



COLORADO DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
COLORADO READING FIRST

# TOUCHING BASE

OCTOBER 3, 2008

PUTTING PROVEN METHODS OF READING RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM  
TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS THE NATION

## COMMISSIONER'S CUP RECOGNIZES CRF SCHOOLS:

**Report finds common themes in schools that beat the achievement gap: Low-income students gain—prompts recognition at the Commissioner's Cup:**

Schools that are closing the achievement gap between students from lower and higher socio-economic background have important common characteristics; according to the "Profiles of Success" study conducted by the Donnell-Kay Foundation and Augenblick, Palaich & Associates, Inc.

"Profiles of Success: Eight Colorado Schools that are Closing the Achievement Gap" examines schools in districts across Colorado whose economically-disadvantaged students outscored the state average (on CSAP), in at least two subjects for at least three consecutive years. 39 Schools were identified as having met the criteria, eight were selected for close analysis.

"The achievement gap exists nation wide between students from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Colorado is no

exception—students from lower socio-economic backgrounds consistently score lower than their more affluent peers on the CSAP," reported Amy Berk Andersen, one of the authors of the report.

The 39 schools identified have not only managed to close the achievement gap, but to raise their students' scores above the statewide average.

The eight successful schools studied in the report are: **South Park Elementary School**, Cesar Chavez Charter School and Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (all Pueblo District 60), Valley View K-8 School (Mapleton Public Schools), Cedaredge Middle School and Hotchkiss High School (Delta County Schools), Carson Middle School (Fountain—Fort Carson School District 8) and Janitell Junior High School (Widefield School District 3). The remaining 31 schools are listed on page 3.

In addition to examining each school's education program and the experience of teachers and principals, the report identifies common elements across the different schools

that may explain their success in closing the achievement gap.

"While none of these schools is exactly like another, we did find common threads that may lead to academic success, particularly for students from low-income households," said Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones.

"Closing the achievement gap is at the center of the department's core work across the state and it's our hope that other schools will look to these common traits as best practices to raise achievement for their own students," added Commissioner Jones.

The report identified ten characteristics shared by most or all of the schools, including:

1. A culture of high expectations and accountability.
2. Targeted assessments and intensive use of data to guide instruction.
3. Individualized support for struggling students.
4. Active engagement of

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- *Commissioner's Cup: Acknowledgments*
- *Assessment Dates—DIBELS, BEAR*
- *Cracker Barrel Reading Initiative*
- *National Distinguished Principal Program*
- *Running Effective Grade-Level Meetings*
- *Professional Development Calendar*

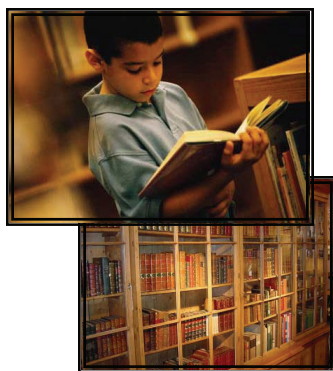


Continued on Page 3...



"THE STRENGTH OF THE UNITED STATES IS NOT THE GOLD AT FORT KNOX OR THE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION THAT WE HAVE, BUT THE SUM TOTAL OF THE EDUCATION AND THE CHARACTER OF OUR PEOPLE."

~ CLAIBORNE PELL



## READING FIRST FALL CONFERENCE—ANITA ARCHER

### Scaffolding Reading Comprehension in the Elementary Grades.

Comprehension is the desired outcome of all reading instruction. At the two upcoming Colorado Reading First Fall Conferences, literacy expert Anita Archer will explore evidence-based practices for scaffolding reading comprehension. Discussion topics include practices that can be introduced before passage reading (teaching the pronunciation and meaning of critical vocabulary, teaching or activating necessary background knowledge, previewing passages), during passage reading (asking questions, teaching student narrative and expository reading strategies, utilizing graphic organizers), and after passage reading (increasing fluency, practicing vocabulary, answering written questions, summarizing expository and narrative passages).

Ms. Archer will introduce each practice, model the procedures and illustrate use of strategies when teaching the core reading program or content-area passages. Examples using the most common core reading

programs will increase your ability to transfer the interventions to your own classroom. In addition, video clips will be analyzed to show the application of all instructional procedures.

### Anita Archer

Anita Archer serves as an education consultant to schools and districts on effective instruction, classroom management, reading and writing instruction, and design of effective literacy programs. She has taught elementary and middle school students and is the recipient of ten outstanding educator awards, including the 2006 Leadership Award from the University of Oregon's College of Education and the Patricia C. Lindamood Award for Clinical Leadership Excellence in Language and Literacy.

Ms. Archer has been a faculty member of San Diego State University, the University of Washington, and the University of Oregon. She is nationally known for her presentations and publications on instructional procedures and literacy instruction. She co-

authored Skills for School Success, Advanced Skills for School Success, Phonics for Reading, *REWARDS®*, *REWARDS® Plus*, and *REWARDS® Writing*. She has also authored many other curriculum materials, chapters, books and training resources.

### Outstanding Opportunity

The CRF Fall Conference is a wonderful opportunity to learn from one of the very best minds in the field of education.

Anita Archer will be presenting at the Fall Conference on the following dates:

October 14-15, 2008—  
Denver, CO: Registration deadline is October 8.

October 20-21, 2008—  
Pueblo, CO: Registration deadline is October 15.

To register please visit <http://bettereducator.com/conferences.aspx> or call Melanie Morrison at 800.547.6747, extension 449 or e-mail [training-temp@sopriswest.com](mailto:training-temp@sopriswest.com).

#### October 2008 Events

Oct 14-15—CRF Fall Conference (Anita Archer)  
Denver: Doubletree 303-321-3333

Oct 20-21—CRF Fall Conference (Anita Archer)  
Pueblo: Marriot 719-586-3281

Oct 22—CRF Regional Training, Region 1  
Scott Elementary 970-348-2200

Oct 23—CRF Regional Training, Region 4  
Guadalupe Elementary 719-376-5407

Oct 28—New Staff Training  
Pueblo: Marriot 719-586-3281

Oct 29—New Staff Training  
Denver: Sheraton 4 Points 866-837-4182

#### November 2008 Events

Nov 5—ELL Training  
Denver: Doubletree 303-321-3333

Nov 6—ELL Training  
Pueblo: Marriot 719-586-3281

Nov 7—Special Education Training  
Colorado Springs: Doubletree 800-222-8733

Nov 20—Regional Training, Region 5  
Cedaredge Elementary 970-856-3885

## NATIONAL DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPAL PROGRAM

### 2009 National Distinguished Principal Call for Nominations:

**TO: District Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents, Directors of Elementary Education, Elementary School Principals, Middle School Principals and Assistant Principals**

**FROM: NAESP State Representative –Craig Belshe**

The Colorado Association of Elementary School Principals (CAESP) and the National

Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) are seeking nominations for the 2009 National Distinguished Principal (NDP) award. The NDP program is designed to recognize outstanding principals whose contributions to the profession are exemplary and recognized by their peers. Both elementary and middle-level principals are eligible as long as they have been a principal at least five years and will be an active principal for the 2009-2010 school year.

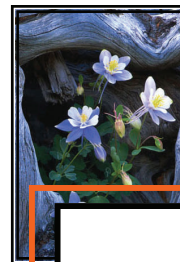
Please share these materials with your colleagues and community. Make copies of

the nomination form and pass it along to your accountability chair, PTO/PTA board teacher association representative, or anyone else you believe would find this useful.

**The deadline for nominations is Monday, November 10, 2008.**

The nomination process is simple and the rewards are immense. Complete and return your nomination form before 11/10/2008. Call the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) with any questions, 303-762-8762 or visit:

<http://www.co-case.org/>



“EDUCATION’S  
PURPOSE IS TO  
REPLACE AN  
EMPTY MIND  
WITH AN OPEN  
ONE.”

~ MALCOLM  
FORBES

## COMMISSIONER’S CUP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

- teachers in school leadership and decision-making.
- 5. Substantial time for collaborative planning and options for professional development.
- 6. A commitment to core academics and standards, but not at the expense of other important learning in the arts and humanities.
- 7. Stable and consistent leadership.
- 8. Small learning communities.
- 9. Flexibility to use resources to support student needs and reinforce school culture.
- 10. An economically integrated student-body.

Dale DeCesar, senior associate with the research group said, “What looked to be most important to success was the school leaders had flexibility and authority to direct resources to the areas of greatest need within their schools.”

In conjunction with CDE, the Colorado Legacy Foundation will produce a “best practices” guide this summer that will gather main messages from the information gleaned in the study. This guide will be shared with school districts, elected officials and business community leaders from across the state.

The additional 31 schools identified as having met the criteria are: Mountain Ridge M.S., Pagosa Springs H.S.,

CEC Middle College Program, Ridgeview Elem., Stetson Elem., Aragon Elem., Jordhal Elem., Fountain-Fort Carson H.S., Roy Moore Elem., James Irwin Charter M.S., Bear Creek Elem, Falcon Bluffs, M.S., Orchard Ave. Elem., Taylor Elem., Monte Vista H.S., La Jara Elem., Manassa Elem., Belmont, Beulah Heights, Carlile, **Columbian**, Goodnight, Heritage, Highland Park, Minnequa, and Sunset Park Elems. (all of Pueblo School District 60), Sierra Vista Elem., Sky View M.S., and South Mesa Elem. (all Pueblo School District 70), Trinidad H.S., Woodland Park M.S.





## RUNNING EFFECTIVE GRADE-LEVEL TEAM MEETINGS

**Grade-level meetings are a fact of life in Reading First schools; teamwork is a vital aspect of the school culture. So, what are the attributes of an effective grade-level team meeting, and how do you know if your grade-level team meetings work?**

According to Reading First consultants Linda Carnine and Jan Silverstein, successful grade-level team meetings occur when attention is paid to three big ideas that impact student achievement: 1) data-driven decisions, 2) action planning, and 3) powerful procedures.

### **Data-Driven Decisions Bring Students to Benchmark**

Teachers begin this process early in the school year by taking a close look at all K-3 performance data, including the previous year's end-of-year benchmark data, end-of-year outcome data, content coverage and reading curriculum mastery data. Teachers then use this information to create a summary of effectiveness and to determine priorities. "The first priority should be to reduce the number of intensive kids, or students who are reading significantly below grade level, and a second priority [should be] to increase the number of students at benchmark," Carnine said.

"It's important not to overlook the students at benchmark so you can make sure you keep them there," de-

clared Carnine. "Many times we are so focused on moving students from intensive to strategic and strategic to benchmark that we miss the students at benchmark."

### **Action Planning Helps Teachers Think**

Action planning involves grade-level teachers regularly evaluating two important types of data for placement decisions: 1) progress monitoring data and 2) curriculum data with anecdotal notes that describe individual progress. Grade-level teachers use this data to answer two key questions: 1) Are the students appropriately grouped? 2) Are better placements possible? "These questions allow teachers to put their thinking caps on and figure it out together. It's an integral part of the action planning process," Carnine said.

The questions also spark the teachers' thinking and rethinking about whether they need to improve the instructional strategies and program materials, increase the amount of instructional time, refine the grouping levels, and reassess the progress monitoring aim-line.

Teachers will most likely question the aim-line between December and January when student performance tends to drop due to a variety of external factors. Carnine advised teachers, "Do what you can to prevent the fall off; plan for it to happen because it's going to happen. Squeeze out every minute of your time to plan effectively as a team."

### **Powerful Procedures, Powerful Teams**

"Powerful procedures help; they make team meetings work," said Silverstein. In particular, teachers must work together. "Students will not succeed if faced with a group of teachers whose work together is disjointed, disconnected, or, in some cases, dysfunctional," Silverstein said, "Work together to see all students as our students rather than my students and your students."

To help grade-level teams monitor the effectiveness of meetings, Silverstein describes a simple self-assessment organized around eight key procedures: 1) purpose, 2) meeting structure, 3) group process, 4) planning, 5) communication, 6) research base, 7) professional development, and 8) motivation. Using a tool that gives grade-level teams immediate feedback on things they have in place and things they need to improve can help teams stay organized and focused.

Carnine and Silverstein have long seen the value and benefits of data-driven decisions, action planning, and powerful procedures in Reading First schools.

"You can feel it when you walk into a school," described Silverstein, "The building buzzes with the energy of eager teachers and students. The buzz is an indicator that there's a whole lot of learning going on—and a whole lot of good teaming going on too."

Reading First Notebook—Fall 2006



"I COULD NOT  
AT ANY AGE BE  
CONTENT TO  
TAKE MY PLACE  
IN A CORNER  
BY THE FIRESIDE  
AND SIMPLY  
LOOK ON."

~ ELEANOR  
ROOSEVELT

cde





**COLORADO DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
COLORADO READING FIRST**

Literacy Grants and Initiatives  
Colorado Reading First  
1560 Broadway, Suite 1450  
Denver, CO 80202-5149

Phone: 303.866.6756

Fax: 303.866.6647

E-mail: [Heiney\\_j@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Heiney_j@cde.state.co.us)

**WE ARE ON THE WEB!**

[HTTP://WWW.CDE.STATE.CO.US/  
CDECOMP/RF\\_HOME.HTM](http://www.cde.state.co.us/CDECOMP/RF_HOME.HTM)

**PUT READING 1ST!**

## WELCOME ABOARD!

With the departure of Della Shorman, Colorado Reading First would like to welcome Jacob Heiney as the new Communications Coordinator.

Jacob is joining our team, most recently from the San Luis Valley where he was working as an Addictions Counselor. Prior to that Jacob lived and worked in Germany and Iraq, functioning as an analyst for the U.S. Army.

Jacob is a graduate of Adams State College's School of Business and an Honorably Discharged Veteran of the United States Navy as well as a Naval Reservist.

Jacob will be working with the CRF team and can be contacted at [Heiney\\_J@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Heiney_J@cde.state.co.us)

### PHOTOS FROM THE FRONT: CRF SEEKING PHOTO CONTRIBUTIONS


We are looking for classroom photos to contribute to the November Touching Base. If you would like to contribute photos of school activities, teacher instruction, reading time, recess or any other applicable activity; please send photos (preferably JPEGs) to Jacob Heiney: [Heiney\\_J@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Heiney_J@cde.state.co.us)

If you would like to submit photos, please include a photo release form!

## CRF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

# October 2008



MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	S/SU
	30	1	2	3	4/5
6	7	8	9	10	11/12
13	14	15 Anita Archer Fall Conference, Denver, CO	16	17	18/19
20	21	22 Anita Archer Fall Conference, Pueblo, CO	23	24	25/26
27	28 New Staff Training, Pueblo, CO	29 New Staff Training, Denver, CO	30	31 	Nov 1/2
3	4	5	6	7	8/9

**No CDE Holiday  
Office Closures  
for October**