Superintendent: Dr. Sharon A. Thomas  
Primary contact: Holly Brilliant, Title I facilitator  
29,625 students, K-12, urban

District Description

Colorado Springs School District 11 is located in the southeastern part of the state in a city that is considered the gateway to the Rocky Mountains. The district’s students come from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds. About 2,000 students are English language learners, most of whom speak Spanish. The district enrolled 130 evacuee students from hurricane-damaged Louisiana in the fall of 2005, temporarily boosting district enrollment, which had declined slightly from the previous year. It is not known how long the students will be in the Colorado Springs schools; within several months, 25% of the students had moved to other areas or returned home.

Key Findings

- Three years ago, 10 Title I schools in the Colorado Springs district were in improvement. In 2005-06, only four of these schools are still in improvement. District staff attributes the increase in student achievement to interventions undertaken by the schools. These interventions include the establishment of technical assistance teams from the district that work with leadership teams at individual schools to analyze student assessments, implement changes to instruction, and monitor the effectiveness of school programs. A recently appointed district facilitator with a background in curriculum content and alignment oversees the improvement process in each school.

- Three Colorado Springs schools are in their first year of participating in the Reading First program. Though Open Court was not the district’s first choice, the schools are actively implementing the program, and district teachers have had intensive training in how to use Open Court in their classrooms.

- Two district schools in improvement have been charter schools for 10 years. Changes in leadership and the high transience rate among students are two factors that make it difficult for these schools to reach expected levels of achievement.

- At three schools in the Colorado Springs district, outside providers offer supplemental educational services on-site. The district has increased participation in these services by working cooperatively with the providers on logistical matters, such as allowing middle school students to take an activity bus home after tutoring.
Overall Impact of NCLB

No Child Left Behind continues to have a large impact on the Colorado Springs district because 21 of its 66 schools receive Title I funds. The district has a high percentage of low-income students—49%—and the schools have many subgroups that count for adequate yearly progress. Three years ago the district had 10 Title I schools in improvement status. As a result of a variety of intervention strategies, only four of the schools are still in improvement, although one additional Title I school did not make AYP in 2005. Holly Brilliant, the district’s Title I facilitator, credits NCLB for improving student performance at all schools, especially the Title I schools. “The assessments are driving change pretty fast,” she said, “even though the community and most parents don’t really understand what it is all about.”

NCLB and Student Achievement

The Colorado system of accreditation and accountability includes NCLB adequate yearly progress as one of three indicators for schools and districts. The other indicators are the School Accountability Report and the School Improvement Plan. The subgroups that generate the most concern in the district and its schools are English language learners and students with disabilities.

Colorado tests students in grades 3-10 in reading, writing, and math. The state uses multiple measures, including test scores, to place individual schools in one of four categories: Alert, Academic Watch, Academic Probation, or Non-Accreditation. Of the 12 Colorado Springs schools on the state Alert list, only 4 are Title I schools (2 elementary and 2 middle schools), and these 4 are also in NCLB improvement status. The other 54 schools in the district, which include 17 Title I schools, are rated as Fully Accredited.

State data on the percentages of students scoring at the proficient level suggest that the district’s achievement has gone up in math and changed little in reading.

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>State average, high school</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Source: Colorado Department of Education, http://reportcard.cde.state.co.us/reportcard/CommandHandler.jsp
Brilliant said that in a number of areas the achievement gap for elementary students is narrowing, including in math for students with disabilities and in reading for English language learners. In grades 6-8, three subgroups—low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners—are narrowing the gap in math. In reading for grades 6-8, improvements are being seen in the Asian, English language learners, and students with disabilities subgroups. The achievement gap has widened for only one subgroup—American Indian—in math in grades 9-10. English language learner achievement continues to be a problem, according to Brilliant, but the group made safe harbor in 2005 in three areas: elementary reading, middle school math and reading, and high school reading.

Adequate Yearly Progress and School Improvement

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL AYP STATUS
The Colorado Springs district is in improvement status, and uses its Title I set-aside funds to provide extra help for the schools. Schools receive technical assistance in rewriting their school plans and help in selecting curriculum and implementing programs and instructional strategies.

Four Colorado Springs schools are in school improvement in 2005-06. Wilson Elementary School, which missed the AYP target in reading in 2004 and 2005, is in its first year of improvement and is offering choice; East Middle School, and Emerson-Edison Junior Charter Academy, and Roosevelt-Edison Charter are in year 2 of improvement.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES
District and school improvement activities in Colorado Springs use technical assistance teams of district staff to work with site leadership teams at individual schools. These teams assist school staff with analyzing student assessment data, identifying new strategies, and implementing improvements to the instructional programs, especially in reading and math. Team members assist with reviews of how funds from various programs are allocated and how the funds are used. They look at the effectiveness of each program at the school and help the staff rewrite the school’s plan for improvement.

The members of the site leadership teams and their school facilitators take part in ongoing training that enables them to focus on the main issues that impede student achievement.
members also serve as a support system for each other. A district facilitator oversees the improvement process at the schools. This person was previously the curriculum supervisor, and as a result, curriculum content and alignment across grade levels is a major focus of the improvement process. District officials are finding that it is difficult to align the common elements of courses and student expectations for learning to state standards. Differentiating the instruction becomes even more difficult, especially at the high schools, because the schools have many subgroups of students and they all have different academic needs.

The Colorado Springs School District has seven charter schools, some of which have been in existence for a decade. Two charter schools, one K-5 and the other 6-8, are in school improvement. Changes in leadership and high turnover of students have made it difficult for the schools to improve student achievement, according to Brilliant. The charter schools do not use technical assistance teams from the district, and they are free of many requirements that non-charter schools have to follow. “They do, however, have to meet the conditions of their charters, said Holly Brilliant, “and that is a huge process.”

Testing Issues

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) plays a large role in Colorado Springs schools. Most grade levels have been tested since 2000. In the first years of testing, students in grades 3-10 were tested in reading and writing, but the math test was administered only in grades 5-10. Math was added in 2005 for students in grades 3 and 4. The science test was given to students in grade 8, and additional grade levels will be tested in 2006. The assessment results have been disaggregated for the past five years, even before disaggregation was required for NCLB. The state requires test results to be disaggregated in three additional ways not required by NCLB: by gender, by gifted and talented status, and by the percentage of students scoring in the advanced proficiency range of each test for grades 3-8.

In addition to giving the CSAP, Colorado Springs tests students with the commercial Terra Nova test in the fall and spring of each year to determine growth during the year of instruction. Students also take district-created quarterly assessments that are used for diagnostic purposes and to follow individual student progress throughout the year.

Another testing program is the Literacy Act Assessments, required in the state of Colorado. These tests are given in the fall and spring of each year to all new students, kindergarten through grade 10, and to previously identified students who have individual literacy plans in place.

Colorado’s accreditation system includes adequate yearly progress as one measure for accountability. The other two are the School Accountability Report and the School Improvement Plan. Brilliant recognized that the state and district require a lot of testing. “Some teachers complain about it,” she said, “but by and large, people know that assessment is an integral part of instruction and learning.” Data are recognized as an important part of the educational system, she explained, and assessment is part of instruction.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

The staff of each school in Colorado Springs selects its own ways to improve instruction for students. The district does not require a common structure for the schools, so a site-based management system is used to make decisions about curriculum and instruction at all the individual schools. The district requires that curriculum and instruction be aligned with the state content standards, and that learning be connected from one grade level to the next.

To help with decisions about instruction, the Title I schools all have building advisory committees that include parents. These advisory groups determine the curriculum and instructional changes that take place at the school. To obtain systematic feedback on student learning, quar-
Quarterly assessments are given in all the content areas. These assessments are used for diagnostic purposes as well as to determine end-of-course learning. School-based management teams identify needs and allocate resources from various funding sources, and changes in curriculum and instruction are made according to these findings. This process is followed at Title I schools and the schools that are in school improvement.

The district uses a document called the Pikes Peak Literacy Strategies Project that was created by several regional districts. Research-based interventions for students are selected by school staffs. As Brilliant explained, “The staffs identify the best strategies to use with at-risk students, and they get tutoring and extra help during the school day.”

Several district schools have adopted the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) program to monitor student skill mastery in reading. Another program commonly used is Reading Mastery Plus in the full-day kindergartens; at several schools this program is used in kindergarten through grade 5. Brilliant is pleased with the results of these two programs, but she and her staff are also working on identifying additional resources, special support, and technical assistance that could benefit the schools. “One thing we are working on is a common reading program across all Title I schools,” she said. “We have it narrowed to two (Open Court and Macmillan-McGraw/Hill), and we hope to implement them next year.” Both of the programs are state choices for Reading First in Colorado.

No schools failed to make AYP because of their subgroup of students with disabilities in 2005, but this subgroup continues to be a concern within the district as AYP expectations for all students increase. The use of the new reading programs has been beneficial to students with disabilities, but there have been no other changes in the curriculum, instruction, and other services for this subgroup of students.

“The state accountability system is driven by NCLB,” said Holly Brilliant, “so we respond to both.” She described the district approach as one that attempts to fix problems before they get worse. “We are becoming more proactive in how we work with schools that need to improve, and it looks like our efforts are showing results,” she said.

**English Language Learners**

Parents in the Colorado Springs district can choose between neighborhood schools and magnet schools that focus on students who are learning English. The district uses the series *Avenues* for all ELL students, and additional classroom support is provided by ELL coaches who work with teachers and students. Title III funds are used to support the ELL program, and Title I funds are used for the ELL coaches.

**NCLB School Choice**

Four schools are required to offer choice in 2005-06. Of the 1,890 students eligible to transfer to another school, only 37 chose to go to another school. Participation in choice continues to be low for two main reasons, according to district staff. “It’s the loyalty of the parents to the neighborhood school,” said Brilliant, “and the long bus rides for kids.”

**Supplemental Educational Services**

The two middle schools and Roosevelt-Edison Charter are in year 2 of improvement and therefore offer supplemental educational services for students. Eleven providers from outside the school system offer supplemental educational services for the students from these schools. Of the 912 students eligible to attend, only 147 (16%) participate—90 elementary and 57 middle school students evenly divided across the grade levels. Almost all of these students selected on-
site and home tutoring programs, and only a few chose online assistance. Providers hired several regular classroom teachers to work in the on-site programs.

After-school instruction and tutoring assistance are the most popular services provided. The district works with the outside providers to arrange for use of classrooms, scheduling, and transportation. Middle school students, for example, are able to take the activity bus home after receiving supplemental services. Students get out of school at 3:15 and spend more than an hour in the after-school program; the bus takes them home at 4:30. Roosevelt-Edison has the same provider it had last year, but participation has almost doubled in the second year. Home transportation for Roosevelt-Edison Charter students who receive supplemental educational services is provided by parents.

Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS
Although Colorado Springs has 12 teachers who do not yet meet the highly qualified requirements of NCLB, only two of them are in Title I schools. District officials anticipate that all of the teachers will meet the requirements by the end of the 2005-06 school year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Colorado Springs offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities for teachers, such as learning new instructional strategies, particularly in reading; aligning of instruction to standards and across grade levels; and differentiating instruction according to students’ specific academic needs. The cost of training is covered by state and local funds, Title II, and a Title I set-aside for professional development.

Paraprofessional Qualifications and Support
A number of paraprofessionals in Colorado Springs have not yet passed the state test for paraprofessionals. The district goal is for all paraprofessionals to pass the test, not just those who have to meet the NCLB qualifications. A year ago, just over half of the district’s paraprofessionals had either passed the test or completed two years of college; at Title I schools, the percentage was 63%. The percentage at the Title I schools increased to 75% in 2005-06, but 46 paraprofessionals who work at Title I schools are still completing their requirements.

Funding and Costs
Colorado Springs received a Title I allocation of $7.8 million for 2004-05, but poverty is increasing among the students at the district schools, and the Title I allocation is not keeping pace, according to district officials. The number of low-income families increased from 40% to 49% in the past year (nearly 3,000 students), according to Holly Brilliant. The Title I funds to serve students in low-income schools, however, only increased by a few thousand dollars.

Reading First
This is the first year for Reading First in Colorado Springs District 11. Three schools are involved with the program, and they are all using the Open Court reading instructional program. None of these schools are in improvement. All three schools had to change their reading programs because they had not been using Open Court. The overall impact of the program with all the changes that had to be made was huge, according to Brilliant, “and the training was very time consuming.” But Brilliant reported that teachers who participated found the training to be beneficial and that it was “really good.”
Data File—Colorado Springs School District 11

Location: Southeastern Colorado
Type: Urban

Number of Schools

- Total: 66
  - Elementary: 39 (K-5)
  - Middle/junior high: 9 (6-8)
  - High schools: 5 (9-12)
  - Other: 7 charter schools and 6 alternative education programs

Number of Title I schools: 21

Student Enrollment and Demographics

- Total enrollment: 29,625
  - White: 63%
  - Latino: 21%
  - African American: 11%
  - Asian: 3%
  - American Indian: 2%
  - Low-income students: 49%
  - Students with disabilities: 9%
  - English language learners: 7%

Teachers

- Total number of teachers: 1,963
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 99%

Paraprofessionals

- Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 185
  - Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 75%

Total Number That Did Not Make AYP Based on 2004-05 Testing

- Title I and non-Title I schools that did not make AYP, including those in improvement, restructuring, or corrective action: 15

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Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

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