

inside dps

Photo Credit: Jeremy Martinez, Communications Office Intern

Asbury Elementary School teacher Julie Chapman with first grader Angel Gallegos.

the denver plan provides roadmap for enduring reform

Message from Superintendent Michael Bennet

The Denver Plan is under way. It has been poked and prodded by teachers, parents, principals, district staff and the community. It was dissected during 13 public meetings. It was subjected to the scrutiny of The Denver Plan Committee, a group of 40 teachers, principals and staff assembled solely for the purpose of analyzing and critiquing each word over the course of twice-weekly meetings for two months. It was reviewed against the feedback from hundreds of e-mails and letters. And, finally, it was vetted by the Board of Education during a four-hour work session.

This was a very powerful experience – communities packed meetings to discuss the future of Denver Public Schools. It's clear that many parents realize that there is ample room for improvement across the district, and they want to support the district in our work.

So what's the result?

In short: an enduring, common roadmap for the district's reform.

See DENVER PLAN on page 4



making movies:

merill film heads to indigenous festival

A picture might be worth a thousand words, but as Merrill Middle School students recently discovered, a single picture doesn't cut it on the silver screen.

Students enrolled in the Indian Focus School at Merrill spent three very busy weeks creating almost 6,000 individual pictures – frames – for an animated film.

To create one second of film, the student artists moved their cutout characters ever so slightly, bit by bit before photographing each frame – to the tune of 24 frames per one second of animated film.

Teaming up with visiting PlatteForum Creative Residents professional animator Karen Aqua and musician and composer Ken Field, the sixth and seventh graders created a four-minute animated film and original soundtrack that interprets a Santa Clara Pueblo story about the origin of the bear paw design on traditional pottery.

To get started, teacher David M. Redhorse and about a dozen students visited with master teacher in Native Arts Heather Neilson at the Denver Art Museum. From there, they created sketches and a script to tell the traditional Pueblo story.

Each student fashioned a character for the film and worked with Aqua on the stop frame animation, creating a total of nine scenes. Working with Field, students also recorded sound effects, narration and voiceover spots.

The film will premiere during the first annual Native Youth Pow-wow at Merrill Middle School in April before advancing to Denver's Indigenous Film and Arts Festival in September.

The two professional Creative Residents from Boston connected with the school through PlatteForum, an organization that gives youth a chance to work side-by-side with master artists to create and present new work. PlatteForum co-designs programming with the artists, teachers and other collaborations to create unique, enriching experiences for youth (www.platteforum.org). ■

The hands - and hearts and minds - of Indian Focus School students at Merrill created almost 6,000 individual frames for a four-minute animated film. Pictured here are some of the hands that brought the film to life: Mariah Baca, Zachary Busby, Joshua Esquibel, Breanna Fesili, Keanna Fesili, Eddie Hernandez, Parker Kirn, Alysha Martinez, Emilio Martinez, Rona ThunderHawk, Aaron Yellowboy, Kashmir Chapa, Alaura Gilbert, Terri Murray, Brent Roberts and Westley Underwood.

The Bear

(an interpretation of a Santa Clara Pueblo story by students of the Merrill Indian Focus School)

It was a hot, dry summer for the Pueblo people.

People: "Sigh! It is so hot! I am so thirsty!"

The people were thirsty and their crops were wilting.

They gathered together and hoped and called for rain.

Kids: "Come, come! A bear is heading towards our Pueblo!"

The people saw an old bear come down through the canyon.

The wise elder knew that the bear was important and should be followed, not hunted or feared.

They followed the bear all day through the hot, dry land.

Finally, as the sun was setting, the journey ended.

The bear had led them to a little spring of cool fresh water.

No one had found this spot before, because the thirsty sands consumed the moisture before it could get to their Pueblo.

People: "Our Pueblo is saved! Thank you!"

After that, the people remembered the bear by placing his paw print on pots made at Santa Clara Pueblo.

market incentives expanded for 2006-2007

Educators who join **ProComp** during the second opt-in window covering 2006-2007 will see some expanded opportunities. Seven schools have been added to the list of hard-to-serve schools for the 2006-2007 contract year, and the role of school nurses will be considered a hard-to-staff position. Both elements fall under the Market Incentives component – rewarding educators who choose to work in schools and positions with the greatest need.

Opt-In Window

The second ProComp opt-in window opened on Wednesday, February 1 and ends on Friday, March 31. It is the last opportunity for educators to sell unused university and in-service credits to increase their ProComp starting salaries.

Educators who are interested in joining ProComp should call 720-423-3900 to start the process and order official university transcripts for evaluation. Transcripts must be received by Friday, March 17 in order to be evaluated before the opt-in window closes.

Hard-to-Serve Schools

The additional hard-to-serve schools for 2006-2007 are Ashley, Bryant-Webster Dual Language, Columbian, Montclair School of Academics and Enrichment, Horace Mann, Rishel, and West.

The hard-to-serve list is a “rolling” list. Schools that are designated hard to serve stay on the list at least three years. All schools are reviewed annually to determine if they meet the criteria. It is possible for a school to be named to the list in one year and not renewed in the next, but schools that are not renewed will finish their original three-year designation.

The following schools were not renewed in this year’s list and will complete their three-year designation in 2007-2008: Castro, Garden Place, Gilpin, Harrington, Bruce Randolph, Lake, Abraham Lincoln and North. They may be renamed as hard-to-serve schools if they meet the criteria in future annual reviews.

School Nurses

School nurses were added to the list of hard-to-staff positions after the Transition Team reviewed and compared the filled and unfilled positions across the district. The addition of school nurses brings to six the number of positions designated as hard to staff.

English Language Acquisition-Spanish (ELA-S), middle school math, special education center assignments, speech language specialists and psychologists already are on the list and will remain for the 2006-2007 school year. Hard-to-staff positions are reviewed annually, and this year all positions from the previous year were renewed.

New Licenses Eligible for Payment

Two new licenses also were added to the list for which educators may receive payment under the Knowledge and Skills component. Counselors who earn a license as a National Certified School Counselor and the psychologists who hold a Clinical Psychologist license may receive a salary increase of \$2,997 or 9 percent of the index salary. ■



Photo Credit: Jeremy Martinez, Communications Office Intern

whiz kids

Eighty-five Denver middle school students went head-to-head with hundreds of their metro area peers at the recent Brain Bowl competition at Thomas Jefferson High School. The students tackled math, science, history, literature, art and geography quizzes, such as naming the planet (Neptune) that belongs to Triton, the only large moon in the solar system to have a retrograde orbit, or identifying the type of flu (avian) for which scientists re-developed the deadly Spanish flu virus in 2005 to see if it would help develop a cure. ■



save the date!

2006 Annual Celebration of Denver Public Schools

6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, May 11
Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Denver
Tickets are \$125 per person for DPS employees and retirees

Proceeds benefit the educational priorities of Denver Public Schools. For information or to purchase tickets, call 720-423-3980, email dpscelebration@dpsfoundation.org or visit www.dpsfoundation.org.

DENVER PLAN *from page 1*

But, it's not set in stone. The Denver Plan was designed from the start as a flexible tool, a living document that can be adjusted and refined based on our experience in the classroom.

The feedback drove some key changes. The revised plan more explicitly describes the effort to close the achievement gap for students of color. It calls for diversity training for faculty, leaves unsettled the proposal to close campuses (more about that in a minute), and places a parent advocate with each of the eight Instructional Support Teams now being formed as the new management structure for the district.

Double blocks of mathematics and reading instruction

As The Denver Plan analysis moved forward, one hot button issue emerged that I hope now is resolved. The first draft of The Denver Plan called for intervention across the board for students who are not yet learning on grade level.

Double blocks of mathematics and reading instruction for high school students below grade level will be provided for ninth-grade students only – not students in ninth and tenth as originally proposed. There are no changes for this concept for middle school grades.

Initially, it was feared that the idea of requiring double blocks of time in core subjects for struggling learners in middle schools and high schools might mean a drastic rollback in the electives students could take, particularly in arts and music.

Let me say clearly that arts and music will remain an integral part of schools. The community has clearly stated it expects Denver students to learn music and arts. In fact, Denver voters sent a particularly strong message by passing the November 2003 mill levy election, which gave dollars specifically to arts education. That message still is loud and clear today.

Our elective choices will be competitive with all other school districts. However, none of us wants to sign diplomas for students who cannot read and write at the level we expect. To reach that goal, we need to readjust the time we ask students to work on improving these core skills.

Both Chief Academic Officer Jaime Aquino and I are clearly aware that the "double blocks" of work on reading, writing and math involve much more than just repeating the same lesson twice. Students will be exposed to different learning strategies. Teaching time is precious, and we will make sure this effort is not wasted. The double block also is not forever; the object is to move students out of the double blocks as soon as they are proficient.

Throughout The Denver Plan, one theme is constant – we are focusing the entire district's efforts on instruction. Sound obvious? Sure. Now we must follow through, particularly in the effort to provide our teachers and principals with top-notch professional development and support so their time is efficiently applied to helping students learn and not distracted by other issues.

Instructional Support Teams

The Denver Plan organizes eight Instructional Support Teams (IST), each with 15 schools. Each IST will include four staff developers (all teachers on special assignment, not administrators) – one each in math and science, humanities, special education and English Language Acquisition.

Each team's primary focus will be to work with principals and teachers to support quality instruction. They will be supported in schools by new positions known as facilitators. These teachers on special assignment will combine their curriculum and content awareness together with assessment data to plan program improvements. They will assist principals, assistant principals and teachers in grade level planning meetings to evaluate student work.

The idea is for these teams to be in schools – virtually all the time. They may have a desk and a computer somewhere, but they will be highly visible in schools and classrooms.

Focusing on instruction was also the goal of closing high school campuses, which was another lightning rod issue of the original Denver Plan. We'll need some time on this one and continued work with principals to see what will work. Our interest is that students not be truant. Our question is: Which is the best way to get there? There are, indeed, some schools without a truancy problem, so some flexibility may be in order.

As I said, The Denver Plan is a living document. This is one clear case example of that.

Next steps

First, developing and finalizing timelines for each of the steps called for in The Denver Plan and deciding how the progress will be measured through the Balanced Scorecard. Second, supporting the several dozen work groups as they proceed with their analysis and work. Third, aligning our work with the district's resources – the budget. And, fourth, getting ready to open schools next August with our teams and instructional materials in place, ready to go.

Thanks for your ongoing interest and dedication to the task at hand – organizing ourselves around improving the quality of instruction in each and every classroom in the district. We are committed to providing our hard working teachers with the support and tools they need to make this vision a reality. ■



Asbury Elementary School teacher Lori Wartgow with a group of second graders.

comings & goings

Appointments

Danya Arguello: Teacher, Secondary, George Washington High
Shannon Ashley: Nurse, Education
Patrick Aubin: Teacher Secondary, Horace Mann Middle
Rachel Bruce: Parent Liaison Specialist, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle
Donald Carson Jr.: L2 Heavy Equipment/ Small Engines Repair, Operations
Cassandra E. Castanon: Teacher, Elementary, Sabin Elementary
Mona Cedillo-Gervasio: Secretary I, Manual/Arts & Cultural High
Pamela Collins: Secretary II, Place Middle
Robert L. Dixon III: Vehicle Service Tech I, Transportation
Alfred M. Elser: Teacher, Secondary, Montbello High
Lynne A. Furrer: Help Desk Specialist I, Education
Jodie Garten: Teacher, Elementary, Wyman Elementary
Bertha A. Maines: Teacher, Elementary, Barnum Elementary
Trevor P. Marienau: Teacher, Secondary, John F Kennedy High
Abby W. Mayer: Teacher Secondary, Bruce Randolph Middle
Darlene Rosas: Secretary I, Oakland Elementary
Shawn L. Rozinsk: Vehicle Service Tech I, Transportation
Mary Lou Ruiz: Secretary I, Godsman Elementary
Julie M. Sanchez: Teacher Secondary, Lake Middle
Jason Sanders: Educational Pro-Tech, Education
Michael S. Thomas: Purchasing Director, Administration
Paul L. Wilson: Systems Administrator II, Administration

Reappointments

Sandra K. Heffner: Supply Clerk, Operations
Vincent G. Rivera: Custodian Assistant I, Steele Elementary

Change In Assignments

Cherish Boswell: Counter Clerk, Operations
Debra M. Briggs: Dispatch II, Transportation
Randy E. Cole: Custodian Asst III, Rishel Middle
Antonio Esquibel: Interim Principal, High School, Abraham Lincoln High
Trena A. Jones: Director, Operations & Maintenance, Operations
Nicole Y. Portee: Manager, Traffic & Safety, Operations
Maria M. Rosas: Manager, Food Service III, Harrington Elementary
Reynaldo Salazar: Manager, Facility I, Swansea Elementary
Pamela E. Vargas: Dispatch II, Transportation
Jane Walsh: Project Specialist, Education
Sylvia A. Wilson: Special Education Assistant, Education

Retirements

Sinda L. Burnkrant: Teacher, Elementary, Fairview Elementary
Virginia D. Chavez: Teacher, Elementary, Knapp Elementary

Darlene L. Davenport: Secretary II, Place Middle
Katherine Georgiou: Teacher, Secondary, Kepner Middle
Evelyn Melnick: Teacher, Secondary, Grant Middle
Robert N. Morris: Manager, Traffic & Safety, Operations
Susan L. Nee: Teacher, Secondary, Administration, Medicaid Office
Charlene D. Pasley: Library Technician II, Education
George Smith: Custodian Asst I, Knight Academy
Hortensia G. Sprouse: Systems Analyst, Administration
Barbara L. Stube: Teacher, Elementary, Slavens Elementary
Antoniette C. Suazo: Secretary, Executive II, Education
John J. Velasquez: Manager, Facility I, Harrington Elementary
H A. Vogel: Secretary II, Education
Diane M. Weaver: Area Specialist, Education

Deaths

Lauren Carlisle: Teacher, Elementary, Greenlee Elementary



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focus on

Lucia Guzman

Executive Director
Denver Agency for Human Rights
and Community Relations

Years with Denver Public Schools:

Six years on the Board of Education.

Greatest or latest accomplishment:

Learning how to downhill ski.

Editor's note: Lucia is one of two recipients who recently received the Anti-Defamation League's 2006 Civil Rights Award for her leadership and achievements in the areas of civil and human rights.

Why you chose to serve

on the Denver Board of Education: To give better opportunities for kids to learn and excel.

Four words you think children would use to describe you: Funny, cool, kooky and caring.

One way you give children recognition: I ask them for their name and I call them by name.

From your experience, the most effective way to communicate with parents: Tell it like it is.

What you do for fun: Ski, run, bicycle, hike, garden and movies.

Hometown: Katy, Texas.

Person who has influenced you most in life: My parents.

Favorite restaurant: Aix at 719 E. 17th Ave., Denver.

Best book you've read in the past year: "Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism" by Dr. Cornell West.

Family: Friends, three dogs.

Philosophy for life: Work hard, play hard and rest well.

Three items (books, records, movies, presidents, etc.) you would take with you if you were stranded on an island: My blackberry phone, almonds and spinach.



Knight Fundamental Academy fifth grader Kamettisara LuQman.

Photo Credit: Thom Padick

head and shoulders above the rest

Budding artists from Knight Fundamental Academy displayed their head-and-shoulders clay portraits at the U.S. Bank branch in Cherry Creek last month. The works were fired clay painted with acrylic paint.

The fifth graders collaborated with artist Jeff Starr and the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) during a two-session clay sculpture workshop. Starr was an exhibitor in the MCA's recent Biennial Blowout exhibition.

Under the supervision of Knight art teacher Thom Padick, students visited the Dikeou Collection of contemporary art at the museum following a lecture on the differences between modern and contemporary art.

The program was funded by the Denver Public Schools Distance Learning Network, MCA, U.S. Bank, SCFD and by Knight students and their families. ■

Summer Scholars Now Hiring

Summer Scholars is hiring teachers, paraprofessionals and teen interns to work in its award-winning summer literacy and recreation program from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. weekdays from Monday, June 12 through Friday, July 21.

Summer Scholars also is seeking recreation instructors to work afternoons (11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) during the summer program. Applications are now being accepted.

For information and applications, access www.summerscholars.org or call 303-355-0290. ■

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