

Measures of success

Most students come to The New America School knowing very little English, or having had interruptions in their education. Unlike traditional students, NAS kids often lack family support, may have kids of their own, and are likely to have demanding job duties before or after school. Yet they are measured by the same standardized tests as all Colorado high school students.

At NAS, we have to look beyond standardized tests such as CSAP and find ways to measure individual learning for our unique population. For example, if a student moves from proficiency in grade 6 math to grade 10 math, he might not be able to graduate, but he has succeeded beyond the measurements of the small dots on the CSAP test that might label him a failure.

"The question is, 'How do you measure our success in terms of teaching and learning?'" said Superintendent Dominic DiFelice. "One way is to track individual progress in ways that CSAP

can't."

NAS uses such things as Measuring Academic Progress (MAP), which is a computerized adaptive test that measures general knowledge in reading, language and math. While taking the test, the computer adapts the questions to move up or down a scale of difficulty and determine a student's level of proficiency, rather than merely whether they pass or fail a given standard. MAP may find that a 10th grader reads at the 7th grade level, but allows his progress to be measured against his own level of learning.

Another measure of success is credit accrual. If a student accrues fewer than 8 credits by the 10th grade, his likelihood of graduating diminishes. So the goal is to ensure students master the material and accrue credits toward graduation on a regular, predictable path.

In all, NAS uses nine measurements beyond CSAP. Each school builds a School Improvement Plan, which includes goals tied to progressing in each of the

Beyond CSAP:

- Colorado English Language Assessment proficiency test
- Measuring Academic Progress (MAP) to test individual progress
- Credit accumulation
- Academic achievement (grades)
- Mobility rate (keeping students in school)
- Enrollment status (keeping enrollment and environment stable)
- Attendance
- Graduation rate (percentage of students eligible to graduate who receive diploma)
- Student behavior (striving to keep discipline rates low)



The New America School Success

2009 Report

NAS turns 5, serves common student purpose

Welcome to the second edition of The New America School Success Report.

NAS is proud of many accomplishments, among them growing every year to serve more and more students in need of quality English instruction. We believe education—especially the ability to speak, read and write English—is the cornerstone of success in American life. Our students strive to fulfill their dreams of a high school diploma, and of moving on to a better, productive and more fruitful life.

New America School is in its fifth year of educating new immigrants and English language learners. Our students come from dozens of countries all over the world, as well as here in the United



States. Their common purpose is the need to further their skills in English, and earn their high school diploma. We are proud to be one of the few high schools in the nation with a dedicated mission to serve their needs through high quality and specialized instruction. At NAS, we recognize that learning and perfecting a language is among the most difficult and important things our students will accomplish. Indeed, it will set the course for their adult lives.

We at NAS look forward to learning from our success, as well as our missteps, and to another productive five years serving students and the community.

Polly Baca, Board Chairperson
Dominic DiFelice, Superintendent

NAS serves more students every year

New America School's four Colorado campuses continued to grow to serve more students in the 2008/2009 school year. Total enrollment was up 14 percent from the previous year. In addition, the schools continue to enroll students after the official "October count" in hopes of retaining them the following year and helping them reach their graduation goals. NAS schools are adding students every month who might otherwise drop out or not enroll in school at all.

	2007/2008	2008/2009
Lowry	454	475
Northglenn	255	305
Lakewood	219	243
Eagle Valley	36	78
Total	965	1101



NAS expanding to serve Albuquerque

Albuquerque will be the next home to a New America School. The charter was approved September 2008 to open in 2009. Pending selection of the right location, the school could open as early as August 2009. If a site is not secured, the school will open in 2010.

NAS-New Mexico is governed by a separate, local Board, which

includes nine dedicated and highly qualified community leaders. The Governing Council is lead by President Juan Vigil, a retired community activist. The Council meets once per month to oversee development of the school and ensure it serves the unique needs of the Albuquerque community. The school will be located in the south valley of Albuquerque.

FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS

New America School needs your help

The New America School has many funding needs. If you are in a position to help, we would like to tell you about our programs and how your contribution, time or expertise could assist our students. Please contact Jana Miller, janamiller@newamericaschool.org, or 303.894.3165, for information. We invite you to tour a campus and meet some of the students whose lives you can help improve.

Founder Jared Polis retires from NAS Board

It is with heartfelt thanks that New America School bids farewell to founder and visionary Jared Polis. Polis, who served on the NAS Board until retiring in November, is now serving the 2nd Congressional District as its newly elected Congressman.

Polis made a lasting imprint on New America School through his leadership and generosity. His commitment to opportunities for new immigrants and English language learners advanced



Rep. Jared Polis

the lives of hundreds of NAS students.

"Working on behalf of The New America School mission to help immigrants realize their American dream was important to me," Polis said. "Among the most rewarding experiences was being able to meet several NAS students and see firsthand the impact of the school."

The entire NAS community wishes Jared great luck and success in Congress.

New America School at-a-glance:

The New America School is a system of four charter high schools that specializes in English language instruction for non-native English speaking students. We have four schools in Colorado: Lowry, Lakewood, Northglenn and Eagle Valley, and have been approved for a school in Albuquerque, NM.

Mission

The mission of The New America School is to empower new immigrants and English Language Learners with the educational tools and support they need to maximize their potential, succeed and live the American dream.

New Board members

- **Polly Baca**, Chair, Community leader and former State Senator
- **Emily Curray**, Immigration Attorney Stern Elkind Curray & Alterman LLP
- **Mary Hanewall**, Executive Director Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation
- **Tomas Mejia**, Principal Consultant Colorado Department of Education
- **Shepard Nevel**, Vice President Policy & Operations, Colorado Health Foundation
- **Gina Nocera**, Executive Director Jared Polis Foundation
- **Trinidad Rodriguez**, First Vice President George K. Baum & Co.
- **Mikaela Rivera**, Attorney Otten Johnson Robinson Neff & Ragonetti, P.C.
- **Chris Romer**, State Senator
- **Chris Scoggins**, Sequel Venture Partners

The NAS Board welcomes its new members and bids goodbye and thank you to retiring members. In 2008, retiring from the Board were Christine Johnson and Michael Huttner. We thank them for their service and leadership over the past several years. Joining the Board were Emily Curray, Gina Nocera, Mikaela Rivera and Tomas Mejia. NAS already has benefited from their participation and contribution and we look forward to working with them over the next few years.



Reading focus of professional development

Thanks to a \$1.2 million federal government Professional Development Grant, NAS is taking advantage of a rare opportunity to enhance the way all 49 of our teachers integrate English instruction across all disciplines.

NAS, along with the University of Colorado at Denver, is in the midst of implementing a 5-year federal grant that allows NAS teachers to take classes free of charge from the University of Colorado at Denver. NAS teachers are earning an endorsement in teaching English as a Second Language, or working toward a master's degree.

There are 30 teachers taking classes for endorsement or to complete an advanced degree. Other teachers either are already endorsed in ESL, or are pursuing other post-college degrees.

In order to tie into the grant and take advantage of the wide-scale instruction, the New America School's professional development this year is focused on

reading strategies. According to Sarah Austin, NAS Literacy Coach:

"The purpose of the grant is to improve student achievement. One way to accomplish the goal is by having the professional development plan revolve around specific strategies that target the needs of our student population."

For example, teachers approach reading strategies in three ways: "pre" reading assignment, "during" the reading assignment and "post" assignment". Pre-reading might include advance lessons on vocabulary contained in the book; 'during' an assignment there might be more active versus passive reading in which a teacher reads first, and students 'echo' read the same text; finally, a post-reading assignment might relate the book to real life, which gives it more meaning. The techniques are practiced across disciplines to constantly improve English acquisition.

What makes the combination of the grant and the professional development

'Discovery' improves school culture

Two NAS schools have adopted a specialized school-wide approach to learning and discipline that has proven highly successful in raising attendance and boosting student achievement. The Discovery Program, developed in 1990 by Poudre High School alternative teacher Eric Larsen, was created to teach positive social skills to students struggling with academic, attendance, and attitude problems. Northglenn and Lowry have adopted the program.

The curriculum includes social skills, management strategies, culture development and experiential activities. Through Discovery, students learn and master the positive social skills necessary to be successful in school and in life. It is designed to improve student achievement and works especially well for students considered at risk.

The program requires intensive training for all staff and a 'lead' teacher who teaches the class, which includes such things as group skills, team building, anger management, problem-solving

and conflict resolution. The entire staff reinforces the Discovery principles to ensure it becomes a way of approaching learning, school culture and students' day-to-day lives.

According to Lowry Assistant Principal and Dean Tim Mullins, "The program has been so well received by students that they are helping each other maintain focus in the classroom. Students who were once disruptive are now encouraging others to stay on-task."

Lakewood campus teaches Tools for Success

The Lakewood campus has melded successful tenets of national programs to create its own "Tools for Success" to advance student achievement in and outside the classroom.

The class, taught by lead teacher Tory Baldwin, teaches life and study skills in the hope that students will gain valuable tools to help them in the classroom and beyond.

Three key areas focus on the needs of students to better themselves in the classroom and personally, and then translate their newfound skills to the rest of their life: Academic Success (study skills, preparation for standardized tests); Professional Success (resume and interviewing skills, exploring careers); and Personal Success (life skills, goal-setting, time management).

"We want to help our kids succeed

STUDENT FACTS

- 63% of students are 18 or older
- 93% Hispanic
- 72% immigrants from 25 different countries
- 44% in U.S. 5 or fewer years
- 57% come to NAS functioning below grade level in English proficiency
- 91% at-risk (per state standards)

different from other school systems is that it is universal: every teacher in every discipline is learning and practicing the same techniques whether in UCD classes or in the professional development that reinforces ESL practices. "It's rare and not easy to do on large scale," Austin said.



NAS Graduation 2008



Nearly 100 students—a record number—graduated from NAS in 2008. Graduates and their families celebrated in a June ceremony at Tivoli on the Auraria Campus.



Classrooms go high tech

Classrooms in the historic Lakewood campus may look like charming and old-fashioned, but the school's technology is leading the way to student success.

Smart Boards, portable laptop computer 'labs', high-speed Internet, clicker systems to help teachers engage students, PowerPoint in every room. These are the modern technology tools helping English Language Learners make the most of their education.

"The tools we use help us 'differentiate' learning for our students," said Principal Jon Berninzoni. "Language learners don't always learn in the same way, or at the same pace. Things like Internet-based learning open up new worlds for our kids."

And things like Smart Boards and clicker systems make it more fun and engaging. For example, classrooms at Lakewood have the ability to instantly—and anonymously—poll students about the day's lessons. A simple "Click yes or no if you understood the instructions" can help teachers get past shy students who don't want to admit they don't grasp the concepts. A recent Social Studies class became lively when students used their hands to 'move' words on the Smart Board into the proper category: "need or want".

Each Lakewood classroom features four computers for teacher and student use, and roving laptop carts with wireless high-speed Internet access keep students connected and learning critical skills. The use of such things as Rosetta Stone engage students and give them confidence to continue learning. "The kids love it," said NAS Literacy Coach Sarah Austin.

Eagle emphasizes individual success

The path to a diploma and pursuit of life's goals can be daunting for many of New America School's at-risk youth. In the Eagle Valley campus, staff believes the best way to help their kids succeed is to spell out their goals.

Each NAS Eagle Valley student receives an Individual Success Plan aimed at helping students achieve their individual goals within their academic needs. The idea came out of the first reporting of the "Measuring Academic Progress (MAPS)" testing, which shows each student's grade level, strengths and weaknesses and allows teachers to track their progress.

Eagle Valley staff decided to take the MAPS scores and establish clear benchmarks for each student, including progress that will assist their post-high school goals. For example, if a student is behind grade level in reading, the teacher can individualize a plan with books, vocabulary and writing assignments that will assist that student

in particular. Students can then use a computer program called Power School to track their own progress and make sure they catch up, if necessary, and stay on track.

Says Principal Kathy Brendza: "If you give students a goal and steps to attain it, you've given them small chunks to achieve and see their success at each point. For our students, it's an ominous and overwhelming thing to think about the vast amount of work they need to graduate. This is an exact, step-by-step plan on how to achieve their goals."



Parenting program teaches, comforts

Students at Northglenn and Lowry who face the incredible challenges of being a young mother are finding support in fellow moms and school staff in a new Teen Mother's Group.

The Northglenn group, led by Counselor Mayra Ramirez and school nurse Anne Comaskey, meets twice per month to talk about the issues facing teen moms, including day-to-day difficulties, how to keep their children healthy and tips on being a good parent.

According to program member Alexia, 17, the group helps her learn new things to help her 1-year-old son, such as what to feed her baby. She says she also has learned about how to prevent unwanted pregnancies in the future.

"I like being able to ask questions about things I don't know," she said. "And being able to make friends and talk about my son encourages me to stay in school. It's a good program and a good school."

