

Issue Brief

Student Achievement

3/31/05

What some people say:

Public education in Colorado isn't working.

Public schools are failing.

Some believe that districts serving most of Colorado's children are failing under the requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) and that our students are not doing well compared to other states. This is certainly not true in Colorado. According to national measures, including the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*, and in comparison to other states, Colorado schools are generally doing quite well.

Facts:

1. Colorado school districts performed very well in meeting the requirements of NCLB:

- 63% of the districts in Colorado met 100% of their targets in 2004, a small increase over last year.
- 85% met over 95% of their targets.
- 90% met over 90% of their targets.
- The number of required targets ranged from 4 to 142, depending on the size and diversity of the district.
- The students who did not make Adequate Yearly Progress were largely students with disabilities and English language learners.

Source: Colorado Department of Education

2. Colorado had the greatest increase among all states in the percent of students taking Advanced Placement courses over the past three years.

Source: College Board (Advanced Placement Report to the Nation, 2005)

3. Colorado students do very well on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compared to students in other states:

- Colorado ranks 5th on the 4th grade reading portion of the NAEP and 17th in 4th grade math.
- Colorado 8th graders rank 12th in reading and 10th in math on the NAEP.
- Colorado ranks 2nd nationally in parent engagement, overall school climate, and school safety.

- We achieve this level of success despite ranking 40th in education spending per student and 45th in percent of taxable resources spent on education.

Source: Quality Counts, Education Week, Jan. 6, 2005

Challenge(s):

Closing the achievement gap between African-American and Hispanic students and Whites and Asian students remains a major challenge. The gap has closed substantially in reading (particularly in 4th grade since 1997). Schools and districts across the state are working hard both to close the gap.

Increasing achievement for all students is an additional challenge. CSAP scores in math and reading have remained essentially flat in most school districts, despite ongoing attention to this concern. Schools and districts continue to seek ways to decrease the number of dropouts as well.

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