Place  
Richard A. Osendorf: Facility Manager, Barnum  
Freddie J. Ceja: Maintenance, Operations  
Sandra M Hart: Bus Driver, Transportation  
Joseph M. Candelaria: Teacher, Skinner  
Anne C. Williams: Teacher, East

## Paraprofessionals

**Are you ready to earn a Bachelor's degree and become an elementary school teacher in DPS?**

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### Center For Urban Education

Learn about a University of Northern Colorado and Denver Public Schools program that enables you to combine work as a paraprofessional/teacher apprentice (in a DPS classroom) with a full-time four-year college degree program. Find out about this special opportunity at one of these information sessions:

#### **4:15-5:15 p.m. Monday, March 10**

Castro Elementary School  
845 South Lowell Blvd.

#### **4:15-5:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 11**

Ellis Elementary School  
1651 South Dahlia Street

#### **4:15-5:15 p.m. Wednesday, March 12**

Barrett Elementary School  
2900 Richard Allen Court

#### **5-6 p.m. Thursday, March 13**

UNC Center for Urban Education  
1061 Akron Way  
(Call 303-365-7635 for directions to the Center)



## Teacher staffing for next year to begin in April

The teacher staffing process for the 2003-2004 school year will begin in April. The information below outlines important points regarding this year's automated process.

1. There are three staffing cycles.
  - Cycle 1 is for internal transfers only (Web-based profile form) for current continuing contract teachers (does not include long term substitutes, student teachers or those teachers on a non-renewable contract).
  - Cycle 2 is for internal and external applicants (on-line application for both employees and applicants).
  - Cycle 3 is for external applicants only (on-line application).
2. Any teacher transferring must meet qualifications under No Child Left Behind.
  - Current continuing contract teachers may request to transfer to positions for which they are qualified. The definition of qualified based on No Child Left Behind legislation means the teacher is either:
    - Endorsed in each of the curriculum area(s) teaching OR
    - Endorsed in another curriculum area and has 24 credit hours in each of the curriculum area(s) teaching, OR
    - Endorsed in another curriculum area and has passed the PLACE test in the curriculum area(s) teaching.
3. Teachers are able to apply to a maximum of 15 positions per cycle.
  - Teacher applicants are responsible for sending their resumes directly to the schools where they have applied.
4. .5 positions are open to 1.0 contracted teachers with the understanding that those interested must actively participate in obtaining a second .5 position.
5. A teacher can move once during the probationary period (first 3 years as full-time contracted teacher or first 4 years as TiR) beginning with the 2002-2003 school year.
6. If a teacher applies to ELA positions,
  - The teacher is required to remain in an ELA-S or ELA-E designation for 4 years AND
  - If the teacher is not endorsed with a linguistically diverse endorsement, the teacher is required to attend the following training in the summer: ELA-E: 150 hours, ELA-T, 60 hours, ELA-S 150 hours and pass the Spanish Language Proficiency (SLP) test. Requirements and timelines will be provided.
7. During Cycle 1, offers may be made to teachers beginning at 8 a.m. Wednesday, April 30 and not before. Candidates must accept or decline by 5 p.m. the same day.
8. Intent to vacate, request for general and sabbatical leave, and job share forms will be available in late March via the website. The final date to submit is Monday, April 7.
9. The final Teacher Informational session will be held from 5-6 p.m. Wednesday, March 12 at the South High School library.
10. For information regarding the timeline for teacher staffing, access the Human Resources website at [hr.dpsk12.org](http://hr.dpsk12.org) and click on the "Teacher Staffing 2003-2004" link. ■

## george washington parent gives school kudos

Excerpted below is a letter from a first year George Washington High School parent. As assistant principal Pat Thomas says, "This is the type of feedback that makes teaching wonderful!" ■

Mr. Mario Williams  
Principal, George Washington High School

Dear Mr. Williams,

*I just wanted to drop you a line and let you know how pleased my husband and I are with George Washington. Our son attended a Catholic school for the last eight years. He didn't want to attend a Catholic high school, and we let him make the decision.*

*WOW!! He has been doing great. He was barely passing in seventh and eighth grades. This was a kid who was testing off the charts and yet was failing miserably in the classroom.*

*What a difference this year! The teachers have all been wonderful; I have received feedback from each of them. Their encouragement to Sean has given my son the motivation to do well. He is carrying his 4.018 GPA report card around with him and showing anyone and everyone.*

*I am very impressed with the teachers at George Washington. They truly care about Sean's success. He is a different child this year. We have "caught" him studying on the weekends. The positive attitude of the teachers has made Sean want to excel.*

*Thank you and keep up the good work.*

*Lori Peck*

# dps poster boy comes full circle at smedley elementary school

By Tony Base, Public Information Office Intern

About fifteen years ago Sheldon Reynolds appeared on a famous and clever poster for Denver Public Schools. The poster shows nine children wearing oversized sweatshirts from various colleges such as Harvard, Duke and Yale – Sheldon is the one in the Howard sweatshirt. Across the top of the poster, the words are simple: "Teach Your Children Well."

Fifteen years later and Sheldon is doing just that, teaching your children well.

In fifteen short years Reynolds went from the skinny, grinning second grader in the picture to teaching skinny, grinning fifth graders at Smedley Elementary School. Reynolds' dad, Shurwood Reynolds, now principal at Greenwood Elementary School, arranged for Sheldon and two of his friends, Simone Sloan-Morrison in the Harvard sweatshirt and Quincy DeVillie in the Williams sweatshirt, to be on the poster.

Sheldon was attending Knight Academy at the time of the photo shoot, and the thought of becoming a teacher had yet to cross his mind.

"I never thought I would follow my dad's footsteps but slowly and surely it's happened," says Sheldon during a break from teaching his 26 students.

Sheldon always had the desire to go to college, but just like the sweatshirt in the poster, going to Howard University just did not fit him. After graduating from George Washington High School Sheldon headed to Las Vegas to attend classes at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas (UNLV).

It was the summer after his freshmen year, when Sheldon came home and participated in the Summer Scholars program as an intern, that he immediately fell in love with teaching.

"Since I love working with kids teaching was always something I could picture myself doing," Sheldon says, "But the Summer Scholars program is what really got me interested in teaching."

And DPS seemed like a natural fit.

"I was a product of DPS and I really like the program," Sheldon explains, "Also, I wanted to get back home and give back to the community."

Since returning to Denver, and beginning to teach at Smedley, Sheldon finds teaching every bit as rewarding as he hoped.

"Seeing my students try for the first time and seeing the light go on when they start to understand, that makes it all worth it," Sheldon says with a grin which is a stunning replica of the one he flashed 15 years ago for the poster, proving that not too much has changed since he was the boy in the oversized sweatshirt.

Sheldon is scheduled to marry his high school sweetheart, Chinika Irving in June. In all fairness Chinika could be considered his elementary school sweetheart, since they did

attend Knight Academy together. Sheldon insists that he never chased her around the playground and that they did not start dating until their sophomore year at George Washington High School.

Chinika and Sheldon's meeting at Knight Academy did not mark the first time a Reynolds and an Irving had met in a Denver Public School. In even another ironic



*Sheldon Reynolds, third from the left (above) has come full circle – and now teaches fifth grade students at Smedley Elementary School.*



twist to this story, Sheldon's future mother-in-law, Colette Irving, was a student in his father's first class.

As Sheldon watches his students read their assignment he says he has a hard time believing that he used to be that size. Of course, when he was that size he had a hard time believing he would become a teacher. ■



*Three players from the University of Denver women's basketball team spent an evening recently with the girls' team from Dora Moore K-8 School, providing a pep talk and some motivation. Dora Moore coach Patrick McDonald organized the clinic, hoping it would help the Eagles on and off the court. The players from 'DU' included (left to right) center Sarah Cyran, forward Venice Adams, and guard Katie Davenport.*

**DAY IN THE LIFE** from page 1

Throughout her two morning geography classes, Critty tends to each student, knowing who has a test on Friday and who hasn't turned in worksheets that were due in another class. She knows the chapter from which they need to pick up where they left off in a previous class.

"When are you going to do your homework?" she asks. "Do you want to take the book home and do it tonight, or do you want to do it in class on Thursday? How do you need to plan for it so that you understand it before Friday?"

"She's a good teacher," says one student, preparing to go to lunch. "She's strict, but she's good. She keeps us up on our tasks."

Her morning is busy and fast paced, juggling two classes, parent phone calls, meeting preparations, and the steady stream of visitors to her classroom. Just before lunch, a student finds his way into Critty's office to borrow one dollar. She has only a five-dollar bill, and he leaves with clear instructions to return with four one-dollar bills.

"They call this Hotel Critty," she explains. "I have kids coming through here all the time, every day – even kids who aren't in my classroom."

Every day, she teaches 27 freshmen through seniors who are special education students. While paperwork for her special education students takes up the bulk of her time, she also manages the scheduling for the school's 200 special education students, tests them for placement into classes, and works with student teachers from Metro State College.

Her afternoon today is booked solid for meetings with teachers and parents so she can stay on top of her students' progress toward behavior goals and Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

"We want to make sure we're doing everything we can for kids," says Critty. "I'm consistently communicating with teachers and parents to find the strategies that each student needs to succeed."

And she's seen what success looks like, both in her professional and personal life. Her nephew has Down syndrome, and he inspired her at an early age.

"I started working with special education kids as a teacher's assistant in junior high and continued through high school," she says. "My compassion for kids comes from watching my nephew learn, from seeing what he went through. People along the way thought he wasn't capable, but he proved them wrong."

Those are the kinds of success stories she's seeing in DPS.

"I have one autistic student who's graduating from East this year, and I started with him at Ashley Elementary my first year in the district in 1989," she says. "He was a handful at the time, and his mother told me he was mine – that I should do with him whatever I had to do, and I did. Now, he's part of my family, and I'm part of his."

Taking students under her wing and showing that she cares is in her nature, even if they aren't in her classes.

"If I see kids having a bad day, I get emotional," she says. "For that matter, I get emotional when I see them having a good day, too."

Recalling a school assembly when a student from the Adaptive/Functional class performed a song, she says, "It makes my day to see one of our students get up in front of everybody."

This is Critty's first year at East High School. She recently spent four years in the Student Services office after two years at Cole Middle School and seven years at Ashley Elementary.

"The difference in high school is that you have more responsibilities, and you get more attitude from the kids," she says. "But my time with the kids is the best part of my job," she says, heading off to that evening's basketball game. She'll call it a day at 10 p.m. – after the girls win their basketball game! ■

## Maureen Penley



International Baccalaureate  
Program/College Counselor  
George Washington  
High School

Years with DPS: 18

**Greatest or Latest Accomplishment:** Setting up the Scholars Program for advanced students who are not participating in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. (Colleagues tell Inside DPS that Maureen was recently selected from over 1,000 counselors nationwide by the British Counsel of the United States in DC to attend the UK Study Tour. This prestigious award is bestowed on counselors who are known for their advocacy for youth and their consistency in counseling, which reflects really knowing and guiding students in the college selection process.)

**The Most Challenging Part About My Job:** There is always too much to do and not enough time to do it. Additionally, college admissions is an ever-changing process, and keeping ahead of the changes requires constant research and communications with the colleges.

**The Most Rewarding Part About My Job:** The students are superb. They make my job very rewarding even though the challenges of IB are quite profound. The teachers are always willing to help and to tell a joke to keep things light.

**I've Also Worked:** As an elementary and middle school teacher in Arizona, California and Iowa. I took several years off to sell disability insurance in Denver.

**When I'm Not Working I Am Usually:** Gardening and working in my huge backyard. My favorite activity is to walk around the neighborhood and give treats to the dogs and talk to their caregivers.

**Hometown:** Springfield, Illinois.

**Favorite Book:** The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold.

**Favorite Movie:** The Hours.

**Favorite Restaurant:** Strings.

**Family:** I have two sisters and a brother. I recently lost the last of my 3 dogs that were a part of my life for 18 years.

**Philosophy For Life:** Do your best and don't worry what others think or say about it.

**Volunteer activities:** I work extensively with animal shelters and foundations.

**Final Words:** I never wanted to go into education when I was young, but I found out that it is the most rewarding and challenging job out there. Students respond to care and it is possible to change the world through them.

choosing to sit alone and doodle if they don't understand," she said.

### About the initiative

The Board of Education last month took its first look at the initiative that is bringing focus and direction to math classrooms throughout the district.

So far, about 300 fourth through eighth grade teachers have been trained in two programs – Everyday Mathematics in elementary schools and Connected Mathematics Program in middle schools.

Bearing down with support for each program, Hearty told the Board, will allow the district to maximize the use of professional development dollars and help schools focus on what's needed to raise achievement and succeed on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP).

The heart of this standards-driven initiative is the conviction that all elementary and middle school students can, and must, learn more mathematics than has been expected from them in the past. The instructional design is carefully crafted to capitalize on student interest and maximize student learning.

Hearty said highly mobile students who transfer from school to school within the same year will find consistency in mathematics instruction, making it easier to keep learning.

There's clear evidence that large-scale implementation of standards-based curricula produces significant improvements in achievement across the board – in problem solving, conceptual understanding and in computational skills.

Chief Academic Officer Sally Mentor Hay said there will be some lag time until all schools are on the same track. It will take time – and money – for the textbook purchasing cycle to catch up.

"Teaching math in urban situations is a very challenging situation and teachers deserve a lot of support," said Mentor Hay. Due to budget restraints and textbook purchasing cycles, she added, "we have to go more slowly than we would like to go."

The initiative brings a rich array of materials and curriculum, requires setting competency levels on a district-wide basis, addresses issues for English Language Learners, and builds students' ability to discuss mathematics concepts orally.

At the elementary level, the program includes such themes as problem solving for everyday situations, developing concepts through hands-on activities, and an emphasis on students being able to explain and discuss their mathematical thinking.

At the middle school level, students will move through four to seven thematic units of investigation into mathematics problems and issues each year. Students develop understanding, reasoning and skills by exploring a cohesive set of interesting problems that embody rich mathematical ideas.

Several Board members praised the new push. "I've been waiting for this for some time and I am so happy to see this kind of approach taken on a district-wide level," said Board member Kevin Patterson. "I'm thoroughly excited." ■



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