



# Growth at DPS outpaces state

**By Yesenia Robles/The Denver Post**

State test scores released Wednesday showed Denver Public Schools kept up a six-year growth trend in math, science and writing — but not in reading.

This year, DPS students taking the Colorado Student Assessment Program had a 39 percent proficiency rate in writing, 41 percent proficiency in math and 48 percent proficiency in science.

Reading-proficiency scores dropped by 1 percentage point to 49 percent districtwide.

All of the scores remain below average compared with state proficiency levels, but the growth shown in DPS outpaces the state.

Suzana Cordova, the district's chief academic officer, said the scores are not a surprise.

"Writing was such a high area of need for us, based on last year's scores," Cordova said. "In one area, in-

terim tests at the end of the first semester showed only 30 percent of students proficient in writing, so when the time CSAP came around, we knew the score was 36 percent."

Cordova said DPS will start administering four interim tests instead of three each year that will allow similar interventions based on data throughout the year.

She said the district will focus on linking reading and math lessons so both scores can improve next year.

When school starts later this month, DPS will be implementing new state standards that emphasize content integration.

This means students will be learning reading and writing not only in those classes but in math, science and social studies.

There were pockets of schools that logged progress in all four subjects.

This year, the district focused on regional achievement in northwest middle schools.

Sixth graders in northwest Denver — including those in the new Lake International School, two West Denver Prep schools, and at Skinner — had a combined proficiency rate that was 7 percentage points higher in writing than it was for Lake and Skinner students last year.

Sixth graders in the area also increased math proficiency to 45 percent, up from 34 percent the year before. Reading proficiency was 43 percent, up from 39 percent last year.

## CSAP and growth

Wednesday's release of the 2011 Colorado Student Assessment Program scores was combined with a growth model that measures a child's improvement rate from year to year. The CSAP scores in the graphic represent percentages of students who were proficient or advanced. The growth scores are the average growth rates of students, or the "median student growth percentiles." The state median is always the 50th percentile, which is the same as a year's growth in a year's time. In a district scoring above the 50th percentile, students' growth rate is higher than the state average.

| District       | READING |      |         | WRITING |      |         | MATH |      |         |
|----------------|---------|------|---------|---------|------|---------|------|------|---------|
|                | 2010    | 2011 | Change* | 2010    | 2011 | Change* | 2010 | 2011 | Change* |
| Aurora         | 47%     | 47%  | 0       | 32%     | 34%  | 2       | 39%  | 38%  | -1      |
| Boulder        | 81%     | 80%  | 0       | 67%     | 69%  | 2       | 69%  | 70%  | 0       |
| Brighton       | 62%     | 63%  | 1       | 45%     | 48%  | 3       | 48%  | 48%  | 0       |
| Cherry Creek   | 75%     | 75%  | -1      | 62%     | 65%  | 3       | 64%  | 65%  | 1       |
| Commercia City | 43%     | 43%  | 0       | 28%     | 32%  | 4       | 33%  | 32%  | -1      |
| Denver         | 50%     | 49%  | -1      | 35%     | 37%  | 2       | 40%  | 41%  | 1       |
| Douglas Co.    | 81%     | 80%  | -1      | 67%     | 69%  | 2       | 70%  | 70%  | 0       |
| Englewood      | 56%     | 55%  | -2      | 41%     | 5    | 39%     | 40%  | 1    |         |
| Five Star      | 60%     | 64%  | 4       | 46%     | 50%  | 4       | 55%  | 5    |         |
| Jeffco         | 75%     | 75%  | 0       | 62%     | 62%  | 0       | 70%  | 70%  | 0       |
| Littleton      | 62%     | 61%  | -1      | 59%     | 60%  | 1       | 70%  | 70%  | 0       |
| Mapleton       | 47%     | 49%  | 2       | 31%     | 30%  | -1      | 38%  | 38%  | 0       |
| Sheridan       | 43%     | 37%  | -6      | 28%     | 25%  | -3      | 31%  | 31%  | 0       |
| St. Vrain      | 72%     | 72%  | 0       | 56%     | 60%  | 4       | 59%  | 60%  | 1       |
| Westminster    | 40%     | 39%  | -1      | 24%     | 25%  | 1       | 27%  | 28%  | 1       |
| Statewide      | 68%     | 68%  | 0       | 53%     | 55%  | 2       | 55%  | 56%  | 1       |

| District       | READING GROWTH |      |         | WRITING GROWTH |      |         | MATH GROWTH |      |         |
|----------------|----------------|------|---------|----------------|------|---------|-------------|------|---------|
|                | 2010           | 2011 | Change* | 2010           | 2011 | Change* | 2010        | 2011 | Change* |
| Aurora         | 51%            | 50%  | -1      | 52%            | 50%  | -2      | 53%         | 50%  | -3      |
| Boulder        | 50%            | 53%  | 3       | 54%            | 54%  | 0       | 54%         | 55%  | 1       |
| Brighton       | 45%            | 47%  | 2       | 43%            | 45%  | 2       | 46%         | 44%  | -2      |
| Cherry Creek   | 53%            | 54%  | 1       | 54%            | 54%  | 0       | 53%         | 53%  | 0       |
| Commercia City | 40%            | 40%  | 0       | 47%            | 45%  | -2      | 47%         | 45%  | -2      |
| Denver         | 48%            | 48%  | 0       | 44%            | 45%  | 1       | 45%         | 45%  | 0       |
| Douglas Co.    | 52%            | 50%  | -2      | 52%            | 50%  | -2      | 52%         | 50%  | -2      |
| Englewood      | 39%            | 44%  | 5       | 43%            | 52%  | 9       | 49%         | 49%  | 0       |
| Five Star      | 50%            | 50%  | 0       | 49%            | 50%  | 1       | 49%         | 50%  | 1       |
| Jeffco         | 51%            | 53%  | 2       | 49%            | 50%  | 1       | 49%         | 50%  | 1       |
| Littleton      | 48%            | 48%  | 0       | 54%            | 50%  | -4      | 54%         | 50%  | -4      |
| Mapleton       | 44%            | 43%  | -1      | 50%            | 50%  | 0       | 50%         | 50%  | 0       |
| Sheridan       | 48%            | 41%  | -7      | 48%            | 44%  | -4      | 53%         | 44%  | -9      |
| St. Vrain      | 52%            | 53%  | 1       | 53%            | 54%  | 1       | 53%         | 54%  | 1       |
| Westminster    | 40%            | 45%  | 5       | 38%            | 42%  | 4       | 38%         | 42%  | 4       |
| Statewide      | 50%            | 50%  | 0       | 50%            | 50%  | 0       | 50%         | 50%  | 0       |

\*Percentage-point changes may not appear correct because of rounding.

Sources: I-News analysis of Colorado Department of Education data. The Denver Post

# CSAP: Mapleton schools' chief credits reforms for improvement

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new test by 2014 that will align with new state standards linking student performance to teacher evaluations.

For the past five years, state CSAP scores have fluctuated only slightly and suggest insignificant improvement in student achievement.

For example, the overall percentage of students scoring at least proficient in third-grade reading has ranged from a low of 71.4 percent in 2005 to a high of 73.8 percent in 2010.

Colorado Department of Education staff presenting CSAP results to the state board Wednesday said the new test will change the focus of education to supporting students who need to catch up.

"This will require moving away from looking at aggregated data to assess individual student academic growth."

"The risk of staying behind through graduation — if they make it that far — cuts across gender, race and poverty," said Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner of standards and assessment.

Currently, 338,543 students in the state are not performing at grade level and are on track to catch up within three years or by the time they reach 10th grade.

Some districts have outpaced the state in student growth.

Boulder, Denver and Cherry Creek public schools were among the metro districts with the largest growth in multiple areas, according to state growth models released this year with the test scores.

Boulder was the top metro district

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Jo O'Brien, state Department of Education assistant commissioner of standards and assessment

Growth in middle-school reading, writing and high-school reading put Denver in the top three of metro districts.

The Douglas County School District's growth slowed from previous years, and scores were down in some cases. Still, district averages are higher than statewide averages.

In math scores, Douglas County's largest jump was at the seventh-grade level, where 70 percent of test-takers scored proficient or better, up from 67 percent last year.

Douglas County had the second-largest metro-area growth in high-school writing, just behind Mapleton schools.

In Mapleton Public Schools — an 8,000-student district covering 25 square miles of north Denver and parts of Thornton — improvements have been more steady for years.

Mapleton students increased math and writing scores at nearly every

grade level in 2011, and all tested grades have better scores than they did five years ago.

The greatest gains over that time were for third-graders in math and high-schoolers in writing.

This year, the third-graders were 53 percent proficient or advanced in math, up from 41 percent in 2007.

In writing, 59 percent of eighth-grade freshmen and sophomores were proficient or advanced in 2011. This year, 53 percent of freshmen and 50 percent of sophomores were proficient or advanced.

Mapleton's third-graders also made big gains in reading, moving from 65 percent of students scoring proficient or above last year, to 69 percent this year.

Superintendent Charlotte Ciancio credits reforms implemented six years ago.

"It's really not a year in the making, it's six years in the making," Ciancio said. "We're happy to see the scores. They're confirmation that we are doing the right thing, but we are not surprised."

Among the reforms implemented six years ago, Mapleton students take interim tests three times a year or help educators track progress, design interventions and predict CSAP results.

"The children are not getting everything they need from us yet," Ciancio said. "We know our scores are still not where they need to be, but the growth is coming in strong."

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## Top schools for growth

| District              | School                                       | Grade level   | Overall growth score* |
|-----------------------|--|---------------|-----------------------|
| Platteau RE-5         | Peeta Junior-Senior High                     | Middle school | 25.8                  |
| Denver                | West Denver Prep: Harvey Park Campus         | Middle school | 24.3                  |
| Roaring Fork RE-1     | Basalt Middle                                | Elementary    | 23.8                  |
| St. Vrain Valley RE-1 | Mead Middle                                  | Middle school | 23.6                  |
| Denver                | Denver School of Science and Technology      | High school   | 23.1                  |
| Edwards Co.           | Edwards High                                 | High school   | 23.0                  |
| Denver                | Sicka Elementary                             | Elementary    | 22.1                  |
| Aspen 1               | Aspen Community Charter                      | Middle school | 22.1                  |
| Elizabeth C-1         | Legacy Academy                               | Middle school | 23.0                  |
| Denver                | Denver School of Science and Technology: GVR | Middle school | 22.9                  |

\*Growth score is calculated by adding the scores for math, reading and writing together.

Sources: I-News and Denver Post analysis of Colorado Department of Education data. The Denver Post

# GRIEGO: Visits help conquer isolation

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communicate verbally. Jesse is the most outgoing, possessing a wonderful smile. Though complicated sentences elude him, he can make himself understood. At any rate, one does not need speech to convey what it is to be needed.

The meals Laradon students and adults deliver go to elders enrolled in the Volunteers of America Meals on Wheels program. The typical recipient is a widow in her 80s who wants to live at home. What's been established in this neighborhood exists nowhere else in the city. It's a relationship that began 25 years ago, when the elderly served today might have just retired, before the canes and the oxygen tanks and the house-bound days.

Back then, it was common to segregate the developmentally disabled.

"It was an isolated population that was patronized," says Anne Green, deputy director of Laradon. "It was, 'Well, they really can't do anything, or, 'Don't that cater?'"

What was created, then, is the partnership of two communities, each of which, in its own way, has known isolation. "And 25 years later, we're still going strong," says Jim White, VOA's director of community affairs. That early partnership has expanded now to 12 delivery routes in the city.

We're at the VOA offices and kitchen, where the youths are gathering the meals. This is part of their lesson: pick-



Nathan Roberts, right, makes a Meals on Wheels delivery to Frank Mearns in the Cleobville neighborhood. A *Arise* October 7, *The Denver Post*

ing up the trays and boxes, loading them in the van, closing the door, looking both ways when crossing the street, saying — with words or not — hello, thank you, you're welcome.

White and Green have worked together those 25 years, and White laughs as he remembers how one recipient, fond of the young man who delivered her food, asked him if he wanted her dog after she died. "No," he replied. "I'd rather have your TV."

There was, too, the older gentle-

man, so lonely he burst into tears with the first visit, and the young Laradon student who delivered a meal and then helped herself to the woman's potty. The woman's son greeted the news with equanimity. "When you gotta go, you gotta go."

On the eve of that girl's graduation, the woman gave her the only gift she could afford: baseball cards fished from cereal boxes, collected in a sack and wrapped in tissue paper.

The day 1 ride along, the recipients turn shy. Some do not like to admit need. Some are not feeling well and are accustomed to their own routines. Milton Lake, 83, a widower still mourning his wife of 50 years, accepts the meal with a series of profuse thank yous and God bless yous.

"It means so much to me," he later tells me. "They're awful good people."

It is a simple front-door transaction. Yet, in the meeting of eyes and smile of greeting, in the passing of food from younger hands to older, there lies a vital mutual acknowledgment: You are not alone.

Only Jesse can articulate the pleasure of this service in a way most would comprehend. As he sits in Anne's car between deliveries, he fidgets in the back seat, face alight with huge smile. Leaning forward, he calls out, "Go!"

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# GANG: Members were told to be "outlaws at all times"

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of Soul were indicted in a Missouri federal court in June, and Fry was the last man left walking the streets.

The Wheels of Soul is a gang that earned power through crack-cocaine sales, murder, attempted murder and intimidation of rival gangs and clubs across the county, authorities say.

The gang has a "mother chapter" in Philadelphia, but the group's tentacles reach into Indianapolis, Chicago and Denver.

Members wear vests with patches designating rank or status, and they are required to swear an oath to the organization and a constitution.

At a 2010 national meeting in Philadelphia, members were told: "Wheels of Soul members are to be outlaws at all times, and Wheels of Soul is not weekend warrior s---, it is a lifestyle."

Some members have achieved "diamond status" and are deemed "1 percenters," terms to describe those who are particularly criminal and violent, the indictment says.

The gang coded phone calls — referring to firearms as "bottles of wine," for example — to evade the writs of law enforcement.

On Aug. 2, 2010, Fry rode in a sport utility vehicle past the rival Hell's Lovers clubhouse in Denver and opened fire from a shotgun, the

indictment says. Three members of Hell's Lovers inside the clubhouse came out and returned fire.

In January, Wheels of Soul's Colorado chapter president Jerry "Shaker" Elkins directed Fry and fellow member Raheed Jamal "Diamond" Brandon to travel to East St. Louis, Ill. with the intent to shoot and kill members of the Outkast motorcycle gang, the indictment says.

The three met up with two other national members, also there to carry out the hit, but the mission was thwarted because police were near the Outkast gathering that day.

But the Wheels of Soul's propensity for violence is why local deputy U.S. marshals put so much effort into preparation.

On Saturday morning, they pored over maps one last time and rehearsed the game plan before pouncing on an auto-repair shop where they believed Fry was hiding. They suspect he had been there but left before the marshals arrived. So they were back to missing intelligence and hoping he hadn't fled the state — when they spotted him Tuesday night.

Fry is charged with racketeering, attempt to commit murder in aid of racketeering and conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering. He remained in custody Wednesday, awaiting a detention hearing before a judge.