



The New America School

# Success 2016

## Message from Chair

For each of the past four years, as chair of the New America School it has been my pleasure to inform you of the successes, and yes, the challenges that NAS has faced over the past year. And, I am proud to say, that during this time the highpoints have far outweighed any lows we have encountered.

Where I'm most cognizant of this fact is when reporting on the achievements of our students. In May, the New America School bestowed high school diplomas upon 210 worthy students. Many of these students, if not most, had experienced academic or social difficulties before enrolling in NAS. More than 50% had dropped out of their previous school; more than 95% were high risk.

Yet through the students' determination and resilience, coupled with the assistance of NAS faculty and staff, these young adults were able to turn their educational fortunes around and earn their degrees.

Graduates walked across the stage at the Buell Theatre in Denver to be handed their diploma and congratulated by their principal, NAS superintendent Dominic DiFelice, an NAS Board member, and a representative of their school's authorizing district. These school officials have often told me that the singular moment of shaking a student's hand in congratulations was an undeniable affirmation of why we are so proud of our affiliation with the New America School: the young adult on the other end of the handshake will be leaving the graduation ceremonies and NAS far more prepared to succeed in life and to contribute to their community than they were prior to enrolling in our school.

Each New America School must seek periodic renewal of its charter to continue operations. The charter renewal process consists of an extensive, lengthy evaluation whereby the school must demonstrate its capacity to provide quality education to its students, producing student outcomes consistent with the standards set by the State of Colorado and the Colorado Department of Education. During the 2015-2016 school-year, the New America School-Lakewood underwent its renewal process. I am delighted to report that the JeffCo School Board voted to extend the NAS-Lakewood charter for an additional five years. This extension is proof positive of the value that the JeffCo School Board places on the work conducted at the school, and of the school's capacity to promote student

growth and achievement.

This year, both NAS-Lowry and NAS-Thornton will be seeking renewal from their authorizer, the Charter School Institute. Though the process promises to be arduous, we are optimistic for a similar favorable outcome.



Vincent Badolato,  
Chair

This November may greatly enhance the position of our Lakewood campus, as the Jeffco School Board voted to move forward on pursuing a \$535,000,000 bond and a \$33,000,000 mill levy. If passed the Lakewood campus could receive \$3,500,000 from the bond and approximately \$250,000 from the levy. NAS would use much of these funds to purchase the building the school currently occupies, reducing our annual occupancy expenditures by \$400,000. These funds would be re-invested into school services, student activities and reducing student/teacher ratios.

Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I report that NAS superintendent Dominic DiFelice and Chief of Business Operations Craig Cook will be retiring by the end of the 2016-2017 school-year. Both DiFelice and Cook have been with the New America School since 2006, joining the staff within weeks of each other. Together, these two exemplary leaders took NAS from a fledgling, and struggling, school system to a robust, stable three-school institution enrolling 1,200 students each year and graduating 200 of these students annually. While Mr. Cook will be replaced internally by current New America School controller Ray Peterson, NAS will be conducting a national search to find our next superintendent.

I am also saddened to announce that NAS board member Paula Gomez Farrell will be resigning her position after six years of service. Paula has moved to Nederland and opened a new art gallery designed to support the work of nonprofit organizations through the sale of local artisan products. Her gallery, The Art House, will be donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of all artisan products to four nonprofit organizations along the Front Range that support self-reliance, life-long learning and entrepreneurship; the New America School is one of these organizations. On behalf of the board, staff and NAS students I wish her the very best and thank her for her tremendous contributions to our board. We will miss her. ■

# Report

## NAS Board members

- **Vinny Badolato** (Chair),  
*Education Venture Fund Director, Voqal*
- **Mary Hanewall** (Vice Chair),  
*Nonprofit Interim Executive/Leadership*
- **Matthew DeAngelis** (Treasurer),  
*Senior Vice President, Public Finance, D.A. Davidson & Co.*
- **Mara Gonzalez** (Secretary), *NAS Alumni*
- **Polly Baca**, *former State Senator and Community Leader*
- **William Bethke**, *Attorney, Kutz & Bethke, LLC*
- **Deborah Brackney**, *Executive Vice President, Mountain States Employers Council*
- **Sarah Kurz**, *Vice President of Policy and Communications, LiveWell Colorado*
- **Dianne Lefly**, *Director of Instructional Research and Decision Analytics, Colorado Community College System*
- **Jorge Loweree**, *Senior Counsel for Congressman Jared Polis*
- **Tomás Mejía**, *State Director, Migrant Education Program, Colorado Department of Education*
- **Gina Nocera**, *Executive Director, Jared Polis Foundation*
- **Terry Whitney**, *Director, State Government Relations, West Region, College Board*
- **Dominic DiFelice**, *Superintendent, non-voting*
- **Craig Cook**, *Chief of Business Operations, non-voting*

## Mission

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

# NAS Network Perspectives:

## A Message from NAS-Las Cruces

Charter schools were not created to be better than public schools; they were designed to be different, to provide an environment of innovation, and to address the needs of underserved students. Many students select NAS-Las Cruces as their first choice school because of our strong faculty, outstanding school facilities, reputation for community service through Student Council, active National Honor Society, opportunities for students to experience international educational travel, and strong family outreach, as well as for our safe campus community. For other students, however, we may be a school of last resort and hope. Consider the following:



John Munoz,  
President



Margarita Leza Porter,  
Principal

- **OUR STUDENTS FACE EXCEPTIONAL CHALLENGES.** NAS-LC's population is comprised of 23% single parents; 12.4% of our students are homeless, 6% require special education services, almost 28% are English learners, and 94% receive free or reduced meals because of their economic status.
- **WE NEED AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE:** Many of our students come to us from other area schools where they were not accepted due to age, limited earned credits or other individual circumstances. Why do we take these students? Because we know that our community needs an educated workforce.

Almost half of our students (45%), who attend our night school, are 19 and older. They are recovering credits and/or returning to school. They have untapped possibilities waiting to be uncovered given the chance. We are committed to cultivating the enormous potential of students who were left behind.

• **OUR GRADUATES DROPPED OUT OF OTHER SCHOOLS.** If the graduation rate for local schools is at 65%, what happened to the other 35%? They dropped out, foreclosing their chances for better jobs and a better life. Many then seek out welfare or need to rely on other social service programs to sustain themselves and their families. The fortunate ones, however, learn about our school and enroll in efforts to earn an actual high school diploma. Since NAS-LC opened, we have graduated 263 total students, many who are adults and who now have a much more optimistic outlook and means to contribute to our community.

We take those whom have been labeled as the broken, the failing and the dispirited and give them the educational tools and support they need to maximize their potential in a 21st century world. We know our students' names, we know their stories, and we know how to help them achieve the American dream. We are different from other schools, but we are not struggling. On the contrary, we have a strong record of accomplishment. We are succeeding... one student at a time.

## A Message from NAS-New Mexico (Albuquerque)

Every 26 seconds in the United States, a student drops out of high school, resulting in more than 8,300 students lost daily, and more than three million annually. In addition to decreased earning potential and lowered employability rates in an already tight job market, there are also the serious and long-term impacts on family health. We know that the high school dropout has an average life span ten years shorter than that of the graduate, and that deficit extends to the next generation, with the child of a high school dropout having only a 6% chance of earning a college degree. In addition, studies at Princeton University indicate that there may be a correlation between dropping out of high school and poor parenting skills, thereby increasing the potential for generational issues. Perhaps most disturbing of all, according to the U.S. Crime Statistics database, 75% of crimes are committed by individuals without a high school diploma.

So who is most at risk to drop out? The Child Trends Database cites that of ethnicities studied, Hispanics were the highest percentage of dropouts, at 18%. This rate is topped only by the immigrant dropout rate of 20% and only slightly behind immigrants' children at 13%.

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LaTricia Mathis,  
Principal

## INITIATIVES [continued from page 5]

### Planning for Improvement

This fall, made possible in part by a grant from the Colorado Department of Education, NAS-Thornton and NAS-Lakewood will both undergo an extensive process, facilitated by the nationally recognized RMC Research Corporation, the result of which will be a comprehensive, individualized improvement plan for each of the two schools.

"Through the partnership with RMC Research," states Principal Mike Epke, "we will be able to make more informed decisions about how to create opportunities for improved student outcomes. An in-depth analysis of data, along with qualitative input from all staff members, will allow our schools to enhance the impact of the annual school improvement plans."

The improvement planning process

will help NAS identify school performance challenges, prioritize those challenges and then analyze their root causes. Armed with this information NAS stakeholders, including board, administration and staff, will set improvement targets and develop a step-by-step strategy to meet those targets.

As a precursor to the improvement planning process, NAS-Thornton worked in partnership with Momentum Strategy & Research last spring to conduct a comprehensive, evidence-based Diagnostic Review of the school. NAS-Lakewood will conduct a similar review, in partnership with RMC and with input from Momentum, this fall. These reviews examine how well the schools are functioning in key performance areas such as instruction, assessment of learning, and school climate. The participation of Momentum Strategy & Research is particularly relevant to the New America Schools in that their expertise focuses on improving opportunities for the nation's

highest risk students and the schools serving them, such as NAS.

Momentum Strategy & Research is a research and development laboratory focused on developing collaborative initiatives that improve outcomes and expand opportunities in public education, using the momentum of the charter sector experience as the mechanism to drive continued reform to education policy and practice.

RMC Research Corporation is a privately held professional services firm specializing in technical assistance and consulting services, professional development, product development, performance measurement, and applied research in a variety of fields. RMC Research's primary portfolio of work is in preK-12 education, assisting educational leaders at the national, state, and local levels to learn and apply best practices to improve systems and services that lead to improved school and student outcomes. ■

# Graduation: 2016

## NAS Students on the Road to Success



On May 27th, a class of 210 New America School students and their families and friends joined in celebrating the 2016 New America School Graduation Ceremonies.

The festivities, held at the Buell Theatre in Denver, kicked-off with the singing of the national anthem, led for the second year by New America School-Thornton graduating senior and NAS-scholarship recipient, Hailey Remigio (see page 8).

In addition to honoring the 210 graduating seniors, NAS principals Mike Epke, Jon Berninzoni and Annie Trujillo individually recognized 25 students that excelled academically, earning a position on the Principal's List. Along with their diplomas, nineteen of the graduates also earned a National Career Readiness Certificate.

Also sharing in the heartwarming event, emceed by NAS Superintendent Dominic DiFelice, were NAS board members and dignitaries from the New America School-Lakewood's authorizing district: Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Dan McMinimee and Board Secretary Amanda Stevens congratulated each NAS-Lakewood graduate personally as they received their diploma.

Senior speakers Vu Tran of NAS-Lakewood (see page 8), Ixayana Rodriguez, NAS-Lowry, and Esmeralda Rodriguez, NAS-Thornton, inspired their peers and the audience with accounts of the challenges they faced, and overcame, on their way to graduating and they each shared their dreams for the future.

Ixayana Rodriguez, who enrolled at NAS when she was just 13, is more of a traditional student than many who attend NAS. She described

how she was first attracted to NAS-Lowry due to the individualized attention she would receive from teachers and the diversity of the student body. "I loved being part of the cooking club," she writes, "because we shared food and cultures and traditions from Nepal, Japan and El Salvador. I learned to crochet with girls from Ethiopia and Kenya. I worked at the Ronald McDonald House with students from Mongolia, Russia, China and Vietnam. I would never have met people from all over the world and had the chance to make great friendships in

a traditional high school and I wanted that opportunity."

Esmeralda Rodriguez, the NAS-Thornton speaker, also discussed the reasons she enrolled at the New America School. She chose NAS because of the opportunity to attend night school. "I could work during the day and help my family with money and still have my education." It was essential for Esmeralda to find a school that fit her full-time work schedule because, after her father was deported, Esmeralda's family was dependent upon her income to help provide for basic

necessities.

After graduation, Vu plans to become a software engineer, Esmeralda a lawyer and Ixayana a primary care physician. But these aspirations are just a sample of the hopes and dreams



of all those who marched across the stage on graduation night. Some NAS grads will attend college; many a trade school or enlist in the military; others will enter the world of work. But regardless of the path these students choose to follow, by attending NAS and completing their high school education, each has begun the transition to a better tomorrow. ■

### [PERSPECTIVES continued from page 2]

Families in poverty are especially at risk, as students leave education to try to help their families financially by working.

What is the risk in New Mexico? It is evident looking at the U.S. Census numbers that New Mexico is a state whose families are in dire need, with a 61% minority population, 48% of which is Hispanic. It also has a 16% overall dropout rate, higher than the national average. Almost 10% of New Mexico residents are immigrants, an estimated 6% of those undocumented. 24% of families are in poverty,

and more than 28% have no health coverage.

This is where The New America Schools make the difference. The New America Schools exist to reach these families most in need of education and social help. By offering the chance for all students to get a high school diploma, "drop-in" and change the path of their lives, some of the trends towards poverty, ill health, and generational social issues can be reversed.

Hispanic students comprise 98% of the NAS student population, almost 20% of whom are pregnant or already parents. By reaching

those students, family education and support is increased, and educational role models are apparent. One particular bright spot is the unique opportunity in New Mexico to admit students with no age cap placed on a diploma. As a result, 29% of students at NAS who had left education are returning as they realize the importance of attaining a diploma, and 27% are adults over the age of 21 — students once assumed lost to the educational system. They have learned that a high school diploma means better opportunities, higher pay, and health coverage for their children. ■

# Featured Initiatives

## NAS Adopts Two-Pronged Approach to Implementing Best Practices in Our Schools

Since its inception, the New America School has conducted structured and ongoing Professional Development activities, programs and meetings to ensure staff is continually improving and keeping up with best practices regarding instructional techniques.

However, in the past few years, NAS teachers, staff, and administrators have also become



**Implementing Formative Strategies:** After attending the NWEA "Building Your Formative Assessment" workshop, The New America School faculty put what they learned into practice by holding a science fair for teachers to share formative assessment ideas, interactive strategies, and feedback techniques. These efforts were featured by NWEA on their Facebook page.

committed to the premise that reaching non-traditional students requires more than just implementing research-based teaching methods: research shows that connecting with our students also requires an understanding of their socio-emotional needs.

"It was important for us to realize that we need to support our students' socio-emotional growth as well as their academic growth," notes Professional Development Coordinator Tracey McCormick. "Growth in one area supports growth in the other, and both lead to greater student achievement."

With this in mind, last spring the NAS Leadership team, based on input from staff and teachers, developed a professional development plan to promote NAS Best Practices that is driven by data, a growth mindset, and a belief that every student can learn. Teachers receive ongoing training in the best practices of instruction, including using formative assessment, employing interactive learning strategies, and using sheltered instruction and learning objectives to support student achievement.



On the socio-emotional side, teachers and support staff such as counselors and interventionists receive coaching on trauma-informed education strategies, motivational interviewing, and identifying risk and protective factors of their students.

For example, last winter all of NAS's teachers received training from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) on using formative assessment to reach all learners in a classroom. Formative assessment is a feedback system of procedures and check-ins so teachers can monitor student learning while it happens. This process allows teachers to improve their teaching so students can improve their learning.

For example, teachers can use popsicle sticks to conduct inclusive formative assessment. Often the students who need the most help don't voluntarily raise their hands. Teachers can simply write students' names on popsicle sticks. Then, instead of calling on students who've raised their hands, teachers can call on the students whose name appears on the randomly drawn stick. In this way, all students' learning can be monitored.



Since implementing formative assessment techniques in the classroom teachers have noted increased student engagement. To facilitate even more

effective use of this instructional methodology, this year teachers will be modeling formative assessment techniques for their peers at monthly professional development trainings.

Interactive learning has also been identified as a NAS Best Practice. Interactive learning is student-centered, where students participate in the learning process through collaboration, technology, role playing, and movement. Students discuss and clarify content with one another rather than relying on the teacher for all the answers.

"Research shows we remember 10% of what we read and 70% of what we discuss with others," McCormick explains. "Our teachers have always known that collaborative learning and movement-based instruction are effective means of reaching our students. We want to build on what teachers are already doing and make the full shift to interactive learning."

On the socio-emotional side, a cohort of 15 staff members and teachers began training in

Motivational Interviewing (MI), a communication method that focuses on tapping into students' intrinsic motivation in order to foster positive behaviors. MI is less about telling a student what to do and more about listening to what drives that student and guiding the conversation toward goals. Karen Alonge, an interpersonal communication consultant from Boulder, Colorado, has been conducting trainings on Motivational Interviewing for NAS support services staff and will continue these trainings throughout the following year.

The newest socio-emotional-focused NAS Best Practice is Trauma-Informed Education (TIE), brain-based research that helps us understand how trauma affects students' development, brain functions, their ability to learn, and their behavior. A teacher and instructional coach at our Lakewood campus, Suzanna Gould, is spearheading the monthly trainings to help staff and teachers become more informed about the varying effects of TIE. Gould is using the Turnaround for Children's Building Blocks of Learning to inform teachers that students cannot learn if their trauma-influenced social emotional needs are not met. At the beginning of the school year, staff identified several behavioral characteristics that many of our students need to cultivate such as: attachment, self-regulation, and stress management. Throughout the year, staff will be implementing a variety of interventions that help students' grow these capacities.

Gould explains, "Some simple tools NAS teachers and staff can use to help build these traits in students include greeting students at the door by name and with a smile. We also should have an objective and an agenda for the day so students know what it happening, and understand that sometimes we need to allow students to step outside for a cooldown period when needed."

## Students Take Major Step towards College Attendance

Dozens of NAS-Thornton seniors, their parents and siblings gathered in the school's library after-school on February 24th to fill out their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Burritos and soft drinks were provided to all so that no one would miss dinner. The entire counseling staff, a volunteer from Goodwill, and other members of the NAS-Thornton team were on hand to ensure that despite the large number of attendees, no one had to wait for assistance.

This scene was repeated on other "FAFSA Nights" at the Thornton school, and at each of

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[INITIATIVES continued from page 4]



*Students and their Families Work to Complete their FAFSA*

the other two NAS campuses: NAS-Lakewood and NAS-Lowry.

Why?

Because completing the FAFSA is the first step toward getting financial aid for college, career school, or graduate school. To apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, work-study, and loans, students need to complete and submit a FAFSA.

"The cost of college keeps going up and up," explains Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness Counselor Judy Schott. "For most of our students, securing financial aid is often the difference between whether a student is able to continue their education or not."

"In addition," Schott continues, "studies show that the mere act of completing a FAFSA makes a student more likely to believe that college attendance is possible, and more likely to apply to college. That's why we're going to keep doing all we can to encourage all our eligible students to fill out a FAFSA."

As a result of the FAFSA nights, and other system-wide efforts to encourage college enrollment, sixty-six NAS students completed their FAFSAs in 2015-16, an increase of 120% over the previous year. Many of these efforts were supported by a School Counselor Corps Grant from the Colorado Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Readiness.

## Building Students' Social-Emotional Capacities

Research on student K-12 and post-high school outcomes show that schools no longer can just focus on developing students' academic competencies because success in today's society requires a broader set of skills. 21st century skills, such as self-management, social awareness, adaptability, and diligence, account as much for, or more, of a student's attainment in school and in the workplace as cognitive skills do.

Yet teachers and schools are more often than not unable to gauge a student's non-academic competencies; even if teachers do have a sense about which non-academic competencies a student may need to develop, teachers often do not have the training to apply this information in the classroom.

To help address this shortfall, the Colorado

Education Initiative (CEI) has granted several schools, including NAS-Lakewood and Thornton funding to pilot one such measure of non-cognitive student competencies and to offer teachers professional development in the use of this tool. The two schools have selected Pairin (Project BeReady) as their tool and will be using this tool throughout the 2016-17 school-year.

NAS-Thornton Principal Mike Epke explains, "We believe that by working closely with Pairin to analyze the results of our assessments of students non-academic capacities, we can develop opportunities for students to learn and grow the socio-emotional skills that so many of them lack."



*Students in Mrs. Zagar's America Literature class collaboratively present their analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's Annabel Lee.*

Pairin is designed to measure personal and professional behaviors in order to develop the "whole student" so he or she leaves school armed with not only academic skills, but also the personal and professional skills employers seek. The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) is an independent non-profit that collaborates with CDE, schools, and districts across the state to accelerate achievement for all Colorado students.

## NAS Launches Three-Year Student Re-Engagement Initiative

Students often come to NAS lacking many of the basic skills necessary for academic success. Most NAS students, 80%, enter the school below grade level in reading, language use and mathematics. More than 60% of NAS students enter our schools at or below the 6th grade level in both reading and math.

Over the past several years, NAS has implemented a variety of interventions designed to help these students develop the academic skills they lack. NAS has established Expanded Learning Opportunities such as Friday School classes in core academic subjects, walk-in after-school tutoring, and self-initiated and self-guided credit recovery work using OdysseyWare.

These efforts have proven impactful. Teacher surveys conducted in spring 2015 indicate that 129 of 202 regular participants in Expanded Learning activities demonstrated academic growth, with only 24 regressing.

Now, with the support of a Colorado Student

Re-engagement grant, awarded by the Office of Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement of the Colorado Department of Education, NAS will build upon, expand, and formalize some of the more successful of these interventions.

First, building upon the success of Friday School core subject classes, NAS will begin to offer formal, **Extended Learning Time, Credit Bearing Elective Courses**, which will both promote increased engagement and credit accumulation. These courses will be taught by community partners who will make available their particular areas expertise to NAS students. For example, Colorado Adventure Point (see page 6) will offer a Life Skills class.

Next, hoping to replicate the impact of NAS individualized after-school instructional activities NAS will offer **In-Class Targeted Academic Interventions**. NAS will station a Supplemental Education Specialist (SES) in core subject matter classes to provide individualized assistance to both students struggling with the lesson at stake and students who are at-risk of not gaining credit for the class, and in so-doing promote course completion and thereby credit accumulation and progress towards graduation.

"As the NAS-Thornton Supplemental Education Specialist," explains Dilly Gutierrez, "I hope to contribute positively to our students' education and serve as a guide for them to be successful in life, reinforcing their knowledge and providing useful tools that will contribute to their acquisition of a high school diploma."

Finally, acting on the promise of after-school, walk-in credit recovery efforts, NAS will formalize an **Independent Study** program focusing on credit recovery (and thus course completion and credit accumulation). These semester long **Independent Study** classes will be scheduled in the computer lab where students will be able to access the online curriculum OdysseyWare. The courses will also be supervised by each school's SES.

"Fifty-four percent of NAS students dropped out at one point during their education, often leaving partway through courses. Many others have taken a course, but failed," adds Lakewood's SES Drew Hoehne. "By offering online programs for these students, and having a trained Supplemental Education Specialist on-site, we hope to help our students recover the credits they are missing and get them back on track towards graduation."



*Supplemental Education Specialist Erik Clark assists a Lowry student.*

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# Featured Partner: Colorado Adventure Point



For the last two years The New America School has been partnering with Colorado Adventure Point, a local non-profit experiential education center, to provide unique learning opportunities to NAS students.

Colorado Adventure Point (CAP) is a two-story indoor facility that provides students of all ages training and experiences in rock climbing, archery, welding, and dozens of other skills which most public schools cannot offer their students. The programs CAP planned for NAS are specifically designed to make academic concepts more hands-on, engaging, and personally relevant to each student.

Jesse Greaves-Smith, a former teacher at NAS-Lakewood, explains the teaching model he believes make CAP and NAS a natural fit. "At Colorado Adventure Point we use what we call Adventure Education. It's a blend of academic skills, hands-on skills, and positive youth development techniques. What this means is that every student in a class at CAP develops their cognitive and affective domains, and walks out of our building with a new skill each time they visit."

Students from the Lowry and Lakewood campuses have been attending CAP regularly since early 2015, and Thornton students began attending this



fall. They typically come to a 4-hour Friday school course that splits the time into a specific academic subject taught CAP style, and an in-depth experience of one of the many Adventure Zones.

During Quarter 1 this year the Friday school course has been "Geometry through Robots".

Over the nine-week class students have learned to program simple robots to outline geometric shapes. They have also covered scale drawing with the practical application of reading blueprints and drawing maps. The long-term problem which the class will work in small groups to solve is based on a mock mission to Mars. Students will measure an obstacle-filled environment and use that data to draw an accurate map of the "Martian" surface, and then program their robot to navigate the course safely.

"This type of course highlights the effectiveness of Adventure Education," explains Greaves-Smith. "Students learn concepts of area, perimeter, algebraic solutions, and angles, they learn the practical skills of reading and making maps and writing program code, and they learn and practice social skills as they work in small groups to solve their problems."

Each day the students also participate in active teambuilding games and spend around 90 minutes in either archery or rock climbing. Both of those activities focus on the competencies needed to participate safely, and on the mental skills each discipline can offer.

"Rock climbing is an immediate, hands-on application of creative problem solving ability, body awareness, goal setting, perseverance, and even trusting and communicating with your climbing partner," elaborates Austin Durr, CAP's director overseeing climbing and alpine programs.



Other course combinations that NAS students have participated in include a human anatomy and first aid course. Lakewood student Fabian Trujillo describes his experience. "It really taught me some things about self-aid and survival. I had a blast!"

NAS Lakewood students participated in a 4-day zombie survival course with real "zombies" released into the building as a practical test. Students learned survival skills such as first aid, cooking from natural supplies, shelter building, group leadership, and welding. Student Andre Gonzales enjoyed the course, explaining "This was my first time trying welding. The experience was pretty cool since I got to melt metal."

Partnering with Colorado Adventure Point has also allowed NAS students to participate in three-day, two-night high ropes teambuilding campouts. Groups of 15-30 students meet at CAP for orientation and harness training, and then take a bus to the Tahosa Alpine Adventure Base, a 300-acre camp owned by the local Boy Scouts and often operated by CAP for special events. Friday night through Sunday afternoon are spent solving problems in small teams and developing communication and leadership skills. During the most recent trip, on Saturday students canoed on a mountain lake, and then on Sunday students spent several hours on the zip line, cable bridge, and other high-ropes elements. ■



# NAS Fundraising Again Tops \$1,000,000

For the sixth consecutive year, the **Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation** has granted NAS \$25,000 to support the Lakewood campus' *Cuidate!* program, a research-based, teen pregnancy and HIV prevention curriculum.

2015-16 marked the third year of the four-year \$730,000 **School Counselor Corps** grant, funded by the **Colorado Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Readiness**. Year 3 funding of \$235,642 enabled NAS to maintain our efforts to increase our students' postsecondary education and workforce readiness. \$78,692 in additional funding was made available during Year 3 which allowed NAS to implement a mentorship program and University Preparation summer class which better equipped our recent graduates to make the transition to post-secondary education.

The **Colorado Department of Education's Dropout Prevention and Re-Engagement Office** continued to fund three existing grant programs and began funding a fourth program in 2015-16.

- Marking its fourth year, the five-year, two million dollar **21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC)** grant (made possible through the U.S. Department of Education), allows each NAS school to run a series of after-school academic and enrichment programs. NAS received \$360,000 in support during Year 4.
- 2015-16 was the final year of the four-year \$500,000 **Expelled and At-Risk Student Services** program, which identifies the NAS students most at risk of suspension and expulsion and assigns a behavior interventionist to work closely with them, monitor their progress, and then provide them with personal support and attention. NAS received \$78,061 in support during Year 4.
- The five-year, \$450,000 **Colorado Graduation Pathways Program** was extended for a sixth year. An additional \$20,000 was made available to the NAS-Lowry and NAS-Thornton campuses to work with the students that were most at-risk of dropping out.
- In April 2016, CDE established the **Student Re-engagement Grant Program** and awarded NAS \$269,194 to hire three dedicated staff that will provide daily, in-class individualized academic interventions to students struggling with core subject area course material and to assist re-engaged, formerly out-of-school students working to recover credits.

The **Colorado Department of Education's Office of Student Health Services** renewed its funding of the **School Health Professional Grant** program. The grant of \$160,199 enabled



**NAS Grant Support at Work.** NAS-Thornton student Josiah Rios participated in a 21st Century Community Learning Center supported student leadership opportunity, a guided excursion to the mountains. Then, during the school's Sheila Fortune Foundation-funded Spoken Word Poetry program, he used this physically demanding undertaking as a metaphor for overcoming his internal travails.

NAS to hire a full-time nurse at the Thornton campus and a social worker at both the Lowry and Lakewood campuses with the goal of increasing the availability of school-based prevention and early intervention programs to reduce the risk of substance abuse.

The **Colorado Education Initiative** awarded a grant to NAS-Thornton and NAS-Lakewood. This in-kind donation will allow NAS to pilot Measures of Non-Academic Learning Outcomes and to offer related professional development.

The **Sheila Fortune Foundation** renewed its support of the NAS-Thornton **Spoken Word Poetry** program with a grant of \$3,500. This program provides students the opportunity to use the creative arts to develop healthy thinking and behavior, and at the same time, enhance their English language skills.

The **Jared Polis Foundation** awarded NAS \$2,500 to establish an Emergency Fund to support students experiencing short-term financial crises.

The **Polis-Schutz Family Foundation** continued to provide financial support for deserving NAS students to carry on their studies

after graduation. This year, the family through their foundation donated \$10,000 to the **Colorado Educational Opportunity Scholarship Fund**. In addition, The Polis-Schutz Family Foundation donated \$70,000 to support efforts to replicate the NAS educational model in other communities throughout the southwest.

**Rotary Eclub One**, acting on the recommendation of an NAS board member, contributed \$500 for general support of the New America School.

The **U.S. Department of Education**, via a pass-through grant to the **Colorado Department of Education**, granted NAS-Thornton \$25,756 to develop a focused **School Improvement and Action Plan**. The same program also granted NAS-Lakewood \$47,284 to conduct both a **Diagnostic Review** of the school and a **School Improvement and Action Plan**.

NAS received \$92,789 in funding through the **U.S. Schools and Libraries E-Rate program**, a federal initiative which assists schools that enroll a

high percentage of low income students pay for telecommunications and internet service. This year E-Rate also allowed NAS-Lakewood and NAS-Lowry to make some well needed wireless connectivity infrastructure upgrades.

**NAS Board Members** demonstrated their leadership and commitment to the school's mission, not only through the extensive work they do on behalf of NAS, but through their financial support. Once again, 100% of the board contributed to NAS during fiscal year 2015-2016. Members also secured an additional \$1,748 through workplace matching donations and helped raise in total \$87,321 to support NAS programs and students.

More than 80 local organizations, agencies and individuals provided thousands of dollars-worth of in-kind goods and services to NAS, primarily through work with each school's 21st Century Community Learning Center.

In total, gifts from public and private sources, corporations and individuals exclusive of in-kind contributions totaled in excess of \$1,139,308 for the year. ■

## FUNDING CONTRIBUTIONS

### SUPPORT NAS

Your support will enable the New America School to continue to provide high quality education to English Language Learners and non-traditional students. If you would like to visit our school or hear more about our programs and how your generosity can make a huge difference in the lives of NAS students, contact David Rein, [drein@newamericaschool.org](mailto:drein@newamericaschool.org), 303.894.3160.

# 2016 Colorado Educational Opportunity Scholarship Recipients

**Anayeli Lagunas Bustamante** grew up in Guerrero, Mexico. As a child, she often worked from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the fields, helping her father sow corn, pumpkins and pepper. Anayeli's father and mother only finished second grade and nobody in her family has ever attended college.



Anayeli Lagunas Bustamante

She describes that at home in Guerrero, she saw violence on every corner, and she saw the psychological impact of this environment. Her peers were often discouraged from setting goals and didn't have the will to overcome the obstacles that continually stood in their way. Not Anayeli. She writes, "Finishing school is one of the most important goals that I have. I want my parents to be proud of me, of what I'm doing for other people, and as a woman."

And she has done more than enough to make her parents, and the entire NAS community proud. In one year at the Lakewood school, Anayeli has progressed from the English as a Second Language program to College Literature classes, and has become the school's valedictorian in the process. This summer she will be attending the Bridge Program at Colorado State University in route to achieving her dream of becoming a pediatrician.

**Hailey Remigio** became pregnant during her freshman year and dropped out of high school. Realizing that working for eight dollars an hour would not support her and her child, when her son was two years old, Hailey made the decision



Hailey Remigio

to go back to high school and the commitment to graduate. When she began at New America School-Thornton she only had four credits. For a year and a half she would walk her son to day care and then head off to school. She enrolled in both day and night classes, and attended Friday School and afterschool tutoring as well. She increased her GPA from a 1.6 to a 3.0 in the time she was back in school. In May 2016, Hailey graduated—only one year later than her original graduation date.

"My son inspires me to create a future worth living," Hailey writes. "I do not want to just survive; I want my son and family to be proud of what I will achieve. I know attending college will take hard work, time and money, but I also understand that it's an investment into my future."

While at New America School, Hailey has acted as a peer counselor for other teen mothers in the NAS-Thornton parenting group. She has participated in the cooking club, coffee talk, and was captain of the school's volleyball team. A member of the music club, she has sung the National Anthem at each of the past two New America School Graduation Ceremonies. Hailey hopes to become a neurologist one day.

**Vu Tran** aspires to become a software engineer. But, as Vietnam, Vu's homeland, is a developing country, if he stayed at home he would have little opportunity to achieve this dream. So Vu made the hard decision to leave his parents and younger brother in Vietnam, and pursue an education in the United States,



Vu Tran

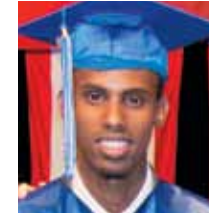
eventually landing at the New America School in Lakewood, Colorado.

Though he began his NAS career as an English as a Second Language student, in just two short years, Vu progressed to the point where he was excelling in the school's College Literature course, as well as in all his classwork, as evident by his earning the position of class salutatorian.

Vu's status as an F.1. Visa enrollee in the New America Schools' "International High School" came with the requirement of paying for tuition. To secure these funds, Vu worked long hours in his uncle's restaurant—yet he still managed to maintain excellent grades, found the time to participate in the school's art and

cooking clubs, and made the time to provide assistance to another Vietnamese student who was just beginning to learn English. Vu will attend Red Rocks Community College for the next two years to secure the foundational credits needed to enter a software engineering program before moving onto a four year college to earn his degree.

**Omar Gabow** was born in a small village in Somalia. However, when he was 11, many members of his family were forced to leave his homeland to escape Somalia's civil war. Other family members, though, had to remain behind. Looking for a safe place to live, after first moving to Kenya, then Yemen, then Ethiopia, Omar and his father, a sister and a brother came to the U.S., and Omar enrolled in the New America School-Lowry.



Omar Gabow

Omar spent three years at NAS, earning a 3.81 grade point average and a near perfect attendance rating. While in high school Omar also gave back to his adopted community, participating in several service projects, such as volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House, cleaning a local creek, and building homes through Habitat for Humanity.

Out of a desire to return to Somalia and help rebuild that country's war torn infra-structure, Omar plans to become an engineer. His first step will be to enroll in the Community College of Denver to earn the general education credits needed to enroll in an engineering program. ■

Learn More about the New America School on –



<https://www.youtube.com/user/NewAmericaSchoolVid>