

**National Center for  
Educational  
Accountability**

national sponsor of Just r the Kids

# **Just for the Kids – Colorado Elementary School Study, 2004-05**

Haaff Elementary School, Pueblo 60 School District

*For more information: Contact Janet Spence, Director of Communications: National Center for Educational Accountability - 4030-2 W. Braker Lane; Austin, Texas 78759; phone: 800.762.4645 or 512.232.0770; fax: 512.232.0777; [jspence@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:jspence@mail.utexas.edu) or [jspence@just4kids.org](mailto:jspence@just4kids.org).*

## **NCEA and Just for the Kids**

NCEA is a collaboration of The University of Texas at Austin, Education Commission of the States and Just for the Kids. NCEA's mission is to inform, inspire and improve learning through the effective use of school and student data and the identification and replication of best practices found in high-performing districts, schools and classrooms. NCEA is the national sponsor of Just for the Kids School Improvement Tools and Services which present complex data in a way that is fair, actionable and available for all members of our public school communities. NCEA works in partnership with a growing number of Just for the Kids state affiliate partners, currently in more than twenty states.

## **Funding for this project**

2004-2005 NCEA state best practice studies have been made possible in part by a matching grant from The Broad Foundation, much acclaimed for their work in urban education as sponsors of the Broad Prize for Urban Education. Studies include elementary, middle and high school best practices in twenty states, and often involve teaming with state research partners to conduct site-based interviews and observations.

## **NCEA State Studies Overview**

Schools and Districts across the country are participating in an initiative led by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) to help teachers and administrators learn from successful schools and school systems and inspire school communities to promote best practices in their local schools. In partnership with a network of Just for the Kids state affiliates, NCEA has been conducting Best Practice State Studies focused on finding and sharing excellence in educational practices since 2001. Schools and systems selected to participate in these studies are identified through an in-depth analysis of academic achievement developed by NCEA using data publicly available from the state.

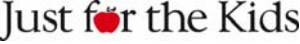
At Haaff Elementary School, data were collected during a two-day site visit at the school and district administrative offices. Structured interviews were conducted with educators at three different levels of the school system: district administrators, school administrators, and classroom teachers. Additionally, evidence and artifacts were collected to illustrate and support the interviewees' responses. Participants answered interview questions from the NCEA State Best Practice Research Protocols. Interview and artifact data were analyzed using standard qualitative data reduction techniques and summarized in this case study.

## **School Selection**

According to the regression analysis conducted by NCEA, Haaff Elementary School was selected to participate in the Colorado Elementary School Study because it consistently ranked among the top of demographically similar elementary schools as measured by achievement on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) in 2002, 2003, and 2004. Students were tested in reading and writing in grades three through six, and in mathematics in grades five and six. Haaff Elementary School was one of 7 elementary schools to participate in the 2004-2005 Colorado Elementary School Study.

The National Center for Educational Accountability is a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational research organization (EIN 01-0577238). Sponsoring organizations include Just for the Kids, The University of Texas at Austin and the Education Commission of the States. The copied material is being shared for educational benefits.

DISCLAIMER: It is the view of NCEA that any materials collected as evidence of best practice during site investigations of high performing districts, schools and classrooms are being copied and shared under the Fair Use Statute of 17 USC Section 107 of the Federal Copyright Law. Upon receipt by NCEA of proper notification by any party with copyright authority of a work requesting that NCEA cease publication of that work, NCEA will comply swiftly and completely to any such request.

TRADEMARK NOTICES:  **Just for the Kids** ® Is a registered mark of the National Center for Educational Accountability. This mark can and should be used only as expressly authorized by NCEA.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS: Copyright National Center for Educational Accountability 2005. All Rights Reserved. Any unauthorized use or reproduction of the materials contained in this report, without written consent from NCEA is strictly prohibited.

## Haaff Elementary School, Pueblo 60 School District

### School Context

---

The Pueblo 60 School District is located in Southern Colorado 110 miles south of Denver. The assistant superintendent of leadership and instruction described the district's diverse community, "We are a high poverty district, we are a 60/60 school district in a 30/30 state which means we have twice the amount of poverty and minority populations." The assistant superintendent explained that within the diverse community of Pueblo they are closing the achievement gap which according to her is "more socioeconomic than anything else." In an editorial in the district's newsletter, The Communicator, the superintendent outlines the district's success and demographics makeup:

Of the 126 targeted goals set by the state for District 60 for AYP, the district met 123, or 98 percent. Of the largest districts in Colorado only Boulder scored higher with 99 percent. District 60, however, has a much higher ratio of minority students and students eligible for free and reduced lunch. District 60 has a 60 percent minority student ratio and a 61 percent free and reduced lunch ratio. Boulder by comparison has a 21 percent minority student enrollment and 13 percent free and reduced lunch profile. The bottom line is that District 60 is only 1 percent behind Boulder- yet with nearly five times the number of free and reduced students and three times the number of minority students.

The Pueblo 60 School District sees their success beginning with vision, a unified mission statement, and identified long term goals. The assistant superintendent explained, "Our primary goal is to improve student achievement in all the subjects. We provide research to find scientific based best practices." In their efforts to meet NCLB they have added an additional focus on professional development. To ensure ongoing professional development the district provides release time every week and facilitators in every building. Student data are used to guide this process but the assistant superintendent stressed it is important "not to use the data to beat people up." The Pueblo 60 School District works to operate from the strategic plan and develop department and school plans around the district's five goals. The five district goals are:

- I. to increase the levels of achievement for all students,
- II. to increase accountability at all levels,
- III. to increase the district's overall efficiency and effectiveness,
- IV. to increase the level of effective communication and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders,
- V. to increase the quality of all teaching, learning and working environments.

The district's primary focus is on student achievement while stressing values such as lifelong learning, personal development, trust, civic responsibility, community involvement, and a strong work ethic.

The mission of Haaff Elementary School is to "provide a stimulating and challenging instructional program that address the Whole Child, the Environment and Basic Skills. The staff will implement programs that address high expectations both academically and socially in a positive learning environment. The principal of Haaff Elementary saw the school's

success as relating to the high caliber teachers at the school. Commenting on his staff, the principal said, "In the two years I've been principal here I haven't had to hire anyone. They work together as a team." Teachers at Haaff Elementary explained that they try to look towards future teachers' expectations and want each student working at a high level. As one teacher stated, "We've recently had a staff that is all on the same track. Classroom teachers are focused on that success."

The budget and changing demographics are two of the primary challenges facing Haaff Elementary. The school has the challenge of reducing its budget by 30% while addressing the needs of an evolving community. Five years ago the school had 27% of its students on free and reduced lunch; currently, it is around 55% of the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. The principal explained the changing demographics, "We have families from six figure incomes and families living in the projects (low income housing). We have nothing in the middle."

The Pueblo 60 School District continues to work on standardizing curriculum and exams to allow for a centralized district structure. As the director of elementary education explained, "We've gone from twenty-two elementary schools that had their own specific reading and math programs. We found that when students were moving from one school to another they were having holes in their curriculum."

One of the major challenges facing the district is trimming the budget by 4.4 million dollars. District personnel felt the budgetary challenges placed limitations on staff salary increases and affected overall teacher morale. As the assistant superintendent stated, "When there is a large budget cut there is a kind of cloud over the city. People are amazed that we don't use excuses and we demonstrate how we can get it done."

During a period of time that was described as a "crossroads of sustainability" the district is working to meet student needs and secure additional funding through grants. Through additional work of teachers and administrators the district has received seventeen million dollars in grants in the last six years. All of the schools in the Pueblo district have Read to Achieve grants. In discussing the funding challenges the assistant superintendent stated, "We try to maintain the philosophy that funding follows students and curriculum. We try and keep the cuts as far away from the classroom as we can. We try to get the resources to the teachers."

<b>Student Demographics</b>	<b>Haaff Elementary</b>	<b>Pueblo 60 School District</b>	<b>Colorado</b>
<b>Enrollment of Racial/Ethnic Groups</b>	2004	2004	2004
White (%)	52.8	38.3	64.5
Black (%)	2.6	2.4	5.8
Hispanic (%)	41.5	57.0	25.3
Asian/Pacific Islander (%)	1.1	0.6	3.1
American Indian/Alaska Native (%)	2.0	1.7	1.2
<b>Enrollment of Students with Special Needs</b>			
Economically Disadvantaged (%)	41.2	59.9	30.2
<b>Enrollment Distribution by Gender</b>			
Female (%)	51.1	48.4	48.6
Male (%)	48.9	51.6	51.3

## **Curriculum and Academic Goals**

---

The district's curriculum development process is research and standards based with teacher involvement to address school needs. Pueblo School District replaces books in each subject every five to seven years. The district looks at the data and oversees the revision of materials.

In discussing the district's curriculum, the assistant superintendent said, "Standards are just a target. Curriculum is how you get there." Teachers learn about the curriculum during meetings at the beginning of the year and through content area meetings where data are reviewed. In the adoption of a new math program, the district provided two programs and staff went to different classes about the programs and talked about which program they liked.

The Haaff Elementary School principal described how standards provide the basic guidelines and the curriculum expands on the content area. The principal stated, "The standards gave direction and guidance and the teachers have really run with them to get the education they need. It is evident in the scores that came out." The school uses benchmark quarterly assessments. Each department has curriculum guides and the curriculum specialists work with teachers to align the curriculum. One teacher commented that he knows what his class needs to learn based on "state standards and common sense."

## **Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building**

---

Principals at the Pueblo 60 District are recruited through a structured process that involves identifying required skills. After Human Resources do a paper screening a committee is formed under an academic director that involves people from the school site including parents and administrators. The committee goes through a set of pre-established questions and submits their top three to four candidates. The superintendent and assistant superintendent then figure out which candidate will be the best fit for the school. The assistant superintendent described the selection process, "We have 'look fors.' We want to know what is essential. We look for strong communication, visionary perspective, one who uses research and does their homework, and someone who is a risk taker but who will form with their teams."

Pueblo 60 School District has a leadership internship where they look for people who are working on their administrative license. The internship involves discussions about data, planning, and giving the participants tasks to do. The district also encourages current principals to look for leadership from within their buildings.

New principals take part in a principal induction program where the district provides opportunities for dialoging and working towards permanent licensure. Principals meet every month as a group in a critical friends model to discuss data. At the beginning of the year principals attend a general "kick-off meeting" where they meet to explore how to "make a good school a great school." The school principals are also encouraged to participate in all the trainings that their staff attends.

Teachers at the Pueblo 60 School District are recruited through establishing desired skills, screening applicants, and scoring applicants. The new resource director works to recruit at universities in and outside of Colorado. Teacher interviews are done with site based teams with cooperating teachers. The building principals use questions developed at the administrative building.

There is a teacher induction program where teachers are provided with a mentor. The principal usually assigns a teacher leader with a new teacher and the district provides additional staff development for the new employee. A teacher expressed his experience with the mentoring program by stating, "You turn in lesson plans to the mentor, you have to answer questions, and the mentor gives you a tour and comes into your classroom. The purpose is for support for teachers new to the building."

All new teachers are broken up into district quadrants and trained in the district programs. The district identifies professional development as significantly impacted student achievement. In their district profile pamphlet the district describes professional development at Pueblo:

We share how we: stay abreast of and incorporate best practices into teaching, learning, leadership and support; identify the ongoing process for successful implementation and problem-solving; make professional development a part of everyday school life; ensure the necessary resources are available; and evaluate teacher school and system effectiveness through our strategic plan and data analysis.

Training occurs monthly and the district mandates the staff development for the school. The Writing Alive program incorporates visiting other teachers' classrooms. The teachers have to produce the same products that are being modeled by the teachers they visit. One teacher expressed that visiting other classrooms "has been helpful but the program is a little cumbersome." Professional development is targeted at an area of need where staff needs professional assistance.

The principal at Haaff Elementary described his arrival at the school, "Usually they have elementary principals with a site based team and they look at past rubrics. Then there are times when they assign people to buildings. I was told I would be moving here and started the next day." He described his participation in a leadership symposium put on by the University of Colorado Springs where new teachers were assigned to retired principals. The principal said, "Those of us that are new principals have formed little groups that we can call upon."

Haaff Elementary School's professional development involves early dismissals on Friday's so that 1:30-3:30 PM can be dedicated to trainings. The first Friday of the month is for district professional development, the second Friday is up to the principal, the third Friday is for grade level teams, and the fourth Friday is for teachers to work on their own.

### **Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements**

---

Pueblo 60 School District selects instructional programs by identifying curriculum with research backgrounds. The district looks to see which programs have a good track record and are aligned with their philosophy. A committee of teachers is formed to see if the program meets school needs and is cost effective. The assistant superintendent expressed of instructional programs, "It has to be a tool that has rigor and relevance."

The district consistently cited Lindamood-Bell as the reform that has had the greatest impact on student achievement. Lindamood-Bell has been mandated in every elementary school and each school has a reading clinic. The principal at Haaff Elementary school described the program, "Introduction of Lindamood-Bell is a comprehensive reading program that deals with phonics and comprehension, vocabulary, etc. It is a very intense

program. The instructors work with four to six students at a time and the effectiveness of it is determined by pre and post testing.”

Effectiveness of instructional programs is determined by extensive student data. “We are one of the most data driven districts,” explained the assistant superintendent, “Starting next year we are going to use Taranova pre-test and post-test. We have Quarterly assessment, Dibbles for K-5, and we do grade checks every four and a half weeks. All of this gives us a good profile of the student for improving instruction.” District personnel described high-quality instruction as “whatever gets the results.” The teachers at Haaf said that quality instruction involves “expectations, interaction with students, and consistent discipline.”

The district has organized instructional programs to have 90 minutes for core reading, 30 minutes for reading intervention, 60 minutes for math, and 45 minutes for science/social studies. Students are served within the general student population as much as possible. Struggling students have identified interventions which include intensive reading groups and Succesmaker for math.

Instructional programs at Haaff are based on research and district identified criteria. Two of their central programs are Lindamood Bell for K-12 and Writing Alive K-12. The principal described the Writing Alive program, “The Writing Alive is more standardized and the same skills are taught such as sentence structure, paragraph design, and story writing.”

If a student at Haaff is being considered as a Special Education student, a teacher support team comes together involving Special Education staff, literacy personnel, the classroom teacher, and the parents. The teacher support team brainstorms about what can be done for the student and meets six weeks after their initial meeting to see if any changes have occurred. At this point a test may be administered to the student. The school uses inclusion as well as “pull out” for Special Education.

For English language learners the district has provided a part time tutor that work with the two students at Haaff who speak only Spanish. Gifted and Talented students are given additional materials within their classroom. There is also a program called Destination Imagination that challenges students and participates in regional competitions. The school is also implementing the Great Books Literature Series which will challenge the most gifted and provide strategies to assist struggling students.

Struggling students get additional support through the Lindamood-Bell program. Haaff Elementary got additional funds to hire two teachers and an aide to tutor after school. One teacher in describing how he works to provide multilevel curriculum stated, “I have three curriculums going simultaneously.”

<b>Student Performance</b>	<b>Haaff Elementary</b>	<b>Pueblo 60 School District</b>	<b>Colorado</b>
<b>How Students Performed on State Reading Tests</b>	2005	2005	2005
Grade 3 Reading - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	100.0	97.0	90.0
Grade 4 Reading - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	87.0	92.0	86.0
Grade 5 Reading - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	92.0	92.0	88.0
<b>How Students Performed on State Math Tests</b>			
Grade 3 Math - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	100.0	98.0	92.0
Grade 4 Math - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	94.0	97.0	90.0
Grade 5 Math - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	97.0	95.0	89.0

How Students Performed on State Writing Tests			
Grade 3 Writing - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	100.0	96.0	94.0
Grade 4 Writing - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	98.0	95.0	91.0
Grade 5 Writing - At or Above Partially Proficient (%)	96.0	95.0	95.0

**Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data**

---

The district monitors their goals through the strategic plan every nine weeks. Twice a year the district gives a presentation to the board about how they have impacted the goals. District personnel expressed that they are happy with the state assessment because “it lets us know the effectiveness of our programs.” The district has told the state that they need sequential testing and to be capable of assessing in all the subjects.

When students first arrive at the Pueblo 60 School District they are screened for their academic ability. The district also utilizes quarterly assessments based on the programs they are using. The assistant superintendent explained, “We say by the end of the nine weeks this is where you need to be. We also have teachers who would stay on the same unit all year if they weren’t pushed.”

The district monitors students through Successmaker. The Successmaker program includes student grades, test scores over time, and lets the district know if they are reading at grade level. While discussing the level of detail in their data monitoring system the assistant superintendent joked, “At some point we are going to get down to their DNA.”

Haaff Elementary uses the quarterly assessments that were created by teachers for math, reading, and science. Student data is monitored through, CSAP, Taranova testing, and Masterminer. The principal at Haaff described these programs, “Masterminer is another program that gives us benchmarks off of CSAP and points out the percentages of the students who understood different areas. Teachers can get to Scholarsmart electronically. Masterminder is for administration only.” A teacher said of the data monitoring system, “It’s starting to be pretty intensive. We get a read out on what they didn’t get. It has student information on each sub-skill.”

**Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustments**

---

The district recognizes student success at board meetings. Haaff Elementary uses the Accelerated Reader program to help students set quarterly goals and recognizes the students who are successful in this program at an assembly. There are also additional school awards such as perfect attendance awards and good behavior awards.

For struggling schools the district works in conjunction with the state and looks at AYP. If a school is struggling the district arranges an outside independent assessment as well as having the teachers do an evaluation. The assistant superintendent described this process of working with schools, “We look at the data and look at what is working and then we begin a process to build it up.”

The mentoring program helps the district address support for struggling teachers. The teacher evaluations identify below district standards and remediation plans. Pueblo 60 School District provides the Champs Program which helps teachers with classroom management. The principal at Haaff Elementary stressed the importance of collaborative involvement, “If they are not a first year teacher and they are struggling, I ask another

teacher to help monitor and I become more involved in the classroom. Last year, I gave a teacher release time to watch a master teacher."

Struggling students receive individualized literacy plans, intensive reading groups, Successmaker in math, after school tutoring, and Saturday school. Resources for interventions are allocated based on programs that have had track records of the greatest success. "Everything we do is based on student achievement," explained the assistant superintendent, "We have significantly closed the gap for our black, white, and Hispanic students. The ethnicity gap has closed." The director of elementary education described the curriculum adjustment process, "It is fluid; the curriculum is ever evolving to meet the needs of every child."

At Haaff Elementary, struggling students are continually monitored. The school utilizes Individual Literacy Plans, math plans, and Successmaker. Commenting on student interventions, the principal stated, "This year we are using more and more data to identify student needs. We have a test called Successmaker by Precision Digital that students can work on. This program can help them at the level they are on."

Haaff recognizes students at quarterly awards assemblies and has an award for the most improved reader of the year. "One of the things we started this year is reading counts," explained the principal, "It is individually based where students read at their own level and they take tests on comprehension and vocabulary and they receive a little dog tag when they get a certain amount of points. We recognize them at quarterly assemblies. You'll see kids with fifteen dog tags out on the playground."

## **Influencing Factors**

---

Staff at Pueblo 60 School District stressed the unique history of their community as consisting of various communities all coming together to work at the local mines and mills. In 1982 when the mills went down it had a significant effect on the local community. The assistant superintendent explained, "There is almost no one who hasn't been here for a long time; who hasn't had something to do with the mill or the mines. Pueblo has a history of different communities. It is very much a blue collar union town." This history of evolving unions is apparent in the current issues with the teachers unions negotiating teachers' salaries.

The salary negotiation was unanimously cited as an issue of tension within the district. The assistant superintendent commented on the union situation, "They want their teachers to get a pay raise but by the law we can't go into deficit spending." There is strong union representation in the district which works to preserve teacher's rights and utilizes collective bargaining rights. The principal at Haaff described the union situation,

It has been strong in the past and new leadership has come in that is emerging as a stronger ally to work with the administration. They are going through salary discussions right now. They provide their own type of professional development, based on their beliefs they do a lot of leadership training. They have a nice building that they let the district use.

The staff at Haaff explained that the union contact person keeps them "up on the issues" but the union's relationship with the administration is "minimal." Staff members expressed that they would like to see a more respectful relationship develop between teachers, district administrators, and the board members. They wanted to see a management style created

district wide which fosters greater understanding of the perspective of the different members of the Pueblo 60 School District.

Despite the current challenges within Pueblo, the staff at Haaf Elementary School strive to meet the needs of all students. Haaff personnel described the strong role of parents and the PTO in the building. As one teacher mentioned, "We have some phenomenal parents who run programs after school." The parents at Haaff raised money to put in a new playground, provide additional equipment for older students, and put in a separate parking lot for student drop off. The principal of Haaff Elementary described the overall school climate as, "very positive, very dedicated. Teachers are striving for the best for their kids."

Expenditure per Student	Pueblo 60	
	School District	Colorado
Spending Summary	2003	2003
Operating Expenditures (\$ Per Student)	6,852	7,233
Instructional Expenditures (\$ Per Student)	3,843	4,177