



A high quality public education system plays a critical role in a community's health by providing an educated workforce, involved citizens, and increased earning power that has a direct effect on business profits, tax revenues, and support for the community's non-profit sector. An effective educational program also improves success rates for students from at-risk families to reduce social problems, including crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and welfare dependence. The **quality** of a learning environment is reflected in a school district's pupil-to-teacher ratios, per-pupil spending, expulsion rates, and teacher qualifications. While we recognize that teacher qualifications are very important, this concept is difficult to quantify for the purposes of this Index. We have, however, included some statistics regarding percentages of minority teachers and minority students. The **effectiveness** of our local education systems includes indicators such as graduation rates, drop-out rates, and standardized test scores.

### Quality Learning Environment

**Pupil- to- teacher ratios** in our region are generally better than state levels, with the exception of Bayfield and Pagosa Springs. During the 2002/2003 school year, Dove Creek spent the most money per student, while Cortez spent the least. In this edition, dollar- to- pupil ratios have been replaced by **total expenditures per student**, which is a more appropriate way to convey the amount of money school districts spend on each student in a given year. All districts, except Bayfield, are spending more money per student each year.

Quality Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
<b>Pupil - to- Teacher Ratios</b>	1998-1999	15.7	15.4	14.9	13.4	15.2	13.7	13.4	18.1	8.1	17.4
	1999-2000	16.4	15.4	14.4	12.7	16.1	13.6	13.5	17.8	7.5	17.3
	2000-2001	16.4	15.1	14.9	12.7	15.3	13.2	13.1	17.3	6.9	16.8
	2001-2002	17.3	15.5	15.8	10.6	15	12.5	13.1	17.2	12.7	16.6
	2002-2003	16.8	16.1	14.4	10.4	14.2	12.2	13.2	16.9	10.4	16.8
<b>Total Expenditures Per Student</b>	1998-1999	\$16,653	\$6,342	\$6,920	\$7,380	\$6,831	\$8,206	\$6,810	\$7,601	\$13,352	\$7,821
	1999-2000	\$9,981	\$6,582	\$7,116	\$7,383	\$7,344	\$8,114	\$6,955	\$6,469	\$12,992	\$8,255
	2000-2001	\$12,288	\$6,806	\$7,487	\$8,873	\$7,875	\$9,122	\$9,919	\$6,839	\$13,157	\$8,631
	2001-2002	\$8,238	\$6,646	\$8,021	n/a	\$8,143	\$8,589	\$7,529	\$7,415	\$15,140	\$9,385
	2002-2003	\$8,382	\$6,972	\$8,218	\$16,033	\$9,166	\$9,036	\$7,577	\$8,260	\$13,237	\$10,151

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts.

The Colorado Legislature determines each year how much in total operating revenues school districts can receive from the state general fund and local property taxes. Total funding is based on student enrollment and other factors. Smaller, rural districts receive more funding per pupil than larger school districts because the per-pupil expense is higher for smaller districts.

Districts also receive state and federal grants for special programs. In addition, districts may ask voters to approve a mill-levy override to increase local revenues by 20 percent over the total program fund that the state allows. Both Durango and Bayfield have asked for, and received, mill-levy overrides since 2002.

**Expulsion rates** are down in Dolores, Dove Creek, Durango, Mancos, and Pagosa Springs, while rates are up in Cortez. Ignacio, Silverton, and statewide expulsion rates remain steady. Drop-out rates are decreasing in most school districts, with the exception of Bayfield and Silverton. A drop-out is a student who leaves school for any reason, except death, expulsion, or transfer, prior to completing a high school diploma. If a student leaves a school district without a request to forward educational records, the student is considered a drop-out, although he or she may have enrolled in another school without the district's knowledge.

Quality Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
<b>Expulsion Rate in Percentages</b>	1997	0.8	n/a	n/a	2.8	0.6	n/a	n/a	0.8	0	n/a
	1998	0.004	0.77	*	0	0.6	n/a	n/a	0.5	0	n/a
	1999	0.5	0.05	0	0	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0	0.3
	2000	0.2	1.2	0	0	0.7	1	0	0	0	0.3
	2001	0.7	1.1	0.2	0	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0	0.3
	2002	0.3	0.8	0	0	0.5	0.9	0	0.4	0	0.3
	2003	0.9	1.7	0	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.6	0	n/a
	2004	n/a	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

\*Included in drop out rate

n/a = Data not available

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts

The **Minority teacher and student counts** address whether there is a positive correlation between minority teachers and higher completion rates among minority students. However, educational research is limited and inconclusive about the impact of teachers of color on increased student achievement among students of color. A diverse teaching staff provides opportunities for all students to learn about and appreciate an ethnic and cultural difference which, in turn, contributes to a healthy community.

The low percentage of teachers of color, compared with the percentage of students of color, in our schools reflects national trends and indicates a need in our communities to support students of color who wish to become teachers. Durango, Ignacio, and Pagosa Springs are hiring more minority teachers, and the number of minority students continues to rise in most school districts. Ignacio has the highest number of minority students, but the percentage of minority teachers was not available for 2003.

Quality Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
<b>% of Minority Teachers</b>	1997	3	n/a	n/a	3.6	4	3	n/a	5.4	5	9
	1998	1.5	3.9	2.23	4	4.6	20	5.4	4.8	0	n/a
	1999	1.5	8	2	n/a	5.27	20	2	6	0	n/a
	2000	1.5	4	2	0	4.8	14.1	2.7	5.7	0	9.4
	2001	1.5	4	2	0	4.9	11.8	2.7	4.3	0	9.8
	2002	1.4	4.1	1.9	3.7	5.8	11.4	2.8	8.4	0	9.6
	2003	1.5	3	2	n/a	4.5	n/a	n/a	5	n/a	n/a
<b>% of Minority Students</b>	1997	9	n/a	n/a	3.21	15	12	n/a	19	19	28.7
	1998	10.7	31.9	19.1	9.9	16	57.4	18.7	21.7	19.8	29.4
	1999	8.8	33.7	18.1	n/a	16.9	58.1	22.1	21.8	14.3	30.5
	2000	10	35.9	15.1	7.2	17.5	61	22.1	12.1	10.1	31.8
	2001	8.6	37.6	15.3	9.4	17	62.4	23.7	21.2	13	33.2
	2002	9.1	38.4	16.6	9.5	17.6	62.9	27.1	22.5	11.8	34.3
	2003	10.2	39.3	17.5	10	18.7	65.2	26.6	22.4	21.2	35.5

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts

n/a = Data not available

## Effective Learning Environment

The effectiveness of an education system can be indicated in a number of ways: such as graduation rates, drop-out rates, and test scores.

**Graduation rate** is the percentage of students who receive a high school diploma versus those who were enrolled and could have graduated during a four-year period. Enrollment for the graduation rate is calculated by the number of eighth-graders in the district four years earlier and adjusted for transfers in and out of the district during the high school years.

Graduation rates are up in all but Dolores and Silverton. Rates for the 2002/2003 school year exceeded the state average in Bayfield, Dolores, Dove Creek, Ignacio, Mancos, and Pagosa Springs. Please note that the Durango rate includes Durango High School, Excel Charter School, the Phoenix Program, DeNier Center, and Adult Education Center Second Chance. The 2003 graduation rate at Durango High School was 87.6 percent.

Effective Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
Graduation Rate in Percentages	1994-1995	89.8	60.5	91.9	100.0	71.8	63.5	77.7	83.6	100.0	77.4
	1995-1996	75.3	59.1	91.1	100.0	n/a	n/a	82.9	82.4	100.0	77.7
	1996-1997	86.8	61.8	79.2	96.2	83.8	55.7	85.4	84.8	72.7	78.5
	1997-1998	84.4	63.3	82.1	93.3	84.1	65.5	85.7	76.9	100.0	80.1
	1998-1999	85.7	65.2	78.6	92.6	78.5	63.4	89.2	80.2	87.5	79.9
	1999-2000	84.0	50.4	83.8	95.5	83.2	90.1	83.0	90.7	83.3	80.9
	2000-2001	96.4	59.9	80.0	100.0	56.9	84.3	90.2	95.4	81.8	80.5
	2001-2002	84.9	56.0	95.3	100.0	66.6	75.4	83.6	94.3	84.6	81.8
	2002-2003	91.5	65.3	93.8	100.0	76.1	86.5	85.1	94.9	80.0	83.6

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts

Data on the number of people receiving General Equivalency Degrees is a new addition to the Index this year. Coupled with graduation rates, this information gives a more accurate picture of the number of people who complete a high school education. There are Adult Education Centers in Durango, Ignacio, Bayfield, Pagosa Springs, and Cortez that provide classes and testing for General Equivalency Degrees (GED). On average, 35 people receive their GED each year from the center in Cortez, which serves students from Montezuma and Dolores Counties. Approximately 90 percent of these recipients were from Montezuma County. Nationwide, 15 percent of high school graduates receive their GED. That trend holds true in La Plata County where 15-17 percent of high school graduates receive their GED – 36 percent of these

students were minorities. There was a surge of students receiving their GED in 2001 because of a change in the testing format. After 2001 any student who had begun the GED program, but not completed it, would have had to re-enroll. Thus, many students who were pending chose to take the test. The Durango Adult Education Center started a satellite center in Silverton in 2004, with four students currently enrolled in that program. There was a general decline in GED recipients in 2004.

Effective Learning Environment					
Indicator	Year	Archuleta	Dolores	La Plata	Montezuma
Number of GED Recipients	2001	45	4	183	31
	2002	28	4	111	31
	2003	33	4	132	31
	2004	19	n/a	74	n/a

Source: Colorado Dept of Education website (www.cde.state.co.us)

**Drop-out rates** are calculated for grades 7-12. Rates in Bayfield, Cortez, Dolores, Ignacio, Mancos, and Pagosa Springs are lower than the statewide rate, while Dove Creek and Durango rates are above the state level. The Durango drop-out rate includes Durango High School, Excel Charter School, the Phoenix Program, DeNier Center, and Adult Education Center Second Chance Program. Durango School District 9-R's special programs serve students from throughout the Four Corners.

Effective Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
Drop Out Rate in Percentages	1997	0.9	n/a	n/a	0.5	2.3	4.0	n/a	3.5	1.4	3.6
	1998	0.2	4.7	3.0	1.1	2.2	2.7	1.1	2.0	4.7	3.5
	1999	0.0	5.6	1.5	0.6	2.1	2.7	2.6	1.2	0.0	3.3
	2000	2.0	0.3	1.2	5.9	2.0	3.3	2.1	1.0	0.0	3.0
	2001	2.2	3.0	0.0	5.0	1.9	4.6	4.3	0.6	1.5	2.9
	2002	0.0	0.5	0.0	6.1	3.4	5.6	2.7	0.9	1.9	2.6
	2003	0.3	0.2	0.0	4.4	2.9	2.2	1.0	0.1	3.2	2.4

\*Included in drop out rate

n/a = Data not available

Source: Colorado Department of Education website (www.cde.state.co.us) and individual school districts

**Standardized tests** are included in this section because they currently provide the most consistent and available indicators that can be collected for all school districts. The ACT measures student readiness for college. With the exception of Dove Creek, ACT scores are decreasing in all five counties, and also at the state level. In 2004, Bayfield, Dove Creek, Durango, and Mancos exceeded the state average on ACT Scores.

Effective Learning Environment											
Indicator	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
Average ACT Scores	1995	20	n/a	n/a	18	22.4	21.3	n/a	20.7	22.4	21.4
	1996	22.4	n/a	n/a	18	22	19.4	n/a	22.3	n/a	21.4
	1997	20.8	n/a	n/a	20.1	21.9	19.9	n/a	23.4	22.7	21.5
	1998	20.8	19.6	23.7	19.8	22.2	21.8	n/a	22.9	21.4	21.65
	1999	21.3	21	19.5	n/a	22.4	19.3	20.7	20.2	21.9	21.5
	2000	21.7	20.5	19.5	n/a	21	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	21.5
	2001	19.5	17	19.5	19.2	19.8	16.8	17.5	19.4	n/a	18.6
	2002	20.4	17.5	19.9	18.9	19.6	15.8	17.4	18.8	n/a	18.8
	2003	18.8	17.8	18.9	18.4	19.9	16.8	19.4	18.4	n/a	19
	2004	19.2	16.7	17.8	19.9	19.3	14.9	19.6	18.2	n/a	18.8

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts

n/a= Data not available

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) test measures student progress toward meeting state performance standards in reading, writing, math, and science. CSAP scores in Dove Creek are down, while there is an upward trend in all other school districts and at the state level. The Ignacio School District implemented new programs in an effort to raise scores, particularly in math. These programs are paying off, as we see from the results of the CSAP tests shown on the following page.

Effective Learning Environment											
Indicators	Year	Bayfield	Cortez	Dolores	Dove Creek	Durango	Ignacio	Mancos	Pagosa	Silverton	State
<b>4th Grade CSAP Scores Reading % Proficient and Above</b>	1997	69	n/a	n/a	72	62	40	n/a	47	n/a	57
	1998	53	41	72	82	61	35	43	61	n/a	57
	1999	79	44	62	74	69	54	62	54	n/a	59
	2000	68	53	56	52	68	54	60	62	n/a	62
	2001	79	44	65	34	78	41	59	55	n/a	63
	2002	68	44	61	43	78	60	67	58	n/a	59
	2003	68	44	61	43	78	60	67	58	n/a	63
	2004	71	49	82	n/a	75	54	48	75	n/a	63
<b>4th Grade CSAP Scores Writing % Proficient and Above</b>	1997	38	n/a	n/a	45	37	20	n/a	26	n/a	31
	1998	46	20	35	59	31	13	30	21	n/a	36
	1999	53	24	26	39	39	22	42	26	n/a	34
	2000	45	26	28	14	39	22	37	28	n/a	36
	2001	47	25	41	38	45	21	37	34	n/a	46
	2002	49	29	39	29	62	39	33	53	n/a	50
	2003	49	29	39	29	62	39	33	53	n/a	59
	2004	48	31	52	n/a	62	43	45	55	n/a	53
<b>7th Grade CSAP Scores Reading % Proficient and Above</b>	1999	62	47	59	78	59	45	51	43	56	56
	2000	54	52	61	57	66	31	80	53	59	59
	2001	78	55	63	n/a	75	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2002	71	53	51	59	65	41	73	60	n/a	59
	2003	69	56	58	33	72	41	66	60	n/a	61
	2004	75	51	53	59	74	36	69	65	n/a	61
<b>7th Grade CSAP Scores Writing % Proficient and Above</b>	1999	46	31	32	57	52	21	34	37	n/a	41
	2000	40	34	37	36	48	24	57	42	n/a	42
	2001	53	41	51	57	60	38	43	52	n/a	52
	2002	54	30	36	35	55	22	53	45	n/a	50
	2003	58	41	34	28	60	30	56	48	n/a	53
	2004	60	38	42	48	74	23	69	44	n/a	52

Source: Colorado Department of Education website ([www.cde.state.co.us](http://www.cde.state.co.us)) and individual school districts

n/a= Data not available

Test scores for Silverton are not made available to the public because the school district has less than 16 students taking the tests.

## Seeking Solutions

Community and parental involvement play a critical role toward ensuring that all children receive a quality education. Research during the past 30 years demonstrates that parents who are involved in their children's education substantially increase student achievement. Parents are most effective when they help their children with learning projects at home, stress the importance of education and doing well in school, and work as partners with their child's teachers. Volunteers can contribute significantly to the quality of education in their communities by serving as tutors and mentors in the schools, particularly for students whose families don't have the capacity to be fully involved in their children's education.

Healthy communities ensure that all students receive a high quality education by providing adequate funding for school programs and infrastructure. Although the majority of education-funding decisions are made in the state Legislature, local communities can support education through volunteerism with and/or contributions to non-profit organizations that provide supplemental educational services for our schools. Furthermore, we should continue to support and assess educational alternatives, including charter schools, home-schooling, and shared-schooling options. Most of all, healthy communities realize that learning is a lifelong process that's supported through continued educational opportunities for all its citizens – young and old.

There are many groups working to improve student success in our region. These include:

### **Archuleta County**

Big Brothers/Big Sisters  
Adult Education Center

### **La Plata County**

Durango Latino Education Coalition  
It's About Kids Advocacy Group  
Advocating Choice in Education  
Service Learning Initiative of Southwest Colorado  
Adult Education Centers  
Big Brothers/Big Sisters  
Four Corner's Safe Schools Coalition

### **Dolores County**

Gear Up  
Service Learning Initiative

### **Montezuma County**

Adult Education Centers  
Service Learning Initiative  
School Community Youth Coalition

### **San Juan County**

Adult Education Center  
Silverton Family Learning Center