



The New America School

# Success 2013

## Report

### Message from Chair

The New America School – Colorado had a phenomenal year full of great stories, accomplishments, and milestones. NAS students continue to make academic gains. One of the campuses began the process of changing authorizers and building a new facility. Both private and public fundraising remains strong. The NAS board has taken steps to advance its governance through a strategic planning process. And, most importantly, a large number of students were able to earn their high school diplomas and either move on to postsecondary opportunities or the world of work.

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 to maximize their potential and live the American dream. This mission permeates everything that happens at the three campuses and the central office. I have never seen a more dedicated and tireless group of people, all working with great synergy to ensure that any person that walks through our doors is given the opportunity and support to succeed in life.

And NAS is demonstrating success at meeting our mission. Our academic results continue to improve annually as



Vincent Badolato, Chair

evidenced by our NWEA Measures of Academic Progress results. In fact, all three campuses were rated “meets” on the state performance framework in all subjects in both achievement and growth. This is no small feat for schools where the average student age is 18 and the average number of credits for a first time enrollee

is seven. I am also proud to have witnessed 186 students walk across the stage at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House in June to receive their high school diploma. The vast majority of these students have self-reported that they never thought they would graduate high school, but due to their hard work and opportunities presented at NAS, these are 186 more individuals who have created a better future for themselves and their communities.

It is an exciting time to be a member of the Board of Directors and I am extremely proud to have been elected

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### NAS Celebrates Start of 10th School Year

In 2013, the New America School will celebrate its 10th year of meeting the needs of the Denver area’s English language learning and academically underserved students. The New America School was founded in 2004 to serve immigrants and their families. While remaining true to this charge, over the past decade NAS has adapted to changing community needs. In 2008, the board expanded the NAS mission to include a service priority of English Language Learners (ELLs). This year, once again responding to community need, the board voted to amend the NAS mission to include an additional service priority of “academically underserved students.”

NAS began with 452 students and two metro Denver campuses (NAS-

Lowry and NAS-Denver). One again, responding to the great demands for the educational services NAS offers, a third campus was opened (NAS-Lakewood) in 2006. Today, NAS-Colorado serves more than 1,000 students annually.

At the same time, recognizing that many communities in the southwest desperately need a high school dedicated to serving English Language Learners and with an instructional schedule flexible enough to accommodate the needs of this population, NAS began establishing schools in other cities—Albuquerque in 2009 and Las Cruces in 2012. NAS is currently investigating opening schools in Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Lisa Collins, a member of the

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### NAS Board members

- **Vincent Badolato** (Board Chair), former Vice President of Public Affairs, Colorado League of Charter Schools
- **Sarah Kurz** (Vice Chair), Director of Strategic Marketing at City and County of Denver
- **Mary Hanewall** (Treasurer), former Executive Director, Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation
- **Tomas Mejia** (Secretary), Senior Consultant, ELA Unit at Colorado Department of Education
- **Polly Baca** (Past Chair), former State Senator and Community Leader
- **Deborah Brackney**, Vice President, Mountain States Employers Council
- **Gracie Carr**, Admissions Director, St. Mary’s Academy
- **Paula Gomez Farrell, Ph.D.**, former Director, SkillBuild Colorado
- **Dianne Lefly**, Core Faculty-Research, University of the Rockies, Denver Campus
- **Gina Nocera** (Past Chair), Executive Director, Jared Polis Foundation
- **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.

# Project-Based Learning and the Arts

Project-Based-Learning informs much of NAS instruction. PBL shifts classroom practices away from short, isolated, teacher-centered lessons in favor of hands-on, long-term, interdisciplinary, student-centered activities integrated with real-world issues. Last year, the arts featured prominently in many NAS projects.



NAS-Lowry Theatre students produced a feature length film, "Friday School," which was screened at Cinema Latino for the entire Lowry student body. Inspired by the classic film "The Breakfast Club," Friday School follows a group of rowdy high school students serving Friday detention. They start the film as enemies and stay in their own cliques but by the end, they recognize they have more similarities than differences. They learn to accept each other and themselves.

"This project helped students understand filmmaking," explains Theatre teacher Lisa Collins. The story line made students question themselves and their prejudices. I think it is something they will cherish for the rest of their lives."

The student actors spent the first semester studying theatre, improvisation techniques and performance. Their first semester final project was to collaboratively write a screenplay. The class comes up with an idea, develops

a story map, and then assigns teams to write the script. The second semester is spent rehearsing, filming and editing.



Last spring, NAS-Denver students participated in a series of workshops led by Minor Disturbance, a literary arts organization dedicated to helping Denver youth find voice through poetry and performance. Three mentors worked with students in Denver's Language Arts classes over

a three week period. By popular student demand, other teachers had their classes join in. The mentors performed their own, original poems and provided writing prompts to teach students how to write and perform spoken word poetry.

"A spoken word poem is," Language Arts teacher and workshop organizer Barshia Cohee explains, "a poem that is so powerful, so gripping, and so bold that it just can't sit still on the page in

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**[ANNIVERSARY** *continued from page 1]*

inaugural faculty at NAS-Lowry reflects upon why her commitment to NAS remains strong. "Though the teachers' and administrators' faces have changed over the past ten years, their passion and commitment to preparing students for their lives after school remains. The simple truth is I am inspired by the people I meet at work. I work with students who have such a tremendous capacity for learning and improving.

They constantly challenge me to come up with newer fresher ways to deliver content and enable their learning. I work for an organization that allows me to be creative in my approach to reaching these students. I have colleagues who value collaboration and are innovative thinkers. The welcoming environment, the hardworking nature and passion of all the players remain the same as they did on my first day."

**[CHAIR** *continued from page 1]*

chair by my fellow members. I want to thank Gina Nocera for handing me the chair reins at a time when NAS is in its strongest position in its ten year existence. Her leadership as a member and chair over the years has been exceptional and I am very pleased that she continues her service on the board. I also want to acknowledge the board vice chair Sarah Kurz, Treasurer Mary Hanewall, Secretary Tomas Meija, and the rest of the board members for their commitment and leadership.

While NAS' successes are many, there are still significant challenges to meeting our mission. School funding remains a challenge, especially when trying to meet the needs of our extremely diverse student population. While I am pleased to report that fundraising totaled over \$871,000 last year on top of per pupil revenue, greater resources are still needed. And even though academic success is improving, there is still much more improvement to be had.

But, if any group of people and any schools are going to get the critical job done, I know it will be the entire NAS organization. NAS will continue to improve, continue to graduate students, and continue to ensure that ALL students are provided with the tools and support to maximize their potential and live the American dream.

## NAS-Lowry Makes Significant Gains on School Performance Framework

The Colorado Department of Education's School Performance Framework (SPF) report for 2012-2013 found that NAS-Lowry's performance over the past year has improved substantially—enough to warrant advancing Lowry's SPF rating from Priority Improvement to Improvement.

"CDE uses SPF's to determine what type of improvement plan the school must implement," Principal Annie Trujillo explains. "Movement from one type of plan to a higher type of plan in a given year is considered a significant improvement in a school's level of attainment."

Lowry improved on each the four SPF performance indicators. The school made significant gains in TCAP academic achievement and growth in reading as well as improving in math. Lowry continued to merit strong NWEA MAP student achievement and growth. The school performed well under the category of student engagement based on the fact that the school's suspension/expulsion rate was a mere 3.9%. And, under the category of postsecondary and workforce readiness Lowry graduated 53.8% of eligible students that had dropped out of other schools prior to attending NAS. In all, Lowry's overall SPF increased 5.4 points.

# Graduation: NAS Students on the Road to Success 2013



The 2013 New America School graduation ceremonies returned to the beautiful Ellie Caulkins Opera House, as a standing room only crowd of family and friends proudly watched 186 students receive their diplomas. Festivities

began with a rousing rendition of the national anthem, delivered by NAS-Denver student Jobel Walker. Senior speakers Ashley Chavez (NAS-Lowry), Mellaconey Mossman (NAS-Lakewood), and Deztani Sandoval (NAS-Denver) then recounted the obstacles all New America students faced while pursuing their degrees, and the determination which enabled them to overcome these challenges.

Ceremonies were led by Superintendent Dominic DiFelice, who reminded all in attendance, "Today we graduate nearly 200 students—young adults who likely would never have graduated without personal fortitude, the support of family and friends, and the nurturing learning

environment provided by the New America Schools. Remember, each person that doesn't finish high school costs their community approximately \$300,000 over



the course of their lifetime in additional public support. So by persevering and finishing school, each of you has not only completed a giant step towards creating a better future for yourself, but you have helped create a better future for your community."



**[PROJECT-BASED continued from page 2]**

silent, printed words. Spoken word poems need to be expressed out loud and in a public performance."

After the workshops were complete, students participated in a spoken word poetry competition—a Slam—on May 1st, scheduled so that all students, family members, and staff could attend. Along with professional slammers from Minor Disturbance and Denver Youth Poetry, NAS-Denver students gave exceptional, poignant, and emotional performances.

This May, NAS students exhibited original photography at The Collection Gallery in Aurora. The exhibit culminated a project that encouraged students to explore how peoples' perspectives shape their interpretation of events.

To kick off the night's festivities, following a performance by the NAS-Lowry band club, students presented their original work at the Martin

Luther King Library outdoor arena. The students' presentations explored the Civil Rights Movement. Each student researched a historical event and wrote about the event from three different perspectives.

"As students explored the perspectives through which Americans viewed, and continue to view, issues

of race and discrimination," explains NAS art teacher Alyson Ellena, "they found that honestly delving into these issues is often uncomfortable and controversial. By dissecting the reality of racism in American history, students began the process of facing our history and becoming agents for change in the present."

Each student also created a photo essay that communicated his or her own perspective of their topic. Students were challenged to use everyday technology to capture their photos, including cell phones and low-tech digital cameras. By doing so, students explored the ways low cost consumer technology can be used to create compelling pieces of art.



# School *Updates*

## NAS-Lakewood to Open Postsecondary Preparedness Hub

Over the next three years each NAS school, beginning with a pilot at the Lakewood campus, will create a physical space that will serve as a hub for all postsecondary-related counseling and programming. Each space will be staffed by a counselor who will help students and their families with every part of the postsecondary preparation process, from filling out enrollment and scholarship applications to completing financial aid forms to providing advice to undocumented, ELL and immigrant students.



“We’ve found that many NAS students believe work is their only available postsecondary option,” explains Principal Jon Berninioni. “As a result, postsecondary education counseling often falls upon deaf ears. Though NAS explains what students need to do to be college ready, and works to encourage parents to buy into and participate in process, we find that often these messages don’t resonate with students and parents.”

To address this challenge, NAS-Lakewood has created a “Postsecondary Preparation” hub, funded in part through Title I dollars, which will aid students in: credit recovery, career and college planning, applying for college financial aid and scholarships, and apprenticeship, internship, or job placement.

As Lakewood Counselor Mikiko Ellis explains, “Dedicating staff to help students prepare for and explore postsecondary education options and creating a visible space to house postsecondary activities will demonstrate to students that NAS does not believe that their options are limited and, hopefully, students will

internalize this belief as well.”

The Lakewood pilot project will be complemented by a series of other NAS efforts. Beginning in fall 2013, through the support of the Colorado Department of Education’s School Counselor Corps program, NAS will create and implement comprehensive plans for delivering postsecondary-preparation counseling services and guiding students through the ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plans) milestone completion process. The UCD Counseling Program will also offer its assistance to this project by conducting ICAP needs assessments at each campus.

## NAS-Lowry Pilots Alternative Educational Programming

As a system of alternative educational campuses, many NAS students—older students, students with language deficiencies, poor performance histories and behavior issues—have had difficulty succeeding at traditional high schools. They turn to NAS looking for a learning

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## NAS-Denver to Relocate to Permanent Home

This January, the New America School-Denver will be moving to its permanent home—a state of the art, completely refurbished facility at 8978 Washington Street in Thornton. The new campus, to be renamed NAS-Thornton, will feature 14 classrooms, a computer lab, offices, administrative space, a multipurpose room, kitchen, a library resource center with computers and a regulation size gymnasium.

After an exhaustive search, the NAS site selection team enthusiastically chose the former Thornton Albertsons Grocery Store to house the new school. This site is centrally located within the geographic base of the NAS student body. Once renovated, the facility will be of ideal size to match our student count of approximately 300 day and 100 night students—thus allowing NAS to retain our small school feel. And, the property has easy access to public transportation with a bus stop directly off the location.

Most important, renovating the Albertsons will be far less expensive than building a new facility. Principal Mike Epke explains, “Given our students’ specialized needs, it is critical that NAS-Thornton



devote all possible funds to providing educational and school-based services to our students, as opposed to creating a debt service load.”

A key feature of the new site will be a regulation-size gymnasium. Low-income adolescents, such as those NAS serves, are often the victims of their “built environment.” That is, often no venues for physical activity are located near where they live, and they subsequently lead less healthy lifestyles than their more well off peers. Indeed, the epicenter of NAS-Thornton students’ residence patterns is 4 miles away from the closest bike path, 4.5 miles from the nearest soccer field, and 5 miles from the nearest softball field. NAS-Thornton, with its full sized gymnasium

can become a focal point for our students’ physical fitness activities.

The move will also bring tremendous value to the nearby community. As NAS Board Member Polly Baca, who represented the Thornton area where the New America School will be located for 12 years in the state legislature, states, “I was a teenager in Thornton and remember fondly the [Albertsons] shopping center and its importance as a hub for the entire community. The New America School will help revitalize the entire area.”

Charter Stone Capital will acquire the existing facility and land on behalf of NAS-Thornton and then finance the needed improvements to convert it to an educational facility. NAS will have the option to purchase the completely refurbished facility from CSC after the second full lease year.



[UPDATES continued from page 4]

environment that better suits their learning styles and where classroom activities are more meaningful to their particular needs.

To help create this type of environment, this year the NAS-Lowry campus will be piloting a series of non-traditional school-wide innovations that if proven impactful, may be adopted at all three NAS campuses:



- **Pathways Programming.** Recognizing that many of our students will not pursue higher education, Lowry is offering expanded workplace preparation initiatives. Over the next two years, Lowry will establish for-credit courses designed to ready students for work in fields such as Health Sciences, Business, Information Technology, Arts and Communications, Graphic Arts and Sports Medicine.
- **Panther Wednesdays.** Through creative scheduling Lowry has shortened the school-day on select Wednesdays—without shortening instructional time. This scheduling will afford students the time to participate in extra-curricular activities such as ceramics, crochet, soccer, service learning, and Zumba. Principal Annie Trujillo notes, “When we surveyed our students, they expressed that the lack of sports or programs outside of core classes made our students feel different from kids at other schools. They felt that they had missed a vital part of the high school experience. Panther Wednesdays will address this shortfall and, by keeping students engaged, help increase the likelihood that they’ll stay in school.”
- **All Ideas Matter.** Lowry will strive to create a campus-wide culture where confident students value school and themselves as successful learners. NAS culture and expectations will be spread through a newly created, required Advisory Seminar offered to every NAS-Lowry student and through the school-wide implementation of the character-building “Discovery” program, which teaches the academic, behavioral and social skills necessary for success in high school.

## NAS-Las Cruces exceeds first year expectations

The New America School-Las Cruces opened its doors in August, 2012 and was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm by the Las Cruces community. Though the school’s projected first year enrollment was 150 students, 235 area students ended up attending.

NAS-LC had anticipated that the school would grow in time, and planned to eventually occupy the second floor of its home, the completely remodeled downtown Las Cruces Furniture Store. However, the great demand for NAS-LC services has led the school to open up the second floor—complete with five new classrooms and a Learning Resource Library—years earlier than planned.

The school year ended on a similarly successful note. The NAS-LC inaugural graduating class included 33 students. Among the graduates was Jonathan Delgado, a 43-year-old who was able to receive his diploma as a result of the fact that New Mexico provides funding to allow older students to attend high school.

Much of NAS-LC’s success can be attributed to its Governing Council, which was awarded the New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools “Governing Council of the Year” award in October. Not only was the GC instrumental in founding NAS-LC, but it has remained in close touch with its students—meeting each month with three to four “Students of the Month.”

“Students have been able to experience how a board is a critical part of the learning community,” explains Principal Margarita Porter. “In larger schools, the School Board is seemingly untouchable. At NAS-LC, the GC has become a close partner with our students.”

## NAS Network Eyes Expansion to Vegas, Phoenix

The New America Schools Network continues efforts to offer our unique educational model to communities throughout the southwest where a large population of recent immigrants, English Language Learners and underserved students reside.

Two areas of focus in the past year were Las Vegas, Nevada and Phoenix, Arizona. The Las Vegas population is approximately 30% Hispanic and 22% foreign born. One-third of Las Vegas residents speak a language other than English at home. Similarly, Hispanics comprise more than 40% of the Phoenix high school student population and dropout rates and graduation rates are significantly worse for Phoenix’s Hispanic students

compared to non-Hispanics.

The provisional charter granted to NAS-Las Vegas in 2012 has been extended to August 2015 while the school’s founding board works to secure the financial resources necessary to open the school. In Arizona, a founding board has been created, chaired by the Hon. Frank Riggs. While serving as a three term US congressman, Riggs was the lead author and sponsor of the Charter Schools Expansion Act of 1998 which provides federal start-up grants to newly-formed public charter school organizations. NAS-Phoenix will be applying for its charter in March 2014.

## Albuquerque School Begins Re-chartering Process

As NAS-New Mexico heads into its fifth year, the school will begin the process of re-chartering for another five years. This will be a year-long process. NAS-NM will examine where it has been and where it is going. It is a time for a fresh look at NAS-NM’s programs, data, and plan for the future.

Looking back, NAS-NM students have made significant gains in reading and math, just part of the reason the New Mexico School Report Card grade increased from an F in 2011-2012 to a high C in 2012-2013. In addition, NAS-NM is very proud of its new Student Recreational Facility, which opened in May and houses a kitchen, spacious locker rooms, a teacher’s office and a fully equipped weight room. For the first time, NAS-NM has a place large enough for student events, from assemblies to graduation events.

“This beautiful facility,” states Principal LaTricia Mathis, “is dedicated to the men of vision who founded the original 1734 Isleta Blvd. LLC, Elias Shakra and Brian Rowe. Without their efforts, NAS-NM would not exist to serve the students and families of Albuquerque’s South Valley. Thanks also to Charter School Development Corporation for their generous financial support.”



# Community Partners Enrich the NAS Experience

When possible, NAS forms external partnerships to enhance the academic and support services we offer to students. In 2012-13, more than 50 different educational, career, health, and recreation focused groups helped augment NAS programming.

## Community Service

The **Community Building Partnership for Youth in Transition**, a program of the Denver Department of Human Services placed **AmeriCorps** members at NAS-Lowry and NAS-Lakewood in 2012-13 with NAS-Denver to be added in 2013-14. Members Heidi Johnson and Lacey Jumppe tutored, helped seniors develop career plans, and facilitated students' community service activities, including: Lakewood students joined with **Miles2Give**, a

program that raised money for, and the spirits of, cancer patients; they conducted a food drive working with the **Denver Rescue Mission**; and beautified their campus with donations from **Home Depot**.



Working with the **Colfax Community Network** twenty-five Lowry students made blankets for, and offered weekly tutoring to, homeless children. NAS-Denver students, participating in Journey through Our Heritage, a partnership with the **Department of Chicano/a Studies**

at **Metro State University**, won Best New Competitor and 4th place overall for community service.

## Post-Secondary Preparation

**Goodwill Industries of Denver** has been working with NAS-Denver to prepare students for post-secondary careers. This partnership will grow in 2013-14 when Goodwill will facilitate Career and College Readiness classes. More than 25 partners exhibited at the first NAS College and Career Fair. Representatives from post-secondary institutions such as **Arapahoe Community College** and **University of Northern Colorado** and job training programs like the **Colorado Sheet Metal Workers Joint Apprenticeship Program** helped students explore their interests and explained what students have to do to be ready for life after graduation.



## Cross-Curricular and Project-Based Learning

**iEmpathize** organized week-long in- and out-of-class activities at both the Denver and Lakewood campuses where students studied the realities of sex trafficking of minors. NAS-Lakewood and NAS-Denver

students participated in **Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA)**, which encourages minority and female students to prepare for a college education and to major in mathematics, engineering or science. An NAS-Denver team, led by Jose Lopez, Manuel Cazares and Drake Maurici,



placed second in a MESA Prosthetic Arm competition. A NAS-Lowry and **Cooking Matters through Share Our Strength** collaboration taught 15 students to cook inexpensive, healthy meals.

## Leadership Development

NAS partnered with **Big City Mountaineers**, taking students on backpacking expeditions to teach transferrable life and leadership skills. During each day on the trail students participated in team building initiatives and assumed leadership positions such as Navigator or Educator. **The Colorado Providers for Integration Network** helped NAS-Lowry promote its first "**Celebrate NAS Diversity**" festival. One hundred thirty-three students participated in Out-of-School-Time activities preparing for the event and more than 150 students, family members, staff, and community members attended. Lowry also collaborated with 9News to hold a **9Health Fair**, organized by 16 student leaders.

## Featured Partner: The University of Colorado-Denver

New America School has a long-standing partnership with the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. The partnership dates to the very founding of NAS, and has been of lasting benefit to both partners. UCD faculty who have been highly present at NAS include Mark Clarke, Alan Davis, Sally Nathenson-Mejia, and Barbara Vaille.

UCD faculty members Mark Clarke and Mia Thomas-Ruzic, both experts in educating English Language Learners, assisted in writing the charter applications that launched NAS. More recently, a 6-year grant from the US Department of Education provided funding for UCD to work closely with NAS to plan professional development, coach NAS teachers, and offer onsite courses at NAS on formative

assessment and teaching ELLs.

The partnership has provided UCD opportunities for doctoral and faculty research. Judy Northup, a UCD doctoral student who studied classroom climate and teacher-student relationship at NAS, is now working as a researcher at RMC Research; NAS Dean of Students Susan Holloway recently completed a dissertation on mathematics instruction. Several NAS and UCD educators have given joint presentations at Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conferences.

Currently, UCD faculty members Mark Clarke and Alan Davis are working with the NAS Community Learning Centers to assist with formative evaluation and integrate the CLCs into core NAS functions.



## Sports and Recreation

The NAS-Denver boys' basketball team took 2nd place in **The Academy of Urban Learning** basketball tournament held at the Pepsi Center. In the spring, the school formed a coed indoor soccer team that won 1st place in the newly developed All-City Urban League. This league was organized by **HOPE Online Learning Academy** to provide opportunities for charter school students to participate in sports.

## External Support Enhances NAS Programming

Four multi-year major grants awarded to NAS by the **Colorado Department of Education** (CDE) enable each of the three NAS-Colorado schools to offer extensive student retention, graduation and post-secondary preparation programs:

- This August, through the support of a \$490,000 School Counselor Corps grant, the New America School will establish a comprehensive program designed to increase our students' postsecondary education and workforce readiness.
- Now in its second 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 campus to establish a series of after-school academic and enrichment programs for all NAS students.

- Also in its second year, the Expelled and At-Risk Student Services program, created through a four-year \$500,000 CDE grant, identifies the NAS students that are most at risk of suspension and expulsion and monitors their behavior and academic progress, and provides them with personal support and attention.
- The five-year, \$450,000 Colorado Graduation Pathways Program which will enter its fourth year in 2013-14, targets students at the NAS-Lowry and NAS-Denver/Thornton campuses that are most at-risk of dropping out and offers them intensive monitoring and support.

With a grant of \$25,000, the **Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation** once again renewed its support of the Lakewood campus' *¡Cuidate!* program, a research-

based, proven-effective teen pregnancy and HIV prevention curricula.

**The Polis-Schutz Family Foundation** continued to provide the financial support needed for deserving NAS students to carry on their studies after graduation. This year, the family through their foundation donated \$20,000 to the Colorado Educational Opportunity Scholarship Fund. In addition, The Polis-Schutz Family Foundation donated \$50,000 to support efforts to replicate the NAS educational model in other communities throughout the southwest.

NAS received approximately \$60,000 in funding through the **U.S. Schools and Libraries E-Rate program**, a federal program which assists schools that enroll a high percentage of low income students pay for telecommunications and internet service.

A New America School-Lakewood teacher, Megan Kobjez, led an effort to secure a **Great West - Great Teachers** Financial Literacy grant of \$4,000. Through this grant, the school will develop and offer an Out-of-School-Time for-credit, semester-long personal financial literacy class.

**NAS Board Members** continued to demonstrate their leadership and commitment to the school's mission, not only through the extensive work members do on behalf of NAS, but through their financial support. Once again, 100% of the board contributed to NAS during 2012-13.

In total, gifts from public and private sources, corporations and individuals exclusive of in-kind contributions exceeded \$871,000 for the year.

### [Scholarship Winners continued from page 8]

video will hopefully help prevent other teens from dropping out.

While at NAS Deztani was a leader in after school activities. She was a key participant in the Diversity Club, which focuses on creating a safe space to talk about issues that students face today, as well as providing a sense of community and a place for fun. She also was an inaugural member of the first NAS-Denver girls' basketball club. She was a member of the Cooking Club and Journey through our Heritage. After graduating NAS, Deztani plans to pursue a criminal justice career.



**Marisela Vasquez** earned her high school diploma in Chihuahau, Mexico in the spring of 2011. Even so, she enrolled in the New America School three months later as she knew that learning English would be an important step towards achieving her dream of becoming a dentist. Though Marisela lived alone in Denver for much of the time, and had to work nights to support herself, she still found time to stay after school to help out her peers, often acting as a translator for NAS newcomers with very little English skills and to volunteer in the community, providing assistance to the residents of New Dawn Assisted Living.



## First Generation Scholarship Awarded to NAS-Lakewood Student

The fall, NAS-Lakewood student **Jovanny Estrada** will receive the Red Rocks Community College "First Generation Scholarship" granted to high school graduates who will become the first member of their family to attend college.

Jovanny has overcome many obstacles on his way to higher education. He is quite open about his troubled past; early in his high school tenure Jovanny got caught up in the legal system and was put on probation. Jovanny now



uses his past experiences to fuel his future success. He is willing to share his experiences with his peers in order to help guide others that may be falling down the same path he once was following. Through strength and determination, Jovanny has begun to discover what he wants in the future and what steps he needs to take in order to reach his goal of someday operating his own business. Studying Business Entrepreneurship and Botany at Red Rocks will be the first step.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

### FUNDING 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.

## NAS Scholarship Award Winners

**Richard Agyemang**, who immigrated to the US in 2012 from Ghana, West Africa, understands, as the saying goes in his country, “A person who climbs a good tree must get a push.” Richard explains that, in other words, we all need support to achieve our dreams—support which Richard received at NAS. With this support, coupled with his dedication to learning, Richard was able to earn the Lowry Student of the Month honor in November 2012 and was on the Principal’s Honor Roll every quarter that he attended NAS. Richard was also a committed member of the Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) Club, the Restorative Justice Club and the Service Club. Again, guided by another of his country’s sayings, “A little drop of water makes a mighty ocean,” Richard has set the goal of attending college and then eventually providing affordable health care to individuals living in marginalized communities in the US. Richard’s “little drop of water” will be to give back to underserved populations that struggle every day to sustain a family.

**Justin Bimenyimana** was born in the Congo, but lived for 16 years in a Rwandan refugee camp after his parents were killed.

He came to the US in 2011 and, after a brief stint at another school, began attending NAS in August 2012. At the time, the only words of English he could say were “Hello” and “Good Morning.” He quickly moved through the NAS English Language Acquisition sequence and is now able to ask higher level questions during classroom discussions and share insightful ideas. Justin also took advantage of NAS-Lowry’s many out-of-school opportunities to learn about and experience civic participation. He was a member of the school’s Service Club, represented NAS-Lowry at the Martin Luther King Day “Marade,” and was a 9Health Fair leader. Justin plans to hone his English skills at the New America College next year and then move forward with his desire to become a dentist.

**Everado Ramos** wasn’t going to let anything stand in the way of getting an education. He wasn’t deterred when he was in fourth grade and his parents left his home, leaving Ever in the care of his grandparents, who didn’t value education and made Ever stop schooling after elementary school. When he was old enough he fought to receive permission

to go to a special middle school for older students. Though he had to stop schooling once again at 15 to work in a cement company to support his grandparents, he still didn’t give up. At 17 he moved to the US, worked for yet another year, and then at 18 Ever began attending NAS. Still it wasn’t easy. Ever lived in Lafayette, 30 miles away from NAS. But Ever made the long drive both ways, every day, even in winter storms. After three years of attending night classes at NAS, during which he often volunteered for school activities, helping decorate special events, staffing booths, even cleaning up afterwards, Ever has graduated near the top of his class, and is ready to pursue his dream of studying criminal justice.

NAS-Denver student **Deztani Sandoval** turned a personal tragedy, the loss of a beloved grandparent, into an opportunity to help others suffering through similar circumstances. Deztani created a PBS/Colorado Public Television video describing how death and loss can often cause teens to leave school. Through her original poetry and pictures, Deztani’s poignant

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## NAS Student Earns Governor’s Service Award

New America School-Lowry student **Chau Nguyen** was selected as the winner of the 2013 Governor’s Service Award for Outstanding Youth Volunteer and was recognized in a ceremony at the Capitol Building on July 23, 2013. Chau was nominated for this award for his commitment to service and volunteerism, as well as for his leadership in engaging other youths in service. Chau arrived at NAS last year barely knowing any English and completely unfamiliar with American culture. However, as he describes, in the months he spent at NAS, Chau went from “zero to 100.” Chau not only grew in terms of his English language skills, but in his confidence and leadership—which he especially demonstrated through



service. Chau became a member of the school’s Service Club and never missed a meeting or project, volunteering with Salvation Army, the Food Bank of the Rockies and the Ronald McDonald House. Chau conducted outreach to other students, encouraging them to sign up. Chau showed his commitment to service when he began volunteering weekly with the Colfax Community Network’s after school program for children of families

living in motels as a temporary solution to homelessness. Chau talks about how interacting with these kids inspired him and gave him something truly meaningful to look forward to in his week and helped him discover that he is passionate about working with children. As a newcomer to American culture, Chau embraces and embodies the spirit of volunteerism and has given so much back to the community he has called home for less than a year.

Learn More about the  
New America School on  
YouTube:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=al0KODd13sc>