



# THE NEW AMERICA SCHOOL



# SUCCESS REPORT 2010

## 2010 GRADUATION ANOTHER RECORD YEAR

A record 190 NAS graduates and their families celebrated at the Denver campus during a June ceremony. In 2009, the schools graduated 128 students. As always, the schools' best scholars delivered addresses and spoke of their accomplishments, gratefulness for the opportunities at NAS, and their desires for the future. Congratulations to all graduates!



## STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY TAKES TEMPERATURE

The NAS Board of Directors requested an annual Staff Satisfaction Survey to be conducted by an independent firm beginning in 2010. Results of this survey gave leaders a good indication of staff satisfaction with jobs and pay, as well as a glimpse into how staff views the New America School's strengths and weaknesses.

"This survey is a good baseline," says Superintendent Dominic DiFelice. "We are pleased staff felt they could be honest and express their views. As you will read in this report, we have already begun to implement several strategies that will keep our schools improving and serving students in the best way possible."

The survey found high satisfaction ratings among NAS staff in the areas of

jobs, benefits, rates of pay and human resources. Also receiving high marks are individual schools and principals, who foster collaboration among staff.

In addition to the positive ratings, the survey highlighted ongoing areas in which NAS strives to improve every year. Recruitment and retention of quality teachers is a priority among NAS leadership and was reinforced as a focus area among staff. As the schools grow and become more centrally directed, consistent curriculum aimed at increasing academic achievement among English Language Learners continues to be a priority and goal shared by staff and leadership.

The survey will be repeated yearly to help the schools grow and measure progress on an internal level.

## POLLY BACA STEPS DOWN FROM LEADING NAS BOARD

Founding Board member and well-known community activist Polly Baca stepped down from her duties as NAS Board Chair but remains on the board. To honor her dedication and work on behalf of students and staff, Polly was given the title 'President Emeritus of The New America School Board of Directors.'



Polly Baca

Polly is no stranger to awards. This year she also was bestowed with the Mexican government's highest honor, the Ohtli award, which recognizes contributions on behalf of Mexican and Mexican American people. The New America School thanks Polly for her tremendous dedication to students and staff, and to the success of Colorado's Latino people. Taking her place is longtime Board member Trinidad Rodriguez. NAS welcomes his steady and thoughtful direction.

## 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.

## NAS Board members

- **Trinidad Rodriguez**, (Board Chair) First Vice President, George K. Baum & Co.
- **Mikaela Rivera**, (Vice Chair), Attorney Waas Campbell Rivera LLP
- **Mary Hanewall**, Executive Director Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation
- **Gina Nocera**, (Treasurer), Executive Director Jared Polis Foundation
- **Tomas Mejia**, (Secretary), Principal Consultant Colorado Department of Education
- **Shepard Nevel**, VP of Operations The Colorado Health Foundation
- **Polly Baca**, (President Emeritus) former State Senator and community leader
- **Chris Romer**, State Senator
- **Chris Scoggins**, Sequel Venture Partners
- **Emily Curray**, Immigration Attorney Stern & Curray LLP
- **Dominic DiFelice**, Superintendent (non-voting)
- **Craig Cook**, CBO (non-voting)

## NAS FOUNDER JARED POLIS HONORED AS CHAMPION FOR CHARTERS

Congressman Jared Polis, D-Colo., was honored by the National Alliance for Charter Schools as the "Champion for Charters" for his support of high-quality public charter schools.

Polis was recognized for introducing the All Students Achieving Reform (STAR) Act of 2009, which would establish a competitive grant program in the Department of Education to enable successful public charter schools that serve at-risk students to replicate, expand and serve more students who are currently in underperforming schools.



# DENVER

## DENVER CAMPUS SETS COURSE FOR PROGRESS

The Denver Campus is implementing a variety of programs to boost academics and student achievement.

The school is focusing on helping students see opportunities beyond high school. The focus is working. In 2009, only a few graduates went onto post-secondary education. In 2010, 20 will attend some type of college, junior college or trade school.

Principal Rhett Parham says it's a combination of students recognizing the value of post-secondary education, school counselors working hard to encourage further education, and school field trips that demonstrate the opportunities beyond high school.

"We are intentionally working on post-secondary readiness and helping them pursue their American dream," Parham says.

Another focus of Denver's improvements is to 'level' classes to better tailor learning to individual needs. The school uses Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test scores to place students in classes according to academic levels. Now, all students can learn and advance at the appropriate pace. The increase in the school's enrollment since moving to the larger campus has allowed them to level classes in all content areas.

MAP testing data also is being used to help students better understand their performance and work toward goals tailored to their needs. For example, students can see their progress and work toward moving into higher level classes.

"Students are developing a sense of personal responsibility," Parham said. "They can see how their performance affects their level of class."



### MOVE TO DENVER MEANS BIGGER, BETTER FACILITY

The NAS formerly located in Northglenn moved in 2009 to its new home in Denver at 601 E. 64th Ave, near Washington and I-25. Both the location and campus are a better fit for students, who now have easier access to the campus via public transportation, and who enjoy amenities not available at the old site.

Among the extra-curricular attractions at the Denver school: a full gymnasium with basketball, athletic fields for soccer (to be finished this year), a theater for plays, assemblies and

other performances, more classrooms, a lunchroom for breakfast and lunch and meeting space for students clubs.

"It's been a fantastic change for staff and students," said Principal Rhett Parham. "Physically we have far superior facilities. Academically, being in the Mapleton district means access to resources and a collaborative relationship between NAS and our chartering district." The new campus and its extracurricular activities have helped the school 'drastically' lower its rate of discipline problems, Parham said.

### EAGLE VALLEY NAS MOVES UNDER AUSPICES OF LOCAL DISTRICT

After three years under the stewardship of The New America School, the Eagle Valley NAS campus in Gypsum moves under the direction of Eagle County Schools starting in the 2010/11 school year. Principal Kathy Brendza, who has steered the school since it opened in 2007, remains the leader at the Gypsum campus.

"The move is a positive one for our campus and students," Brendza said. "It allows us to continue serving our students as before, but also to enjoy more resources at the local level. We are thankful to Jared Polis and the NAS Board for our great start and look forward to continued success."

The school serves approximately 100 students in grades 9-12. The campus is an integral part of the community and a quality educational home for students in the Eagle Valley who might not otherwise be able to earn a high school diploma.

### NAS STUDENTS MAKING GREAT STRIDES

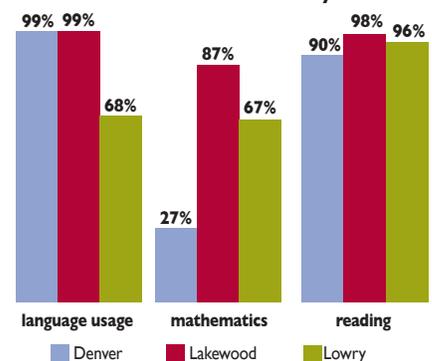
NAS's instructional methods are yielding admirable academic outcomes when analyzed in terms of the school's student population of predominantly English Language Learners.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association, is a quarterly test in English and mathematics that allows teachers to monitor their students' progress and to guide their teaching practices. MAP data is especially valuable to ESL students because it allows teachers to understand and tailor teaching to individual students.

This winter (2010) the three NAS Denver-area schools—each of which is an alternative campus, with 95% or more at-risk students—outperformed most

traditional schools on MAP in terms of student growth in Language Usage, Mathematics and Reading.

Chart 1: Fall to Winter Growth: National Percentile Rank by School



### NAS SERVES MORE STUDENTS EVERY YEAR

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Lowry	454	475	545
North Denver	255	305	476
Lakewood	219	243	230
Eagle Valley	36	78	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>1101</b>	<b>1343</b>

# LAKEWOOD

## SMALLEST CAMPUS MAKES BIG GAINS

The Lakewood campus may be the smallest of the NAS schools but it has plenty to boast about. From daily silent reading to character building, NAS Lakewood is making strides in improving academic achievement and promoting a positive school culture.

Lakewood continues its emphasis on 'experiential education.' For example, the 2009/10 school year began with the entire campus going to the West Pines Campus ropes course to build teamwork and trust among students. Another experiential education unit on cultural diversity culminated in an international fair to share and experience the characteristics of cultures around the world.

"Beginning with the ropes course starts the school year off the right way. The program helps to build community and encourages students to value learning," said Principal Jon Berninzoni.

Another method Lakewood employs to build an appreciation for learning is a requirement to complete six hours per year of community service. The campus also attends Cal-Wood Education Center west of Boulder, where NAS students—most of whom have

never been to the mountains—sleep in log cabins, explore the environment and learn about nature.

One way the school is building its academics is through 10 minutes of silent reading every day in every core class, such as math, social studies, science and English. Research shows that second language learners learn best when they read in their second language. Berninzoni explains that silent reading programs help improve the school's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores.

"It helps kids learn English and helps them perform better in other subjects. The acquisition of second language spills over into all other areas, including mathematics and how they perform on their science tests," Berninzoni said.

The school also participates in Mathematic Engineering Science Achievement (MESA), which is a weekly program in which students take on engineering challenges such as building wind turbines, catapults and bridge building. In past years NAS students have won first prize awards during competitions at the Colorado School of Mines.

## STUDENT WINS WRITING CONTEST

Lakewood Student Nataly Cano won the January prize of the national "Exquisite Prompt" writing contest sponsored by Washington, D.C.-based Reading Rockets and AdLit.org.

The contest is a series of monthly writing challenges based on the works or the lives of 18 participating authors and illustrators. Many of the prompts are designed to strengthen research skills as well and introduce students to online resources like the rich library of primary source material from the Library of Congress. Nataly won for her essay about a person of color staying strong in the face of discrimination. Congratulations to Nataly! Check out her essay at [ReadingRockets.org](http://ReadingRockets.org) and look for the January Level IV winner.

# LOWRY

## LOWRY'S DIVERSITY TOP OF CLASS

When a relatively small school serves students from 22 countries, it can be a challenge for students and staff. But at the Lowry campus diversity has always been a cornerstone of what makes the school special. The hallways at Lowry are filled with faces from around the world, including Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

"Having students from all over the world gives all our students a global perspective," says Principal Annie Trujillo. "They learn about different cultures and peoples. And I'm always impressed with the way they respect each other's cultural experiences and background."

Diversity is a theme carried through Lowry's academics. The campus is focusing on 'writing across the curriculum', which means working on writing skills for all students in all content classes. Diverse learners often can possess good verbal skills, but their written skills need help. So the curriculum requires many different types of writing, from preparation for post-secondary education, resume writing, job applications, college applications and other very real-life, applicable skills. The school also emphasizes important vocabulary words and integrates lessons based on their meaning across curriculum. Examples include words such as opportunity, responsibility, choice, service, culture and immigration. A \$6000 grant from the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries will allow the campus to purchase as many as 500 books that are culturally relevant to Lowry's student body.

The campus also reinforces and celebrates its diversity through the Discovery Program, which is a lot like boot camp for personal, social and educational values. Students learn how to behave and conduct themselves and to value the education they receive. Students take a Discovery class and the tenets of the program are carried throughout the building and reinforced by all teachers in all classes.

"It's the school culture we are developing," Trujillo says. "Students learn the

skills they need to be successful in school: be on time, be prepared, be ready to learn, take responsibility for your actions. It all leads to academic success."

Discovery has increased retention year over year at Lowry. Some of the most at-risk kids stay in school, Trujillo said. "We've seen them have better attendance and stay in class. They don't get in fights and act up. They are learning how to be young adults."



# ALBUQUERQUE CAMPUS OPENS TO SERVE UNFILLED NICHE

The New America School New Mexico opened in Albuquerque in fall 2009 to serve students underserved or not served by local schools. The school has exceeded all expectations for enrollment and graduated 17 students in its inaugural year.

NAS-New Mexico is chartered through the New Mexico Public Education Department. In its first year, more than 240 students enrolled; 325 students are expected for the 2010-2011 school year.

NAS-NM students range in age from 14 to 61 (New Mexico allows students

over age 21 to attend high school) and possess English skills from limited English proficient to fluency. The common theme is that students want a learning environment that better meets their individual needs.

Monthly newsletters and activities keep families and the community involved. Through a dual enrollment agreement with Central New Mexico Community College, NAS-NM students may attend classes to receive both high school and college credit-tuition free.



## ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS SUPPORT NAS

*In 2010 the New America School launched an effort to secure additional resources that will enhance the school's capacity to provide quality education and programs to NAS students. Some of the campaign's successes are highlighted below:*

### LOWRY LIBRARY TO ESTABLISH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER COLLECTION

Aided by a \$6,000 grant from the **Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries**, the Lowry Library collection will be upgraded to include materials written in simplified English and that cover topics that capture students' attention. The Bush grant, the only such grant made to a Colorado school this year, will enable NAS to purchase 500 new books and journals including current best sellers and biographies of individuals with similar cultural backgrounds to NAS students, and novels and classic literature that have been editorially adjusted to the reading level of the school's students.

### IMPROVING TEACHING QUALITY A PRIORITY AT NAS

During the next school year, the New America School will implement two new professional development efforts designed to increase teachers' pedagogical and content-based knowledge. First, with the support of a \$27,500 grant from the **Daniels Fund**, NAS will conduct a series of day-long intensive professional development workshops for the school's faculty. Five of the workshops will help teachers better utilize Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data. In these sessions, teachers will learn how use MAP to identify individual student's academic strengths and weaknesses and tailor instruction to meet their needs at various learning levels. The other four sessions will focus on specific content areas of

particular importance to NAS teachers, such as English as a Second Language instruction.

The second initiative will establish a Mathematics Learning Laboratory. During this project, funded by a \$3,780 grant from the **National Council of Teachers of Mathematics**, NAS faculty will observe teachers who have guided English Language Learners to pronounced achievement in math. NAS teachers will also receive coaching and share best practices with each.

### NAS TO OFFER 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY AT ALL CAMPUSES

**The Morgridge Family Foundation** has granted NAS \$10,000 to purchase four SMART Boards in two of its campuses, Lowry and Denver. The Lakewood campus already uses SMART Boards. SMART Boards are an interactive method of delivering instruction that engage students' interest and allow teachers to present information in a variety of ways, including written, visual and audio. SMART Boards will benefit NAS students because English Language Learners often learn best when material is presented in multiple ways to accommodate students with different learning styles.

NAS also plans to utilize 21st Century Technology to enhance students' reading skills. During the next school year, **Reading Plus®/Taylor Associates** and NAS will be conducting a joint research project through which most English as a Second Language and Reading students will have access to a sophisticated software program designed to increase student comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading proficiency. Students will work through a variety of computerized exercises that are appropriate to their comprehension and skill levels, and that become more challenging as students progress.

## STUDENTS AWARDED POLIS-SCHUTZ FAMILY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Five NAS students will be able to attend college thanks to awards from the Colorado Educational Opportunity Scholarship, sponsored by the Jared Polis family.

The Opportunity Scholarship awards NAS students with \$2500 per year toward tuition and books. For most NAS students, it means the difference between going to school or not.

In 2010, three students from Lowry, one from Lakewood and one from the Eagle campus were given scholarships to use in college or other post-secondary training. The awards went to worthy students, four of whom spoke no English when coming to NAS to study. All have overcome obstacles and have big dreams.

One student, who works as a nanny during the day and studies at night before reading her 4-year-old daughter to sleep, wants to pursue a fine arts degree so she can teach underserved high school students. Another student and political refugee from war-torn Mauritania in North Africa plans to return someday as an educated young man so that he can work for peace. Another student emigrated from Peru and began learning English at NAS, where he earned a 4.0 GPA and is on a path to a computer engineering degree.

NAS congratulates scholarship recipients and wishes them a bright and smart future. In all, the Polis-Schutz family has awarded 23 scholarships to outstanding NAS students.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP NAS STUDENTS

The New America School is always in need of donations of time and money to secure greater educational tools. If you would like to visit our school or hear more about our programs and how your generosity can make a huge difference, contact David Rein, [drein@newamericaschool.org](mailto:drein@newamericaschool.org), 303.894.3160.



303.800.0056  
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