

StrategieS

FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS ON DISTRICT-LEVEL CHANGE

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Pueblo, CO:

Moving Toward International Standards of Success for All

In Pueblo City Schools the graduation rate has improved over the past two years. In fact, the district has

SUPERINTENDENT:
John W. Covington

DISTRICT SIZE:
18,300

closed the gap between Hispanic and white students. The rate of Hispanic

students graduating is 11 points higher than for “all” students and 2 points higher than for whites. When asked about hitting a mark that preoccupies so many urban districts, Superintendent John Covington is neither impressed nor complacent. “I don’t mean to belittle the gains we have made, but closing the gap is not getting our kids where they need to be. Our vision is far beyond merely closing the gap.”

Pueblo is focused on an international vision for students. Colorado state content standards are ranked 38th out of 50 in terms of rigor; and according to Covington, “it is not enough to be proficient on Colorado state standards. Our students are called upon to compete with graduates from states with higher standards than our own and with graduates from countries like China, Singapore, and Japan.” The district is taking bold steps to make sure that when graduates receive their diplomas, they can compete on national and international levels.

Toward this end, the district has applied for country status and is scheduled to participate in the *Trends in International Mathematics*

and *Science Survey (TIMSS)* in 2011 as a stand-alone country. According to Bob Vise, Pueblo City Schools’ executive director of assessment and technology, “Applying as a ‘country’ is the only way to see how our students measure up to the new national and international standards that we have set.” Although TIMSS does not disaggregate results by race or SES, the district will be able to report individual student scores.



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Moving to international standards has been a challenge for a city that holds fast to its traditions. A one-room adobe hut built on the Fountain River in 1862 served as Pueblo’s first school. Today, Pueblo is a diverse city of more than 100,000 people. The district’s student population is 61 percent Hispanic, 34 percent white, and about 3 percent African American, with the remaining 2 percent American Indian or Asian; 69 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Even as the community has grown, the local buzz still centers on the long-standing rivalry between high schools. According to Sandy Gutierrez, president of the Latino Chamber of Commerce, “This is a city with deep roots; folks speak with pride of their high school, even more so than the college they attended. They are proud to trace back and show that their school is the same school

that their parents and their parents before them attended.” With all this generational support, people do not want to see the schools flounder. However, according to Andrew Lang, a community leader, “At the same time, people were not tuned in to a global perspective. Local construction plants were moving their operations to Juarez, Mexico, and parts of China, and folks hadn’t made the connection to the quality of education people were getting here at home.”

Mobilizing the Community Around a Bold Strategic Plan

Today in Pueblo, the push for preparing students to be worldwide competitors exists not only in the classroom, but in the community as well. The work of mobilizing community support in working toward international standards is now under way.

In 2006, Covington launched the largest and most comprehensive strategic planning process in Pueblo’s history. District leaders brought together 350 individuals who fully represented Pueblo’s diversity, including business people, K–12 educators, university professors, union representatives, health care and government workers, and law enforcement officers. The group encompassed representative numbers of students, parents, grandparents, and blacks, Hispanics, and whites. The district sent a steering committee composed of four community members and two district staff to be trained in the Cambridge Group’s strategic planning process. Lang, CEO of Pueblo-based Bassett Construction, signed on as a member of the steering committee. For him, serving on the committee

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Pueblo— World Class

Pueblo City Schools' plan has the following six objectives:

- All students will successfully complete a comprehensive individual education plan to prepare them to enter 21st century academic pursuits or the global work force.
- All students will meet or exceed international standards and measures of achievement.
- Pueblo City Schools will recruit and retain a highly qualified competitive workforce sustained by "cutting edge" professional development for internationally competitive schools.
- Pueblo City Schools will provide a system of support for students to be civic, responsible, healthy, and involved members of the global community.
- All Pueblo City Schools are conducive to superior teaching and learning and are capable of responding to the diverse needs of 21st century learners.
- Pueblo City Schools will secure and utilize 100 percent of human, financial, and physical resources required to create and sustain world-class public schools and this strategic plan. ◀

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was good business practice: "I see things from an economic perspective. I see firsthand how businesses are outsourcing. We were falling behind as a community. I wanted to do my part."

The steering committee worked with a team of 40 from the larger group to complete the initial work of refining the district mission, values, and belief statements. Among those statements was the following: "We will honor and respect our traditions, but we will not let them get in the way of progress toward our goal." The team developed six overarching objectives that became the core work of the district (see the box titled "Pueblo—World Class"). Once the school board approved the objectives, the action team of 350 was divided into six groups to identify solutions to realize the objectives. Throughout the process, Covington implored the group to think outside the box and build a radically new model of what public education should look like to create a globally competitive student and workforce: "If at the end of your work you have come up with something that looks

like Pueblo District 60 today, you have failed."

The plan took 10 months to complete, and it took 18 weeks to draft the strategies for each of the six goals. Lang reports that "it was not easy to reach consensus. We had to get people to embrace significant change. What made it challenging is that we were charged with building a plan that fit the entire community, not just the school district."

Two centerpieces of the plan are teaching all students to national and international standards and providing every child with an individualized education plan (IEP). Board President Stephanie Garcia was initially concerned about expectations laid out in the plan. "I thought, 'Are we asking too much?' But that was exactly the charge we made to the planners: 'Do not worry about cost or scope. Uncover and secure for us the best practices and research that will lead [us] toward dramatic increases in student achievement.' We did not want a situation where the group came up with cutting-edge ideas but did not bring them forward because of finances."

Community and District: Mutual Accountability

According to Covington, the best thing about Pueblo's plan is that it is not "his" plan. The fact that the community created it is its strength and why it will be sustained, he believes. When asking teachers to change practice, he never says, "Here's my plan." As the community's plan, it bears the strength of the 350 people who helped create it. A plan that is driven by the community comes with the expectation that it will be carried out and that there will be regular updates on progress. As a community plan, it is likely to do something that most school district strategic plans don't do—that is, outlive the superintendent who was in office when it was drafted.

Ongoing progress checks on all six objectives are part of weekly senior staff meetings. Progress on selected goals is reported monthly at the regular board of education meetings, and a formal report to the community is made annually.

Modest about his role and that of his colleagues, Covington sees himself and his staff as implementers of a broad community mandate. "When it is time to go to the taxpayers for support for the next phase of implementation, it is not me or a five-member board that is asking for additional funds to sustain the plan. We take the request to the individuals who put together the plan." Lang notes, "With 300-plus people involved in the plan, most people are bound to know someone who knows a friend that was in on the plan."

Reengineering Curriculum Around International Standards

Pueblo has rebranded itself with a simple slogan: "Pueblo—World Class." But for Pueblo, "world class" is not just a catchy tag line; it has become the driver of a major curriculum overhaul. Given the charge to meet international standards, the first quest was to identify those stan-

dards. The district and the teachers union together selected 125 teachers whom Covington describes as “at the top of their game” to lead the curriculum alignment process. They selected math, English language arts, social studies, world languages, fine arts, and science teachers from every school, representing every level of experience, and paid them to work outside of class. Five teacher leaders plucked from the classroom led the curriculum work. They implemented the charge in three phases: (1) getting on board, (2) research and synthesis, and (3) developing curriculum maps.

Phase 1 involved creating buy-in and recruiting 10 percent of Pueblo’s teaching population to reengineer the curriculum around international standards. For this task they turned to the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey* (TIMSS), the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS), the *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP), and, where appropriate, other national and international standards-setting bodies applicable to each content area. Phase 2 immersed the teachers in researching, uncovering, examining, and synthesizing the latest research and best practices within their subject areas and developmental levels. Phase 3 involved distilling the research into specific curriculum maps for each grade level and content area.

The maps were produced using *Curriculum Mapper*™ software, which allows online, real-time access of the maps by teachers and administrators. Doing the research and completing the maps were extremely time-intensive tasks. Michelle Gray, math specialist and teacher leader, estimates that it took 95 hours of teacher time to complete the map for each grade level within each specific content area. Pueblo teachers now

have access to individual curriculum maps by grade level or course, which guide them in designing instruction within each content area. The maps provide teachers with the essential concepts and specific skills and performance objectives referenced to state, national, and international standards. They represent a significant shift from a textbook orientation to concept-driven instruction. The district has charged another teacher-led committee with providing teachers with specific resources and supports that can be accessed from the maps. When the interactive component is complete, teachers will be able to click on hyperlinks and view actual lessons, activities, student work, book excerpts, and Web links. They will be able to provide input and talk with colleagues across the district about lessons and resources in real time.



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Operation Rollout

Gray distinguishes the maps from the pacing charts the district previously used, which “required teachers to be on a specific page on a particular day. Teacher autonomy was severely limited because the teacher was locked into being on a certain page. Even if students were not ready, the teacher had to work from that page if she was to adhere to the pacing guide.” According to Jodie Crane-Murphy, Centennial High calculus teacher and part-time math coach, the new curriculum maps provide just the right mix of autonomy and specificity. “The maps tell you exactly what objectives you need to

teach to mastery but do not lock you into using a prescribed book or activity. I can choose the resources and activities that will best grab my students’ attention and engage them—whether a book, the computer, or some other interactive resource.”

Crane-Murphy stresses that teachers need a lot of contact time with the curriculum maps. They need to walk through them, become familiar with how topics are ordered, and discuss and come to understand the underlying rationale for why the content is presented as it is. That is where a process that teacher leaders have dubbed “forward lesson planning” comes in. Teacher leaders are bringing teachers together in a step-by-step process to codesign lessons around the maps. The power in the process is that all teachers—elementary, middle, and high school—meet during their early-release time throughout the year. Teachers by grade level and course look “forward” into the maps to codesign lessons. In the process, they (1) pinpoint what needs to be taught, (2) predict possible student and teacher misconceptions with the content, (3) identify best practices, and (4) design formative assessments. After teaching the lesson, they regather to examine student work, identify benchmark examples of standard-level work, and refine the lesson with colleagues. Gray describes the work as “breaking down barriers” as teachers from different schools and feeder patterns join to talk about content and instruction.

In addition to lesson studies, teacher leaders and school-based math and reading coaches are supporting buildings and individual teachers as they attempt to implement the new maps. Chief Academic Officer Tammy Clementi-Watson recognizes that even with all the ongoing professional development, much more is needed for teachers to own

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the maps and reach their full capacity in using them to drive instruction. The district acknowledges that it will be a few years before the maps are in full use, but the idea is to saturate the teachers with support.

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Using Research and Data to Correct System Flaws

Although the curriculum-mapping process was arduous, doing the research has paid off. The work revealed significant content overlaps and practices that ran counter to current research and were impeding children's success. For example, Gray recounts uncovering research that debunked the prevailing district practice of teaching 2nd graders multiplication tables to 12. "Brain research has revealed that generally children are not developmentally ready to handle the abstraction of large numbers until they are older. The recommendation internationally is for children to learn up to 5×5 in 2nd grade and up to 10×10 in 3rd grade in order to achieve proficiency up to 12s by 4th grade. Well-meaning, dedicated teachers were wasting valuable time trying to teach all the tables in 2nd grade. As a result, kids were missing out on other important math concepts and were failing their tables anyway." The new maps correct this misconception and allow teachers to teach multiplication to mastery in small chunks across grade levels.

District leaders are also using data to understand how the system is getting in the way of progress. Although the district was nationally recognized for making monumental improvements in the elementary grades, Pueblo central office leaders were regularly perplexed by the disturbing dip in performance once students reached middle school, a trend that persisted into high school.

Consistent with his determination to ensure the culture of high

expectations for all, Covington went directly to teachers with the problem. District leaders scouted out four math teachers who were beating the odds with their own students and tasked them with addressing the historically vexing problem of low middle school math achievement.

After the teachers were on the job for about two months, Covington describes what he remembers as a breakthrough moment. "The math teachers walked in and literally cleared the piles of books and papers on my work table and said, 'You've got to see this.'" What they showed him revealed that of all the 5th graders who exit proficient in math, 70 percent are placed in the lowest-level middle school math classes. These students, overwhelmingly minority, and despite having mastered 5th grade math, were routed into middle school classes that forced them to repeat 5th grade, and in some cases even 4th grade, material.

This institutionalized practice undervalued the achievement of many students. It was no surprise that after repeating one or two years of math that they had already mastered, students quickly lost ground and the gap widened. When these students were tested on 6th grade material, they were sorely unprepared. The math teachers, although pleased to have identified the source of the problem, were unsure of whether they could correct this unfair practice for the current year, given that middle school students had been in class nearly five weeks and schedules were set. For Covington, the answer was easy. He directed all six middle schools and the two K-8 buildings to move every child who had scored proficient in 5th grade into higher-level math. This non-negotiable directive made after the school year was well underway could have wreaked havoc through the district. However, Carol Partin, Pueblo Education Association president, notes that teachers backed

the change 100 percent because it came from teachers. The 2008 scores on CSAP, the state assessment, showed modest gains that may be attributed to the schedule change. Sixth graders broke the longstanding trend of declining middle school scores when, in 2008, they posted a 4-point gain.

Strategy: Acceleration, Not Remediation

Because many students have gaps in their learning and still others are entering the system many years behind, the district needed a grand strategy to bring all students up to speed. The strategy they developed was to meet students at their current instructional level and quickly accelerate their progress toward mastery. In addition to using the math and reading coaches housed in each building, the district is leveraging technology, using small-group instruction, and revamping instructional approaches and course sequences to get all students on track to succeed with the district's rigorous international standards.

The district was determined to leverage technology to make a difference for students. According to Bob Vise, the district developed specific parameters for selecting tools. They were looking for results-driven learning systems that included careful teacher monitoring and that were aligned with Pueblo's curriculum maps. In addition, the tools needed to provide accelerated, not remedial, instruction in the regular classroom for students identified as partially proficient or below on the state test. Pueblo chose *Successmaker Enterprise* and *America's Choice Navigator*. With the addition of computers in every classroom, teachers can now use both tools to help differentiate instruction for small groups of students in the context of regular instruction. In this way, students receive instruction

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calibrated to their individual needs, while not missing the grade-level instruction in concepts they must master to meet high standards.

With the tools now in place in most classrooms for two years, the district has the data it needs to back up the effectiveness of these technology-based interventions. According to Vise, “A student who successfully completes 20 to 25 hours on *Success-maker* or *Navigator* gains the equivalent of one grade level.”

In some cases, bringing students up to standard required not just differentiation of the standard curriculum, but new instructional approaches. In too many districts around the country, students who enter 9th grade two to three years behind in mathematics are automatically channeled into remedial classes, where content is diluted and knowledge gaps widen instead of narrow. To accelerate math instruction, the district searched for an approach that would replace remediation with rigor. For Pueblo, the answer has been the *Ramp Up to Algebra* strategy from America’s Choice. With this approach, Crane-Murphy describes the instruction that has replaced traditional math for Pueblo middle schoolers and 9th graders who have struggled with math: “Every day students are working in groups to discover concepts; they are identifying their own mathematical misconceptions; they are required to present their solutions to their classmates using multiple representations and appropriate math vocabulary.” The success of this approach is in the results. After receiving daily 90-minute blocks of this type of higher-order instruction over two semesters, the vast majority of students move directly into algebra.

To accelerate reading progress, Pueblo has implemented *Linda Mood*

Bell Multi-Sensory Learning Systems (LMB) districtwide. The district has certified its own teachers as LMB facilitators who train teachers to use and reinforce this approach to reading and comprehending in the regular classroom and across content areas. Ninth grade students who are not proficient in reading are assessed using the LMB diagnostic battery to determine their specific reading deficits. They then receive one semester of intensive instruc-



“Every day students are . . . required to present their solutions to their classmates using multiple representations and appropriate math vocabulary.”

tion. Gala White, 9th grade reading teacher at East High, notes that by applying the multisensory strategies to the textbooks that students need to be able to read in their content area classes, the 80 hours of instruction is raising student scores and getting them on track. To ensure that one set of interventions serves all students, special education staff trained teachers to support special needs students in the regular classroom using the same interventions.

Holding High Standards—Not Time—Constant

Basing school on something other than “seat time” was a difficult shift—even for some on the strategic planning committee. The use of technology is allowing Pueblo to abandon the notion that “nine months per grade” is the only way to structure school. The standards are non-negotiable, but the time required for a student to master them may vary widely. According to Covington, one of the district’s misconceptions that has historically held students back is the notion that if mastery of skills is

the gatekeeper instead of seat time, you face the problem of having to orchestrate a physical move from one classroom or grade to the next when a student meets standards midyear. Using technology as part of a differentiated instructional approach driven by on-grade-level standards is one answer. Covington provides this example: “Using technology, a 4th grade student whose math skills were two years behind moves seamlessly on to 3rd and then 4th grade content as soon as he masters the 2nd grade skills—without ever having to move to another classroom.” A teacher may have students working across three grade levels while also benefiting from the daily grade-level instruction.

All of the support and acceleration is aimed at mastering the skills on the curriculum maps. This system also benefits students on the upper end of the learning curve. First, each grade-level map is calibrated to a rigorous international standard. Second, depending on mastery, students can move through the skills on the map as rapidly as they choose. Those who master grade-level content are encouraged to work on standards in higher-level maps.

Holding standards rather than time as the constant is changing how Pueblo talks about and reports progress as well. At the elementary grades, the district has eliminated “A through F” report cards and instead reports on mastery of proficiencies based on the curriculum maps. The same is true for middle school. Instead of pushing students through the system and wondering why they fail in high school, mastery of skills in core academic classes is determined by class work and the quarterly benchmark tests aligned to the international standards captured on the curriculum maps. This year the district is piloting its first standards-based middle school report card.

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Putting Rigor in the Diploma

Raising standards to international levels has also meant a new high school diploma in Pueblo. According to Brenda Krage, executive director of secondary instruction, “It is all about what you are teaching and how you are teaching it, hence the need for the curriculum overhaul we have undergone.” However, bold changes in curriculum need to be accompanied by bold changes in policy as well. Although Colorado is in the process of developing guidelines, historically the state has had no common graduation standard; as a result, there are 178 different sets of graduation requirements in the state—one for each district.

In looking at their own graduation requirements against the standards set by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), leaders had to wrestle with serious alignment issues: District requirements were not aligned with university requirements, nor were they in sync with the district’s new international standards. According to Krage, “Many of our parents had no experience with college admissions hurdles. They trusted us and followed all the rules and came to find out their children had not even met the minimum requirements for college entrance without remediation.”

The district formed a diploma task force that examined graduation requirements across the country. Krage notes that the diploma overhaul has been three years in the making, with a full year spent reviewing the research of Achieve (www.achieve.org), the American Diploma Project (www.achieve.org/node/604), and Education Trust high school graduation statistics (www2.edtrust.org/edtrust).

The result is a new diploma that allows students to account for an emphasis on higher education or career skills—both with equally rig-

Gaps Between Nonwhites and Whites, K–12 Three-Year Trend

	Reading Gap			Math Gap		
	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Pueblo	15.3	15.5	16.5	13.9	11.9	12.0
State of Colorado	30.1	30.5	29.0	27.1	26.7	26.1

Gaps Between Students in Poverty and Those Not in Poverty, K–12 Three-Year Trend

	Reading Gap			Math Gap		
	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Pueblo	21.3	22.0	16.9	17.1	16.5	11.8
State of Colorado	32.1	32.2	30.9	27.7	27.3	27.3

orous standards. Each one requires high-level attainment in all core content areas.

Essentially, the diploma represents a “four-in-the-core” design—that is, four courses are required in each core subject area: math, English, social studies, and science. This approach varies from the previous Pueblo diploma that required four English and social studies courses but only three math and science courses. Consistent with higher standards, there is not a basic or remedial-level class anywhere in the new design. For example, to receive a Diploma with Academic Excellence, students must complete a math sequence that includes, at minimum, algebra I and geometry; beyond that, students can choose classes such as statistics, trigonometry, precalculus, and calculus. Similarly, to receive a Diploma with Career and Technical Advancement, students must complete the four-in-the-core course sequence with the same math requirements, but they can choose electives in challenging courses that directly prepare them for state-recognized career certifications such as welding, emergency medical technician, and electrician.

The other significant research-based addition to the diploma has been the freshman and senior seminar courses. Krage points to conclusive national data that shows

that the overwhelming majority of unsuccessful students exit the system at 9th and 12th grade. “We lose so many kids at both ends of the high school experience—freshmen who never make the connection to high school, and seniors, many of whom would be first-generation college attendees but who don’t know how to navigate the college entrance process.” The task force realized that to be successful, the district would have to get extremely purposeful about how it guides students through these critical transitions. Policies had to be in place so that nothing was left to chance. As a result, all students in Pueblo must take freshman and senior seminar classes. These feature small class sizes and personalize the high school experience for students. The seminar curriculum addresses individualized goal setting, long- and short-term planning, planning for college and postsecondary options, and teamwork.

The new graduation requirements went into effect this year, so the 9th grade class of 2008–2009 will graduate with these diplomas of distinction, which district leaders believe will ensure postsecondary success.

Leveraging Technology to Provide an IEP for Every Student

Among the daunting challenges articulated in the district’s strategic plan

is the expectation that each student will be provided an IEP. Bob Vise is leading the charge to tie all existing interventions together and provide each student with an individualized plan. Using *Galileo*, a powerful online tool from ATI-Online, the district is assessing all 18,300 students three times a year against the specific standards identified in the curriculum maps. In September, it completed benchmark testing of students in grades 3 through 10 in reading and math, and students in grades 5, 8, 9, and 10 in science.

The Web-based test yields instantaneous results that teachers can use to plan instruction. Because the testing is done online and refreshes every 10 seconds, the teacher can monitor students' understanding of each question as they are taking the test. The teacher can pull up classroom- and student-level profiles and get immediate analyses of each question. The first test provides a baseline, and subsequent tests measure growth and mastery of skills taught during the previous quarter. Marne Milyard, principal of Goodnight School, a K–8 school, says her teachers embraced the *Galileo* benchmark assessments: "My teachers' response to the performance objective profiles was 'Finally! Now we know what we have to teach before we have to teach it!' They got busy planning what they were going to do differently in their classrooms so that all their students could meet international standards." The performance objective summaries provide individual pictures of where each child is with regard to each skill in the curriculum map.

Once the tests are completed, the tool develops an IEP for each child. Vise says the plans provide teachers with one-stop shopping for their instructional planning. The profile includes all the data in one place—the benchmark results, CSAP, DIBELS, and Linda Mood Bell diagnostics. It links with existing district

Sample Value-Added Report

SAS® EVAAS® Teacher Value-Added Report for 2007
Pueblo City 60 • Subject: CSAP Writing, Grade 7

Year	Teacher Gain	Std Error of Gain	vs. Reference		vs. District	
			Reference Gain	Teacher Comparison	District Gain	Teacher Comparison
2007	3.8	1.0	0.0	Above	1.1	Above

Estimates are from multivariate, longitudinal analyses using all available test data for each student (up to 5 years). The analyses were completed via SAS®EVAAS® methodology and software, which is available through SAS Institute Inc. EVAAS, SAS, and all other SIS Institute Inc. product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of SAS Institute Inc. In the USA and other countries, ® indicates USA registration. Other brand and product names are trademarks of their respective companies. Copyright © 2007 SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA. All Rights Reserved.

SAS® EVAAS® Teacher Diagnostic Report for 2007

interventions and so prescribes use of *Successmaker* or *Navigator*, depending on a student's performance. Not only can teachers use results to design individualized instruction; parents or students also can pull up the profile, and with a click they are routed to assignments and homework practice that address their specific needs.

Using Value-Added Analyses and Data Discussions to Drive Professional Development

Although Colorado only began making value-added data available to districts this year, Pueblo has been ahead of the curve in using growth models to understand the value that instruction is adding to student achievement. They have been providing growth data to all teachers since 1998, and this past year they began providing the data to prin-

cipals to use in their conversations with staff about data.

The reports provide a picture of how individual teachers facilitate and influence progress by subject area with low-, medium-, and high-performing students over the course of a year. The data sheds light on successful teachers who have achieved more than a year's worth of growth with students in a year's time—teachers to watch and learn from. It also identifies teachers who need additional professional development and system support to help them reach all of their students. For example, a teacher looking at the report excerpt shown above would see that overall, he is "above" other teachers in the district in reaching his students, meaning he has made decidedly more progress than

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other teachers in the district who served the same students. Looking more specifically, the white bars represent this year's progress for high-, medium-, and low-achieving students; the blue bars represent the previous year's progress for these same students. This teacher sees that he has made slightly less progress with low-achieving students and significantly more progress with students at the middle and upper ends of the achievement spectrum, which indicates the need for professional development related to instructional strategies for struggling students.

At Goodnight School, Milyard uses the data in two ways: to identify professional development that all her teachers may benefit from and to coach the growth of individual teachers. "The growth data showed that we had reached a plateau with many of our high-performing students. They had spent all year with us and had made much less than a year's growth. As a result, we launched a

book study around how to activate background knowledge and teach academic vocabulary."

The Path Forward

Pueblo has gone a long way toward eliminating the predictability of a student's achievement based on race or SES. In September 2008, 12 of the 39 schools honored statewide for eliminating the gap and raising the bar were Pueblo City schools. Nearly half of Pueblo's regular elementary schools (10 of 22), along with one charter and one magnet school, were honored by the state for eliminating the achievement gap while raising the bar. The district has also been singled out as having high-performing high-minority schools by Education Trust in the report *Dispelling the Myth Revisited*. Pueblo has all but eliminated the 3rd grade reading gap. The data has fluctuated slightly over the past six years, but the average gap between proficient nonwhite and white 3rd graders is only 2.3 points.

Although Pueblo still has work to do at the secondary level, the

overall K–12, three-year trend shows that they are closing the race and SES gaps at twice the rate of the state of Colorado. In Pueblo, the 2008 reading gap between whites and nonwhites is 16.5 points, and it is 29 statewide. The 2008 math gap is 12 points in Pueblo and 26.1 in the state (see tables on page 14).

Even with all of its accomplishments, Pueblo City Schools, like most urban districts, still has a long way to go. With the strategic plan and rigorous curriculum maps in hand, it is redoubling its focus on improving instruction. Under CAO Clementi-Watson, it has created a new board policy adopting *Managed Instruction* as the umbrella for instructional leadership. During 2009, dubbed the "year of instruction," the district is taking on administrator academies, professional learning communities, and data dialogs—all designed to build expertise and improve instructional practice toward world-class standards.

—Deborah Winking