

History of the  
ADAMS TWELVE Five Star  
School District

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## THE CITIES WHICH GREW UP JUST NORTH OF DENVER

As we have followed the history of the Adams 12 area from the time when it was still a part of Kansas Territory down to the post-World War II era, we have seen dramatic changes. Had you lived in Colorado back in the years when William Cody, or "Buffalo Bill," was supplying the Kansas Pacific Railroad with meat, cooking Sunday dinner very likely would have involved going down to the garden to pick vegetables, then stopping by the henhouse to chase down a plump-looking pullet. Washing clothes would have meant getting out the tub and washboard, then going down to the well to get water which had to be heated on the wood-burning stove. But by the time the present Adams 12 school district was organized in the early 1950s, life in this area had changed dramatically.

Looking at old pictures taken in the district's early days, it is easy to imagine that the people standing next to the old school buses and peculiar-looking fire escapes lived in a world that was very like ours, except for the old-fashioned gadgets and clothes. However, to understand the huge population shifts which occurred in the decades following World War Two, one has to realize why so many people were so eager to move to the new suburbs which were rapidly springing up around large cities all over the U.S.. This quote from *Newsweek* describes some reasons why many people were eager to move to the rapidly growing suburbs in the post-World War II era:

. . . In 1940, more than a fifth of the population still lived on farms, less than a third of the farms had electric lights and only a tenth had a flush toilet. Among all Americans, 56 percent were renters. More than half of the households didn't have a refrigerator, and 58 percent lacked central heating. Nearly half the labor force worked at grueling farm, factory, mining or construction jobs. Home life was demanding. The famous study by sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd of "Middleton" (Muncie, Ind.) in the 1920s found that wives in working-class families (about 70 percent of the total) were typically up by 6 a.m. to start cooking; 40 percent rose by 5 a.m.

Postwar suburbanization represented a huge leap in living standards for most Americans. It is not simply that they had better housing or that more Americans became homeowners--about 64 percent, up from 44 percent before the war. The quality of everyday life was superior.<sup>1</sup>

Modern mechanized farming methods meant that fewer people were needed to raise the same amount of food. Back in 1820, 71.8 percent of Americans were farmers. By 1990, the number had fallen to 2.4 percent.<sup>2</sup> Urbanization took place later in Colorado than in the states on the eastern seaboard. The changes in Adams County, which in the early 1950s was still largely rural, have been dramatic. As recently as 1968 the county's population was almost equally divided between unincorporated areas (81,435) and incorporated communities (81,620).<sup>3</sup> Yet, by the 1980s, as noted by Leonard and Noel in *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis*, Adams County "has become the industrial and agricultural muscle of the metropolis."<sup>4</sup> Adams County one of the most socially and economically diverse areas in Colorado.

Home to farmers and suburbanites, exclusive neighborhoods and robust ethnic communities, Adams County School District 12 reflects the diversity of the area of which it

<sup>1</sup>Samuelson, R.J. *Newsweek*, March 2, 1992, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, Dirk (1992) "Leaving the Land," *Boulder Daily Camera*, reprinted from *New York Times*, June 14, 1992, p. 1B.

<sup>3</sup> *Adams County Population* (Brighton: Adams County Planning Department, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 435



is a part. Serving students throughout 62-square miles, District 12 has become Adams County's largest school system. During the 1990-91 school year, the district served approximately 20,700 students.<sup>1</sup> So how was this section of western Adams County transformed from a peaceful farming area to the site of golf courses, subdivisions, refineries, farms, and the new Denver International Airport?

Part of the answer lies in the attraction which the wave of people who had come to Colorado to man its war plants, its military installations, and its federal government operations felt for the area. Others who had merely passed through briefly decided to return. The vast and uncluttered expanse, the soft and invigorating climate, the friendly population and the magnificent scenery drew people back. A population explosion took place. Home builders struggled to keep up with demand.

#### THORNTON BECOMES "COLORADO'S NEWEST CITY"

Developer Sam Hoffman of Phoenix, Arizona, announced in December of 1952 that he would build "Colorado's newest city" on a stretch of land seven miles north of downtown Denver, in an area which was mostly open prairie with a few scattered farms and gentle valleys. Hoffman's F & S (Father and Son) Construction Company bought 640 acres from Art Eppinger and broke ground in the spring of 1953 for the first 5000 homes. Newspaper articles of the day called it the largest single home building project in the state and the second biggest in U.S. building history.

The new "Miracle City" would consist of moderately priced brick homes on 1,500 acres with planned areas for schools, churches and recreation. Hoffman envisioned Thornton as a complete city within itself with an eventual population of 20,000. On April 28, 1953, the first three model homes officially opened. Several thousand people attended the open house, due in part to Hoffman's foresight in also inviting actress Jane Russell, three of whose brothers worked for F & S Construction in other cities. Later Russell Boulevard, the "curviest" street in Thornton was named in her honor.

In 1954 Hoffman's firm was considered the third largest home builder in the nation. Hoffman had previously built 1,900 units in Hoffman Heights, now a part of Aurora. F & S Construction had constructed similar projects elsewhere in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Pueblo, Colorado; San Diego, California; and Cleveland, Ohio. The new Thornton homes sold for \$8,000 to \$11,000. A family could move into a two-bedroom brick home with a \$650 down payment and FHA payments of \$57 per month, or they could move into a three-bedroom home with a down payment of \$1,250 and monthly payments of \$67 per month.

Over 300 homes were sold in a matter of weeks. The new community was named after then-Governor Dan Thornton, a quicksilver man who had been born a Texas sharecropper's son but had become a college athlete, bit Hollywood player and supreme showman. Dan and his wife Jesse had become infatuated with Colorado and chose the lush Valley of the Gunnison as the breeding place for a strain of Hereford bluebloods. In 1945 cattlemen were amazed when Thornton sold two of his prime bulls for \$50,000 each--then a record price. Such royalty were housed for a week in the lobby of the Brown Palace Hotel.

Dan's charisma caught the eye of the state's Republican party and they sent him to the State Senate representing Gunnison County. When former Gov. Ralph Carr died in his try for a new term as chief of state, the GOP selected Dan Thornton to take his place on the ticket and he won an overwhelming victory. Seeing Gov. Thornton as an engaging salesman of Colorado's original bounties, Sam Hoffman approached him and asked if he would lend his name to Hoffman's new community. The governor responded with a

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<sup>1</sup>MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce, 11990 Grant, Northglenn, Colorado.

modest witticism, "I wouldn't like to see a town start out with a stigma like the name of Thornton." But he accepted.

In January 1954 the Glassman family moved into their new home at 1921 Emerson Street, becoming the new city's first official residents. All homes were served by one well, located at 91st and Clarkson Street. The Thornton Community Association was formed in April 1954. Each city block selected a representative block leader for the TCA Board which addressed such issues as recreation, streets and lighting. By June of 1954 the first shopping center had opened, at 88th and Washington, housing such tenants as Miller's Supermarket, Woolworth Stores, the Bonebreaker's Toggery, and Thornton Barber Shop.

Dorothy Leigh recalls that many people who could not otherwise have afforded to buy a home were enabled to do so by the GI Bill of Rights, which allowed them to get into a home with no money down. To cut costs, homes were built in assembly-line style with one contractor pouring the concrete pads on which the houses were built, another doing the framing, another putting plumbing, etc. Construction workers moved steadily from house to house, constructing whole neighborhoods of sturdy brick veneer residences in a manner that maximized efficiency and minimized costs.

With the building of the Hoffman development in Thornton, there came a great need for additional school buildings in that area. In 1954 residents approved an Adams County School District 12 bond issue to build Thornton's first school, now known as Meritt Hutton Junior High School. Thornton area businessmen and residents also donated the materials and labor for the construction of a temporary frame building call The Annex at 901 Eppinger Blvd. Until The Annex was completed at Thanksgiving in 1954, the district rented space in the Eastlake Fire Hall for a few elementary classes and a central office.

By the end of 1955 there were an estimated 5,500 people and over 1200 homes in the Thornton community. On May 26, 1956 Thornton, with a then population of 8,640, was incorporated as a city. Oyer G. "Bill" Leary, now an Adams County District Judge, was the first mayor. Eight aldermen were elected, two to represent each of the city's four wards. The first city council meetings were held in the home of the city clerk, but soon a used military Quonset hut was erected on Dorothy Boulevard to serve as a temporary city hall and headquarters for the fire and police departments till a permanent building could be built.

The original fire and police departments in Thornton were volunteer organizations. Mike Dichter bought the first fire truck. There was tremendous *esprit de corps* among the volunteer firemen. In a very short time, the Thornton Fire Dept. became known as one of the best volunteer fire departments in the state. In a contest their first year, they took three places, a feat never before accomplished by a first year fire department. By 1956 the police department included six paid personnel. By 1957 there were an estimated 10,350 people living in the City of Thornton. An independent newspaper called "The Thunder" was started. The city got its first post office in 1958. Taxi service was provided by a single Volkswagen Bus which could hold ten passengers.

In the mid-50's the Thornton Shopping Center was built at the corner of Washington Street and 88th Ave., providing the city with a major source of income. The chart below is a list of salaries of the City of Thornton officials for 1958.<sup>1</sup>

<u>City Official</u>	<u>Salary Per Month</u>
Chief of Police	\$375.00
Police Officers	\$325.00
Fire Chief	\$375.00
Firemen	\$325.00
City Clerk	\$250.00

<sup>1</sup>Addis, D.; Eskoz, R.; Matney, J.; & Schmidt, G. (1976) "City of Thornton," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1.



City Attorney

\$175.00

Yet north of Thornton there was still plenty of open farmland. Linda Spruce remembers what it was like to attend Eastlake Elementary in the late 1950's. There was no kindergarten, so students started school in the first grade. It was a farming community. Everyone knew one another. Classes were traditional, very structured, with lots of direct teaching. Students read from basal readers featuring characters like Dick, Jane, and Spot. Everyone loved fire drills because they got to slide down the fire escape tube from the second floor. As a special treat on the last day of school students were allowed to ride their horses or bikes to school.

#### NORTH GLENN SUBDIVISION GROWS INTO NORTHGLENN

In the spring of 1959 the Perl-Mack Companies finalized plans for a large subdivision north of Thornton. Development plans called for a total community design centered around a regional shopping complex. As Perl-Mack was both the sole land owner and the developer, it was able to control the layout of streets, the location and design of commercial and industrial areas, as well as the planning of recreational areas and the location of schools. Ground was broken in June, 1959. The first show homes were opened north of 104th Ave. and west of Washington St.

By 1960 there were approximately 500 residents in the North Glenn subdivision. During the period from 1960 to 1962, the subdivision grew rapidly and received national recognition and numerous awards including "The Most Perfectly Planned Community in America" and "The Best Home for the Money in the Southwest United States," as well as other awards for distinguished merit from sources such as *Life* magazine, *Look*, *McCall's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *House and Home*, and the National Association of Home Builders.

The City of Thornton saw the North Glenn subdivision as a desirable annexation and began the necessary legal process to bring the subdivision within its boundaries. However subdivision residents had other ideas. Citizen groups and service clubs began to form and oppose annexation by the City of Thornton, beginning a long struggle for community identity. In 1969 the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that North Glenn could not be annexed by Thornton. North Glenn proceeded with action to incorporate and officially became a city on April 18, 1969.

Just prior to the incorporation of North Glenn, the Northglenn Mall opened in 1968. Northglenn Greens, across from the mall where the Mann 6 Theatre and Shepler's are now, was originally a golf course. The first municipal election was held in April, 1969, to elect the first Mayor, City Council, City Clerk and City Treasurer. From 1969 until the city acquired Home Rule Status in 1975, all these positions continued to be filled by election as this was pursuant to the statutory requirements for statutory cities. After 1975 the City Clerk and Treasurer became appointed positions. To insure citizen involvement the first mayor, Hugh Danahy, and the City Council started a program of Town Hall Meetings, the first of which was held May 19, 1969. Eventually these were replaced by City Council meetings and study sessions, which continue to be open to the public.

Telephone service to North Glenn at this time still left something to be desired. There was a ten cent charge to call anywhere south of 104th Ave. Recreational needs of the City were provided by the Northglenn Recreation District, which remained separate from City administrative control till it was merged with the City in 1972, pursuant to Court order. The Recreation District was finally dissolved in 1984, upon final payment of the bonded indebtedness, and the City now provides for the recreational needs of the City.

The first body of elected officials had to begin the City's operations without any revenues and without any administrative staff. Operating funds were borrowed and City offices were set up in the Melody Business Building on Melody Drive, north of 104th Ave.

A law enforcement Committee was formed in July, 1969, with the responsibility of assisting the Mayor and Council in establishing a Public Safety Dept. Richard Colby was hired as first Public Safety Director and on January 15, 1970, the fifteen men who had been hired to form the nucleus of the new department began to provide security by patrolling the streets of North Glenn in two cars loaned to the City by the Adams County Sheriff's Dept.

On July 19, 1970, the new municipal building at 10969 Irma Drive was dedicated. The Council had chosen a design which would permit construction of additional space as that became necessary. The site had been donated to the City by Perl-Mack. By this time the population of the area had grown to 26,000. Additional land had been annexed to the City, including the 24th Filing, the Northmor area and the Karl's Farm Dairy area. The name of the city had been changed from North Glenn to Northglenn.<sup>1</sup>

## WATER BECOMES AN ISSUE

Remember how, in his official report, Major Stephen Harriman Long had, in 1820, stated that the entire region between the Mississippi River and the Rocky mountains was almost wholly unfit for cultivation and thus uninhabitable? He very effectively spread the word of the Great American Desert. This did not deter the trappers who followed the Missouri to the South Platte, using the rivers to assure them of a water supply on their way west. Nor did it deter the settlers who later followed the same route, later using the water from the rivers to irrigate the land they had settled. But the rivers only held so much water. As the population grew, so did competition for possession of rights to that water.

### Thornton Buys Own Water System

The Denver Water Board had not agreed to service the new community of Thornton with an option to buy the system at a later date. At first the newly built homes were serviced by a single well. As more homes were built, the utilities system grew. In 1963 Thornton voters approved the purchase the Utilities System from Northwest Utilities Company. This provided Thornton with its own water and sewer system. At this time the System was providing water for about 30,000 people, both inside and outside the city limits. The city sold \$7,870,000 in bonds to purchase the utility.

Problems arose due to the fact that approximately 60% of the Utilities System customers lived outside the Thornton city limits. These customers, especially Northglenn residents, now had to contract with Thornton Utilities because Northglenn had made no provisions for contracting with another company. The contract, which ran till 1988, guaranteed that users outside the city limits of Thornton were to agree to contract only with Thornton for the duration of the contract. Northglenn residents claimed that the period of the contract was too lengthy. However, as they were not Thornton residents, they had no official representation in the administration of the system.

Listening to such complaints, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) questioned the validity of the sale by Northwest Utilities Company. In 1964 the PUC took the issue to the Colorado Supreme Court, claiming that it should have jurisdiction over the system in order to protect Thornton water customers who lived outside Thornton. The Colorado Supreme Court declared that the sale of the system by Northwest to Thornton was invalid since outside customers had no representation in its management. The PUC took jurisdiction over the system. However less than a year later the Colorado Supreme Court reversed its earlier ruling, declaring that the PUC had exceeded its jurisdictional powers

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, J. (1986) "North Glenn to Northglenn," published by City of Northglenn, reviewed and edited by D. Bolman, City Historian.



and had no right to interfere with matters of municipal improvement. Thornton regained control of the Utilities System.

Immediately after this ruling Thornton moved forward in developing its system. In 1965 \$1,300,000 was spent on items such as storage tanks, water mains, new wells and a utilities department in the new city hall. Since then the system has been greatly expanded and is now providing better service for customers who do not live in Thornton. In 1976 approximately 80,000 people were being served by the Thornton Utilities System. Only about one third of these people resided in the city limits of Thornton.

#### Northglenn Develops Water Management Plan

At the same time, Northglenn has taken steps to develop its own Water Management Plan. In 1959, when North Glenn was first developed, the subdivision did not own the water treatment system on which it depended nor even the pipes that serviced its citizens. By 1977 the City Council had agreed that it was in the City's interests to develop its own water system. Although the accepted practice in many other Colorado municipalities had been to condemn the agricultural rights of nearby farms, the Northglenn City Council unanimously signed a letter which stated, "This solution to the water problem creates more problems than it solves; we simply cannot afford to meet municipal needs at the cost of drying up our nation's farms."

The key to the water management program was seen to be an attempt to share resources rather than a power grab for municipal purposes that would shut farmers out of water that was needed for agriculture. The proposed system involved the use of water in Standley Lake, which would be borrowed and treated for municipal purposes. After use by the citizens of the City, the water would be returned to the farmers, plus ten percent, for irrigation. Approximately sixty meetings were held to discuss and explain the system to the citizens prior to holding a special election on July 12, 1977. By a margin of 3003 to 1500, the citizens of Northglenn voted to issue General Obligation Bonds in the amount of \$31,000,000 to acquire a joint municipal water and sewer system.

Between 1977 and 1979 the City of Northglenn acquired the water lines located in Northglenn from Thornton and a plan was established to construct a wastewater facility in Weld County, north of Northglenn. This proved a cause of controversy, with citizens from Weld County visiting Council meetings in protest and picketing the offices in front of the bank that housed the City offices for several weeks. The water treatment plant, located on East 112th Ave., was completed in 1980 and the final severance of Northglenn's water lines from the Thornton Water System took place. In 1982 Northglenn signed a water lease agreement with Coors and the controversial sewerage treatment plant began operation in Weld County. However cost overruns on the water project had placed a burden on the City and on the administration, resulting in the termination of many City employees and the elimination of several City positions in order to cut costs.

The cost of the water system had turned out to be considerably greater than the \$31,000,000 proposed and approved in the election of 1977. Among the reasons were general inflation, a much higher cost for purchasing the lines from Thornton than had been originally estimated, and legal fees for the many suits filed against the city in regard to the Water Project. Water bills in Northglenn were much higher than in the surrounding areas, primarily because of a capital charge to pay for the water system. Citizens angered by these costs filed petitions to demand the recall of the Mayor and four of the City Councilmen. After protest hearings resulting in a great deal of media coverage, the City Clerk deemed four of the five recall petitions sufficient. An election was held in June, 1983, but none of the demanded recalls were successful.

In November, 1985, Charles Winburn was re-elected Mayor and a sales tax rate of 3% on food items purchased in the City was approved. The tax was expected to generate approximately \$680,000 during 1986. Proceeds were used to reduce the capital charge

from \$35.54 to \$29.04 a month for single family homes. This reduction in their high water bills was a welcome relief to the citizens of Northglenn.

In 1978 the City of Golden had filed a suit against Northglenn and the Farmers' Reservoir and Irrigation Company when FRICO contracted to sell its interest in Berthoud Ditch. An agreement, reached in February, 1986, provided Golden with the right to additional water in the Ditch from May 15th to June 30th each year, with Northglenn owning the water in excess of Golden's share, and helping Golden pay for improvements to the Ditch. Additionally, the Agreement provided for the two cities to split the operation and maintenance costs of the Ditch.

By the end of 1986 the City's economic crunch seemed to have been resolved. Water bonds had been refinanced. The City had come under increased scrutiny by bond investors and insurers after the financial problems due to the water and sewer project hit in 1982, but in 1986 bond experts reported that the City was off the list of investment risks. Northglenn was once again viewed as a financially stable city. Utility issues once again became controversial in 1987, however, with Northglenn demanding \$1.4 million from Thornton, contending that Thornton had failed to report 8 sewer taps linked to the Northglenn system. Meanwhile, Thornton filed suit against Northglenn, arguing that a new drainage ditch was dumping too much water into the Eastlake Reservoir.

In September, 1987, an agreement was approved which appeared to be beneficial to both cities. Under the proposal, Northglenn acquired Croke Reservoir from Thornton for recreation and water storage and rights to up to 200 acre feet of water from the Clear Creek drainage area, with Thornton continuing to provide free sewer service to two Northglenn residences and water to a third. In return, Northglenn would pay Thornton \$200,000, allow Thornton to draw up to 26.1 acre feet of water from Croke Reservoir in emergencies, and provide sewer service to certain parts of Thornton.

On March 24, 1989, the *Sentinel* headline stated "Northglenn Moved into Weld County." The City annexed the 323 acres owned by the City in Weld County, the site of its wastewater treatment plant. The administration and the Council were concerned that another entity may have been on the verge of annexing the land, which would have made Northglenn subject to land-use and zoning codes imposed by outsiders. Therefore, the Council passed an emergency ordinance on February 2, 1989, annexing the property.<sup>1</sup>

The ongoing Northglenn concern with purchasing enough water to insure adequate future supplies was addressed again in 1989. A proposal to bolster water supplies by a sales tax increase until such time as other revenues were available was studied and ultimately presented for a vote in May. It was projected that \$600,000 per year could be realized. The sales tax proposal was passed, with an increase of 1/2% to become effective June 1, 1989. The money generated was earmarked to purchase water, except for the portion derived from the food tax, which would go toward reduction of the capital charge. A sunset provision would return the tax to 3% on December 31, 1994.

### Thornton's Attempt to Get More Water

Originally, Thornton had planned to obtain its future water supply from Denver's Two Forks Dam. However as problems with the Two Forks project mounted, Thornton started looking elsewhere for enough water to quintuple the city's population in the next 40 years. The city's focus turned to northern Colorado's irrigated cropland. However, after spending six years on nasty court fights, Thornton learned that getting water from rural Colorado is not easy. *The Denver Post* explained Thornton's problems:

... In one of the biggest Colorado water deals ever, Thornton paid farmers \$50.5 million for the rights to 8 billion gallons of annual irrigation supplies.

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<sup>1</sup>Baker, J. (1989) "Northglenn Matures," made available by the City of Northglenn.



Today the farmers are collecting interest off the money they made from the water sales. But Thornton still hasn't seen a drop of its water. . .

"I would hope that others can learn a lesson from what we've done," said City Manager Jack Ethredge. "I would hope that someone can find a way to take some of the confrontation out of this process."<sup>1</sup>

The preliminary calculations had been simple enough. Some individual farms around Ault were using annually as much as 2000 acre-feet of water--about 650 million gallons--to grow alfalfa and hay. That was enough water to grow 1400 acres of crops. In Thornton, the same amount of water would support 8000 new residents for a year.

Thornton targeted 120 farms for possible purchase. To keep prices down, the city ordered everyone involved to keep secret Thornton's search for irrigated farmland. Rural real estate agents were paid \$4 million to serve as intermediaries with the farmers. When they were asked, the real estate agents refused to tell the farmers who wanted to buy their farms. The rural rumor mill went wild.

Ultimately, Thornton secured options to buy 89 farms with more than 21,000 acres of irrigated cropland. With those farms, Thornton acquired 283 of the 600 shares of the farmers' Water Supply and Storage Company, a private firm that supplied irrigation water to the farmers. In the spring of 1986, after closing the deals, Thornton went public as the buyer. Opposition was loud and swift. The remaining owners of the Water Supply and Storage Company tried to stymie Thornton's takeover by authorizing the sale of another 300 shares of stock in an attempt to dilute Thornton's ownership stake. The city filed a lawsuit to block the additional stock offering, but eventually had to pay \$10 million to the irrigation company and make other concessions in order to resolve the case.

Meanwhile, as Thornton worked on financing its project, city water rates jumped 11 percent in 1986, another 11 percent in 1987, and 8 percent in 1991, giving Thornton some of the most costly water in the area. The really expensive part of the fight began that year, when the deal reached water court. For, before Thornton can move any water from farms, it has to prove that the transfer wouldn't hurt anyone. That means that the city has to show that it can take water from the upstream end of the ditch without diminishing the quantity or quality of water delivered to farmers downstream.

The city proposes to take clean water from the top of the ditch and replace most of it for downstream farmers with treated effluent mixed into the South Platte River from municipal sewage plants. Thirty-nine groups, led by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and Fort Collins, have objected to that plan in court. No decision has yet been handed down.

### The View from the Rural Areas

What happens when the water which irrigated a farm is sold? Doesn't the land just revert to prairie grass, the way it was before? Gerry Knapp, who runs the Arkansas Valley Range Project, a multimillion-dollar attempt by the city of Aurora to reseed thousands of Otero and Crowley county acres into natural grasses, explains it is not that easy. It's a tricky business growing native grasses in soils filled with the salts and silts of more than a century of irrigated farming. Grass takes time--and several runs of irrigation water--to take hold. "The idea is to irrigate it one year and never go back again," said Knapp. "I want to give it back to the landowner so he can start grazing. I'm just interested in taking care of the land before the water's gone."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Obmascik, Mark (1992) "Soaked in big water deal?: Thornton yet to see one drop," *The Denver Post*, July 20, 1992, p. 1A.

<sup>2</sup>O'Driscoll, Patrick (1992) "Plains alchemy: Turning weeds to grass," *The Denver Post*, July 20, 1992, p. 6A.



The land must be reseeded with native grasses before Aurora can divert the irrigation water for urban use. "Aurora has worked very hard to get these soils to take some kind of grass. They've had marginal success," said David Miller of the U.S. Soil and Conservancy Service. Grazing the grass that does take hold will be tricky, too. "It's difficult to explain to people and have them realize that these grasses are fragile and will always be fragile," Miller said. "You can't graze them like you do range grass. It will always be bunch grass. It will always look ragged and rough."

Still, to the people of the eastern plains, the reseeded lands could mean the difference between reborn grazing meadows and weeds and dust. If the grass takes hold, a livestock-grazing future might arrest the area's present economic decline. Since the early 1970s, rights to more than 85 percent of Crowley County's farm irrigation water have been sold to the urban Front Range, leaving an ugly wasteland of weedy fields. "During dry, dusty years, the fields blow," explained Miller. "In wetter years, the weeds grow, and blow and pile up."

Meanwhile, drastic property tax losses loom for an already-paltry Crowley County treasury when more than 35,000 acres of once-irrigated lands revert to rangelands. In 1996 or 1997 all the fields that lost irrigation will be reclassified as grasslands on the county tax rolls. Assessments will plummet, hatcheting county services and schools. And the remaining farmers are struggling.

"With 15 percent of the farmers left," says Alvin Carter, an Ordway-area farmer who didn't sell his water, "bringing that water down a 50-mile channel is just real tough."<sup>1</sup> He expects fewer irrigation runs--deliveries of water--with more water at a time to compensate for the "shrink," or loss to evaporation and seepage as water travels the ditches. Even then, the shrink could double.

"My lateral (ditch) had 1,910 shares (of water) in it," said Ralph V. Mercer, a hog breeder outside of Ordway. "When they first sold, there were only 80 shares left--two of us. I tried it. The water just wouldn't get here. A lot of people sold for the same reason I did. It's like a row of dominos."

Such experiences go a long way toward explaining how people in rural areas feel about Front Range cities buying up land to get the water rights. In the past two decades, city purchases of agricultural water have dried up more than 60,000 acres of Colorado cropland. Balancing the interests of the cities and the rural areas has become a major dilemma, not only in Colorado, but in much of the West.

### The View from the National Level

Colorado's biggest dams are operated not by cities or by the State, but by the federal government. The Bureau of Reclamation was created in 1902 to furnish a water supply to "reclaim" the desert of the arid West. Today the agency operates more than 350 reservoirs and 72,000 miles of canals, pipelines and tunnels that divert water from rivers and deliver it to farms and cities. About 85 percent of all Bureau of Reclamation water goes to western farmers, almost always at cut-rate prices.

Now congressional critics are questioning some of the priorities which have traditionally guided the policies of this federal agency, which has a \$900 million budget, employs 7300 people, and controls about 20 percent of the water in the western U.S. The questions they are raising could strongly affect the future of cities like Thornton and Northglenn. California Congressman George Miller, Chairman of the House Interior Committee, feels that the Bureau of Reclamation is failing to adapt to the economic realities of a new West.

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<sup>1</sup>O'Driscoll, Patrick (1992) "Sell off creates sea of weeds: Crowley county coffers to suffer when fields revert to range," *The Denver Post*, July 20, 1992, o, 1A, 6A.

"The Bureau of Reclamation unfortunately has viewed itself as having one constituent and one constituent only: the agricultural growers," Miller said. "They can't bring themselves to tell their favored clients, the growers, that this federal water is going to have to be shared with urban areas and that it's going to be used for environmental restoration to mitigate the damages of the past.

"They have to start managing water for a modern era where jobs are being created in urban areas. Otherwise, they're on the verge of making themselves irrelevant."<sup>1</sup>

Marc Reisner, who chronicles the history of the Bureau of Reclamation in his book *Cadillac Desert*, agreed with Miller, "The bureau isn't a caretaker for farmers. It's an undertaker." However agency directors argue that they--and not the Congress--are best qualified to make key water management decisions.

"I think natural resource management should be left in the hands of professional resource managers, not the courts or the Congress," said Dennis Underwood, who heads the bureau. "If Congress gets involved in these disputes, they're going to say 'Let's split the difference down the middle in the name of political compromise.' I don't think Congress should be dealing in these matters."

The current debate centers on the fact that agriculture accounts for 92 percent of Colorado's water consumption, but generates only 2 percent of the state's jobs, according to the Office of State Planning and Budgeting. By contrast, the entire Denver metro area uses 6 percent of the state's water, but provides 63 percent of all Colorado jobs.<sup>2</sup>

A 1987 Bureau of Land Reclamation report estimated that its annual irrigation subsidy to western farmers was \$534.3 million. Because the bureau irrigates 9.9 million acres across the West, the typical bureau farmer was being subsidized by federal taxpayers at a rate of \$53 per acre. The average farmer repays just 15 percent of the cost of government irrigation projects; a *Denver Post* review of federal water projects in Colorado showed that the typical state Reclamation farmer repays just 14 percent of the cost.

Colorado's biggest Eastern Slope Bureau of Reclamation project is the Colorado-Big Thompson project, which takes water from the Western Slope at Grand Lake, Grandby Reservoir and Shadow Mountain Reservoir and delivers it via a tunnel beneath the Continental Divide to 2700 farms along the South Platte River. Federal taxpayers spent \$107.6 million to bring irrigation water to the Colorado-Big Thompson farmers, but farmers have agreed to repay \$33.8 million. That leaves them with a subsidy of \$27,333 per farm.

These 2700 farms get 56 billion gallons per year of federal water. If that water were in Denver's suburbs, it would support the annual needs of 690,000 metro-area residents. Instead the subsidized federal water was used to irrigate 625,000 acres of northeastern Colorado farmland--including 261,000 acres of subsidized crops. For, since the U.S. grows more corn, wheat, oats and barley than it can eat or sell, the Department of Agriculture gives farmers financial incentives--or subsidies--to plant less food. Last year Colorado farmers received \$130 million of these government "price supports."

About one out of every four acres irrigated with federal water in Colorado is used to grow government-designated surplus crops such as corn, sorghum, oats, wheat and barley. How many Colorado farmers dip twice into the federal till in this way is not known. Many farmers do not do so. But these contradictory government policies, administered by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Agriculture, have become a matter of concern in a time of ballooning federal budget deficits. Critics point out that the same crops thrive without any federal water subsidies in Farm Belt states such as

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<sup>1</sup>Obmascik, Mark (1992) "Water fight coming to a boil: Congressional critics pushing bureau to share resources with cities," *The Denver Post*, July 21, 1992, p. 5A.

<sup>2</sup>Obmascik, Mark (1992) "Crop, water policies pay farmers twice," *The Denver Post*, July 21, 1992, p. 1A, 5A.



Iowa and Illinois, which receive an average of up to 35 inches of natural precipitation in a year, compared with 15 inches of moisture on the Eastern Plains of Colorado.

As water shortages loom for cities across the West, the way agriculture uses its water seems certain to come under increased scrutiny. "When Colorado has 90 percent of its water being used in agriculture and 10 percent in cities, you don't have to take a whole lot of water out of agriculture to help the cities," said Colorado College economics professor Mark Smith, who monitors rural water transfers. "The key is to make it as painless as possible. You have to find the least productive land and take it out of production. It's a lot more efficient to take marginal agricultural land out of production than to build new mountain reservoirs."

City officials in Thornton, which has been trying to acquire extra water supplies, said they wish some Colorado-Big Thompson water would be made available to metro-area cities. "Life isn't like it was in the 1930s, when CBT was built," said Thornton city manager Jack Ethredge. "I don't think we ought to let the past become a blockage to the realities of the present."

So far, though, the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, which controls water from the Colorado-Big Thompson project, steadfastly has refused to let anyone sell project water to most metro-area cities.

"The feeling is, why should we let these outside entities come in and drive up the price of our water when we made the investment to use that water for our own future? These outside communities are competing with our areas for the same growth," said Larry Simpson, manager of the northern district.

### Colorado Copes with Economic Challenges

Through the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the local economy was booming, seemingly with no end in sight. However the energy industry, upon which a large part of this prosperity was based, ran into hard times in the early 1980s. When immigration to the state slowed abruptly with the decline of the energy industry, plummeting from 41,000 in 1983 to 7,000 in 1984, construction and related industries were hard hit. Much of the 1980s were dominated by an economic recession which held most of the State in its grip. The 1990 census showed nearly 18 percent of all children under the age of 5 living in poverty, state-wide, compared with 13.6 percent in 1980.

For the first time, the 1990 census showed that the majority--63.2 percent--of women with pre-school-aged children in Colorado were in the labor force. This figure contrasts sharply with 1980, when only 46.4 percent of women with children under 6 were working. At the same time, the Colorado's farm population dropped 23.7 percent between 1980 and 1990, with 14,034 people moving off of farms. Meanwhile the percentage of State residents living in cities grew to 82.4 percent from 80.6 percent in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Median household income, when adjusted for inflation, fell slightly, from \$30,262 in 1980 to \$30,140 in 1990. The reason: some of Colorado's higher-paying jobs went elsewhere when the economic boom ended in the early 1980s, and the majority of the state's workforce remains in traditionally lower-paying jobs in retail trade, entertainment and tourism.

At the same time, there was strong job growth in key segments of the job market, such as among technicians and related support occupations, as well as executive, administrative and managerial occupations. The technician group grew by nearly 41 percent over the decade while the number of executives and managers grew by 37.4 percent. The number of highly skilled blue-collar workers dipped 11.4 percent over the 10 years, with a loss of 20,600 jobs in precision production, craft and repair occupations.

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<sup>1</sup> Gottlieb, Alan (1992) "Thousands in Colorado became poor in the 1980s," *The Denver Post*, May 13, 1992, p. 1 & 10A.



Construction employment dropped by 11.4 percent in the decade. The pressure put on government by the recession could be seen in the fact that, although the number of private wage and salary workers grew by nearly 22 percent over the decade, growth in the number of government workers rose by a more modest 9.2 percent.<sup>1</sup>

#### Weak Local Economy Creates Ripple Effect

Schools and city services are supported by the taxes people pay. Most of these taxes are figured as a percentage of something else, such as income, sales, the value of local property. When the economy is booming, the amount the state collects in income tax goes up because people are making more money; cities collect more in sales tax because more merchandise is sold in stores; school districts get more income from property taxes because property values go up. Conversely, when economic times are hard, the amount of tax support available to the state, cities and school districts goes down. A message written by D.B. Stukey, the first District 12 superintendent, to parents of students makes the relationship clear. Stukey was writing in 1966, two years before the Northglenn Mall opened in 1968.

Within the coming few years, when shopping centers and other planned developments are completed, a more favorable tax base should result. This will enable the District to increase its building program and provide for the entire educational needs of the community . . . our building program has been unable to keep pace with the population growth of the community--but it appears that brighter days are ahead with the promised increased valuation in the District.

Our building needs are multiple. Currently, the District must complete its second high school complex [Northglenn High], construct two additional elementary schools [Stukey & Westview], and begin planning for the fourth junior high school [Northeast]. Our pupil population continues to grow in excess of 1,000 pupils per year, which places increased respective demands upon the building program.<sup>2</sup>

Just as local growth was important in helping District 12 to expand and build more schools, the economic downturn during the 1980s has forced the school district to be cautious in its expenditures. In the four years between 1985 and 1989 the local recession had caused Denver property values to drop an average of 10%.<sup>3</sup> Property taxes collected for the support of schools fell at the same time. Denver's northern suburbs suffered as well. Nor were the schools the only tax-supported entity hit. Just as possessing sufficient water is important to a city's ability to provide essential services, so is a healthy local economy:

The City of Northglenn, a planned suburban community, was incorporated in 1969. The downtown area including the Northglenn Mall and a variety of business, commercial, office and high density residential enterprises was established in the 1960's and the 1970's. This regional mixed-use commercial center served consumer needs of the local community and regional trade area generating sales taxes that, at their peak, provided approximately 67 percent of the City's public revenues. Due to a variety of

<sup>1</sup>Leib, Jeffrey "White-collar force grew; blue collars shrunk," *The Denver Post*, May 13, 1992, p. 10A.

<sup>2</sup>Stukey, D.B. (1966) "Superintendent's Message," *District 12 Executive*, October 11, 1966, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Covarrubias, A. Ryan (1989) "Denver schools to raise taxes: Increases of 6.9 mills needed just to stay afloat, Koeppe says," *Rocky Mountain News*, October 6, 1989, p. 6.

factors, including financial, commercial, and changes in consumer purchasing habits, Northglenn's downtown area began to decline in the early 1980's. Since 1986, the City experienced annual decreases in sales tax and property tax revenues accompanied by deteriorating conditions in both public and private facilities.<sup>1</sup>

"It's like a ghost town up there!" a community member commented in the spring of 1992 about the Mall. "For the merchants it's been real hard times." There is a great deal of similarity between the problems faced by Northglenn Mall and those faced by Westland Mall in Lakewood, Cinderella City in Englewood, University Hills Mall and Bear Valley Shopping Center in Denver. Upon opening, some were considered prototypical showcases, but have since lost business to newer, trendier malls. Most watched key anchor stores pull up stakes and leave during the last decade.

At Cinderella City, where May D&F and Joslin's stores are among the chains' worst performers, May D & F has slashed its daily schedule to only seven hours--from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sales tax at Cinderella City has declined by half since 1984, reducing it to little more than a neighborhood shopping center. Roy Mullin of University Hills said the situation has become "quite a headache since May moved out in 1990. Sales have declined significantly since then, and the future is very uncertain. It really hurt. You know what they say: 'When a major anchor leaves, a shopping mall goes dark.'"<sup>2</sup>

Some say the real problem is that Denver is "overstored," that the area has been inundated with retail outlets, strip centers, shopping malls and specialty shopping areas over the last 20 years. National statistics collected by the International Council of Shopping Centers show that Colorado enjoys a lot more shopping space per customer than most other states, with 26.2 square feet per person compared with a national average of 18.2 feet per person. The Denver retailing picture "is maxed out," according to Aj Jamison of the Aurora Mall.<sup>3</sup>

"These older Malls must find a *raison d'etre*," says Eileen Byre, a Denver retailing analyst. "In a way, those generational malls are like computers and video games. If they haven't upgraded, they've become obsolete."<sup>4</sup>

Aware of the situation, the City of Northglenn decided to take action.

#### Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority

The Northglenn Mall was purchased from its original owner in 1987 by Northglenn Mall Associates, a California-based partnership with plans to renovate the Mall. A renovation plan was developed including the four mall anchor stores--Sears, Mervyn's, The Denver, and J.C. Penny. But within 18 months The Denver (which had been acquired by May D & F) and J.C. Penny vacated Northglenn Mall. Loss of two major anchor stores, added to a regional economic recession and the proliferation of conventional shopping centers within Northglenn's regional trade area, gave momentum to the downward financial and economic cycle which continues to the present.

Telephone surveys carried on in the North Denver area by Browne, Bortz, & Coddington (BBC) indicated that the Mall's lack of strong anchors, older facilities, and

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<sup>1</sup>Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority, *Northglenn Mall Area Redevelopment Plan*, approved by Northglenn City Council, Northglenn, Colorado, April 23, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Conner, Chance (1992) "Malls facing up to ravages of age: Overbuilt market, trendier centers, poor local economy contributed to woes," *The Denver Post*, May 18, 1992, p. 1C,7C.

<sup>3</sup>Conner, Chance (1992) "Malls facing up to ravages of age: Overbuilt market, trendier centers, poor local economy contributed to woes," *The Denver Post*, May 18, 1992, p. 1C,7C.

<sup>4</sup>Conner, Chance (1992) "Malls facing up to ravages of age: Overbuilt market, trendier centers, poor local economy contributed to woes," *The Denver Post*, May 18, 1992, p. 1C,7C.



limited store variety have contributed to the Mall's market erosion. Other regional malls have taken advantage of Northglenn's deterioration to make substantial inroads into the Northglenn market. Northglenn's primary trade area is of sufficient size to support a regional mall, but presently Northglenn does not provide the competitive retail opportunities necessary to realize full market share.<sup>1</sup> In early 1990 the City Council created the Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority (NURA) in an attempt to implement a planning and legal process, as well as a communications strategy, that fostered coordination, cooperation and implementation of a redevelopment project.

The area which is designated as the Urban Renewal Area is the portion of the City of Northglenn that is generally bounded by Interstate-25 on the east, Kennedy Drive on the north, and Huron Street on the west. The south boundary proceeds along 104th Avenue from Huron Street eastward to near Melody Drive, then proceeds south to include the businesses and vacant land on the south side of 104th Avenue along Bannock Street.

Colorado Urban Renewal Law provides a process for urban renewal projects. NURA implemented a program that complied with the legal requirements:

acknowledgment of the existence of factors of blight and deterioration, and plans to remedy same

responsibility to understand the area's infrastructure

the need to be knowledgeable about economic and market conditions

a duty to consider and be sensitive to community concerns and suggestions from the private sector<sup>2</sup>

A commitment was made early in the process to encourage public comments and to regularly communicate progress. Regular progress reports have been a key element in NURA's Public Information Program. The Conceptual Development schedule (page 11, *Urban Renewal Plan*) provides an overview of the major activities and work tasks which drive NURA's urban renewal process.

Concerned that several metropolitan Denver area urban renewal authorities and redevelopment agencies were suffering the consequences of financial instability and visions that did not materialize, NURA emphasized analyzing Northglenn's plan area and utilized the expertise of consultants and city staff to establish an objective data base for redevelopment activities. The consultants' reports documented problems and opportunities for redevelopment. Their recommendations will be considered on a project-by-project basis.

Palisades Realty & Development Corporation submitted a proposal to become the City's redevelopment partner for the Mall project. Between June 14 and July 24 NURA sought assurance that the firm was legally and financially capable and had the experience to redevelop the plan area. Satisfied that there was sufficient substance to the proposal and the firm's ability to perform, NURA authorized negotiations with Palisades Realty and Development Corporation for the purpose of reaching an agreement for redevelopment of the Urban Renewal Area. (See map, p. 26 *Northglenn Mall Area Redevelopment Plan*.)

Any plan adopted will give due consideration to the goals of the Northglenn Mall Area Development Plan adopted in 1986 as a part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Blight conditions listed in the RFPs which need to be remedied include: unmarked Mall

<sup>1</sup>Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority, *Northglenn Mall Area Redevelopment Plan*, approved by Northglenn City Council, Northglenn, Colorado, April 23, 1992, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority, *Northglenn Mall Area Redevelopment Plan*, approved by Northglenn City Council, Northglenn, Colorado, April 23, 1992, p. 10.



entrances; damaged or poorly maintained signs in Mall parking lots; inadequate and poorly maintained trash collection areas; Mall restrooms inaccessible to the disabled; obsolescence of building facades including obsolete and vacant anchor store buildings; high vacancy rates and numerous business leases on a month-to-month basis; and economic blight evidenced by declining retail sales tax to the City of Northglenn.

The policy of NURA is to consider any and all legal methods of financing or any combination of methods of financing any costs of redevelopment projects. However the Colorado Urban Renewal Law allows Northglenn to include within its Urban Renewal Plan a provision that a portion of incremental property taxes and/or municipal sales taxes collected within the Redevelopment Area can be utilized to pay financial debts and obligations for a period of twenty-five years after adoption of its Plan. The base year for property valuation will be 1991.

The Urban Renewal Plan provides that municipal sales taxes collected in the Urban Renewal Area for the twelve month period ending on March 31, 1992 will be calculated by the City and will serve as the base year amount. Each year following, 100% of the incremental amount collected in excess of the base year shall be paid into the tax increment revenue fund of the Northglenn Urban Renewal Authority as required for debt service. Payment of incremental funds to NURA will commence only after the base year amount has been collected and paid to the City. The division of *ad valorem* property taxes for the project area shall be divided and paid to NURA by the Adams County Treasurer.

#### CITY OF FEDERAL HEIGHTS

Federal Heights is located in the north suburban area of metropolitan Denver, with 84th Avenue and 104th Avenue forming the southern and northern boundaries. Federal Boulevard and Pecos Street form the western and eastern boundaries. Within this 1.775 square mile area live approximately 9,000 people. With its housing units comprised primarily of mobile homes and apartments, Federal Heights has an unusual population profile. Approximately one-third of the residents are senior citizens, one-fourth are young adults, one-fourth are young families. Only one-sixth are middle-age families.

One of the first known residents of what is now Federal Heights was Harvey Larsen. He purchased two and one-half acres of vacant land in 1927. His land was to the east of the narrow two-lane dirt road that later became Federal Boulevard. That land, which now has a house on it, is located at the corner of 92nd Ave. and Federal Boulevard. It was not until 1940 that a group of citizens, who had joined together to find a way to obtain a better water supply, decided to form an incorporated town. A mayor was elected and a new well was dug. A Volunteer Fire Dept. comprised of townspeople was begun in 1941. Town meetings were held in George Vonalt's store, where the car wash at 90th and Federal is today. In 1949 an army surplus building, 20 by 50 feet, was purchased for \$745. After several weeks of volunteer labor, and the use of donated materials, Federal Heights held the first meeting in its new Town Hall on February 7, 1950.

During the 1950s more people began moving into the area. A second well was dug. As of April 30, 1956, there were 55 water meters in use. This was the year they first began locking the Town Hall. Three keys were made available to the mayor and council and one key was left on a nail at "Shorty's Grocery." Street and stop signs were ordered and a heating system was installed in the Town Hall. By 1957 the population had reached 512. There were 77 mobile homes in town. The town's first annexation was 280 acres of land called the "Monticello Heights." During the next few years more wells were dug, more land annexed, and more mobile homes moved in. A sanitation district was established in 1961. Speed limit signs were installed and city limit signs were purchased. By 1970 the population of Federal Heights had grown to 1,502. Large mobile home parks were being established. In 1972 the population of Federal Heights reached 4,500. In 1974 the estimated population was 12,000. The new Town Hall was completed in 1975 and

representatives of School District No. 12 began talking with Council about the construction of an elementary school in Federal Heights.<sup>1</sup>

Federal Heights Elementary, located on the hill above Kimberly Hills Mobile Home Park, was built at a time when it was widely believed that the mobile home parks it served would be temporary. Owners of the land upon which the mobile home parks were located were thinking of eventually converting the area to an industrial park. Thus the original open space school built on this site was designed in such a way that it could be converted to other uses should the school's clientele move away.

The original Federal Heights Elementary School burned down during the 1983-84 school year. A fire started in the attached greenhouse and swept through the school. All classrooms were destroyed. Teachers lost all the teaching materials they had developed over the years. On a wall outside the main office in new school is a poem by Jerry Oney which sums of the feelings of the school community after the fire:

Tragedy has hit us in the past few days . . .  
 But memories of our school still have their ways.  
 Our school is gone right now . . .  
 But the work and love will always remain somehow.  
 We feel that all is not lost . . .  
 Regardless of what the cost.  
 Our principal, who is super and great,  
 Has worked so hard to keep us straight.  
 Oh, yes, the building is gone . . .  
 But we are still very strong.  
 The teachers and staff are number one . . .  
 We learned and still had fun.  
 So, why are we sad?  
 Let's build again and we can all be glad.  
 So, we say to you . . .  
 We are not through.  
 Give us another chance . . .  
 And we'll show what we can do.  
 So, Federal Heights Number Two . . .  
 We are ready for Mr. Flint . . . and you.

Ute McFerran remembered that for two years Federal Heights students up to grade three were bussed to Hillcrest. Grades four to six were bussed to Hulstrom. Community residents argued forcefully that the trailer parks were there to stay. The school had become a community focal point and they wanted the new school building to reflect a sense of permanence. The present Federal Heights Elementary School was built on the foundation of the old, but with a different design, one which since has been adopted for two other schools. The community plays a strong role in the school, with many community members employed as para-professionals, others serving as volunteers, some serving on advisory councils, still others occasionally serving as resource people to classes.

Since many parents must leave for work before their children leave for school, the school serves breakfast as well as lunch. Approximately three quarters of the students are on free or reduced lunch, so most get their breakfast for free. Otherwise breakfast is \$.40 and lunch is \$1.50. In the spring of 1992 Federal Heights Elementary had a student population of 685, including 4 kindergartens, 5 first grades, 5 second grades, 4 third grades, 4 fourth grades, 3 fifth grades and 3 sixth grades. To assist students in learning

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfe, Gregg (1978) *Federal Heights Community Directory*. Federal Heights, Colorado: Federal Heights Community/School.



geography, all classrooms are named after towns in Colorado and also have a map which shows the distance between Federal Heights and that town.

### **Adams County School District 12**

The rapid growth of the communities in the southwestern corner of Adams County provided a formidable challenge to Adams County School District 12. By 1953 Adams County District 12 had grown to 238 students and 11 teachers housed in two schools, Eastlake and Westlake. The new district appointed its first superintendent that same year.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT DANIEL B. STUKEY**

Daniel Stucky, the district's first superintendent, came to the district in 1953 and also served as principal of Westlake/Eastlake School the first year. A native Coloradan, Superintendent Stucky had attended school in Boulder and Steamboat Springs. Later he had attended Wheaton College in Illinois, the University of Arizona, and the University of Denver, receiving degrees in history, geology and school administration. For four years he was a gold miner in Cripple Creek, also working in his family's lumber business before joining the Coast Guard and serving three and a half years during World War II. He came to District 12 from Berthoud, where he was principal.

Superintendent Stucky had his first office in the fire hall. He hired the district's first secretary, Margaret Farmer, in September 1954. Old Thornton Elementary was opened in the fall of 1954 and Superintendent Stucky's office was moved there. Longtime teacher George Bailey remembers Superintendent Stucky as a very kind man, congenial, very conservative, very dedicated. The superintendent's life seemed to revolve around the school district. The superintendent went to army surplus stores to get tools as cheaply as possible for the shop in the annex just north of old Thornton Elementary School. In order to save \$200 Superintendent Stucky would go to Detroit to pick up the new school buses. Then he and his son would sleep on the bus as they drove it back.

Shortly after Mr. Stucky's arrival, enrollment had started increasing at a rapid pace. In order to meet the educational needs of the young people within its 62 square miles, between 1954 and 1978 the Adams 12 district passed nine bond elections, totaling over \$96,000,000. Former auxiliary services director Norm Smith remembers Stucky as "the most honest, hard-working man I've ever seen. He did more for District 12 than most people realize. There were years when the district, which might have had 5,000 or 6,000 students, would get another 1000 the next year. Just imagine what it was like, trying to absorb a 15-20% increase over the prior year!"

By the 1950s Eastlake no longer served high school students. Instead the Adams 12 school district paid the tuition for students to attend whatever high school was most convenient. Students in the northeast part of the district went to Brighton. Others went to Westminster High, Commerce City or Lafayette. One student chose to go to Boulder since she had relatives she could stay with there. In the 1954-5 school year that began to change. Students who had attended Westlake as eighth graders the year before were kept at Westlake as ninth graders. The following year there was a temporary building put up between Thornton Elementary and Meritt Hutton, which was still under construction. High school students went down there. Three teachers taught everyone. In 1956, the year Meritt Hutton opened, it served students in grades seven through eleven. For the first time graduates of Eastlake and Westlake were able to stay together through their high school years. Norm Smith remembers well the pride and feeling of loyalty to the school evinced by its first students.

Superintendent Stucky brought in Willis Tarver, a former classmate at DU, as principal of the new school. Ron Roloff remembers that Stucky had high moral expectations of the people he hired. Although he was very autocratic, he was very loyal to the people he hired. He literally chose administrators himself, but if you were a good



administrator he'd support you. Tarver had been principal at Elizabeth and was, temperamentally, a very different sort than Stukey, more authoritarian. The new junior/senior high school had a student population of 370 and very strict dress codes. Girls were required to wear skirts and the boys had to have their shirt tail tucked in at all times. Male teachers were required to wear a coat and tie. Female teachers wore skirts. Indeed, Superintendent Stukey had made it known that he expected teachers to always dress when they went out in public, outside of school, as if they expected to see a student. It was rumored that Stukey preferred to wear tie even while mowing his lawn.

The bus boundaries for Meritt Hutton when it opened were: west one mile to Broomfield, south to 92nd, east to Riverdale, north to 136th. Next to Meritt Hutton Junior-Senior High School was the "dishbowl" where the Colorado State Militia had called a caucus with the Indians during the winter of 1863-64, the year before the Sand Creek Massacre. Today the "dishbowl" is the Adams 12 football stadium.<sup>1</sup> Meritt Hutton Junior-Senior High School was named after a native Coloradan who had a strong impact upon the Adams 12 School District. A 1916 graduate of the Colorado School of Mines, Hutton had long attempted to get a school built between the Eastlake and Westlake Districts. Eventually Meritt Hutton became President of the school board.

The first hot lunch program under the National School Lunch Program in Adams 12 was started at Thornton Elementary in 1956 and was managed by Henrietta Green. Food was cooked in army surplus kettles. The high school students scrambled down the hill to eat lunch in the Thornton lunchroom. At times this made it difficult for the elementary teachers to teach as the cafeteria was in the gym, which was adjacent to all the surrounding classrooms.<sup>2</sup> Counts were high, with as many as 800 eating. Superintendent Stukey could be seen with his sleeves rolled up, washing heavy army trays, pre-rinsing them in an old wash machine and carrying them across the room to the dish machine.

Violet Plunk transported food to Eastlake Elementary in a "yellow jalopy" that first year. Eventually a makeshift kitchen was set up in the custodian's quarters at Eastlake and Mildred Walters went there to manage. As more people moved into the area and more schools with their own lunchroom were opened, the "hot lunch" program grew and evolved into "Food Services" then into "Child Nutrition Programs." The superintendent's office remained at Meritt Hutton Junior-Senior High School till an administration building was built in 1962, at 102nd and Huron.

George Bailey taught at Westlake for half a year before moving to Meritt Hutton, where he began his fifteen year stint as basketball coach. "There was quite a lot of open country between Denver and Thornton back then, mostly irrigated crops. They raised a lot of hay." He recalls winter practices in the Thornton Elementary School Cafeteria. One student stood up on the stage, holding up a wastebasket as a goal. Dave Bollman, who graduated from Meritt Hutton in 1961 and now serves as assistant principal there, remembers the open fields surrounding the school back then. There was hardly anything between the school and Federal Boulevard. The Valley Highway was still a two-lane road with a stop sign at the crossing at 104th. There was only one shopping center at 88th and Washington. To buy anything big one had to drive to Denver.

Most of the students still came from neighboring farms. Superintendent Stukey, a former farm boy himself, contributed to the strong community feeling. He made a point of going to each school on payday, walking into classrooms to personally hand the pay envelope each teacher. George Bailey recalls "He really delighted in that." Ron Rolloff, who was the 75th teacher hired by the district, remembers wonders as a new teacher if he would lose his job when Superintendent Stukey walked in to give him his check and one of his third graders called out, "Hey, mister! What are you doing in our classroom?" Yet the

<sup>1</sup>Branning, H.; Martinez, L.; & Sayre, S. "Eastlake, Colorado," in *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*, vol. 1, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Fox, p. 3.

district over which Stukey presided was rapidly growing beyond the point where it was easy to know everyone by name. Throughout most of its first 30 years the present Adams 12 district was faced with a student growth rate nearly twice the national average.

Norm Smith, who worked under Superintendent Stukey for 19 yrs, remembers the challenge of absorbing such phenomenal growth. "We'd have 5 or 6,000 students and get another 1000 next year. Try to absorb 15-20% increase from prior year!" Smith remembers Stukey as the "most honest, hard-working man I've ever seen. He did more for school district 12 than most people realize. He operated it like he was spending his own money," somehow making ends meet during a period when the district was getting as many as 1300 additional students every year.

In 1962 the high school principal and an elementary principal were promoted to the positions of curriculum coordinators and assistant superintendents. This was the beginning of curriculum supervision in the district. A classroom teacher was promoted to a resource position, but this move was not accepted by the classroom teachers, resulting in termination of that position.<sup>1</sup> Later that same year, however, the district again attempted to introduce resource and coordinator positions. A reading teacher was promoted to become K-6 reading resource teacher and another classroom teacher became the art resource teacher. The following year two additional classroom teachers were promoted to half-time mathematics consultants, spending half the day assisting other classroom teachers and developing curriculum.

This was an era when ability grouping was an accepted fact of life in secondary schools. Commenting on how much things have changed, former student remembers the system of "tracking" used in her junior high in Adams 12 in the early 1960s. Students were assigned to sections according to their grades and the recommendations of former teachers. There were eight or nine sections and students stayed with these same classmates all day. Getting to take a foreign language was tied to what section you were in and was sort of an honor. The kids in 7-1, the highest section, got to take German. Kids in 7-2, the second highest section, got to take French. Kids in 7-3 got to take Spanish. That division seemed to be tied to how hard the teachers and administrators thought the languages were. The student had a friend who was in section 7-8 and remembers having really felt sorry for her.

Curriculum and instruction were closely tied to textbook adoption as most teachers tended to follow the text closely, taking the chapters in order. Teachers were welcome to call upon additional resources but few materials other than the text were available. At the high school level there were fewer electives available than there are today. For example, students taking a college preparatory course had most of their coursework laid out for them, with their choices largely limited to additional electives they chose to take beyond the suggested English, math, science, social science and foreign language courses.

Unable to build permanent buildings fast enough, the District bought or leased homes and turned them into "cottage schools" with the intention of converting them into homes again once permanent buildings were built. Ron Roloff started teaching at the North Cottages in 1960, the first year the cottages were used. The cottages faced on Washington, just south of Muriel, and had four classrooms in each, two upstairs and two downstairs. There were no adult restrooms for teachers. They started with about 25 kids per class but by Christmas had added about 95 children. So they added a third building during Christmas vacation. The houses were leased from Perl-Mack, the builder of all the homes in that area. With so many new children arriving, the way the schools coped was to keep adding students to a class till it got to 36 or so, then take about 10 kids and start a combination class, such as a 3rd/4th grade split. Then, before long, there would be enough new students for a whole third grade and a whole fourth grade. Things changed all the time, which gave working in the district a feeling of adventure.

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<sup>1</sup>Fox, p. 4.



Teachers in the cottages got their only break at recess. There was no teacher's lounge, no place for teachers to be by themselves. Ron Roloff recalls going out to his car, turning on the radio and smoking a pipe during recesses till a neighbor made a comment to the principal, who reminded him that Superintendent Stukey did not approve of smoking. So from then on he had to go for a drive to smoke his pipe. Hot lunches were all cooked at Eastlake Elementary, the food put in hot containers, taken to the cottages, and served in the basement. Students took trays through the line, then went back to the classroom to eat. In the fall of 1964 some 800 students, mostly first and second-graders, were attending 11 cottage schools according to an article which appeared in *The Denver Post* on November 16, 1964. Three school buildings with a capacity for 1,200 students were planned for construction in the next year but it was anticipated that the District might receive 2,000 new children in that time. The State Industrial Commission, citing overcrowding and safety hazards had suggested double sessions or the use of more portable buildings, but Superintendent Stukey pointed out that the District was already installing more portable classrooms and that the community did not want double sessions. Yet eventually split sessions were needed, which caused much anger among parents.

Stukey is remembered as being very tight with money, primarily because there was not much. Back then a school district could not be in debt more than 10% of the assessed valuation of the district. If need was proved, that could be expanded to 15%. Adams 12 was at 15% almost all the time. In 1960 Adams County was the 5th fastest growing county in the U.S. and most of that was in District 12. Perl-Mack was finishing seven homes per day. There was no kindergarten because there was no space for it. From 1950 to 1970 the population of Adams County increased by 400%. During the decade of the 1970's the population grew at a 34% rate. School district finances were stretched almost to the breaking point. Stukey explained that it took 2.5 houses, in terms of tax dollars, to support one child in school for a school year. Yet the families moving in averaged 2.9 elementary school children per house. Till the Northglenn Mall was built, there was little commercial property to tax, so the assessed valuation behind each child was small. At that time the district was building more than one school per year. In its first year, Hulstrom averaged 45 new students per month. There was a cut of point in April after which they simply would not take any new students in school that year.

There was a real closeness among teachers. Northglenn High was opened in 1965 with sophomores only. Max Willsey, who started teaching there that year, recalls that there was only the two-story building back then. Students were bussed to Meritt Hutton for all activities. Superintendent Stukey, who was very interested in athletics, often stopped by the practice field. Willsey, who was also Northglenn's first football coach, remembers how Stukey loved to hold the football for players as they practiced kicking extra points. He went to the army surplus store and bought huge mittens for the football team to wear on the sidelines. You could get six hands in each one.

There was talk of building the new district stadium on 100th and Huron but no way to provide adequate parking was found. So the stadium just north of Meritt Hutton continued to be used. In his role as track coach it was Willsey's job to make sure that burnt coal cinders were properly distributed over the track in the spring. He had a hand-made wooden drag which he pulled behind an old Buick in order to level the surface. The white lime lines between lanes had to be laid down with a one-lane hand "limer," which meant that there were often days when the lanes were a bit crooked. Willsey recalls the feeling of closeness which prevailed among the staff of the small but growing district. One day, when he was talking with Superintendent Stukey in his office, the head mechanic from the bus garage called to inquire about the availability of a certain kind of wrench. Mr. Stukey called a halt in their meeting, went home to get his own wrench and brought it over to the bus garage so that the mechanics could get the bus fixed.

Norm Smith remembers that there was a time when the first students arrived at Northglenn High at 7:00 a.m. and students continued arriving till 1:00 p.m. The first students left the school at 11:00 a.m. Students continued leaving every hour, the last not



leaving school till 5 p.m. Yet the young, enthusiastic staff at Northglenn High did not allow the tactical difficulties to destroy their *esprit de corps*. Jim Studholme remembers the early days at Northglenn High as "a heady time." As the growing district was in perpetual need of funds, many state and federal proposals were written and funded. Title I was approved to provide funding for reading improvement for economically and educationally disadvantaged students. A Title II grant was received to provide paperback books for every English classroom. Two Title III projects were funded: one to develop a central tape library and another to set up a pilot study and to plan for accountability budgeting.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1970, of the 4 largest elementary schools in the state, three were in the Adams 12 district. Leroy Drive Elementary was the third largest in the state. Built for 600 students, it had 1175 in 1970-71. First, second and third grades were on split session. One session ran from 8 a.m. to noon, the other from noon to 4:30 p.m. The afternoon teacher came in at 11:00 a.m. and did team teaching the last hour, helping with reading groups, etc. The morning teacher stayed the first hour of the afternoon session. People from other districts which had done split sessions had advised Adams 12 that it was better to do a split session in the primary grades rather than the intermediate grades, for political reasons. Parents tended to provide closer supervision to younger students. Older kids were not as closely supervised and could become a community problem, also focussing negatives on the schools.

Daniel Stuckey is remembered as a man to whom it came naturally to "make do." Through the years of spectacular growth his flexible approach to operations made possible a wide range of pragmatic solutions to pressing problems. Yet he was very much a man of his era. A veteran teacher recalls the atmosphere:

Paternal. Run by a bunch of "good ol' boys." Low key, but with an unpredictable quality. Stukey was an old farmer who expected his staff to be self-reliant. I'd say his attitude was Emersonian, in an unselfconscious way. Stukey never called a snow day. We'd have a 20 inch snowstorm and some teachers might suggest that a snow day might be a good idea. He'd just advise them to buy snow tires.

The superintendent believed in strict dress codes. Women teachers always wore dresses to school until, late in Stukey's tenure, there was a "revolt," and a large number of women teachers wore pantsuits on the same day, finally forcing acceptance of pantsuits by the district. Yet, in other ways, Stukey was very supportive of teacher individuality. In the District 12 newsletter, addressed to parents, he explained:

Not only are teachers professional people, but they are individuals. We would not care to have our children led and directed by a stereotyped image of perfection-- "by the book." Each teacher has his own method of teaching and operates within that context most effectively.<sup>2</sup>

Two years later the superintendent, in another newsletter, asked rhetorically "What is quality education?" Again he pointed to the importance of teachers:

People are often misled by "high-sounding cymbals" of news articles or other publicity media claiming some unique "super programs" which are represented as solving all problems and placing that educational system on a high pedestal of attainment.

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<sup>1</sup>Fox, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Stukey, Daniel B. (1964) "Superintendent's Message," *District 12 Executive*, March 24, 1964, p. 1.

The basis of any successful educational system, however, is measured by the quality of its teaching personnel. Well prepared, innovative, personable and dedicated teachers are the key to all successful instruction. Physical facilities such as fine buildings and optimum tools of learning are of importance, to be sure, but these physical provisions fade into insignificance in the light of the human factor of individual teacher dedication and excellence.<sup>1</sup>

Fittingly, it is through the able, self-reliant staff members hired during his tenure, staff members who have gone on to become the core of the Adams 12 teaching and administrative staff, that Daniel Stuke's legacy has lived on within the district. Mike Roblin recalls "Stuke just had a feel for people, which is probably no worse than any other way of hiring, and better than many." A community member whose children graduated from the Adams 12 schools remembers "What's been distinctive about this district has been the high quality of the staff and Stuke started that. My children that went through school under Stuke got a good foundation." Credit for wise hiring also belongs to Willis Tarver, Stuke's assistant superintendent. Jim Studholme remembers Tarver:

When I got here Willis Tarver, the assistant superintendent, did all the hiring. He was a Southerner, I think from Louisiana. It was like being interviewed by Bear Bryant. Afterward he walked you into D.B. Stuke's office and you met the old man.

Steph McCarter recalls the wild, patterned socks Tarver would always wear to beginning of the year meetings. "Willis Tarver was a unique individual, charismatic, very confident and rightly so," recalls Grant Johnstone. "He had a lot of experience, was very supportive, and didn't hold grudges. But when he said, 'Now look, friend ...' you knew you were in trouble. He stayed quite awhile into Bailey's term and finally quit, I think, because of heart trouble."

When Superintendent Stuke first came to Adams County School district 12, the district had 11 teachers and offered classes only to 240 students in grades 1 through 8. When he retired in 1972, District 12 had twenty-two schools. The small rural district he had joined in 1953 had been utterly transformed, and the changes showed no sign of stopping.

#### SUPERINTENDENT GEORGE W. BAILEY

Throughout the District 12 community, interest in the schools was strong. Curt Furness remembers the strong community feeling which prevailed at Westlake Junior High during the school's first years. Many farm families still lived in the northern part of the district. So when a foot and a half of snow fell the night before Westlake's ninth grade football team was to play for the district championship on its home field, it was a natural thing to call a couple of parents. A couple of moms fit the family tractor with a blade and cleared the snow off the football field so that the noon sun could dry the playing surface. Westlake went on to win the afternoon game and the district championship.

Yet by the 1970s the phenomenal growth of Thornton and Northglenn had created a school district of such a size that it seemed to demand a less personal, more systematic management style. Financial accounting within the district had remained rather informal. Often the district had to borrow from banks in the spring to get through the school year. The school board also had changed. No longer did board members from the rural areas have the strongest voice. At school board meetings some citizens had become vocal in

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<sup>1</sup>Stuke, Daniel B. (1966) "Superintendent's Message," *District 12 Executive*, November 22, 1966, p. 1.



insisting that a new leadership style was needed. Sam Thornham remembers the feeling of suspense as the district waited for the new superintendent to be named. A friend who had been involved in the hiring process assured him that when he heard the name it would be familiar. Of course George E. Bailey had long been a familiar figure as the Meritt Hutton basketball coach. Thus when the name of the new superintendent was announced it did seem as if he were at once a new voice and a longtime member of the district team.

George W. Bailey, who became superintendent of Adams County School District 12 in 1972, was a recognized leader in gifted/talented education and school management. Ron Roloff remembers him as "wonderful, truly and educator, with a focus on teaching kids." Prior to coming to Adams 12, Bailey was an associate professor of education at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, having also served as superintendent of schools districts in Cheyenne, Wyoming and in Bellevue, Hebron, and Bruning, Nebraska. He had received an Ed.D. in educational administration from the University of Nebraska, a M.A. from the University of Northern Colorado, and a B.S. from Doane College, Crete, Nebraska. In 1970 Bailey had served as Wyoming's representative in providing expert testimony on gifted/talented education to the U.S. Office of Education and published "Are We Neglecting the Gifted and Talented Child?" in *Wyoming Education*.

In 1972, George Bailey was a man with an idea. "If education is to retain any credibility with the general public," he believed, "we must define clearly what students should know in terms of instructional objectives, and we must make those objectives public and measurable." Armed with that conviction, Bailey left the University of Wyoming in search of a school district where he could translate his beliefs into action . . . He knew that a match between superintendent, board, and district was crucial for the superintendent to have a real impact on the direction of the schools, and felt such a match was more possible in a suburban district. Bailey found what he was looking for in Adams County, School District No. 12.

*Effective Instructional Management*, p. 52

### Management by Objective

Then a 29-school, 18,500-student district, Adams 12 was gearing up to write instructional objectives in response to a Colorado school accountability law adopted in 1971. A profile of the district published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, pointed out that the fast-growing district faced common problems. There was no clear statement of organizational mission. The district's goals were extremely broad. There were no long-range and few short-range goals. Although up to 100 instructional objectives had been written in each subject for each grade level in response to the accountability law, few of them were terminal objectives. Student assessment was not tied to the objectives but instead was tied to standardized tests comparing performance to national norms. Working with the Board of Education, Bailey spearheaded two major agendas for change:

1. Apply the principles of management-by-objectives (MBO) to the district's organizational structure.
2. Implement objectives-based mastery learning in the instructional program.

The aim was to start with management and leadership issues, not the instructional process, with the intent of working back to instruction. A key to the MBO approach was a clear definition of organizational goals. According to MBO theory, the more clearly goals are known, the more likely they are to be achieved; moreover, change increases when it can be measured against clearly defined goals. In 1973 the Board of Education adopted



districtwide educational goals that translated the district's historically vague goals into measurable and observable terms. Teams of teachers and administrators spent the next two years clarifying course objectives in basic skills and developing pilot-test criterion-referenced tests.

Superintendent Bailey had come to Adams 12 with a management agreement, unusual at the time, which clearly defined who was responsible for what. He pledged to implement a management-by-objectives system within three years, and the board pledged to limit its activities to legislative and judicial policy matters. Also, Bailey was given authority over the contracts and salaries of administrators which, he pointed out, "builds loyalty in a hurry."<sup>1</sup> The new superintendent immediately began implementation of management procedures meant to make people on at all levels of the district structure very accountable. Assistant superintendents wrote objectives for themselves which met the objectives set down in the superintendent's management agreement. Each principal also wrote down objectives which matched Superintendent Bailey's. Assistant principals had written goals which met those of their principal. Teachers were expected to report to parents on how the district's objectives were being met in their individual classrooms.

By 1976 all administrators were writing their own management agreements, which spelled out the administrator's specific tasks relating to school system goals. On the agreement, in a column opposite each task, was a standard against which Dr. Bailey could measure whether the objective was met. On principal's 1981 management agreement, for example, contained the following key task: "to ensure that progress is made in implementing the school system's instructional objectives." To measure whether that was accomplished, the principal set as his standard that students would increase test scores by a specific percentage. Under the plan, each principal reported to a central office supervisor who continuously monitored the principal's work.

"It's very difficult for those in the central office to know what's going on in individual buildings," said Director of Organizational Development Harvie Guest. "Likewise principals don't know central office administrators' problems. Through the monitoring system, the 'firing line' almost disappears. We're a team." Added Principal Frank Cyr, "The [management agreement] form might look inhuman, but it's one of the best things that's happened here."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bailey wanted administrators to have vision and be professionally tops. He thus offered opportunities for training and professional growth which local administrators would not otherwise have had. Personnel were sent to conventions. Consultants were brought in. There was a feeling of being an administrative team, with the focus always on student learning, teaching kids.

A horse enthusiast, Superintendent Bailey chose to live on a small acreage in Sunny Slopes. Those who knew him well insist that he was always a cowboy at heart. However his vision of educational excellence was informed both by theoretical conceptions of how school districts should be organized and by practical experience as a superintendent before becoming a professor of educational administration. The new superintendent quickly catapulted the fast-growing district into national visibility. During Stukey's last years, media coverage of the Adams 12 district had emphasized the challenges presented by steep population growth and by the inevitable delay between the arrival of new students in school and the arrival of the tax income provided by the building of new residential areas. Superintendent Bailey's frequent speaking engagements brought attention of a different and welcome kind. Both the school board and the constituents of the Adams 12 district enjoyed the positive recognition which began to come to the district as it gained recognition as a front runner in the national movement toward greater accountability in school district management.

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<sup>1</sup>Gonder, P.O. "Anatomy of a school success," *The Executive Educator*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Gonder, P.O. "Anatomy of a school success," *The Executive Educator*, p. 26.

The Board of Education was part of the planning and implementation of the management system from its inception. Board members attended many workshops and study sessions, both at home and in various parts of the country, in order to assure a comprehensive understanding of the process as well as the immediate and long range impact of implementation. Policies and directives of the Board thus reflected an excellent understanding of the system and a high level of commitment to ultimate installation and operation. Community awareness of the impending changes in management of the school district was enhanced by the District Accountability Advisory Committee. This standing committee, made up of parents and community representatives from each school, attended in-district workshops similar to those presented to the Board of Education in order to assure understanding of the process at each level of implementation.

Implementation was planned to take place in defined stages over a period of years, beginning first with the Superintendent and his cabinet (Assistant Superintendents), then central office directors, then principals, finally teachers and classified employees. The plan called for no application of a performance-based compensation aspect (merit pay) until all groups were comfortable with the overall process. The Superintendent, upon entering into the process, established a separate division within the central office to spearhead the MBO implementation. Named the Division of Management Services, it was responsible and accountable for the systematic implementation and formative evaluation of the performance-based management model. The division contained personnel with expertise in systems planning, evaluation and organizational development. As each division, department or school in the district became competent with a given aspect of the system, the Management Division shifted from the role of initiator to a role of support and maintenance.

In the fall of 1976 the District contracted to have four senior administrators trained in the American Management Association's program "How to Improve Managerial Performance." The program focused on developing knowledge and skills in the management functions of planning, organizing, communicating, directing and evaluating organizational performance. The concepts of this program were adapted to district needs and used as a comprehensive training program for all administrators and the Board of Education. The course involved ten weekly three hour sessions which examined the five management functions mentioned above in relation to developing position descriptions, organizational arrangements, standards of performance and appraisal of performance. Key results were a comprehensive system of management and a staff which had been commonly trained who could thus communicate with each other more effectively.

Resource allocation was tied to MBO through building level master plans developed each year by the principal and staff in each building. Individual, departmental, and building objectives were set for the coming year in regard to student achievement, student citizenship, organizational health, and resource management. Such objectives became "predictions" of expected performance. Just as the entire staff had been involved in developing the building master plan, all staff members were expected to be committed to it. After all schools in the district had completed their master plans, tentative goals were set by the board and allocated on the basis of these priorities.

"We tell the principals, 'If you want your resource allocations, we're going to have to see your master plan,'" explained Bailey. "And I'm convinced that if I had to do it all over again, I'd start with the building master plan. If people are really involved in goal setting, their achievement can be just out of this world."<sup>1</sup>

In response to a questionnaire distributed by Michael Fullen in 1978 as part of a larger report funded by NIE, the district classified its community as 10% upper middle class, 40% middle class, 40% working class (blue collar), and 10% working class (semi and unskilled). Each of the schools in the district had an elected Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) which worked with the school on matters of policy and school-

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, *Effective Instructional Management*, p. 53-54.



community relations. A state-required District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC) advised the Board on matters of accountability concerning the goals and quality of programs. The DAAC consisted of two representatives elected from each of the PACs, along with four high school students and several central administrators. The Board asked this committee to receive information from and provide feedback to their constituents on six major areas:

1. assessment of need of the district
2. appraisal of goals
3. appraisal of goal-oriented student achievement
4. appraisal of co-curricular concerns
5. appraisal of district policies and practices
6. appraisal of resource needs<sup>1</sup>

Each school had a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) elected by the teachers and consisting of one member for every ten teachers. The FACs, which ranged from 2 or 3 members to as many as 14, depending on the size of the school, worked with the principal and met regularly once or twice a month to perform a liaison function with the rest of the staff on both individual and organizational issues. The FACs and the principal planned the agenda for staff meetings which were held at least monthly.

Organization in the area of curriculum was similarly systematic. Whereas under the previous administration there had been separate assistant superintendents in charge of curriculum for the elementary and secondary levels, curriculum was now integrated on a K-12 basis. Later subject area specialists were appointed to coordinate curriculum in specific areas. Each of these coordinators had K-12 responsibilities in order to insure articulation. Each of the 10 subject areas--art, language arts, mathematics, music, physical education, reading, science, social science, special education and vocational education--had a Standing Subject Area Committee (SSAC) which included one representative from every school, as well as representatives from the central curriculum department and citizen representatives of the DAAC.

These standing committees provided "program and instructional objective construction, objective validation, basic text adoption, program review and/or modification, curriculum scope and sequence recommendations, and improvement of teaching strategies."<sup>2</sup> They also acted as the liaison between the buildings and the Central Office. Standing committees met once a month, after school, with ad hoc committee meetings held when necessary. Each standing committee generated instructional objectives for the district in its subject area. These objectives were then sent out to the teaching staff for validation. Seventy percent of the teaching staff had to validate each objective or the objective was not acceptable.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the SSACs there was a District Curriculum Coordinating Team (DCCT) made up of one representative from each of the SSACs and central office representatives including the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum. The DCCT reviewed and made recommendations on district-wide curriculum planning, new developments,

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<sup>1</sup>Adams County (1977) *Education for Excellence*, p. 215

<sup>2</sup>Adams County (1977) *Education for Excellence*, p. i.

<sup>3</sup>Fox, Catherine (1980) "A Historical Study of District Twelve, Adams County's Growth and Reading Curriculum," Ph.D. Dissertation, p. 5.



revision and improvement. Structurally, the communication and decision-making organization which evolved under Superintendent Bailey was based on a linking pin principle<sup>1</sup> where committee membership often consisted of representatives from other committees and thus provided a basis for the systematic linking of information and decisions at different levels of the system. John Gathman remembers the greater feeling openness which resulted when Dr. Bailey began to encourage teachers and administrators to meet together. Opening up the process also opened up avenues for the superintendent to get needed information about how teachers "on the front line" were experiencing the reforms being put in place.

The Board of Education participated in goal-setting workshops in 1975. Nationally known outside consultants conducted workshops for district administrators and teachers on BASICS (Building and Applying Strategies for Intellectual Competencies in Students) and the Teaching/Learning Model. Workshops were also held on gifted/talented programs across the country. Programs for gifted children were established at each school in the district. School district 12 was one of the few districts in the U.S. to receive a national grant (Project THINK) for gifted and talented children in 1978 and 1979.

### Predictable Learner Mastery

Dr. Bailey reorganized the central administration offices by dividing responsibilities among three divisions, Curriculum and Instruction, Management Services, and Auxiliary Services. A Curriculum Master Plan was first developed in 1975 to provide direction for present and future learner mastery programs which would emphasize the needs of each learner so that students could achieve subject mastery. Under the direction of Dr. Bailey the district moved toward a Predictable Learner Mastery System which was based on the idea that a majority of students can "master" a subject in any given class. In 1976 the district implemented its own Program Criterion Referenced Tests to measure more precisely the degree of the students' achievements in relation to the district's own instructional objectives. Each year the district used these tests to measure how well the students were mastering the district's instructional objectives. Ten educational objectives, which established specific goals for learning, were defined as priorities for 1978-82. The goal was for 80% of the students to master 80% of the objectives. High graduation and junior high continuation requirements were also strengthened.

When Dr. Bailey started the mastery learning program, he did not have everything formulated. The idea of to define the constellation of things needed to support the learning process. As instructional programs were refined, the district more and more turned to mastery learning techniques as a means to increase student achievement levels. In 1980, by action of the Board of Education, all elements of the objectives-based approach and the district-wide use of mastery learning were adopted as district policy. Predictable Learner Mastery was defined by the district as "the process of supplementing regular group instruction with diagnostic procedures and prescriptive methods and materials in such a way as to bring most pupils to a predicted standard of success, and which emphasizes altering and providing the time different individuals need for attaining the predicted standard." The program incorporated locally-developed processes and generally-accepted elements of mastery learning (as developed by Bloom, Block and others) into a seven-component, integrated program to manage organizational activities and instruction in the district.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Likert, R. *The Human Organization*, McGraw-Hill, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>"Adams County Uses Management Approach to Improve Student Achievement" (1982) *Goal Based Education*, number 16, June 1982, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 300 S.W. Sixth Ave., Portland, OR 97204

The institution of the PLM system and the continued monitoring of performance at all levels in the district were successful in raising student achievement levels. Gains in student reading and mathematics achievements on district tests were significant and consistent between 1975 and 1982. As gains occurred, the district continued to increase its expectations of students and to refine staff performance standards upwards to reflect these expectations. Very high test results were produced by the PLM system and that resulted in recognition of the district nationally, and even internationally. Ron Roloff remembers the pride people felt to be working with District 12 and the feeling personnel had that they were graduating kids with a higher quality education than they could have gotten nearly anywhere else.

### Themes Used in Setting Objectives

While superintendent of schools in Bellevue, Nebraska, an Omaha suburb, Superintendent Bailey had come to believe strongly in the personnel selection and management system developed by a Nebraska firm, Selection Research, Inc. (SRI). A key part of this system was the setting of objectives based on one or more of twelve "themes" which were thought to characterize first-rate, scientific management. Sample themes for school administrators were:

"Relator"--a manager who both desired to and did have strategies to build relationships with the staff. Such a person expressed feelings and thoughts openly and encouraged others to do likewise.

"Delegator"--extended responsibility to associates, knowing each teacher's strengths and interests and delegated appropriately so that each teacher grew professionally and was successful.

"Ambiguity tolerance"--a characteristic which was present when the manager displayed a tendency to suspend judgement until as much evidence as possible was available, a quality assumed to restrain impulsive decision-making.

Other themes included "catalyzer," "arranger," and "group enhancer." These themes were used in two ways: as the basis for highly structured interviews given all teachers and administrators before they were hired and in setting up the management agreements all principals were required to sign. Bailey used a 72-question interview, which he believed very useful in identifying successful teachers and administrators, in the hiring process. The goal of the interview was to show how highly developed the various "themes" were in each interviewee. "I felt when the teacher shortage ended that we needed something better than a calculated guess as to who would make a superior teacher," Bailey was quoted as saying (*Denver Post*, August 26, 1976).

Requisite themes for teachers differed from those for administrators. The list for teachers included such themes as "empathy," "the apprehension of the state of mind of another person," or "investment," "the teacher's capacity to receive satisfaction from the growth of students." Both lists included the concept of "mission" but it was defined differently. For teachers it was "a deep lying belief that students can grow and attain self-actualization," whereas for administrators it was defined as "one's personal commitment in terms of making an affirmative impact upon the lives of others." Each principal was required to promise, "In order to gather information from the faculty about my performance as a principal...I will design or select and administer an opinionnaire to all...certificated staff members..." Findings from this survey were to be reported both to his staff and to the superior assigned as his "monitor." A personal "growth plan" would be developed from the results.



On September 26, 1976 *The Denver Post* carried an article describing Superintendent Bailey's application of Management By Objectives to himself. He had signed a management agreement which committed him, among other things, to improve by 10% his "ambiguity tolerance" in dealing with subordinates. He would be allowed a leeway of plus or minus 2% on the 10% improvement objective. Later in the year his subordinates would tell Bailey, via his scores on anonymous questionnaires, whether he had passed or flunked. How did he know that he needed to improve in these respects? That's what they had told him on similar questionnaires the year before.

The same *Post* article noted that in 1975 District 12 had been one of a dozen school districts in the nation picked by the U.S. Office of Education as leaders in performance-based management systems. In 1976 the district was one of 16 school systems in the nation which had superior reading programs selected for nationwide dissemination by the federal agency. Also, the district had been cited by the Colorado Department of Education for the superior quality of its energy conservation program. In 1978 the district's Management By Objectives approach to organizational development was singled out for special recognition. The Ontario Center for the Study of Education, an independent research firm, studied over 200 school districts in the U.S. and Canada and selected District 12 as one of three top working school models of organizational development.

### Achievement, Growth and Change

Through the work of the District Accountability Advisory Committee, composed of district staff, parents and other community members, the district received high ratings from the Colorado Department of Education for "its exemplary accountability program." Federal funding was received in order to enable the district to implement innovative educational projects as models for other school districts. In 1977 and 1978, District 12 was the only school district in Colorado to receive funding for an interdisciplinary metrics program from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In 1978 and 1979, District 12 was one of 13 districts in the U.S. to receive a national grant for gifted and talented education.

In 1972, the year when Superintendent Bailey joined the district, Adams County District 12 had been composed of twenty-two schools. Population growth within the Adams 12 district continued at a high rate. The chart below summarizes population growth just in the City of Thornton in the early 1970's:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1970	13,326
1971	15,000
1972	18,500
1973	23,000
1974	26,500
1975	29,000

By the fall of 1980 the district had thirty schools, nearly 19,000 students, over 2,000 employees, and a general fund budget of \$37.8 million. A bond issue for \$29 million had been passed in 1974 for construction of Westlake and Pecos junior high schools; Federal Heights, Thornton, Centennial, Cherry Drive, and Cotton Creek elementaries; as well as the remodeling of Northglenn High, Northglenn Junior and Northeast junior high schools. The Transportation Center was moved to a new facility at 144th and Washington in 1973 and a new warehouse building was complete at the same site in 1974. These improvements were financed with capital improvement funds and interest revenues.

In 1976 the central district administrative offices were moved into a new administration center, with the district media center relocated in the old Administration Center and Special Services housed in the old Administration Annex Building. This was also the year that Pecos Junior High opened. Tied to the doorknob of the main office door



was the goat who became known as "Pecos Pearl," along with a note which said "Happy first day, Max. Good Luck!" No one had a clue who had delivered the goat to school. Only years later was it discovered that it was counselor Betty Tomlin, whose husband was at the vet school at CSU, who had thought of this innovative way of welcoming Pecos Junior High's new principal.

A \$47 million bond issue was passed in 1978 to build three additional elementary schools, two junior highs, and a third high school, in addition to the remodeling and repairing existing buildings. Trade and industrial programs had begun in Adams County School District 12 at Northglenn and Meritt Hutton Senior High Schools. During those early years four trades were offered: auto mechanics, drafting, carpentry, and electronics. When Thornton High opened in 1974, the Voc-Tech Center began. Initially the center was part of Thornton High School, with classes open to students of either school. Auto body, welding, commercial art, printing, and industrial cooperative education were added at this time. In 1975, for ease of administration, the district's vocational school, the Bollman Center, became a school separate from Thornton High. Masonry and house wiring were added to the curriculum. By 1980 the Voc-Tech Center's eleven programs served some 750 students daily.

Superintendent Bailey is remembered for his directness, for letting everyone know very clearly where they stood. When he met with large numbers of employees there was little interaction. Bailey tended to keep staffers, from the assistant superintendent level on down, somewhat at a distance. Many were intimidated by his presence. If someone did tell a joke in the back row at a meeting and there were momentary chuckles, the superintendent sometimes seemed as if he did not know how to take that. On the other hand, Dr. Bailey became famous for his "coffee calls." When he had heard about something within the district about which he had questions he would call the employee concerned and say "I'll meet you at the Sears Coffee Shop." They would meet there and discuss the situation, one on one.

Long-time district employees remember that Superintendent Bailey tended to keep the staff working at a high frustration level, believing that this increased productivity. Although demands put on staff members were great, those were productive years. At the middle level aggressive curriculum mapping was done. Teachers were asked to map out the school day in fifteen minute increments. The objective was to see what teachers were really doing, a technique which initiated some interesting dialogues among the teaching staff. Max Willsey remembers that Dr. Bailey could tell some great jokes and stories after meetings, when everyone was relaxed.

Superintendent Bailey's multifaceted approach to school improvement, encompassing management-by-objectives, intensive in-service training, along with a comprehensive program of mastery learning, paid off in a dramatic improvement of student scores on both locally prepared and national tests. In 1976 only 48 percent of students in grades three through eight were able to demonstrate mastery of the minimum learning objectives for mathematics; 49 percent mastered the reading objectives. By 1982, when the tests were given to students in the first through eighth grades, 75 percent of the students demonstrated mastery of the minimum learning objectives. Gains were also demonstrated on national standardized tests.<sup>1</sup> Feeling that his goals had been met, Dr. Bailey decided to retire. The Adams 12 district staff took a collection to buy him a handsome new saddle and tack as a going away present.

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<sup>1</sup>Gonder, P.O. "Anatomy of a school success," *The Executive Educator*, p. 26.

## SUPERINTENDENT JAMES E. MITCHELL

The process of finding a new superintendent was a complex one. Dr. Bailey had been a strong leader and the district had gained national recognition for educational excellence under his administration. Yet, as management by objectives had become more established on all levels within the district, some citizens had begun to question whether the artistic and affective side of education had been paid enough attention under Bailey's supervision. Some staff members had felt overwhelmed by the paperwork involved in the management-by-objectives approach and questioned whether micro-management might have been carried too far. There were questions as to whether the time required to keep up with the directives imposed by upper management levels was well spent.

Chris Sundberg, who headed the school board search committee charged with finding a new superintendent in 1982, recalls the thoroughness of the search. The committee met with principals, parents and teachers to find out what everyone wanted in a new superintendent. Paper screening was used to settle on the top ten candidates, who were interviewed by the Board at a national conference. The top three were invited to come to Adams 12. Dr. James E. Mitchell was hired.

Jan Lindstrom, now secretary to Dr. Henderlite at Horizon High, attended East Junior/Senior High in Duluth, Minnesota when Dr. Mitchell's father was principal there. Dr. Mitchell was in the senior high section of the school when she was in junior high. "He was a jock," she confides. Following his father into the educational field, Dr. Mitchell had begun experimenting with collaborative decision making as a principal in the Robinsdale School District just outside Minneapolis in 1972. He had been assigned to a difficult school, charged with the task of turning things around. By forming a committee of parents and teachers to handle matters of budget and discipline and asking "How can we do this together?" he was able to focus attention on what needed to be done. He became convinced that the best way to implement educational reforms is to have the central office support the schools in their efforts rather than to take a top-down management approach.

Superintendent Mitchell points out that Adams 12 had always been a wonderful school district. In the 1970s many schools were in split sessions and there was a need for a centralized approach. However with the advent of the 1980s and the many reports pointing out the need for curriculum reform, there was a need for introductions of a more participative style of management style in order to facilitate recommended changes. He has described the situation and his own course of action:

During the years prior to my arrival the district had received national recognition for the implementation of Outcome-Based Education and Computer-Managed Instruction. It was also very centralized. Most major decision and plans for implementation evolved directly from the central office administrators with little opportunity for input by those expected to implement the decision. Since my background reflected a participative approach to management, one of the things I began to do during my first year was to talk about decentralizing decisions that traditionally had been associated with the central office administration.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning helps to narrow the focus of the school district and develop clear, agreed upon goals. In most school districts the approach taken to strategic planning is for the upper level of leadership to seclude themselves and develop district goals and objectives. These are then handed down to the rest of the organization, often to collect dust on bookshelves all over the district. Also, goals arrived at in this way are often not supported by a data base, making it difficult to measure accomplishments. The method of strategic planning used in Adams 12 is more collaborative. A consensus process is used to



arrive at district goals. Individual schools/units then develop their own plans to reach the district goals. Once developed, the strategic plan also serves as a guide for distributing district resources.

Representatives of all the important stakeholder groups are included in the core planning group. This group examines the values espoused by the school district and reaches a consensus on the most important ones. In *A Facilitator's Guide to the Development & Implementation of Site-Based Decision Making*, Dr. Mitchell points out that, in examining the values of an organization, it is critical that each perceived value be put to the test. This means analyzing the value against the following four criteria:

1. Does it permeate the organization?

Using the value "success for all students" as an example, does this radiate throughout the organization? If a school district has a high drop out rate or certain groups of students consistently score below others on standardized tests, it may be a perceived value but, in reality, it is not really happening.

2. Does the value drive decisions?

If "success for all students" is important, are resources allocated with that thought in mind? Using the above example of students performing below grade level, does the school district, school and individual teacher consistently look for ways to improve student achievement for those at risk students who will probably be part of the thirty percent dropping out?

3. Is there a strong reaction when the value is violated?

Is there unrest within the community when the report is given regarding the number of students who drop out of school? Do changes occur in order to address this problem, or does business continue as usual?

4. Is the value something that you won't give up?

An example is the district that has implemented site-based decision making over a number of years and begins searching for a new superintendent. If the school board is willing to consider candidates who haven't displayed the necessary skills for success with shared decision making, it would be a reflection that the value of shared decision making hasn't really permeated the organization. On the other hand, if the job description clearly states that the superintendent must show evidence of working collaboratively, be proficient in conflict resolution and delegating responsibility, there is a strong indication that the value of shared decision making has begun to permeate the organization and the school district is not willing to give it up.

After values are identified, the core team develops a brief, clear mission statement to guide the district. Good mission statements address three fundamental questions:

1. What is the purpose of the school district?
2. For whom does the school district perform its function?
3. How does the school district go about performing the function?

Once the values and mission statement have been roughed out, and the core team has reached tentative agreement on the wording, they are ready to move into the process of giving as many stakeholders as possible an opportunity to react and provide input to the

values and mission statement. At least two to three weeks are allowed, so that core team members have an opportunity to meet with service clubs, senior citizens, or other community groups that have weekly or monthly meetings. When the core team members reconvene, they make modifications based on the feedback received.

Setting goals comes next. In Colorado some goal areas have been previously set by the state. Each school district is required to address ways to improve: 1.) student achievement; 2.) graduation rates; and 3.) student attendance. These are automatic goal areas and they provide a starting point for developing measurable outcomes in each area. Other goal areas can be identified by studying the values that have been identified for the district. Examples of such values might include success for all students, community partnerships, self-actualization, orderly and safe environment, efficient use of resources, shared decision making. The core team then needs to reach consensus on a priority listing of the goals.

After the goal areas have been prioritized, work begins on establishing measurable outcomes for each goal. These outcomes should reflect five-year goals and then one-year goals. For example, if a goal area is to increase the graduation rate, the five-year goal might be "By 1995 the dropout rate will be reduced 50% through the design and implementation of innovative ways to deliver instruction pre-K through 12." A one-year goal might be "By June 1991, each high school will have developed a school profile identifying the characteristics of students who have dropped out of school during the past two years." Once goal areas and measurable outcomes have been identified, the strategic planning core team assesses whether the expectations for the organization over the next year and five years will be too overwhelming. Are there too many goal areas or measurable outcomes? This could result in frustration and or confusion on the part of individual schools/units attempting to reach the goals. A narrowing of focus may be necessary.

Each outcome to have a data base from which future comparisons can be made. Thus, a data base must now be established so that the school district will have a basis for measuring success. If a data base is not established in the very beginning, frustration will occur when people attempt to measure their progress at a future date. For example, in the area of student achievement, the five-year outcomes might be:

1. The school district will provide evidence that all students are learning;
2. The Hispanic achievement scores will be comparable to the Anglos'.

What sort of data base might enable the district to measure these outcomes? One indicator might be how well students have done on standardized tests. Another might be writing samples if the school district uses this as an assessment measure. A third source might be the number of students who are getting grades of "D" or above, assuming that those students receiving "Fs" are not learning. In the state of Colorado, there is solid evidence, provided by the State Department of Education, that Hispanic students are achieving at lower levels than the Anglos.

Before turning the measurable goals over to the administrators of the district with the charge to develop implementation plans for reaching the identified outcomes, input on the goals is solicited from stakeholder groups and modifications made as necessary. At this point the main work of the core team is completed. It is anticipated that building principals will use the school improvement planning process to develop their own implementation plans. Other district administrators will use a variation of the planning process to develop plans within their respective departments. Administrators are given a time line by the superintendent for completing their planning strategies. Whether or not the strategic planning core team assumes the role of evaluating and/or approving the plans developed at each unit/building is up to the superintendent. The superintendent may decide that the cabinet, or another group, should assume this responsibility. Either way, it is important



that the strategic planning core team assure that a process is in place for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan.

#### ADAMS TWELVE Five Star Schools Mission Statement

The mission statement developed by a broad cross section of the ADAMS TWELVE Five Star Education community focuses on success for all students through shared responsibility.

The mission of the ADAMS TWELVE Five Star Schools is to maximize learning opportunities to ensure success for all students in school and society. The cornerstones of achieving this mission are shared decision making, partnerships, and innovations in our educational and business practices.

#### Value Statements

The ADAMS TWELVE Five Star Education community, comprised of staff, students, parents and community members, values:

Success for All Students--Emphasizing success for all students and recognizing the importance of K-3 education as the foundation on which later school success is built.

Positive Self-Concepts for Each Individual--Recognizing the dignity and contributions of each individual

A Safe, Orderly, Supportive Environment--Building environments which support learning and provide a sense of security

Unity With Diversity--Honoring diversity through curriculum and staffing

Future-Oriented Planning--Planning which establishes direction and aligns available resources to our shared values

Shared Decision Making--Utilizing shared decision making to enhance student learning and operational effectiveness

Community Participation in the Educational Process--Involving the total community in the educational process

#### Critical Success Indicators

To achieve the mission and values decided upon, the ADAMS TWELVE Five Star Education Community will make continuous progress toward:

Individual Student Success--Student achievement, attendance and graduation rate, curriculum proficiencies and minority achievement

Expected Innovations--Research-based innovations in all units and schools

Emphasis on Pre-Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade Instruction--Appropriate instruction for students entering school through the third grade

Reflection of Intercultural Diversity--Diversity in curriculum and staffing

Partnerships in Learning--Partnerships with the home, school and community

Positive and Supportive Environments--Positive and supportive environments for Learning

### Site-Based Decision Making

Realizing that “site-based management” is a broad term which can cause confusion and misunderstanding, Dr. Mitchell prefers the term “site-based decision making.” In *A Facilitator's Guide to the Development & Implementation of Site-Based Decision Making*, Dr. Mitchell made clear his reasons for this:

The term that is widespread across this country to reflect the movement of site-based decision making is site-based management. This term is a misnomer. Site-based management infers that teachers, community members and others are going to be involved in managing the schools. This is not the case with our site-based decision making. The management of schools is an administrative function and people should understand from the very beginning that this movement is not intended to move the managerial functions from building principals and other administrators to staff and/or members of the community.<sup>1</sup>

Site-based decision making is a form of school decentralization which facilitates shared decision-making at the building level among all constituencies: parents, teachers, administrators, students, non-certified school staff, and members of the local business community. During the initial implementation process the Adams 12 district made use of the shared decision-making model developed by the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (IDEA). Superintendent Mitchell explained:

In 1984 the district brought in /I/D/E/A/ to provide training for a selected number of schools that were interested in learning about “decentralization” as a vehicle for reforming education. /I/D/E/A/ called this training “a school improvement process” which quickly became the accepted term for shared decision-making in Adams Twelve. /I/D/E/A/ did a magnificent job in providing teams of teachers, administrators, parents, and sometimes students, from 17 schools the opportunity to explore the meaning of school improvement using a collaborative approach.<sup>2</sup>

The Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. was set up in 1965 by the Kettering Foundation to research ways to promote lasting educational change. IDEA now uses five-day workshops based upon experiential learning to train teams of three (a parent, a teacher and the principal) to facilitate the implementation of site-based management in individual schools. Through the workshops these teams of facilitators learn what it means to bring a diverse group together and begin to move toward school change.

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<sup>1</sup>Mitchell, James (1990) *A Facilitator's Guide to the Development & Implementation of Site-Based Decision Making*, Northglenn, CO: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, p. 1 - 2.

<sup>2</sup>Mitchell, James (1990) *A Facilitator's Guide to the Development & Implementation of Site-Based Decision Making*, Northglenn, CO: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, p. i.



In the initial week-long workshop the team members experience the team-building exercises and learn the group-interaction skills which they will later employ in bringing together the planning teams of 18 to 21 people who will do the planning at the individual schools.

As the least successful planning teams have been found to be those where the principal hand-picks team members, each school is encouraged to put together a team on which all those with a stake in the performance of the school are represented. Thus planning teams might include not only students, teachers, parents and administrators but also community members without children in school, school staff members such as secretaries and janitors, city council members or senior citizens. Similarly, when picking students to serve on the planning team an effort is made to pick students from all social groups, not just those who might normally be expected to serve on student council or as class officers.

*I/D/E/A/* began training in 1984, and within the next two years the rest of our schools received introductory training in the development and implementation of school improvement planning. The school improvement process has been the foundation for site-based decision making in Adams Twelve. Every school has a school improvement planning team which conducts needs assessment, establishes priorities based on these findings, establishes design teams for the development of activities to accomplish the priorities and evaluates and repeats the cycle yearly. The school improvement planning process throughout the district has been the basis for the evolution of many other forums where site-based decision making occurs.<sup>1</sup>

Planning teams are encouraged to start by creating a vision of what a good school ought to look like. The district gave each school \$3,000 for planning, speakers, other needs which might be encountered as each school community begins to create a vision of what it wants that school to be. Emphasis is put upon the importance of not allowing problem-solving strategies to become a substitute for vision. Teams are cautioned to avoid the pitfall of beginning by asking "What's broke?" The operation of the shared decision making process at an Adams 12 elementary school was described by a participating teacher:

We create focuses through shared decision making, through parent surveys, through teacher input, through what the administrators want. We have goals each year, and we're accountable to the district and the state department [of education]. Those become the focus and the design teams are generated from those. So we set goals and we meet those goals yearly. Right now we've just made a major change. We've had real curricular goals, real curricular design teams in the past and now we're changing and looking more to restructuring the school and implementing technology and this whole alignment and looking at what . . . how we can integrate the curriculum and make it work better and get the communication . . . those are problems that we're really trying to focus on. This next year will be the first year . . . I would guess, for three or four years we'll work on those before we make another big change.

The evolution of a workable site-based decision making process was not entirely smooth. In the early 1980s, when Dr. Mitchell first arrived, there weren't many districts around the country implementing shared decision making. So it was necessary to do things

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<sup>1</sup>Mitchell, James (1990) *A Facilitator's Guide to the Development & Implementation of Site-Based Decision Making*, Northglenn, CO: Adams 12 Five Star Schools, p. ii.

by trial and error, working out over a period of years what specific responsibilities the schools should now handle and which should stay with central office administrators. Throughout the years when implementation of site-based decision making was taking place the role of the school board was of pivotal importance due to the board's unwavering support for risk-taking behavior which had the potential to make a significant difference in the education of Adams 12 children. Also important to the success of shared decision making was the support of the teacher's union.

Dr. Mitchell quotes Churchill's observation, "A mistake does not become a failure until you stop trying to correct it." For staff members to feel comfortable being creative and trying new things they had to feel supported. Fault-finding kills the feeling of trust necessary to collaborative approaches to goal setting and problem solving. At the same time, insuring the free flow of accurate information is an important condition for establishing trust. By allowing staff to participate in hiring and budget development, a climate of openness was created.

### Setting Up the Shared Decision Making Process

If a building administrator has an issue or concern which she wishes to resolve utilizing the shared decision making process, how might she proceed? The first step would be to clearly identify the issue or area. Failure to do this can often result in confusion. It is easy to get off the track when people come together to resolve a problem without knowing specifically what they are supposed to be discussing. Often the area for shared decision making is made specific by putting it in question form.

Next, the administrator establishes parameters for the shared decision making process. When the group begins without a sense of direction, the outcome is likely to be fuzzy at best. Examples of areas where administrators might set parameters include whether the group's recommendations will be advisory or decision making, or whether the group is to include themselves in the follow-up evaluation of whatever decision is made. Other parameters might include the amount of time the group has to complete the process or an operational definition of what "consensus" will mean. Failure of shared decision making groups to reach consensus can often be traced to unclear parameters.

Thirdly, the administrator assumes responsibility for selecting a qualified facilitator, making sure that facilitator understands the task, and establishing the shared decision making group. The next step is for the group to begin study and discussion of the problem.

### Consensus Building

Basic to shared decision making is the process of consensus building. Consensus is based on cooperation and reflects a win-win philosophy which allows all concerns of participants to be accommodated. The results of an effective consensus process are group unity, nurturing of creative ideas, and a greater group commitment to implementation.

Building consensus differs from voting in that voting only considers two points of view. When a group formally votes on an issue, the group will be divided between those in favor and those against. Thus voting freezes the majority and the minority. A sizeable minority may remain unreconciled to the decision and bend their efforts to passive resistance. The consensus-building process, on the other hand, solidifies a group because all sides feel they have been recognized.

For this reason consensus building is the method of choice for site-based decision making. The goal is to reach a solution which every group member can support. This process begins with posing a question, such as "What inservice activities are necessary to create staff awareness about site-based decision making?" Once the problem has been defined, the group begins gathering information. It is impossible for a group to reach the best decision through the consensus process when the data base is insufficient.



Once the facilitator feels that enough information has been gathered, information regarding options is presented. One of the things that can happen at this point is for the group to participate in a brainstorming activity which will allow many ideas to surface. However suggested ideas are arrived at, they should be considered one by one and those that are clearly unworkable should be discarded. Then, when the solutions have been narrowed to two or three, arguments pro and con are given for each idea. During this process some participants will change their minds. Group members may also suggest modifications to the two or three ideas in order to bring the group closer to consensus.

After considerable discussion, the facilitator should test for consensus on the ideas. The objections of each person are considered individually. Now the facilitator explores ways in which positions taken might be modified in order for consensus to be reached. If total consensus is not reached, the facilitator may call a break during which dissenters may meet in a smaller group with those who have more positive feelings. Or the facilitator may adjourn the meeting to another time and seek additional information by bringing in an outside expert or other materials. Another scheduled meeting may allow individual members either to gather information on their own or in smaller subcommittees.

Some groups decide that "sufficient consensus" will be the guide. The Bellevue, Washington, School District has developed a definition of this process which asserts "after real dialogue about a particular issue had taken place and everyone had been given a legitimate opportunity to state their case and be listened to, if a small number of people were not in agreement, such disagreement could not hold up the vast majority taking action." If such an understanding is in force, the consensus seeking process will be over when the weight of popular opinion is clearly behind a certain solution.

However consensus is reached, the process is not complete until an action plan has been developed. Once developed, the plan must be communicated to all stake-holders. The final step before implementation is to determine how the success of the plan is going to be evaluated, when the evaluation will take place, and by whom it will be done. It is important that planning for the evaluation be the responsibility of those people reaching consensus and not be left up to the building principal.

## Pyramiding

Each person on the site-based decision making team is not there only to express their own opinion but also to represent the interests of others, whether those others be parents, kindergarten teachers, support staff, administrators or students. Pyramiding is a process which calls upon team members to communicate with the stakeholders they represent in order to get their reactions, input and new ideas. Each member of a shared decision making group has the responsibility of identifying three to five people to be part of their pyramiding group. Between meetings team members have the responsibility to speak with this "pyramid group" to get their reactions concerning particular issues, topics or concerns under discussion by the site-based decision making team.

In order to expedite the process, participants are encouraged to select people with whom they have regular contact or to whom they have easy access. It is important to remember, however, to include those people in a pyramid group who are known to be opposed to the particular idea or have a reputation of resisting change. If this step is omitted, implementation struggles are a likely result. A particular group might have done an outstanding job working on reaching consensus, only to find that the other employees do not support the idea because they had not been involved. Pyramiding can remove this roadblock.

By indirectly including many more people in the planning process, pyramiding provides a rich source of information for the shared decision making group. Keeping people informed also builds trust and confidence in the process, while making it less likely that destructive rumors will undermine the best intentions of the group. Even those not directly involved feel knowledgeable and are not taken by surprise when implementation

begins. They feel they have ownership in what is happening and may even volunteer their active assistance.

### Site-Based Decision Making in Action

An example of the site-based decision making process in action in Adams County District 12 is the grade level restructuring at Hulstrom and Stukey Elementary Schools, which are located within six blocks of one another. One school, Stukey Elementary, was overcrowded and had mobile units on site. Down the street Hulstrom Elementary had many empty classrooms. Clearly the district's resources were not being well used.

Community members wanted to have input into any changes in school attendance area boundaries, so the district presented the dilemma to the school improvement teams of both buildings and asked for recommendations for resolving the problem. After several meetings, the school improvement teams came to the Board of Education with the recommendation that Hulstrom house kindergarten through second grade and Stukey house third through sixth grade. The school improvement teams showed the Board where other districts had successfully implemented this structure. Having worked closely with the district's support services, transportation, and food service to work out potential difficulties in these areas, the planning teams were able to show where the proposed change were within the district vision and goals, nor was there any conflict with board policy, Master Agreements or district curriculum.

The Board asked the teams to pyramid, sharing information with those impacted. Six weeks later, the teams reported to the school board that there was support for the idea. The Board scheduled a public hearing to present the plan and get reaction from the two school communities. The widely publicized meeting was held, but no one from the community showed up. The reason was that the school improvement teams had done their homework and received support for the structural change. People felt there was nothing left to discuss. This is an example of the power of site-based decision making.

### Levels of Shared Decision Making

Dr. Mitchell has pointed out the fallacy of believing that when a school or district embarks on shared decision making, every decision must be made by consensus. This is a misunderstanding. There are multiple ways of implementing shared decision making. For illustration sake, they might be imagined as part of a one-through-five continuum.

A *level one* decision would be one in which an administrator develops a plan and then asks those responsible for input. If the plan is changed as a result of the input, the degree of shared decision making moves to *level two*. Shared decisions that fall at the *third, fourth, or fifth level* are those where the administrator brings a concept to those who might be impacted and solicits their participation in exploring an alternative way of doing something, such as developing the master schedule or the budget.

Typically, "now" decisions allow little chance for shared decision making. Dr. Mitchell cites an example which happened years ago when he was a principal at a junior high in a Minneapolis suburban district where 80% of the students were transported by bus. As the buses were preparing to leave on the last day of school, his secretary ran out and said that a tornado had set down in Waverly, Minnesota, forty miles away. The sky was black and the wind was picking up. However the school was not architecturally well set up to weather a tornado. He told his secretary to call the weather bureau to determine how fast the tornado was moving, while he held the buses. She quickly returned and reported that the tornado was only moving twenty miles per hour. Since Waverly was forty miles away, he waved the buses out of the parking lot. The tornado did set down in the district over two and a half hours later, but by that time all the students were home.

Midway between low and high participation decisions are those dealing with problems or high impact situations. For example, the choice of who becomes a department



chairperson or a grade level chairperson rests with the building principals. Yet principals do not make this decision without involving teachers in the departments for the simple reason that a unilateral decision could result in lack of support and participation on the part of those who feel left out of the process.

High participation decisions are often those dealing with future plans, with curriculum implementation, budget, staffing or setting school improvement priorities. Here it is imperative that high staff involvement occur. When long-range planning is done by a selected few, without attempting to involve the rest of the staff and community, the printed results of the process often begin gathering dust on shelves only days after the planning has been completed. There is a direct correlation between the amount of participation in the decision and the results which can be expected once it is implemented.

### Developing a Mission Statement

Vision building is the most important initial activity for a school improvement planning team. Some examples of visions school communities have developed for their schools are:

A place where the staff and community enthusiastically work together so that students are encouraged to achieve their potentials as life-long learners.

A student-centered community where individuals are valued and are encouraged to reach their full potential, to successfully experience life transitions, and to develop responsibility and a sense of self worth.

A people-centered community that celebrates a passion for learning through challenge, growth and success.

A child-centered community that celebrates the joy of learning.

Once a school has a commitment to a vision, a guiding light has been established for the school to develop the goals, objectives and action plans to assure that the vision is attained. As a first step toward developing this vision, it is often helpful for each person on the planning team to write down no more than three sentences describing their personal vision for education. Each person is then given an opportunity to discuss their vision with other members.

Often people in a consensus seeking process have anxieties about whether site-based decision making should even be implemented within a school or district. Expecting people to develop a mission statement on shared decision making when these feelings are present will be difficult at best. Giving people an opportunity to express their concerns will help remove anxieties, fears, or doubts and the participants will become more actively involved as the process moves ahead. The goal of the facilitator is to make sure that each person is listened to with respect and supported as they share their concern with the other participants.

Next the group moves to discussion of the best possible outcome of the school improvement process. Each member expresses an outcome and the recorder writes it down, continuing around the circle until no one has any additional best outcomes to offer. The vision statement is derived from the best possible outcomes, but first pyramiding must take place, with the input and concerns of non-group members taken into account. A consensus building process is used to arrive at the final vision settlement, which all planning team members then sign. The facilitator should note to the group that, by signing the collective statement, team members reflect a commitment to what they have developed.

### District-wide Organizational Structure

In certain respects the practice of site-based decision making was not new to the Adams 12 district. D.B. Stuckey's emphasis on the centrality of the teacher to any concept of educational quality, along with his expectation that staff members show themselves to be self-reliant, had encouraged attitudes similar to those Mitchell wanted to cultivate. Jim Studholme recalls:

Talk about site-based management! Stukey did allow things to happen.  
The first years at Northglenn High were exciting, jumping years.

However the system put in place by Dr. Mitchell is far more carefully thought out than the freewheeling self-reliance of the district's early days, a situation which had tempted some personnel to wonder whether D.B. Stukey really "had a handle" on what was going on in individual schools.

Under Dr. Bailey those staff members who wished to participate on the appropriate committees had considerable input in deciding on objectives and writing criterion-referenced tests. But Dr. Mitchell greatly expanded the scope of staff participation in the decision making process. Teachers and parents now serve on shared decision making committees in the individual schools. When special needs arise, building administrators have been put on special projects for a few weeks, or months, even a year. Ron Roloff remembers how the time he spent working on a special project to coordinate bringing severely retarded students into the schools gave him a new perspective on being a principal when he came back to his school.

"The whole idea of innovation and creative approaches is nurtured," Don Bruno points out. "That's one of the hallmarks of our school district." Basic to the philosophy of site-based decision making is the belief that decisions made close to the problem are likely to be better than if the central office made them. Shared decision making has become part of the district's master agreement with the teachers, with a commitment in principle that people directly affected by a decision have the right to have input into the decision making process. This is not the same as having the right to make the decision. The one who will be held accountable for a certain decision has the final responsibility for making it, but this must be done in a spirit of collaboration, after gathering input from those who will be affected. Then when a decision is announced, the rationale behind it is explained."

The superintendent supervises the learning services and his deputy superintendent supervises support services. Thus, just Dr. Mitchell considers himself "facilitator, collaborator, resource provider, team member, mentor and teacher" to those within the learning circle, the deputy superintendent assumes the same role as facilitator for the support services circle, which includes nearly half the district's employees.

### Division of Responsibility

There has been a prevalent feeling in Adams Twelve that before you can move ahead on the development of a new idea or plan, everybody above you in the organizational structure must be aware and give their approval. We now believe that as long as people who are impacted by the decision are represented in the process and stay within the parameters . . . it is not necessary for the superintendent to give approval of everything that happens within the learning services area or any other area of the district (Mitchell 1990, p. 13)

After trial and error, the determination was made that decisions regarding the following areas were best made at the central office level, within the parameter that change



of direction in any of the areas listed would only be done after collaboratively working with those impacted:

1. Budget Development/Allocation
2. Curriculum Framework/Graduation Requirements
3. Data Processing
4. Food Services
5. Maintenance/Construction
6. Negotiating contracts
7. Personnel Screening
8. Printing
9. Purchasing
10. School Boundaries
11. Transportation

The major areas of decision making left up at the building level are:

1. Budget Implementation
2. Hiring
3. Curriculum Selection/Implementation
4. Staff Development

In the area of curriculum, for example, it is the responsibility of the central office to establish the Curriculum Framework and to monitor coordination and articulation of the curriculum. The Curriculum Framework consists of significant learnings, general in scope, which allow the flexibility for individual schools to implement curriculum based on needs they have identified. This doesn't mean that an individual school can select any text book it chooses. Using reading as an illustration, an individual school could select a textbook from several approved by the district reading standing committee. The standing committee includes teachers from each school who meet on a monthly basis and, through shared decision making, collaboratively determine options available to individual schools.

Should an individual school feel that it has a better way of doing something which is currently handled by the central office, areas of authority can be adjusted. An example is the proposal by one of the high schools to save money and expand participation in the lunch program by having its food service program catered by McDonald's. The school brought a proposal to the Board of Education. The Board approved the proposal. Thus the school assumed a responsibility which had traditionally been handled by the central office.

In the Adams 12 district there are four areas where schools must give teachers an opportunity to participate in shared decision making. These areas have been identified through the negotiated master agreement with the teacher's union and include:

1. Budget
2. Planning Time
3. Curriculum Implementation
4. Hiring.

### Curriculum Framework

Mirroring the implementation of shared decision-making as a method of school governance has been the evolution of a curriculum more responsive to individual student needs. As Arthur W. Combs has pointed out, the behavioral objective approach was a symptomatic approach to behavior change which can be useful in the achievement of specific skills; however, behavioral objectives do not necessarily lend themselves serving to more general education objectives. The schools must do far more than produce students

with cognitive skills. Education must produce humane people, who can be relied upon to be successful in applying the skills they have learned and who are responsible and cooperative in their relations with others.<sup>1</sup>

Advances in research on learning in the intervening years have called into question some of the assumptions upon which criterion-referenced testing was based. For example, researchers have found that in areas like science the fact that students are able to give correct answers on tests does not necessarily translate into an understanding of the subject matter. Naive conceptions about the workings of the universe (such as the earth being closer to the sun in the summer than in the winter) have been found to persist in students of normal abilities despite exposure to well-written text and direct teaching which contradicted this view. Such findings reveal that the minds of even very young students are not a "blank slate." They have evolved certain intuitive assumptions about the world which must be re-imagined if the child is to evolve a conception of how the world works which is in keeping with the findings of science. Not only must children be *told* how scientific laws work, but they must be *shown* how they work, so that the child can create a mental model which accurately portrays the interworkings of natural phenomena. Memorized answers repeated correctly on tests do not meaningfully evaluate whether a child has internalized a correct understanding of the phenomena involved.

John Allen Paulos has recently become a national best-selling author by pointing out to his "intelligent and literate, but largely innumerate" adult audience how little they know of math despite their years of studying it in school. He does an excellent job of explaining the problem:

Imagine that 90 percent of every course in English up until college was devoted to grammar and the diagramming of sentences. Would graduates have any feeling for literature? Or consider a conservatory which devoted 90 percent of its efforts to the practicing of the scales. Would its graduates develop an appreciation or understanding of music? The answer, of course, is no, but that, given proper allowance for hyperbole, is what frequently happens in our mathematics classes. Mathematics is identified with a rote recitation of facts and a blind carrying out of procedures. Decades later this robotic mode of behavior kicks in whenever a mathematical topic arises. Countless people feel that if the answer or at least a recipe for finding it doesn't come to them immediately, they'll never get it. The idea of thinking about a problem or discussing it a bit with someone else seems novel to them.<sup>2</sup>

Recent research has also emphasized the importance of the social scaffolding which supports the learning of young, inexperienced learners. Children can be profoundly influenced by the environment in which learning takes place. Teacher attitudes which portray learning as fun and interesting draw children into the learning process, helping to set them up for success. Constant testing on isolated skills, on the other hand, can result in performance anxiety and the alienation of the child from the learning process. The wholistic approach to learning upon which the new Adams 12 Curriculum Framework is based proceeds on the assumption that the subject matter taught to the youngest children should be the most actively involving, taking advantage of the intensely curious nature of children as well as their keen interest in demonstrating competence both in their interactions with others and with the outside world. There is a new recognition of the central

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<sup>1</sup>Combs, Arthur W. (1972) "Educational Accountability--Beyond Behavioral Objectives," Washington S.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, pp. 1-40.

<sup>2</sup> Paulos, John Allen (1991) *Beyond Numeracy: Ruminations of a numbers man*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 52.

importance of motivation, making sure that adventure, surprise, and the thrill of discovery are not banished from the schools.

The whole language approach to teaching reading and writing now widely used the District 12 schools is a broadly defined curriculum reform that combines ideas gained from research in language acquisition, linguistics, cognition, child development, reading, writing and other related fields over the last several decades. The name "Whole Language" relates to the principal that children learn oral language quickly and instinctively, without having it broken up into isolated or abstract bits and pieces as is commonly done in grammar books and basal readers. In class this means that students are encouraged to read literature appropriate for their age and interests and to write daily, usually on self-selected topics. Writing instruction focuses on writing as a process of formulating ideas, communicating them with words, and revising work as necessary for clarity and effectiveness.<sup>1</sup>

### Economic Issues

Changes in the economy over the last twenty years have had a strong impact on the ability of school districts to fund programs and build new schools in order to keep up with population growth. The energy boom of the 1970s brought tremendous economic expansion to Colorado. In 1969 Denver had only three downtown buildings of more than twenty stories. In the late 1970s there was as much office space under construction as already existed. When the boom ended, however, Denver's economy ran out of steam. Construction dried up in the mid-1980s. For several years Denver had one of the highest office vacancy rates of any city in the U.S.

Denver reacted aggressively to the economic slump. In the spring of 1990 it opened a \$125 million convention center with 300,000 square feet of exhibit space and 100,000 square feet of meeting space.<sup>2</sup> Ground was broken in 1989 for a new airport encompassing fifty-three square miles that is expected to be the world's largest facility when it opens in the mid-1990s. So large is the new airport that two terminals will be connected to the departure gates by train. Under construction in Adams County, the airport is expected to spur growth in Thornton and Northglenn. This will give a welcome economic lift to Adams 12 Five Star School District.

Due to their dependence upon property taxes for funding, the ailing regional real estate market caused by the local recession hit school districts hard. In the four years preceding the 1989 bond election Denver property values had dropped an average of 10%.<sup>3</sup> Many suburban school districts also received far less property tax revenue than they had expected. Adams County School District 12 was one of these. Between 1986 and 1988 expenditures totaling \$4 million were eliminated from the District 12 budget, a reduction which included reducing reserve (savings) monies by \$2.4 million. An additional \$1.6 million in programs and services was also eliminated. Again in 1988-89, \$2.4 million was eliminated from the District 12 budget, including program, service, administrative, and working capital reserve cuts.

Shared decision making has helped make budget cutting more equitable. When forced to cut \$4 million, principals suggested that they be allowed to decide on how the last \$1.6 million would be cut. The Board agreed, saying only that principals had to cut .9% of their budget and that they had to use shared decision making processes in doing this. Chris Sundberg recalls that there was a standing ovation when the final cuts were decided upon.

<sup>1</sup>Education Commission of the States (1991) *Restructuring the Education System, Volume 1*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Friedland, Lois (1990) *Frommer's Denver, Boulder & Colorado Springs, First Edition*. New York: Prentice Hall, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Covarrubias, A. Ryan (1989) "Denver schools to raise taxes: Increases of 6.9 mills needed just to stay afloat, Koeppel says," *Rocky Mountain News*, October 6, 1989, p. 6.



Budget cutting measures can be divisive, but the fact that they had been agreed to at the school level made them more acceptable to individual school communities. For example, one school decided that in order to save money each child should bring in a ream of paper. An irate parent called a Board member, who said "Call the principal," who said "Call the parent planning board head," who said "Where were you when we had the meeting to decide on this?" The parent quieted down.

### Funding Challenges Currently Facing District 12

Adams County District 12 has long enjoyed a reputation for being fiscally responsible while providing top-quality programs. In recognition of this, until 1989 voters had never turned down a District 12 revenue request. The district operates with the lowest per-child funding of any of the 14 metro school districts. The majority of educational costs are the same throughout the area; for example, costs for personnel, utilities, transportation, materials and supplies are consistent throughout the Denver area. However funding available to a district is dependent upon property values. At present the bonded indebtedness of District 12 is at the statutory limit and the inability to issue bonds is projected to continue until January 1995. Should there be an increase in the assessed valuation of property within the district, then additional funds would become available, but in the current economic climate at the local, state, and national levels, it is impossible to count on such growth until it actually occurs.

Voters passed a mill levy election in November, 1991, but that increase is being used to continue existing programs, just keeping the district at current levels. At present the district has authorization for another \$27 million in bonded indebtedness, but since the district is at its bonding limit, it must wait until assessed valuation increases before spending the money. This situation is problematic because most schools in the northern end of the Adams Twelve Five Star School District are either at capacity or will be within one or two years. Hunter's Glen, Mountain View, Skyview, and Tarver Elementary Schools were over capacity in 1992, as was Westlake Junior High. Horizon Senior High will be above capacity in 1993. Yet the district has no funds for further building at this time. Money currently being spent to bring substandard buildings in the southern part of the district up to standard was promised as part of the 1986 bond vote.

### State Funding of Schools

The making of educational policy in Colorado has been complicated in recent years by changes in the way in which schools within the state are funded. Under the school finance act in effect before 1988, education funding varied dramatically among districts, according to how much each district was able to collect in property taxes. Legal challenges were mounted, charging that the unequal and inferior education offered to children in property-poor districts made this manner of funding schools unconstitutional. Although the state supreme court found the system constitutional, the justices warned that it was unfair and needed to be changed.

Colorado state treasurer Gail Schoettler has explained that the Legislature responded with a major reform of the finance act designed to equalize the property tax burden and the resources available per student among Colorado's school districts. A second goal was to reduce property taxes statewide. Since the cost of the new school finance act was substantial, the Legislature decided to defer decisions on funding the 1988 act fully. However finding ways of balancing the amount collected by local property taxes with that contributed from the state's general fund and distributing the cost of education fairly has turned out to be an ongoing dilemma. The new law also set a maximum property tax mill levy for school districts, thus meeting the Legislature's goal of reducing property taxes. At the same time the state pledged to make up the difference between what school districts were authorized to spend and the lower statewide property taxes.

Unexpected circumstances intervened. Far more new students enrolled in Colorado schools in the fall of 1990 than had been expected. According to assistant education commissioner Dan Stewert in 1989 Colorado school enrollment grew by 2,000, whereas in 1990 it grew by 12,000, and in 1991 by 18,000.<sup>1</sup> The 3.3 percent enrollment increase was the biggest gain in 27 years, bringing total enrollment to 593,091. Since the increase was distributed across all grades, it was attributed to in-migration from other states brought on by improving economic conditions in Colorado and sagging job markets elsewhere. At the same time, a decline in property values throughout much of the state resulted in the fixed school district mill levies generating fewer dollars than expected. The state was suddenly faced with a much larger bill for school financing than it had budgeted for. Also, due to changes in federal law, Medicaid was costing far more than expected. The state budget, which by law must be balanced, faced a serious deficit.

In the last days of the 1990 session of the Legislature it was projected that an extra \$70 million per year would be needed to meet the requirements of the new school finance act. That shortfall would grow to \$140 million in the 1994-95 fiscal year. To provide this large amount of money without raising taxes, the Legislature at that time resorted to some creative accounting. They passed a bill that changed the schools' fiscal year from a calendar year to the state's fiscal year. The transition would occur in January of 1992, when schools would have a six-month fiscal year. Sponsors of the plan surmised that school districts could collect all of 1992's property tax revenues during the first six months of 1992 (the "short" year). The state could therefore reduce its financial aid to school districts and put the savings into a "property tax reduction fund," which would amount to \$270 million. These savings could be used to fund the projected \$70 million shortfalls of the next few years.

Many problems were caused by the state-mandated change in the school districts' fiscal year. As long as schools operated on the calendar year, the property tax revenues had come in during the first half of the year, giving the school districts cash to pay their bills throughout the year. Under the new law, property tax revenues would come in during the last few months of the fiscal year, forcing most school districts to borrow to pay their bills during the first seven to eight months of the fiscal year. Such borrowing simply added to the costs of school district operation without contributing anything to the educational program. It was to avoid this problem that the school districts had traditionally operated on a calendar year basis.

In September, 1991, the state faced a shortfall of approximately \$260 million. To balance the budget Governor Romer had proposed a mixture of budget cuts and tax increases. Just as school started, long after they had hired teachers and signed contracts, school districts were faced with the necessity of borrowing money and wondering whether their budgets would be severely cut. The choices were not easy. Two-thirds of the state's budget already went to education. Available options for raising revenue, either by giving up on property tax relief or raising sales or income taxes, were not popular. Despite calls for a long-term solution, for deciding which government services were most important and devising a dependable way to pay for them, no permanent solution was worked out.<sup>2</sup>

Writing on October 8, 1989, the year after the Legislature decided to defer decisions on funding the 1988 act fully, Carl Miller, editorial pages editor of the *Denver Post*, described what he saw as the cause of the financial crisis plaguing Colorado schools.

The problem stems from the political game-playing that went on in the state Capitol during the boom years of the 1970s. Blessed with ever-

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<sup>1</sup>*The Denver Post*, December 3, 1991, p. 1A, 12A

<sup>2</sup>Schoettler, Gail (1991) "When state legislators return to work Wednesday to a demanding and controversial session they will be greeted by a parent rally," *Longmont Times-Call*, Sept. 9, 1991.

increasing budget surpluses, the legislators decided to give the money back to the taxpayers instead of banking it for the state's future needs.

These "golden gimmicks" were quite popular with the voters, and they helped the politicians get re-elected time and time again. If the gimmicks had been temporary refunds, it wouldn't have been so bad. But the shortsighted legislators made permanent changes to the state's tax laws which have shrunk the state's tax base.

As Colorado entered its economic recession, the lawmakers found themselves with insufficient tax money to meet even the basic state needs. But they weren't willing to restore the tax structure that had existed earlier and, instead, began playing more games with the system.

In November 1992 an initiative introduced by Governor Romer will be on the state ballot. This initiative represents one attempt to insure adequate school funding on an on-going basis.

### Schools of Choice

In May, 1990, Governor Romer signed into law House Bill 1314, allowing students to choose the district schools they wished to attend so long as there was space available in the program and the school. In accordance with a plan approved by the Adams 12 Board of Education on October 15, 1990, students may apply to attend an Adams 12 school other than their "home school" (the school in their attendance area). Such applications will be approved if the completed application has been submitted by the appropriate deadline and there is space available in the requested school or program as determined by the principal. The deadline for elementary school choice applications is the first school day in April; for junior and senior highs it is the last school day in January. Applications are submitted to the school of choice. When the number of applications exceed space availability in a given school, determinations are made by lottery.

In 1990-91, 96% of the district's elementary students and 91% of the secondary students chose to attend their home schools. Students who choose a school other than their home school are responsible for their own transportation. Colorado High School Activities Association athletic eligibility rules apply to students who change schools under the choice program. Ninth graders may choose to attend any high school without affecting their eligibility on a one-time basis only. Current high school students who attend a school other than their home school, except as a result of a *bona fide* family move, become ineligible for participation in all sports at all levels for one year.

### LINC's Program--Rocky Mountain Elementary School

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's largest organization of early childhood educators, believes that one index of the quality of primary education is the extent to which the curriculum and instructional methods are developmentally appropriate for children 5 through 8 years of age:

Development in one dimension influences and is influenced by development in other dimensions. This premise is violated when schools place a great emphasis on the cognitive domain while minimizing other aspects of the children's development. Because development cannot be neatly separated



into parts, failure to attend to all aspects of an individual child's development is often the root cause of a child's failure in school.<sup>1</sup>

The curriculum in early childhood programs is typically a balance of child-centered and content-centered curriculum. For example, good preschools present rich content in a curriculum that is almost entirely child-centered. As children progress into the primary grades, the emphasis on content gradually expands as determined by the school, the local community, and society. The challenge for curriculum planners and teachers is to ensure that the content of the curriculum is taught so as to take optimum advantage of the child's natural abilities, interests, and enthusiasm for learning. Young children do not need to distinguish learning by subject area. For example, they extend their knowledge of reading and writing when they work on social studies projects; they learn mathematical concepts through music and physical education.<sup>2</sup>

Children of primary age are also becoming intensely interested in peers. Establishing productive, positive social and working relationships with other children close to their age provides the foundation for developing a sense of social competence.

Recent research provides powerful evidence that children who fail to develop minimal social competence and are rejected or neglected by their peers are at significant risk to drop out of school, to become delinquent, and to experience mental health problems in adulthood.<sup>3</sup> Research also demonstrates that adult intervention and coaching can help children develop better peer relationships.<sup>4</sup> *The relevant principal of practice is that teachers recognize the importance of developing positive peer group relationships and provide opportunities and support for cooperative small group projects that not only develop cognitive ability but promote peer interaction.*<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge of age-appropriate expectations is one dimension of developmentally appropriate practice, but enormous variance persists in the timing of individual development that is within the normal range. Developmentally appropriate schools are flexible in their expectations about when and how children will acquire certain competencies. They realize that many 8-year-olds are developmentally more like 9- or 10-year-olds and others more like 6- or 7-year-olds. For this reason some schools provide ungraded primary classrooms as a vehicle for preserving heterogeneous groups while also providing more time for children to develop at their own pace and acquire early literacy and mathematical skills.

The LINC's program at Rocky Mountain Elementary School is such a child-centered, non-graded primary program, built upon creating a "can-do" attitude for all. Students are placed in 2-3 year age span units and learn at their own pace. All units are

<sup>1</sup>Bredekamp, Sue, ed. (1988) "NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the Primary Grades, Serving 5- Through 8-Year-Olds," *Young Child*, January 1988, p. 65, excerpted from NAEYC's new expanded edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*.

<sup>2</sup>Van Deusen-Henkel, J., & Argondizza, M. (1987) "Early elementary Education: Curriculum planning for the primary grades. In *A Framework for Curriculum design: People, Process, and Product*. Augusta, ME: Division of Curriculum, Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services.

<sup>3</sup>Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984; Asher, Renshaw, & Hymel, 1982; Cowan, Pederson, Babigan, Izzo, & Trost, 1973; Gronlund & Holmlund, 1985; Parker & Asher, 1986

<sup>4</sup> Asher & Williams, 1987; Burton, 1987.

<sup>5</sup>Bredekamp, Sue, ed. (1988) "NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the Primary Grades, Serving 5- Through 8-Year-Olds," *Young Child*, January 1988, p. 65, excerpted from NAEYC's new expanded edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*, p. 66.

heterogeneous in respect to gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic competence, and physical functioning. Teachers stay with a unit of students for a minimum of two years. The program encourages stimulating, experiential, hands-on learning experiences. Empowering students to make choices, take responsibility for their own learning, and to develop language are central to the LINC's Program. Students' curriculum is individually determined and based on their developmental stage.

## ADAMS COUNTY DISTRICT 12 AND METRO AREA

On May 21, 1991, in an article entitled "Crossroads for Colorado Education" the *Christian Science Monitor* highlighted the problems and paradoxes faced by Colorado as it moves into the last decade of the century. Colorado has long prided itself on its highly educated workforce. Yet, although 23% of Colorado adults have college degrees, the highest percentage of any state, the state ranks 39th in adult literacy. Colorado also ranks 25th among the states in high school graduation rate. This paradoxical educational profile is a result of the fact that only one-third of Colorado residents were born in the state. Half of Colorado's college grads earned their degrees in some other state.

### ADULT EDUCATION

During the era when the economy was booming, Colorado was able to attract educated people through the beauty of the state's natural environment. However immigration to the state slowed abruptly with the decline of the energy industry, plummeting from 41,000 in 1983 to 7,000 in 1984. Meanwhile, Colorado is 21st in school expenditures in relation to per capita income. There is a shortfall in basic education and in skills for modern industry. Only 2% of Colorado's 455,000 functional illiterates are enrolled in any sort of reading program. Governor Romer has targeted education as a top priority but the state's economic slump has made funding a problem.

The Adams 12 district has chosen to address the adult education issue through founding High Plains High School, an adult education program which began conducting classes during the fall of 1986, with 22 graduates in the Spring of 1987. High Plains, a zero-funded program which has been attended by persons ranging in age from 18 to 75, graduated 76 adult students in 1991. Since many of those attending are between the ages of 18 and 21, and are thus still entitled to funding, the state contributes about \$47,000 a year toward the program. The Adams 12 Foundation gives \$10,000. People pay to attend. Mothers and daughters have gone through the program together. Chris Sundberg remembers that when one graduate got his diploma his granddaughter yelled "Way to go, Grandpa!" from the audience.

### MINORITY ISSUES

A 1950 study called "The Spanish-American Population of Denver" conducted by the Denver Area Welfare Council revealed that the average Spanish-American family made only \$1,840 a year, while black families earned \$1,930 and whites made over \$3,000.<sup>1</sup> Back then people just were beginning to question the inequality of opportunity embodied in these statistics. To understand the extent to which progress has, and has not, been made one needs to understand the extent to which the U.S. was still a divided society in the years following World War II.

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 392.

School segregation was the law in the South until the Brown decision of 1954; the segregation of public facilities was legal until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The first black basketball didn't enter the NBA until 1950. The TV networks didn't hire their first African-American reporter until 1962.

*Newsweek*, March 2, 1992, p. 35

### Growth of the Black Community

For a long time the Denver area remained largely Anglo in ethnic composition. Although Black fur trappers and cowboys had played a part in Colorado history since its early days, until World War II the Black population of the Denver metropolitan area remained small. World War II brought full employment and wider opportunities for African-Americans. Denver's black population almost doubled during the 1940s, from 7,836 in 1940 to 15,059 in 1950, when African-Americans comprised 2 percent of the city's population.<sup>1</sup>

In 1950 the *Denver Post* hired George Brown as its first black reporter. Yet when Brown attempted to swim at Lakeside Amusement Park's pool, he was refused admittance. The same thing happened at the YMCA pool on Thirty-first and Madison. Although Denver might have been socially advanced compared to places in the South where blacks were prevented from attending white schools, eating at white restaurants, and drinking from white drinking fountains, it was far from being an integrated city.<sup>2</sup>

In 1952 Denver's blacks remained concentrated in the Five Points area. Although the U.S. Supreme Court had in 1948 made restrictive covenants in property deeds which were designed to keep minorities out of white neighborhoods legally unenforceable, other barriers remained in the form of custom, the reluctance of banks to lend to blacks, and real estate agents' unwillingness to show homes in white areas to blacks. However such informal stratagems became less effective after Colorado toughened its antidiscrimination laws in 1959 and strengthened its fair-housing statutes in 1965. Gradually African-Americans began to follow other ethnic groups to the suburbs.

The traditionally black areas were fast becoming overcrowded; African-American population in the Denver area more than doubled in the 1950s, reaching 30,251 in 1960. By 1970 the metropolitan area counted 50,191 blacks, of whom 94 percent were in Denver, mainly in the north central and northeast sections. During the 1970s more blacks settled outside the city limits but predominantly black neighborhoods persisted, whether in Denver or in other counties. In 1980, 76 percent of the metropolitan area's 77,779 African-Americans still lived in Denver.<sup>3</sup>

### Growth of the Hispanic Community

Although Spanish settlements in southern Colorado predated the founding of Denver, most of the gold seekers and settlers who came to the Denver area between 1860 and 1900 were from the eastern and midwestern United States.

Before 1930 it was easy for most people to overlook the city's small Hispanic community. The 1920 *City Directory* listed only 12 persons with the common Hispanic surnames of Gonzales, Lopez, and Martinez. By 1920 there were 113 with those names, by 1930 over 300, by 1940 over 600, and in 1950 over 1,100. That year the Denver Area Welfare Council guessed that there were between 30,000 and 45,000 Spanish-Americans in

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 373-374.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 375-376.



Denver. The 1960 federal census gave a more exact picture, recording 43,147 Spanish-Americans in the city. By 1970 the number had risen to 86,345 and by 1980 to 91,937. Since the city's total population changed little between 1960 and 1980, the dramatic increase in Hispanic numbers meant more than a doubling of the Hispanic percentage of the total population, from less than 9 percent in 1960 to over 18 percent in 1980. In the metropolitan area outside the central city Hispanic population also increased, rising from 52,583 in 1970 to 81,425 in 1980, but since total suburban population burgeoned in the same period the percentage of Hispanics living in the suburbs declined slightly.<sup>1</sup>

In 1983 Frederico Pena was elected mayor of Denver. Born in Laredo, Texas, the thirty-six-year-old Pena had arrived in 1973. He had worked for and Mexican American Legal Defence Fund and later practiced law privately. In 1979 he began a four year stretch in the state legislature. Declining oil prices caused economic dislocations and accompanying discontents during Pena's first term. He won a second term by only 3,026 votes. Although Hispanics took pride in Pena's victories, their poverty and excessive high school drop-out rates continued.<sup>2</sup>

#### Adams County District 12 Commitment

Success for all students has long been a strong District 12 goal. In 1990, composition of the district's student body was 80.5% White, 14.8% Hispanic, 2.3 % Asian/Pacific, 1.7% Black, and .7% American Indian. The non-profit District 12 Foundation has set up a Minority Scholarship program with \$70,000 given to award five scholarships to minority students to attend an in-state school. If these students come back and teach in the district, the sum lent them will be forgiven at a rate of 25% per year.

Like other school districts surveyed by the Colorado Department of Education, the Adams 12 district still needs to continue improvement, so that test scores for Black and Hispanics are comparable to those for Caucasian and Asian students. This is a District 12 objective. Reflection of intercultural diversity through diversity in curriculum and staffing is one of the critical success indicators which are part of the district's 1991-1996 Strategic Improvement Plan.

#### **Adams 12 Five Star Schools Today**

The district is governed by a Board of Education made up of five members who receive no salary. Board members are elected by the community for six-year terms, on a rotation basis, every two years. Board meetings, which are open to the public, are held the third Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Administration Center at 11285 Highline Drive in Northglenn. Parent and community participation is encouraged at all levels. Input from parents assists the district in providing high quality education for its students. Parents are invited to become knowledgeable about their schools; they are urged to serve on advisory and other committees, to visit the schools, to become acquainted with teachers and administrators, and to attend Board of Education Meetings.<sup>3</sup>

The school board, Superintendent James E. Mitchell, school personnel, and residents of the community have worked together to make Adams County School District 12 an outstanding school system. In addition to numerous national awards, the Colorado Department of Education commended Adams 12. Special recognition was given to:

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 389-390.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard & Noel, p. 404-405.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfe, Gregg (1978) *Federal Heights Community Directory*, p. 3.

community involvement, the school improvement process, Board of Education support, the Elementary Curriculum Review, the Computer Management Instruction System, staff development opportunities, personnel evaluation, dropout prevention, the Education Foundation, Innovative Classroom Project Awards and facilities planning.

The district maintains 35 schools, including 23 elementary schools, 6 junior/middle schools, 3 high schools, an alternative junior/senior high school, and an occupational/vocational center which also houses the adult education program. The district employs approximately 2200 teachers and staff to serve 21,500 students. Forty-seven percent of the teaching staff hold post-graduate degrees. Horizon, Northglenn, and Thornton High Schools are accredited by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. Diplomas are also granted by the High Plains Adult High School program and the Eastlake Alternative Campus.

An outstanding staff maintains high scholastic standards in a safe, well-disciplined setting. State of the art learning materials and equipment include nearly 3,000 computers for student use. Adams 12 offers special programs for gifted and talented students, new immigrants, the handicapped and others with exceptional needs. Rigorous preparation for college and training for employment are available. Whatever the ability or interest, each child is helped to reach his or her potential. In the past few years, the community has voiced additional needs to which the district has been quick to respond. Adams Twelve's lifelong learning services now extend from citizens three years of age to the most advanced years. Adults may complete a high school diploma through the Adult High School. All programs are provided at nominal fees, on a self-supporting, non-profit basis. Senior citizens pay only half price.<sup>1</sup> The District 12 Foundation has raised over \$300,000 to help fund special projects in the schools. The innovative grant program allows any teacher with an idea to try something creative to apply for up to \$500 in special funding. Every year \$30,000 in such awards are given out. Cotton Creek did a cookbook with one such grant.

Community preschools are located at Horizon and Northglenn High Schools and Hulstrom, McElwain and Tarver elementary schools. Project Child Find is a free screening for preschoolers. Developmental special education services are available to any child needing these services. In addition to numerous national awards, the Colorado Department of Education has commended Adams Twelve Five Star Schools. Special recognition was given to: community involvement, the school improvement process, Board of Education support, the Elementary Curriculum Review, the Computer Management Instruction System, staff development opportunities, personnel evaluation, the Education Foundation, Innovative Classroom Project Awards, and facilities planning.

Students in 5 grades participated in the annual standardized testing program in 1990-91. Students in grades 3, 6, and 9 took the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and the Test of Cognitive Abilities. Students in grades 10 and 11 took the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills Survey. The results at all grade levels show slight fluctuations in scores when compared to the year before. (District test scores are confirmed by CTB Macmillan/McGraw Hill.) District students at each grade level continue to score above the national average in math concepts and application, science, and social studies on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. Students in grades 6 and 9 are above the national average in all areas except spelling. The scores in reading and language arts vary by grade level. Students in the 3rd grade are below the national average in reading vocabulary and comprehension. Students in grades 10 and 11 are below the national average in language mechanics and expression. Students at all grade levels are at or below the national level in spelling. Females continue to perform better than males in all areas and at all grade levels with the greatest differences demonstrated in the language areas. Scores for Caucasian and Asian students were the highest of the ethnic groups in 1991, except at Grade 6 where American Indian students performed better than all other ethnic groups.

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<sup>1</sup>MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce, 11990 Grant, Northglenn, Colorado.

The composite ACT scores of district students in the college preparatory curriculum reached a ten-year high in 1990-91. District students compared favorably with their state and national counterparts. The ACT is a national college entrance examination taken by students who wish to enroll in colleges and universities in Colorado and throughout the western United States. Students' ACT scores in both English and mathematics have increased as well as the composite score. At the same time, student attendance increased by 7.5% from 86% in 1990 to 93.5% in 1991.

#### BUDGET EXPENDITURES

Each year the district's proposed budget is brought to the Board of Education for review. This review is followed by public budget hearings and adoption. Citizen members of the District Budget Review Committee perform a critical role in the review process. Citizens ensure that the budget accurately reflects the Five Star Education Community's mission and shared values as set forth in the District Strategic Improvement Plan.

There are two sources of funds for district operations: the general fund and the building fund. General fund dollars come largely from state allocations (69% in 1991) and local tax receipts (28% in 1991). The school operating budget for instruction and supplies is paid from the general fund. The building or construction fund is funded from a school bond issue which was approved by the voters in 1986. Recently the district sold forty-million dollars in bonds to finance construction projects for new facilities and modernizing existing facilities. As of fall, 1991, 53 projects funded through the bond issue have been completed, including the Five Star Stadium, site improvements at Thornton High School, and recent classroom improvements at Westview and NorthMor Elementaries. Major construction will also be done at Centennial, Cherry Drive, Coronado Hills, and Hillcrest Elementaries, as well as at Northglenn, Northeast and Westlake Village Junior Highs. In September, 1993, students will be attending a new junior/middle school next to the old Meritt Hutton Junior High.

Non-instructional costs are reduced through good business practices, energy savings, and innovations to get the most from the education dollar. Costs are further reduced through intergovernmental joint-use and purchasing agreements with local cities and county agencies. For the past several years, the district has made extensive reductions in its level of central office support. Additional budget reductions were made in 1990 to counteract the loss of funds due to adjustments in the local property tax. Expenditures are projected to increase during the next few years due to an influx of new residents with school-aged children and inflated costs for mandated student services.

#### DISTRICT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

The District School Improvement Team (DSIT) serves as a link between the individual schools and the district. As the district's legally mandated accountability committee, the DSIT provides a unique opportunity to share responsibility for the success of Adams 12 Five Star Schools. The DSIT is composed of two parent representatives from each school, two senior citizens and two taxpayers without children in the schools. Secondary school students and representatives from the district's classified, certificated and administrative groups also serve on the team.

DSIT members review individual school improvement plans, conduct studies in areas designated by the Board of Education, and provide a forum for communication among parents, community members and the district. The team strives to increase parent and community involvement and encourages participation on districtwide committees. Leona Kogovsek, parent and President of DSIT says, "We have seen progress in communication efforts in many schools; we strongly recommend that schools continue to develop and use strategies to provide forums to reach all staff members, parents and community members." DSIT members serve on districtwide committees such as the



Policy Council, Budget Review, and Long-Range Planning. The president of the DSIT serves as a non-voting member of the Board of Education.

In 1990-91, the Board of Education charged the DSIT with studying two issues--parent and community involvement and student transitions from either elementary to junior high or junior high to senior high. Recommendations in the final reports include: a.) review the system of recording volunteer hours to incorporate a broader range of ways parents and community members can be involved in schools; b.) increase communication between parents and community members about involvement and district policy; c.) increase communication among teachers of elementary and secondary schools; and d.) develop positive relationships among students who are making transitions.

#### LOCAL HISTORY RECALLED IN SCHOOL NAMES

Have you ever wondered how a school got its name? The history of the community is reflected in the names of schools in Adams County District 12. Schools have been named after educators and school board members, housing developments, towns or cities, streets, in honor of the state's 100th centennial, and for their pleasant sound and descriptive names. Eastlake Alternative Junior/Senior High is located in the oldest school building in the district, having opened in 1920, and is named after the town of Eastlake.

McElwain Elementary, Meritt Hutton Junior High, and Hulstrom Elementary were named after Percy McElwain, Meritt Hutton, and Ted Hulstrom, who were members of the first District 12 Board of Education. Hulstrom served as a board member for 42 years, having been a board member in School District 6, which was one of seven small districts which were consolidated to form Adams County School District 12 in 1950. The Meritt Hutton school formerly served as a junior/senior high before Thornton High opened. The Bollman Occupational Center was named after Henry Bollman, who served on the school board for 20 years and was elected state president of the Colorado Association of School Boards in 1981.

Stuckey Elementary was named after Daniel B. Stuckey, the district's first superintendent, who retired in 1972. Tarver Elementary was named in honor of A. Willis Tarver, former associate superintendent, who retired in 1978. Two Schools have been renamed. Northeast Junior High was first named Irma Wyco because it is located between those two streets. Later the faculty and student body requested the Board of Education to change the name to Northeast. The first school building located on the site of the present Thornton Elementary was called Eppinger School for a brief time (Eppinger Blvd. runs in front of the school and Art Eppinger was a member of the first school board).

Schools in Adams County District 12 are named as follows:

##### *In honor of a person:*

McElwain Elementary  
Meritt Hutton Junior High  
Hulstrom Elementary  
Stuckey Elementary  
Tarver Elementary  
Bollman Occupational Center

##### *After a town or city:*

Eastlake Alternative Junior/Senior High  
Thornton Elementary  
Thornton Senior High

##### *After a housing development:*

Hillcrest Elementary  
Coronado Hills Elementary  
North Star Elementary  
North Mor Elementary  
Woodglenn Elementary  
Westlake Village Junior High  
Cotton Creek Elementary  
Hunters Glen Elementary  
Riverdale Elementary

##### *For their pleasant sound or descriptive nature:*

Northglenn Junior High  
Northglenn Senior High  
Federal Heights Elementary

*After a street:*

Huron Junior High  
Pecos Junior High  
Wyco Drive Elementary  
Malley Drive Elementary  
Leroy Drive Elementary  
Cherry Drive Elementary

Westview Elementary  
Northeast Junior High  
Mountain View Elementary  
Skyview Elementary  
Rocky Mountain Elementary  
Horizon Senior High

*After Colorado's 100th  
Centennial*

Centennial Elementary

## FIVE STAR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Under the system of site-based decision-making which has been in place in District 12 since 1982, each of the high schools has developed a distinctive character, well suited to the community it serves. All are still guided by the curriculum framework which defines what is expected in the way of significant learnings, but schools have developed different ways of achieving that goal.

### Thornton High School

The present Thornton High facility was already in the planning stages in 1956 when Meritt Hutton Junior/Senior High was constructed. Meritt Hutton was designed as a junior high even though it housed both junior and senior high students. The ground on which Thornton High rests was acquired through a 15-acre public land dedication from Ted Gudmundson and Associates to the City of Thornton, which then transferred the land to the District. District 12 then purchased an additional 10 acres for \$120,000, bringing the total acreage to 25. With revenue from a \$12 million voter-passed bond issue in 1970, plans were made for a two-phase construction. Phase one included the academic facilities, phase two the vocational-technical center and physical education.

Thornton High School is located in an established neighborhood on Washington Street and Thornton Parkway. Approximately 1100 students were enrolled in grades 10 - 12 in the 1991-92 school year. In the fall of 1992 Thornton will become a four year high school, serving grades 9 - 12. The racially diverse community served by Thornton High currently includes 24% Hispanics, 3% African Americans, 2% Asian Americans, 1% Native Americans and 70% Caucasians. Thornton High has twenty varsity teams sanctioned by the CHSAA. In addition to state championships, THS has won 49 athletic Conference championships and has qualified for State tournaments in a variety of sports. The Knowledge Bowl Team at THS has won a State Championship and qualified as a state finalist in 1991-91. Forty-one academic and vocational clubs round out a program that meets a wide variety of student interests.

Fred Wells points to Thornton High's more divergent student body as contributing to the atmosphere of openness, friendliness and adaptability which characterizes the school. Grant Johnstone agrees, "There's a sense of family. If kids are here long enough they find a friend or an advocate. Parents comment on it, too, the way teachers here really care about kids."

### *The Forgotten Past of Adams County*

Between 1974 and 1980 a unique class at Thornton High called "Mountain, Plain, and Plateau" not only learned about Colorado History and geography but also went out and

did research, conducting their own "field work," digging, and sorting, working from a list of unsolved puzzles connected with Adams County which had been compiled by the State Historical Society. Supervised by teachers Richard Marcy and William O'Conner, this class published a series of four books called *The Forgotten Past of Adams County, Volumes I-IV*. Many facts used in the first half of this present history were taken from their work.

Those taking the class learned to see their environs with different eyes. Commerce City may have had its beginnings as a fur trapper settlement. In the old days, before irrigation carried away much of its water for other uses, the Platte River in spring was often described as "an inch deep and a mile wide." Even today if one takes 104th St. east and watches as it drops off approaching the Platte, one can see a definite channel where the river has flooded to take in the whole valley. Near the Adams County Fairgrounds one can see where the channel was chewed out. The Fairgrounds themselves have an interesting history, that land having once been the Denver Poor Farm, where indigents were shipped in the 1920s and 1930s, before there was such a thing as welfare, when the only way for the poor to support themselves was to work the land.

Wagon ruts are still visible in the vicinity of Brighton where the Overland Trail passed through south of the town of Saugache. Each spring students in the "Mountain, Plain, and Plateau" class chartered a bus and toured Colorado, seeing such sights as Bent's Fort, Mesa Verde, and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. They learned how the St. Vrain brothers split with Bent and went north, how the Cache le Poudre River was named for a cache of powder (gunpowder) hidden beside it. Following the miners who had gone before them, they followed creeks into the mountains looking for the mother lode and toured the Central City Cemetery where different sections are reserved for the different nationalities buried there. However students had to pay their own way and the costs kept going up. Finally the expense was such that it was no longer possible to keep the class going. Yet those who read *The Forgotten Past of Adams County* can still appreciate the original research done by this group of Thornton High School students.

### Plaza Concept

In recent years Thornton High has played a major role in a program and curriculum renovation referred to as the "Plaza Concept" which is receiving state and national attention. Taking advantage of the close proximity of Thornton High, Bollman Occupational Center, Meritt Hutton Middle School, and Thornton Elementary, the Plaza aims at a closer integration of all levels of education from Kindergarten through high school. The Colorado Department of Education has awarded the Plaza a waiver so that staff can teach K-12 when necessary. The Plaza is also looking at networking with the area schools in regards to sharing services, such as counseling, custodial help, social workers, etc. Part of the project includes extensive remodeling of the high school physical plant and grounds as well as a new middle school and renovation at Thornton Elementary.

The fall of 1992 saw the transition of Thornton High to a four-year high school. Housed in a new building, Meritt Hutton has become a middle school. Thornton Elementary serves grades K-5. As part of the Plaza Concept high school students have been acting as mentors, working with younger students on a variety of projects. Housed in a new building, Meritt Hutton has become a middle school. Sam Thornham, principal at Thornton Elementary School, described how the Plaza program works:

The Plaza concept is an attempt to do more in a continuum for kids, to try to put together a K-12 continuum. We have a lot of high school kids who come down here now. A writing class comes down on Tuesday mornings. They read to kids, interview kids and write stories that are "published" and given to the kids. It's part of our literacy program. Work-study kids from the vocational center come down and do a big-brother, big-sister program



once a week. We have a high school teacher who has our kids dictate stories to her computer class. We've also been involved with an aesthetic education project connected with the Lincoln Center in New York. Artists come here and work with kids.

Some collaborative programs reach beyond the schools that are formally included in the Plaza group. For example, in 1991-92 the foreign language departments at Thornton High and Meritt Hutton offered a list of options for presentations and activities to classes at Coronado Hills, McElwain, Riverdale and Thornton Elementaries. In the spirit of Plaza cooperation, arrangements could be made for secondary students to share with younger pupils, for teachers to visit classrooms, or for elementary students to make a "field trip" to THS or MHJS. Teachers could request mini-lessons in Japanese, Spanish, French, German, Russian or Classical Latin; travel presentations and slide shows, or lessons centered on geography, cultural influences, songs/dances, or daily living in the culture they chose. Visitations took place in 18 different classrooms at all four schools, involving 455 students. As one fifth grader, in writing a thank you note, said, "Bonjour, Dude. Thanks for everything!"

### International Baccalaureate

When Thornton High Schools application to become the fourth International Baccalaureate school in Colorado (and one of fewer than 200 I.B. schools nationwide) was accepted, THS added a unique option to its curriculum. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the International Baccalaureate program provides students of different educational and cultural backgrounds with the intellectual, social and critical perspectives necessary for the adult world that lies ahead of them. The I.B. program is unique in its depth, scope, and international emphasis. It is a special program for the motivated and successful student. Since the I.B. is so rigorous, many school districts (Adams Twelve Five Star Schools among them) offer two additional years of study as preparation for the I.B. Students enroll in this Pre-International Baccalaureate Program in grades nine and ten, then advance to the I.B. in grades eleven and twelve.

The effectiveness of the I.B. program is due not only to the depth of the individual courses but also to the comprehensive nature of the total program. Unlike other honors programs, the I.B. requires each student to take courses in six academic areas (English, foreign language, study of man in society, experimental science, mathematics, and fine arts) where admittance is competitive. In most universities, I.B. Diploma holders receive college credits or advanced placement or a combination of the two. Credit for up to one year of college is not unusual. Students who earn a certificate in a specific subject area are also frequently awarded credit or advanced placement in that subject.

In order to earn the International Baccalaureate Diploma (in addition to the regular Thornton High diploma), the candidate must:

- 1.) Complete the required sequence of courses in each of the six subject groups;
- 2.) Earn an acceptable score on an examination in three or four subjects at the higher level and an acceptable score on an examination at the subsidiary level in the other subjects (sample tests are available at Thornton High's I.B. office);
- 3.) Submit an Extended Essay in one of the subjects of the I.B. Curriculum;
- 4.) Complete a course in the Theory of Knowledge;
- 5.) Engage in a creative, action, or service activity.

Candidates who do not earn the I.B. Diploma may earn certificates in individual subjects. They may also participate in Advanced Placement testing in individual subjects.

Grant Johnstone explained that originally the I.B. program was developed by international educators to serve the needs of businessmen and members of the diplomatic corps who had previously experienced problems with their children not being admitted into schools they wished to attend at home after going to school abroad. The I.B. carefully sets out a very strenuous, rigorous program. By the end of the four year program, I.B. students should be able to demonstrate superior performance in higher thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The program also helps them to acquire a breadth and depth of knowledge in literature, science, language and other fields. Students are expected to develop the ability to communicate in writing with a high degree of competence and become proficient in research and independent study. At the same time students are encouraged to become leaders in service to others.

Any eighth grade student at a junior high in the Adams 12 district can apply for the International Baccalaureate program. Requirements include: a successful academic record (algebra in the eighth grade is highly recommended), a writing sample, favorable teacher recommendations (one must be from an English or math teacher), student/parent interviews, motivation/enthusiasm as demonstrated by past attendance and conduct.

### Northglenn High School

Steph McCarter comments that she has parents coming in, saying "I hear that you're the college prep high school." Yet, although Northglenn High has a very strong academic curriculum and a very good placement rate in college, it is not a college prep high school. Half the curriculum and more than half the resources are dedicated to the non-college prep student. What makes Northglenn High unique, according to Rich Schweissing, is the diverse and caring staff, which includes teachers with enough different styles and attitudes that any student should be able to find adults he or she can relate to well. "The staff really cares about kids, what happens to them not only academically but as people." He describes Northglenn High as a fairly traditional school with an older staff which has been around long enough so that teachers have learned what styles of teaching fit them best.

### Shared Decision Making

Northglenn High's School Improvement Team has six staff members and a similar number of parents. Shared Decision Making by staff Northglenn High takes place on a volunteer basis. Committee are created to deal with specific problems and staff members can choose whether or not to be involved, with the understanding that those who choose not to be involved will have less input on that particular problem. Standing committee memberships are opened up at the beginning of the year and those wanting to participate have to make the commitment then according to John Gathman. People cannot come in mid-year to participate in a specific decision. However important decisions are referred to the faculty for comment before they are finalized. Principal George McCullough describes the consensus-building process used when major decisions are discussed:

We go through a process that basically says "If we were to do this, what are the best possible outcomes? What are the worst possible outcomes?" As we go through and discuss those, things start to fall out. We start to see agreement on things. It's a lengthy process. But eventually you get to a point where the majority of people in the room see where, basically, it's going to have a negative outcome and we want to "can" that idea, or that it has a lot of merit. The more you talk in these type of terms, the best and the

worst, the more you dislodge people from representing their department or their individual needs and eventually it becomes a group . . . but to make a decision like that you may take 3 or 4 meetings to do it. If you go in and want to make a major decision about your school and expect to bring closure in one 3 hour meeting or one after school meeting, it won't happen. You'll end up with a lot of frustration.

### Pascal Center for Concentrated Studies

Available to all District 12 high school juniors and seniors, the Pascal Center provided rigorous and focused work integrating aspects of literature, writing, history, social sciences, and the arts as relevant to their individually designed courses of study. The Pascal Center has been developed to assist students in reaching their potentials. It is designed for high school students who learn best by working independently, as well as cooperatively, to realize their own educational goals in areas which interest them. It is based upon the idea that learning is a powerful and natural process, which needs only to be guided, nourished, and allowed to occur.

Genuine learning is characterized by discovery, tolerance for difficulties and mental curiosity, and is energized by the accomplishment of personally meaningful objectives. The source of study is developed by each student individually with close guidance and support from teachers. The materials, activities and methods are determined by the student's own abilities, interests and goals. Six "strands" of learning are emphasized: discovery and knowledge, research and problem solving, written and spoken use of language, cultural and social perspectives, artistic expression, personal development.

The Center operates in the afternoons, during the school day, for a three-hour block of time. However, students who can enroll for two hours only can be accommodated. You may enroll for the whole year or for one semester; either fall or spring. Students arrange the schedule of classes they want at their home high school in the morning, and still participate in all their home school activities. Unfortunately, transportation cannot be provided. Students earn one and a half credits each semester they are enrolled, as they would normally for a three-period series of classes. The areas of credit available are English, Social Studies, and Fine Arts. Credit is distributed among these subjects according to the nature and emphasis of the student's work.

Pascal students receive letter grades. Additionally, Pascal provides a detailed written summary of student work as an official part of the transcript. Work in the student's major area results in the preparation of a major body of original work, or production of a portfolio of creative work. Assessment is based not only on acquiring information, but upon demonstrated growth in the student's course of study. Students must apply to attend the Pascal Center, but the selection process is not intended to be restrictive or exclusive, but only to ensure a proper match between the concepts of the Pascal Center and a student's educational needs and goals. Students are selected for Pascal during the spring intent or registration process.

### Bridge Program

Grant monies are helping to insure success for all students at Northglenn High and its feeder schools. In 1991 new dollars were secured from outside sources to extend programs for at-risk students over a two-year period. These funds provide additional resources for programs which help ease the transition for high risk students who are entering school or moving between schools. The grant project, funded by the Drug-free Schools and Communities Act, is designed to help students experience success in school and reduce the incidence of high-risk behaviors and lifestyles. Northglenn High was the only school in Colorado and one of only 30 in the U.S. to win such a grant. The problem



the grant was initially aimed to address was the 20 - 40% student turnover at Northglenn and its feeder schools. Northstar has a turnover rate that can be as high as 50% per year. There is a 30% turnover at Northglenn High. That amount of change can be difficult for students to deal with. Support groups and timely staff intervention can make the difference between a student staying in school or giving up. As of spring, 1992, none of the students in the Bride Program had dropped out of school.

#### Fast Food in the Cafeteria

Nikki Matthews, cafeteria manager, says pizza is "the most popular food" at Northglenn, which started to serve fast food in 1989. One of the benefits is that the school cafeteria is now serving an increasing number of school lunches. Matthews says, "students whom we don't see on other days will eat at school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday when we serve pizza." Good business practices are only one of several factors in the school's move to fast foods. "getting students to stay on campus," according to Matthews, "is another reason to serve fast food; the temptation to miss classes is not as strong when students stay on school grounds."

#### Horizon High School

As population growth in the Adams 12 district continued at a high rate during the late 1970s, plans began for building a third high school. When Superintendent Mitchell took the reins in 1982, much groundwork had already been done. However, Dr. Mitchell poured his energies into making sure that the new school would be an institution of which the district could be proud. Personnel at the existing high schools talked with architects about what they found most and least helpful in the design of their buildings. Marilou Henderlite, who had been selected by Educational Leadership as one of the 100 outstanding small school administrators in the U.S. in 1986, was brought in two years before the school opened to help with planning. A core team of twelve was released a semester early to work with her in planning for the new school.

The core team focussed on envisioning what the school should be, using the belief statements they evolved, along with those worked on by a group of students, to guide development of the school. Kathryn Tallerico remembers the enthusiasm and the intense dialogue that took place during that first semester when that team of twelve were evolving the vision for the school. The Horizon Senior High Vision Statement states:

Horizon seeks to instill the motivation to be a lifelong learner.

- H     Honesty, integrity, and responsibility are placed in the highest esteem.
- A     Achievement and academic excellence are encouraged and rewarded.
- W     Worth is found in the acceptance of diversity.
- K     Kindness and respect are encouraged and maintained throughout the school and community.
- S     Shared involvement is emphasized in all aspects of the learning environment."

Literature on learning and quality education identified the following interrelated strategic components as those essential to the educational environment Horizon staff members wished to establish: school-centered decision making and accountability; personal sense of belonging; flexible use of time and space; integrated core curriculum;

and changed roles with student as worker, and teacher as facilitator. All of these strategic components have been woven into the organization and curriculum of Horizon High.

The first year it was open, Horizon served 815 students, all sophomores and juniors. Students who had started high school elsewhere but lived in the Horizon attendance area were given the choice of staying where they were or transferring to Horizon. An integrated core curriculum was set up for 10th graders, with three teachers working together to plan how science, social science and language arts will be taught to their core group. A unique advising system makes use of talents of teachers and administrators as well as guidance counselors to make sure that every student has an adult with whom they can talk when the need comes up. Horizon has evolved as a very student-centered place. According to Dr. Henderlite "If improved instruction doesn't occur as a result of what we do, I don't know what we have accomplished by being site-based."

Concepts considered futuristic in other schools--such as site-based decision-making, block-scheduled classes and integrated curriculum core classes--already are in place here. So are advanced computer technology, music synthesizers and theater lighting, all housed in a high-tech plant that reduces isolation by minimizing physical and mental walls. . . Horizon's innovations have drawn more than 250 educational observers from across the country this school year alone. "Nationally, the second wave of educational reform has yet to begin. But Horizon is leading the state and the nation in implementing meaningful reform efforts," concluded an evaluation team from the University of Colorado in Boulder last year.

J. Sebastian Sinisi, *The Denver Post*, Sunday, April 7, 1991

Hiring at Horizon is a committee affair. Two students, a parent, and two staff members with an administrative facilitator make the decision regarding who will teach at Horizon. Those who end up teaching at Horizon tend to be those who are willing to take risks and who want to be involved. All of the 70 applicants who applied for the first 25 teaching positions at Horizon and passed the initial screening were observed teaching by Dr. Henderlite before final decisions were made. Every time a job description goes out, even for custodians, the belief statements the school has agreed upon go with it.

### American Studies Core

Often, when mention is made of the factors which make Horizon unique, the first thing mentioned is the required tenth grade core, which meets for three consecutive periods every day. It provides students with opportunities to make connections and understand the relationships between historical events, technological and scientific developments, artistic creations, and literary works. The core promotes the development of critical thinking skills necessary for problem solving and becoming responsible citizens. The diverse nature of activities in the core meets the varied needs of students and stretches the mechanisms by which they learn. Teachers from the four disciplines (social studies, English, science and art) form teaching teams and provide learning experiences to help students understand yesterday, today, and prepare for tomorrow.

There is an emphasis on the concept of the school as a community of learners, that it is not just the students who are learning but that teachers need to model learning. In keeping with this, the teams teaching the American Studies Core will be switched around every two to four years as this keeps people thinking and changing. If people are kept together over a long period of time, they tend to fall into set patterns which may not make for optimum educational interactions. Core teachers share a planning period, which has proved important to effective integration. Also helpful to integration of subject areas is the arrangement of teacher offices into two large work areas instead of small, separated offices.

## Advisory

All Horizon students meet in an Advisory group two times a week. Most staff members, including some classified employees and all administrators, are involved in leading or co-leading advisory groups. Students remain with the same advisor, counselor, and administrators for three years in this non-graded, safe environment. The philosophy for Advisory says: "The Horizon High Community believes that to meet the needs of the whole learner, educational experiences must extend beyond the academic classroom; our student advisement program is a team effort among students, staff, parents, and community. This program is designed to personalize education, complement the curriculum, and assist students in developing skills and attitudes necessary to their success. The desired outcomes are to enhance the learner's self-esteem; to enhance the learner's development in personal, academic, social, and career areas; to enhance responsible decision making; and to encourage the responsible application of personal, academic, and social skills in the community.

## Block Scheduling

Horizon provides a variety of scheduling options including the traditional eight period day, two period blocks every day and every other day, three period integrated CORE blocks, and a weekly three hour evening seminar. As Horizon moves into more extensive non-traditional scheduling, staff and students continue to explore using different and varying method of instruction to maximize the time options effectively.

## A.L.P.S.

In an effort to successfully meet the needs of all students, encourage life-long learning, and utilize the wealth of learning resources available beyond the school walls, Horizon established an Action Learning Program for Students consisting of an experiential, integrated three-period academic core and a service learning component utilizing the community work experience, internships, shadowing/mentoring, and service learning. The flexible, thematic scheduling allows students to earn credits as they develop and fulfill their IEPs (Individualized Education Plans). At any given time, a student or group of students might be involved with contract learning, portfolios, cooperative learning, service learning, or extended field trips utilizing experiential learning.

## Wetlands

The Wetlands Project is an effort by Horizon students to transform 14 acres of school property into a wildlife sanctuary and outdoor learning center to be used by other students and the community. Initially the students hauled truckloads of trash away before planting over 1,000 trees and shrubs. Five acres were seeded with grass to stem erosion and wildflower seeds have been scattered throughout the area. The students also constructed a nature trail which doubles as a cross country race course. Bat boxes, bird houses and feeders built by students are being placed on the Wetlands. Four elementary schools have requested that Horizon's "experts" come help them set up similar programs at their schools. Future plans for a bridge, interpretive signs, park benches, even an outdoor amphitheater and classroom are in the works. This program was recognized as the outstanding education environmental program in Colorado by Governor Romer.

## Nature Guide Program

Students in the Nature Guide Program (Birds, Bug, and Bear Tracks) prepare and give presentations on wildlife to third grade students in the Five Star School District. Their



purpose is to encourage interest and participation in life science programs. Each multidisciplinary program lasts 2 1/2 hours, and complements the third grad Explore Program. A \$2,000 Dwight D. Eisenhower Mathematics Science Education Grant from the Colorado Department of Education made it possible to offer the program to all Five Star District third grade students during the 1990-91 school year in order to help develop science, math, art and language skills. The seventy-five Horizon students discovered the joys and frustrations of the teaching/learning process.

#### Peer Writing Tutors

Selected students receive extensive training for the Peer Writing Tutor Program which was put into effect at Horizon in 1989. The writing tutors are available during the day to help other students with class writing assignments. Tutors specialize in the areas of revision and editing. The benefits of the program are as follows: 1.) Peer writing tutors have the opportunity to improve their own writing and revision skills by talking with student clients and to build communication skills by working with all kinds of personality types. 2.) Student clients show an increased awareness of themselves as writers, confidence in their own ability to communicate and improved critical and creative thinking skills.

#### SWAP

In 1988 the Colorado Alliance for Business selected Horizon High School to participate in the School-to-Work Action Program (SWAP), a competency-based academic program designed to maximize the potential of at-risk teens. SWAP is offered in 20 junior and senior high school sites serving over 1400 students statewide. SWAP is designed for the student who exhibits symptoms such as poor academic performance and motivation accompanied by poor attendance. By combining the "content" of basic academic skills classes and the "process" of group involvement activities, the program is designed to build self-esteem, self-discipline, basic skills and motivation. SWAP begins a process that engages students in lifelong learning and helps develop a commitment to themselves and their futures.

#### Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons Early Education Center provides training and drop-out prevention to pregnant and parenting teens. Utilizing an on-site licensed day care, the program provides parenting and family life education with skill development in problem solving and decision making. Students using the center must be enrolled in 5 credit classes per semester and follow program expectations including New Directions class, acceptable grades and attendance, as well as a parenting practicum. Bright Horizons has been named the Outstanding Family Life Science Program in Colorado. Comments from students include:

This program got me back in school and keeps me in school.

My child has matured faster by being around other kids and has learned manners.

I now have a greater chance to get a job; it has also helped me gain more self-confidence.

In 1991, Horizon High School received the prestigious Challenger Award from the State Commission of Education. Gladys Eddy, State Board of Education member,

presented the award saying, "Horizon High School's real reward is that students are growing in good citizenship, lifelong learning, and service to the community."

### Bollman Occupational Center

Tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students from Eastlake, Horizon, Northglenn and Thornton High Schools are eligible to attend the Bollman Center free of charge and participate in any of the programs offered. Free transportation is provided to and from the student's home high school. Students who wish to attend BOC may simply enroll at the time of their regular high school registration. Each career area is designed to be a two-year program. Relaxed classroom and lab settings allow students to progress at their own pace. Course offerings include: Applied Technology, Auto Technology, CAD--Computer Aided Design, Electronics, Principles of Technology, Auto Body, Commercial Art, Construction Trades, Graphics, and Welding.

Instructors at BOC are not only certified teachers, but have at least five years of actual on-the-job experience in their specialized program. Students enjoy hands-on training using the latest equipment. Classes provide the experience and skills needed to compete for jobs in today's workplace. Students also have the option of transferring some of their BOC credits to selected community colleges through articulation agreements. By completing classes that apply toward an Associate Degree, they can finish college in less time and with less expense.

Students not only learn technical/vocational skills, but they are also allowed to work in the computer lab to improve basic math and English related to their career choices. In addition, science, math, and English credit classes are provided through Principles of Technology, Tech Math, Practical English and Interpersonal Communications. Leadership skills are provided through membership in VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America) and the National Vocational/Technical Honor Society. Transitional skills are provided to selected students advancing from junior high to high school through participation in the STARR program. Counseling, tutoring, assessment, career planning, and help with job seeking skills are all vital parts of preparing for the future through BOC programs.

### Eastlake Junior/Senior High School

The educational philosophy of Eastlake Campus is to provide each student with an opportunity to succeed and develop the skills and support systems necessary for a productive future. Important to this concept is the delicate balance of appropriate love and support, along with clearly defined and consistently enforced limits. It is important that students are committed to their own academic success. This commitment is shown by attending classes regularly, having the appropriate materials, completing the work assignment, and respecting self, teachers, and other students through appropriate language and cooperative behavior.

Eastlake Campus offers an individualized, student-centered, and success oriented program. Required basic skills classes, electives, and a variety of support offerings are included in a curriculum that is delivered in a class size of approximately fifteen (15) students to one teacher. Most classes are multi-grade level and reflect a 2/3 to 1/3 high school to junior high school ratio. In addition to course offerings at Eastlake Campus, several off-campus classes are available in the community, at Front Range Community College, and at other District Twelve schools. An education at Eastlake Campus is open to all high school aged residents of School District Twelve. Total high school enrollment per quarter is currently limited to 100 students.

Eastlake is a high school of choice, and as such, it should be understood that upon enrollment both students and parents accept the condition and rules which govern the program. It should also be noted that students must have attended their home school for at least one semester before making application to Eastlake. Prior to the start of each quarter,

students are notified of a date for an intake interview. A panel of teachers and students will present the Eastlake program and listen to each applicant's motivation for wanting to be a part of our school. In addition to the interview, there will be a group orientation where the Eastlake program and expectations are presented, and curriculum offerings and any prerequisites are discussed.

Attendance policies for high school students are strict. In the M-W-F classes a student may have three absences per quarter and still pass. (Eastlake does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences for the first three absences.) The fourth absence will result in an F for the quarter unless it is excused. In the T-Th classes, a student may have two absences per quarter. The third absence will result in failure unless excused. The only absences which will be excused are doctor's notes or a subpoena to court as a witness. In any class, three tardies equal one absence. A tardy will be marked for the first ten minutes of class. More than ten minutes late in any class is considered an absence. Junior high students drop one letter grade for each unexcused absence after three on M-W-F or after two on T-Th. Students who are new to Eastlake are placed on probationary status. During this time, new students may have only one absence per class in the first three weeks. Students who fail probation may not attend classes for the remainder of that quarter. Students may re-interview for the following quarter.

Students who are enrolled at Eastlake Campus must pass six classes to avoid being recycled for the following quarter. A successful quarter is one in which student passes a minimum of six classes, with at least two being T-Th classes, and three being M-W-F classes. Students on recycle may interview for re-registration at Eastlake Campus for the school quarter following the recycle quarter. Students on recycle may not enroll at Thornton, Northglenn or Horizon High Schools. Instead, it is advisable for the recycled student to reconsider his/her education and other goals. If a student is recycled two times, Eastlake Campus is no longer an educational option. These could include, but are not limited by: High Plains High School (minimum age 18 years); enrollment in another District 12 school (with principal's permission); Front Range Community College; G.E.D.; Trade/vocational school; seek employment while considering other options.

#### LOOKING BACK . . . AND FORWARD

"For me, individually, working for District 12 was the most wonderful opportunity you could have as an educator. I feel like I touched a lot of lives. I'm proud of having been part of something good." Ron Roloff comments. "There's been a lot of changes. You have to remember that in 1954 only about 72% of the kids eligible to be in school were in school. Rarely did you have any handicapped kids in school. Kids who were not doing well dropped out at 16. Those who were in school were the ones who were doing well and were easiest to teach. By the early 80s, about 95% of the eligible students were in school, with 92% of those graduating. The whole focus shifted. We're still struggling with how we deliver a quality education to such a diverse population."

"The community has probably been the most important thing in keeping this school district in the forefront in education," Mike Roblin pointed out. "Many people here see education as the key to their kids' future, which means they take an interest and support the schools. They recognize that we are professionals."

Former School Board president Chris Sundberg affirmed, "I have had to model trust for years to make shared decision making work, and that experience has taught me to have great trust in the people of this district."



## PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Colorado's economy, like that of the rest of the U.S., is unlikely to again experience the sort of boom years which followed World War II, when between 1950 and 1970 median family income in the U.S. rose 89 percent. Historically speaking, the tremendous economic spurt following World War II was due to an artificial U.S. dominance of the world economy. The U.S. industrial base, unlike that of the countries of Europe and the East Asia, had not been devastated by the war. As Western Europe and Japan rebuilt, their products began to compete with those of the U.S., where economic growth slowed. Yet experiencing slower growth is not the same as sliding backward. Between 1970 and 1992 U.S. median family income, adjusted for inflation, has risen by 13 percent.<sup>1</sup>

These advances have been uneven, however. Increasing their living standards has become difficult for low-skilled workers, who have been hurt by foreign competition, immigration and harsher economic times.<sup>2</sup> The share of families with incomes under \$25,000 (in 1990 dollars) has declined only slightly, from 36.7 percent in 1970 to 33.3 percent in 1990. We have entered an era when a worker's education level matters a great deal. As more and more U.S. companies contract to have unskilled assembly work done overseas where labor costs are cheaper, the cost of jeans and sneakers to U.S. consumers goes down, but the skill requirements for U.S. workers go up. In 1910 the average 25 year old in the U.S. had completed only 8.1 years of schooling. By 1983 that figure stood at 12.5 years.<sup>3</sup> Employers are coming to expect not only a high school degree but some sort of specialized training.

Colorado is now entering its fifth year of slow but steady economic growth. This state is fortunate in that the bulk of its manufacturing is state-of-the-art, high-tech industry that, with the exception of defense-related activity, is likely to continue to expand during the 1990s. Adams County, which was hard hit by the economic downturn which hit the Denver area in the 1980s, is now enjoying renewed growth. At the end of 1992, housing starts, state-wide were up 15%; locally they were up 18%. Tucker Hart Adams, chief economist for Central Banks of Colorado and president of The Adams Group, a consulting firm that provides economic research, analysis and forecasting, predicts:

Many businesses from Europe, Australia, the Pacific Rim want to open North American headquarters and Denver is their primary choice because of our (central) location. They won't all show up in December 1993, but over the course of the next 10 years that will be an important growth opportunity.<sup>4</sup>

There currently exists a strong potential for growth in Adams County. Approval by the voters of Adams County of the annexation by Denver of the land needed for the construction of a new international airport, the nation's first new airport in 20 years, will act as a spur to growth. Whereas once the rivers made travel across the dry plains possible, with the railways becoming the key to economic viability in the late 19th century, now the airports provide our link with a wider international trade network. The new facility is likely to pull growth from the south and west metro areas to the north and northeast metro areas.

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<sup>1</sup> *Newsweek*, March 2, 1992, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Newsweek*, March 2, 1992, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> "Building Confidence in Our Schools" (1983) American Association of School Administrators, Arlington, VA: AASA, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rees, Tom (1992) "Forecast: Colorado Economy to Outperform Nation in 1992," *Metronorth Business Report*, Winter 1992, p. 7.

Yet for students looking forward to high school graduation, economic opportunity takes a different shape now than it has in the past. More skills, more education, are needed for the technologically-oriented industries which are growing fastest. Between 1967 and 1982, white-collar jobs as a percentage of all jobs increased from 48.8% to 56.8%; blue-collar jobs decreased from 38.0% to 29.0%; and service jobs increased slightly from 13.2% to 14.2% of all jobs.<sup>1</sup> The percentages differ from place to place, but everywhere the trend is the same:

In 1953, 50% of private sector employment in Philadelphia was in blue-collar manufacturing, and the figures for New York and Boston were 32% and 40%. By 1980, the corresponding figures were 27%, 17%, and 23%. In contrast, white-collar jobs increased from 12% to 43% in Philadelphia, from 22% to 53% in Boston, and from 22% to 45% in New York.<sup>2</sup>

Similar changes in the structure of the local job market are unlikely to reverse themselves. Those who will benefit most from the economic upswing will be those with the skills to take advantage of the opportunities provided. Thus the schools will be ever more central to Adams County's future, preparing young people for occupations which early settlers could not have imagined.

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<sup>1</sup> House, E. *Educational Researcher*, June-July 1991, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>House, E. *Educational Researcher*, June-July 1991, p. 22