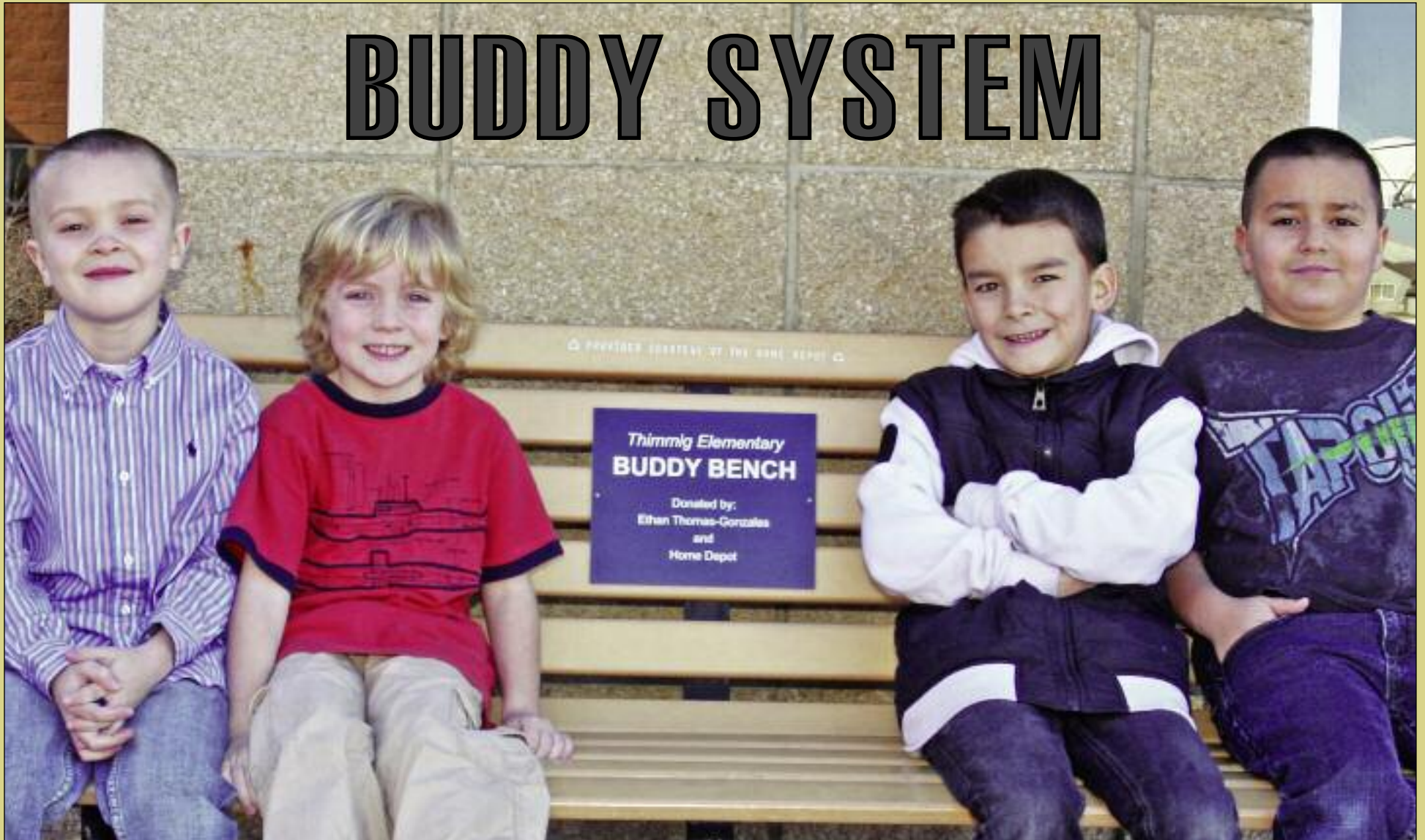


## BUDDY SYSTEM



Ethan Thomas-Gonzales, far left, wanted to make sure all students at Thimmig Elementary have someone to play with at recess, so he arranged for a Buddy Bench to be installed. Here, he tries it out with from left, Xavius Churchill, Xavier Ramirez and Elijah Trujillo.

| Page 7



Makenna Nolop, left, and Jordyn Dickinson, seventh-grade students at Prairie View Middle School, operate virtual desktop computers in the library.

## Virtually anywhere

Students can access their work from any computer

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

No longer are School District 27J teachers and students tied to their individual desktop computers. They now have the flexibility to work anywhere, accessing personal documents and shared software programs through virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI).

The idea emerged two years ago when the district was looking for cost-effective alternatives for replacing aging computers.

“We knew we didn’t have \$3 million in the budget to simply buy new computers, but we needed an

option that would take us into the future,” said Chief Information Officer Jeremy Heide.

VDI utilizes server hardware to run desktop operating systems and application software inside a virtual machine. Users access the virtual desktops through a network, using their existing PC, thin client or mobile device. Each virtual desktop is the exact working environment they would find if the operating system were running on physical hardware at their work stations. Benefits of the system include

See **VIRTUAL WORLD** Page 7

# Grading system no longer as simple as ABC



**DR. CHRIS FIEDLER**

We still pay a lot of attention to letter grades.

Many school districts have chosen to move away from traditional letter grades in favor of standards-based grading that often uses a rubric and number scale.

While the argument can be made for or against that growing movement, there is little argument that the more traditional letter grades carry a lot of weight.

An “A” still means success and an “F” still registers as failure. So when Colorado School Grades ([www.coloradoschoolgrades.com](http://www.coloradoschoolgrades.com)) delivers its grades for each Colorado school on an annual basis, those grades also carry a great

deal of weight. It makes sense that it would be easier for parents or community members to understand how their school is doing based on a letter grade rather than working through the complex Colorado Department of Education data (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance>). Each school grade is, however, based on that same CDE data.

Colorado School Grades scores schools on a curve so, for example, schools that score from 98 to 100 percent receive an “A+.” Conversely, schools that score 4.9 percent or below receive an “F.”

When you look at Colorado School Grades, you will see that the majority of our 22 schools (including charter schools) hover around the “C” range – some “B’s” and some “D’s” but no “F’s” – in the latest round of grades. I wish our school funding was subject to the same grading. I have shared before that our school district ranks 172nd

out of 178 state school districts in terms of total per-pupil funding and mill levy override funding. Put another way, we are the seventh-lowest-funded school district in Colorado. When you do the math that puts 27J in the bottom 3.9 percent in terms of total funding among state school districts. If we were to use the same Colorado School Grades scale for the purpose of assigning a grade to our current funding, our grade for funding in 27J would earn an “F.”

When I put these grades together, I can’t help but be impressed by our incredible teachers and staff who have our students performing academically at a “C” level despite working with “F” funding. Frankly, I think you should be, too.

It leaves me wondering. What could we do with more? Knowing what we are accomplishing now, what could we do with “C” funding or even “D+” funding? What programs could we add and enhance to improve and enrich our students’

experience and levels of achievement? What tools could we give our amazing teachers who already defy expectations with the terrific work they do every day?

As you may know, I joined the overwhelming majority of my fellow Colorado school district superintendents earlier this year in asking the state legislature to restore at least a portion of the funding we have lost as the result of the state’s economic negative factor. While the result of this unprecedented effort and common voice from those charged with leading our state’s school districts remains to be seen in terms of increased funding, I think the message is clear. We simply can’t keep shortchanging our students on the quality of their education.

It’s time to raise all of our grades.

*Dr. Chris Fiedler is superintendent of District 27J.*

# Overcrowding is a growing problem in District 27J



**PATRICK DAY**

There is a growing concern in School District 27J that we are out of seats for our kids. The district has been able to handle the continued growth of our attendance area for the past six years but the options for dealing with our growing enrollment have become limited.

In 2006 our district opened its second high school, Prairie View. Prior to that opening, we had nearly 1,800 students on split session at Brighton High School. We are now near, if not over, that 1,900 figure in both schools! I am using the high school level as an example of the crowding that we are seeing. We are nearing

capacity at some of our elementary and middle schools as well.

Some may ask why, since the economy is down, are we still seeing growth in our student population? The simple answer is that many of these kids were already here before the downturn, but not yet school age. Our area is unique in that new homes are affordable and close to downtown and area businesses. Our location has drawn many young families.

With home building on the increase, we will be seeing an even greater demand for education. We don’t mind that at all and we, as always, will go to the extreme to provide a quality education for those in the district – but our assets can only go so far.

Sometimes I hear, “It doesn’t affect my school,” or “The growth doesn’t affect my area,” In fact, growth over the entire district affects all schools. There is no other way to mitigate this

growth other than new space and/or split schedules, a year-round schedule or extended days.

I am sure the school board will be presented with a bond issue for buildings/capital improvements as well as a mill levy override to help operate our schools. We, as a board, will decide whether it is placed on the November ballot. I ask you, each member of the community, to take a look at what is happening in our schools. See the opportunity that our students have. See the dedication of the staff and teachers. Become active in the community as well as the district, and consider the investment we need to make in our schools for students to be successful.

*Patrick Day is president of the School District 27J Board of Education.*

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## DISTRICT 27J SCHOOL DIRECTORY

<p><b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</b></p> <p><b>Brantner Elementary</b>              Michele Saller, Principal              7800 East 133rd Ave              Thornton, CO 80602              720-685-5050</p> <p><b>Henderson Elementary</b>              David Felten, Principal              12301 East 124th Ave              Henderson, CO 80640              303-655-2700</p> <p><b>Northeast Elementary</b>              Michael Clow, Principal              1605 Longspeak Street              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-2550</p> <p><b>North Elementary</b>              Paula Redig, Interim Principal              89 North 6th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-2500</p> <p><b>Pennock Elementary</b>              Valerie Ortega, Principal              3707 Estrella Street              Brighton, CO 80601              720-685-7500</p>	<p><b>Second Creek Elementary</b>              Evoice Sims, Principal              9950 Laredo Drive              Commerce City, CO 80022              720-685-7550</p> <p><b>South Elementary</b>              Kay Collins, Principal              305 South 5th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-2600</p> <p><b>Southeast Elementary</b>              Sarah James, Principal              1595 Southern Street              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-2650</p> <p><b>Thimmig Elementary</b>              Justin McMillan, Principal              11453 Oswego Street              Henderson, CO 80640              303-655-2750</p> <p><b>Turnberry Elementary</b>              Brett Minne, Principal              13069 East 106th Place              Commerce City, CO 80022              720-685-5350</p>	<p><b>West Ridge Elementary</b>              Carrie Brock, Principal              13102 Monaco Street              Thornton, CO 80602              720-685-5304</p> <p><b>MIDDLE SCHOOLS</b></p> <p><b>Prairie View Middle School</b>              Tom Delgado, Principal              12915 East 120th Ave              Henderson, CO 80640              720-685-5400</p> <p><b>Overland Trail Middle School</b>              Eric Lambright, Principal              455 North 19th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-4000</p> <p><b>Stuart Middle School</b>              Cindy Price, Interim Principal              15955 East 101st Way              Commerce City, CO 80022              720-685-5500</p> <p><b>Vikan Middle School</b>              Trina Norris-Buck, Principal              879 Jessup Street              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-4050</p>	<p><b>HIGH SCHOOLS</b></p> <p><b>Brighton High School</b>              John Biner, Principal              270 South 8th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-4200</p> <p><b>Prairie View High School</b>              Ana Mendoza, Principal              12909 East 120th Ave              Henderson, CO 80640              303-655-8800</p> <p><b>Heritage Academy</b>              Cyndra Foster, Principal              830 East Bridge Street              Brighton, Colorado 80601              303-655-2850</p> <p><b>OTHER</b></p> <p><b>BOLT Academy</b>              Jennifer Alexander, Principal              1850 Egbert Street, Suite 120              Brighton, CO 80601              720-685-5475</p> <p><b>27J Preschool</b>              Bethany Ager, Coordinator              18551 East 160th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              720-685-5490</p>	<p><b>CHARTER SCHOOLS</b></p> <p><b>Belle Creek Charter School</b>              Irene German, Principal              9290 East 107th Ave              Henderson, CO 80640              303-468-0160</p> <p><b>Bromley East Charter School</b>              Lori Sheldon, Executive Director              356 Longspur Dr.              Brighton, CO 80601              720-685-3297</p> <p><b>Eagle Ridge Academy</b>              Ben Ploeger, Head of School              &amp; Principal              3551 Southern Street              Brighton, CO 80601              303-655-0773</p> <p><b>Foundations Academy</b>              Joe Hammond, Principal              340 South 45th Ave              Brighton, CO 80601              303-659-9519</p> <p><b>Landmark Academy</b>              Matt Carlton, Principal              10566 Memphis Street              Commerce City, CO 80022              303-287-2901</p>
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# Is District 27J too squeezed?

## Enrollment has almost tripled since 2000

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

As space at Brighton and Prairie View high schools nears a critical point, administrative staffs at both schools are planning changes for the 2014-15 school year.

At Brighton High, which is projected to be over capacity by more than 200 students, freshmen will be assigned to eight classrooms at the nearby Brighton Heritage Academy, three-tenths of a mile away. The freshman class will be divided and will alternate

schedules, with 180 students going to Brighton Heritage in the morning and returning to the main building in the afternoon, and vice versa. The freshmen were chosen because they have more common schedules and core classes.

"It's not a permanent solution," said Brighton High Principal John Biner. "It's a fiscal hit to use other space that we'll soon outgrow. Plus, our students will have to travel back and forth between buildings, which is disruptive to the neighborhood. Ultimately, I hope we get something done in November. The enrollment projections get ridiculous in about five years, so we don't want to have to wait until it's so painful that the vote isn't even debatable."

Based on projections, Brighton High will likely be over capacity by 646 students by the start of the 2018-19 school year. The influx in students has been a result of the housing boom from 2002-07. In 2000, the district's K-12 enrollment was 5,643. That skyrocketed to 12,224 in 2007 and now stands at more than 16,000.

To deal with the already overcrowded

conditions, Brighton High has installed 10 modular classrooms over the past few years, and will also continue using "traveling teachers" – teachers without designated classrooms – to allow for additional classroom space.

Prairie View High School is projected to grow to nearly 100 students over its capacity next year and 756 students over capacity by 2018-19. The school will be transforming storage space into teacher workrooms and planning areas in order to open up additional classroom space. It will also implement the practice of traveling teachers, as well as multiple lunch periods.

"I applaud the work done by our administrative team over the past several months to develop ways they can continue to stretch the capacity of their school buildings for the near future," said District 27J Superintendent of Schools Dr. Chris Fiedler. "While this work is necessary to accommodate our growing number of high school students, it distracts us from more important discussions we should be having about raising graduation rates and increasing academic achievement for all of our students. We need to find a long-term solution to our capacity challenges."

Continued capacity shortages will mean fewer students will be able to have full-class

schedules. Programs, such as reading-intervention programs for students in need of additional help, will be scaled back. Both schools are also limiting open enrollment in the coming school year. Only current students entering their junior and senior years will be eligible for open enrollment as non-residents.

Enrollment growth has not been limited to the high-school level. School District 27J is also experiencing increased enrollments at the elementary and middle-school levels, and chose to limit open enrollment at some district middle and elementary schools. Based on current projections, the district estimates it would need an additional 3,242 K-12 seats by the 2018-19 school year.

To explore more sustainable solutions than the temporary changes, District 27J has created a committee called the Quality Schools Initiative. Among the options the group is considering is a school construction bond to build a third high school. The district has not decided on the location, but the school could possibly be built on 73 acres of land in the northwest part of the district that has already been purchased. Planning Manager Joy Gedom and other staff members have been working with the high school principals throughout the year and are continuing to engage the community in the discussions.

**Prairie View High overcrowding can best be seen at the main entrance during the change of classes.**



# Brantner students off to Washington, D.C.

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

While hundreds of thousands of eighth-graders across the country take an annual pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., it is less common for a group of fourth- and fifth-graders to make the journey.

This will be the second year, however, that students from Brantner Elementary School in Thornton will spend four days exploring the nation's capitol. They will travel to Washington May 28-31, visiting the U.S. Capitol Building, Supreme Court, Smithsonian and national monuments and memorials. They will also spend a day in Colonial Williamsburg, where they will be fully immersed in 18th-century Virginia's capital city.

"We had so much fun last year," said fifth-grade teacher Brenna Bidwell. "The kids were so excited to see and interact with the sites we study."

The trip complements the curriculum of LEAD21,

a comprehensive K-5 core literacy program that Brantner uses. As part of LEAD21, students study government and citizenship, examining local leaders, good citizens and the foundations of our freedom. The curriculum also explores history and culture, celebrating the heroes and stories of our past, as well as geography and economics, with units on "A Nation's Beginning" (grade 4) and "Early America" (grade 5).

This year, 12 students have signed up to go. Last year, four fifth-graders went on the trip, visiting many of the same sites, with the exception of Gettysburg instead of Williamsburg. Bidwell hopes to continue the annual tradition, alternating between trips to Washington and either Boston or Philadelphia. Students are responsible for the expense of the trip, although the school has held a number of fundraisers to offset the cost.



Brenna Bidwell, top, a fifth-grade teacher at Brantner Elementary, poses with students who will be visiting Washington, D.C.

# BOLT proves there's more than one way to learn



Halie Addington, a student at BOLT Academy, uses her time in class to complete assignments on her laptop.

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The road to a high school diploma doesn't always pass through a traditional classroom, and now students in School District 27J have an alternate route.

The district rolled out a new, blended-learning school at the start of the school year to give students more choice in when, how and what they study. Brighton Online Learning for Tomorrow (BOLT) Academy, open to students in grades 9-12, combines the appeal and flexibility of online learning with the guidance and support structure of a classroom. The school, located inside the Brighton Learning and Resource Campus, welcomes all types of learners who are self-motivated, independent, disciplined and have an interest in using technology to enhance their learning experience.

"We understand that the concept of online learning is a tremendously popular choice for students and their parents," said District 27J Superintendent Dr. Chris Fiedler. "We're happy that BOLT Academy is providing that flexible, technology-rich learning environment for students, but also providing personalized learning assistance from our highly-qualified staff."

Most courses at BOLT are offered through a web-based curriculum. The school has partnered with Edgenuity to provide the online coursework, while hiring its own, Colorado-licensed teachers to provide instructional support. Students attend on campus four days a week, and continue working online from home. They can choose from a variety of course offerings including core academics, arts, world

languages, and career and technical courses. Students also work with learning coaches to create personalized pathways to graduation, based on learning styles, interests, skill levels and goals. Progress is measured by proficiency, not time.

"Every student has a different reason to be here," said Principal and Learning Coach Jennifer Alexander. "Some may need a flexible school schedule for family responsibilities, and some may want to graduate early by taking additional classes. Students have deadlines, but the pace is set by them. We take a look at their goals and help them reach them."

Alexander was hired by the district last year as an instructional technology specialist and was tasked to explore online learning options.

"Transitioning to this role and opening this school has made all of our ideas about online learning a reality," said Alexander. "In a self-paced learning environment, online learning can create challenges in keeping yourself on-task and on-time, but our biggest strength is in giving students a small, personalized environment. We get to know each student so well, and we can help them stay motivated."

The school has 42 students enrolled this year. It can accommodate up to 50 students in the current space and may be able to expand in time.

"Overall, I'm thrilled," said Alexander. "Kids are telling other kids and we've already had so many success stories. Anytime you take on a new endeavor, there's a steep learning curve and more work to be done, but we're continuing in a great direction."

BOLT is currently accepting applications for next year. The application, as well as additional information about the school and enrollment requirements, can be found online at [bolt-academy.org](http://bolt-academy.org).

# World travelers

## Brighton students to visit Ecuador to experience global perspective

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Hiking through a rainforest, visiting a palm tree plantation and coming face-to-face with spider monkeys will all be part of the adventure Brighton High School students will have when they travel to Ecuador in June.

Eight students will accompany science teacher Melissa Super-Greene as part of a field course program, which strives to teach students the benefits of a global perspective. The course focuses on ecology, biodiversity and human impact. Students will build on what they have learned at Brighton High when they travel to Ecuador, where they will study and compare the ecosystems and conservation efforts of both countries.

“Unlike other high school travel programs, which typically focus on travel experience first and education second, our goal is to introduce rigor and measurable outcomes to provide our students with a global education and perspective” said Super-Greene. “This will give our students a competitive edge in our changing world and prepare them for futures in a global community.”

The students will earn science lab credits as part of the travel experience. It is open to any Brighton High student who passed biology, which includes a pool of honors freshmen and students in grades 10-12. Sophomores Trevor Kamm, Jenacie Klinger, Jacob Morris, Michaela Dietrich, Samuel Larkins and Sara Hagedorn and juniors Tabitha Langland and Isaac Morris will make the trip this year, scheduled for June 9-19.

Their first morning, students will explore

Quito, a United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, where they will visit churches, museums and monuments. Surrounded by volcanoes, Quito is the highest capital city in the world. The next day, they will travel to the village of Papallacta to enjoy the hot springs, and on the following day, they will board a dugout canoe and travel down the Napo River to a rainforest. There, they will hike, observing tropical birds, wildlife and vegetation.

They will also visit AmaZOOnico, a rehabilitation center for wounded and displaced animals, and discover traditional culture in the village of Ahuano. The fourth day, the group will trek through primary and secondary forest trails, observing plants that are used as medicine and in construction. They will visit a butterfly house, which is home to 1,500 butterflies from all over the world. Over the next two days, they will visit the Bellavista Cloud Forest, a private reserve of more than 700 acres that contains one of the most diverse ecosystems in the country. Each evening will also include discussions led by Super-Greene and local naturalists.

After departing from that region, the group will head toward Ecuador’s Pacific Coast, passing through the cloud forest, a tropical humid forest and tropical dry vegetation. Along the way, they will stop at a modern palm tree plantation and agribusiness where they will learn about the stages of obtaining oil, before arriving in the town of Ayampe.



After a hike in Machalilla National Park, one of the most outstanding examples of tropical dry forest on the coast, the students will enjoy the next day at Las Frailes Beach—considered one of the most beautiful beaches in Ecuador.

The following day, they will travel to Isla de la Plata, which is nicknamed the “poor man’s Galapagos” for the richness of its bird life. After hiking and exploring, students will participate in whale- and dolphin-watching on the journey back to the mainland. On their last day, they will visit a school to sample local education, donate supplies and experience a performance of the traditional dance by the local children.

“It will hopefully be an awe-inspiring experience,” said Super-Greene. “It will be wonderful to end it in Ayampe, interacting with the local students and reaching out to a community in need.”

Super-Greene plans on organizing another trip in 2015, likely to Costa Rica, before returning to Ecuador in 2016. For more information or to enroll next year, email her at [msupergreene@sd27j.org](mailto:msupergreene@sd27j.org).

Brighton High teacher Melissa Super-Greene, back row second from left, with students who will be traveling to Ecuador.



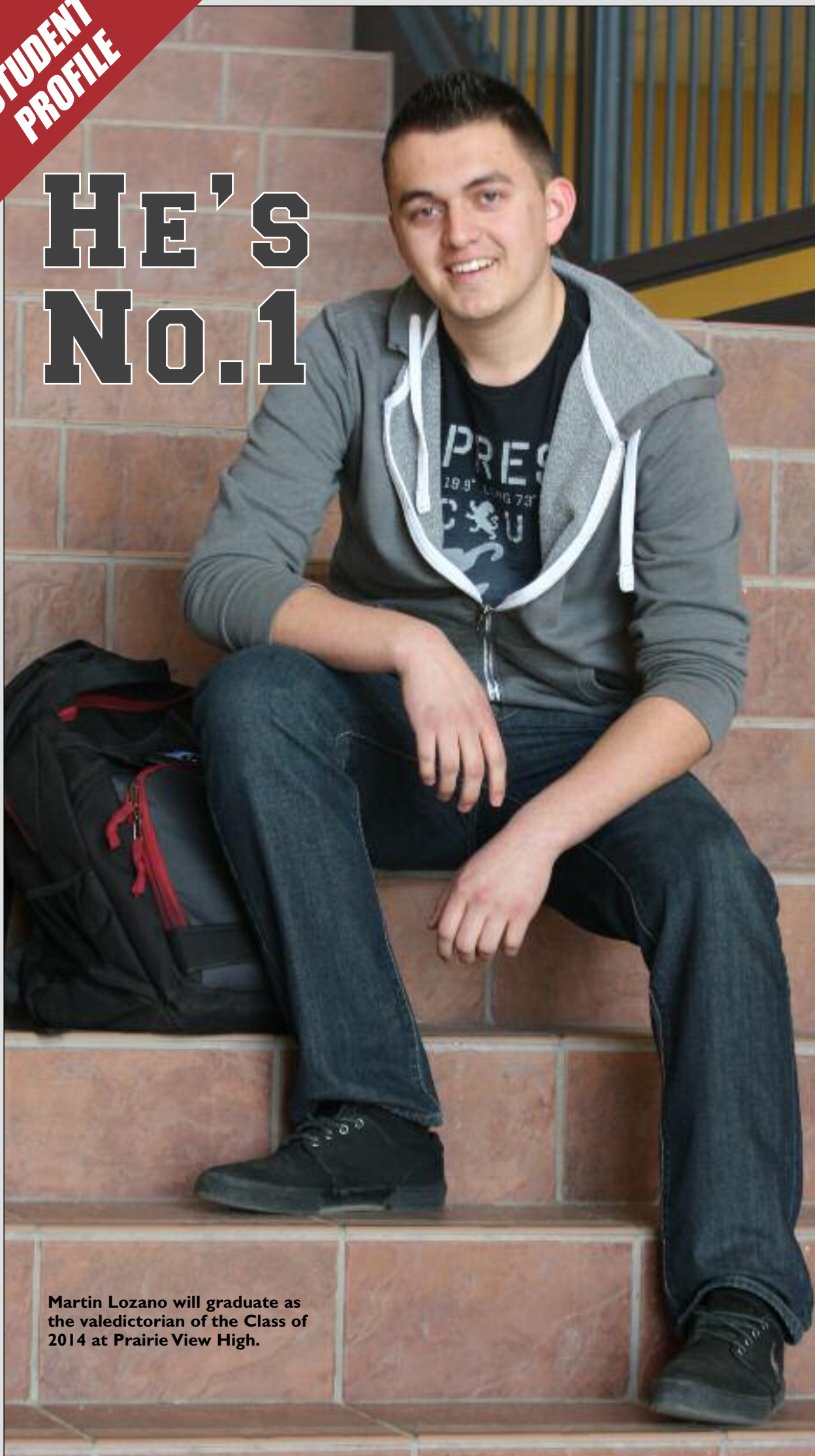
Melissa Super-Greene addresses her class in front of photos taken during last year’s trip to Ecuador.



Photos from last year’s trip to Ecuador.

STUDENT  
PROFILE

HE'S  
No.1



**Martin Lozano will graduate as the valedictorian of the Class of 2014 at Prairie View High.**

## Prairie View senior goes to the head of the class

BY PAUL HALLORAN

The way Martin Lozano looked at it, why settle for No. 2?

As a junior at Prairie View High School last year, Lozano learned that he was ranked second in his class, which now numbers 412 students. Rather than rest on his laurels, Lozano was determined to gain the top spot.

“When you’re so close, knowing you can have it motivated me to obtain it,” Lozano said of the No. 1 ranking. “I had to work a little harder to get what I wanted.”

Lozano’s efforts have paid off, as he will graduate as the valedictorian of the Class of 2014 at Prairie View High. He is carrying a 4.51 GPA on a weighted scale of 5.0 while taking five AP classes and serving as an instructional assistant in a biology class. He played the same role in a chemistry class last year.

Lozano’s route to the top of the Prairie View mountain indirectly started in the Northern Chihuahua region of Mexico, where his parents grew up before immigrating to the U.S. His father, Martin, came first, seeking employment before being joined by his wife, Olga. Martin and his brothers, Omar and Fernando, were born in Colorado.

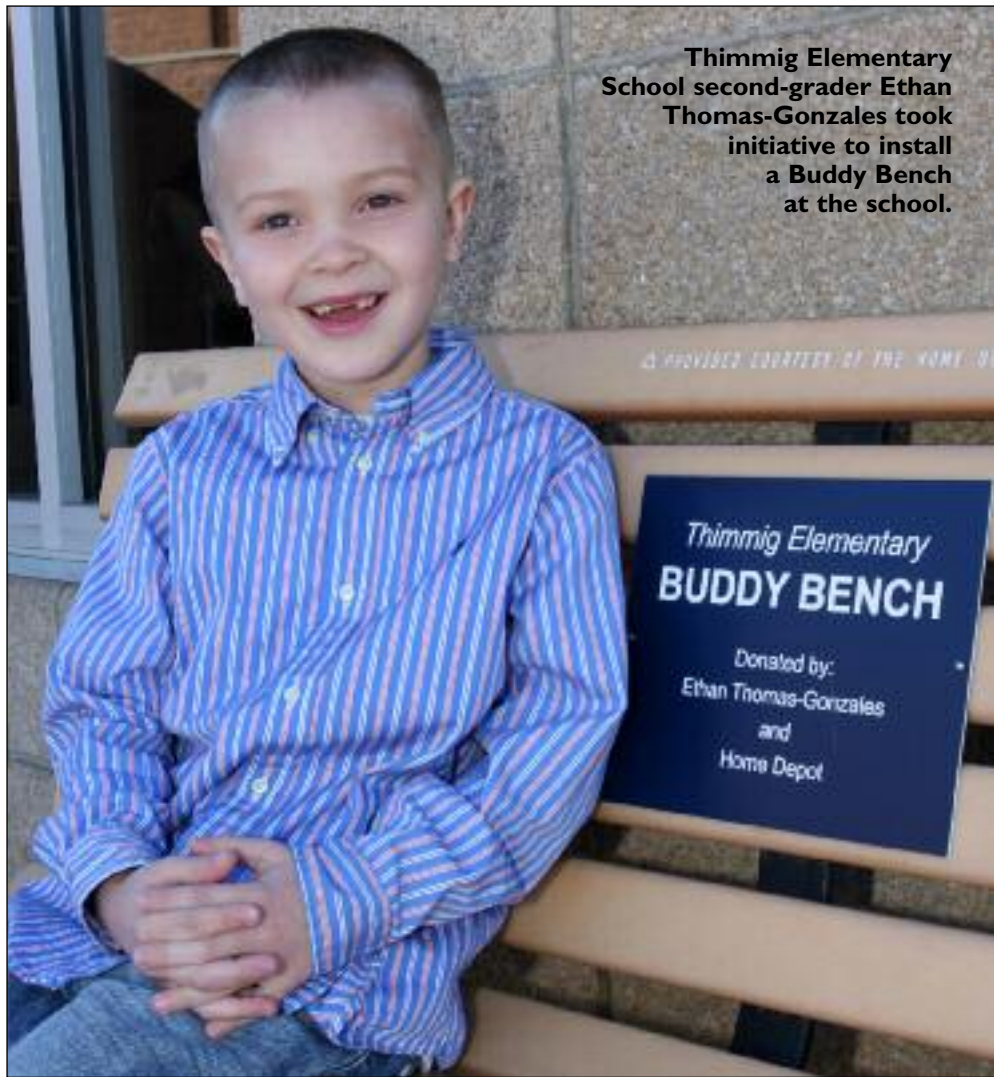
“My parents worked hard and made a lot of sacrifices, so it would be foolish not to take advantage of all the opportunities I have,” Lozano said. “That gives me motivation to seek something better.”

There is little doubt Lozano has made the most of his time at Prairie View, excelling in the classroom, playing soccer his freshman and senior years and serving as a Confirmation instructor at his church, St. Augustine, in Brighton.

He credited science teacher Jessica Mauracher with challenging and motivating him, as well as helping him with the college-application process. Lozano plans to attend the Colorado School of Mines and major in petroleum engineering.

“Martin is a dedicated, driven, motivated young man,” Mauracher said. “He’s had to fight for everything he’s received. He does not rely on anyone else. He is 100-percent devoted to doing whatever he needs to do for his education and career.”

Lozano said he is grateful for Mauracher and “all the teachers who were willing to help me out and push me along so I could get to another level.”



Thimmig Elementary School second-grader Ethan Thomas-Gonzales took initiative to install a Buddy Bench at the school.

# No buddy will get left out at Thimmig

BY PAUL HALLORAN

When Thimmig Elementary School second-grader Ethan Thomas-Gonzales read about a boy in Pennsylvania who came up with an idea to make sure no one at his school felt left out at recess, he liked the idea so much he decided to bring it to Thimmig.

The result is a new Buddy Bench that has been installed in the playground area at the school. The concept is simple, according to Thimmig Principal Justin McMillan.

“If anybody feels alone and they don’t have anybody to play with, they sit on the bench and students will ask them to play,” McMillan said. “They make sure all students feel involved and nobody gets left out.”

Ethan said he and his mother read the story about Christian Bucks of York, Penn., on the Huffington Post website. Bucks knew that some of his classmates felt lonely during recess and he decided to do something about it, taking the idea to his principal.

“My mom asked me to read the article and I liked it,” Ethan said. “I knew some kids at my school did not have anyone to play with at recess, and I wanted them to have friends.”

McMillan credited Ethan with taking the initiative and making the idea a reality at Thimmig, first getting the local Home Depot to donate the bench and a sign, then explaining the

concept to every grade level at the school.

“Ethan has gone above and beyond,” McMillan said. “He is a great example of the idea that age is not a factor if you want to make a difference.”

Ethan said his classmates have responded very well to the Buddy Bench.

“When one kid sits down on the bench, a huge group comes over and asks him if he wants to play,” he said. “I’m glad it’s working.”



Ethan Thomas-Gonzales sits on the bench with his mom Shandelle, left, and second grade teacher Sarah Quinn.

## Virtually anywhere: Students can access their work from any computer

**VIRTUAL WORLD:** From Page 1

eliminating the need for hardware upgrades – even while upgrading software – and enabling users to seamlessly switch between operating environments.

“Anywhere they can get online, they can pick up right where they left off,” said Heide.

Heide also said the longevity of virtual desktops is twice that of a regular desktop – and for half the cost.

The district rolled out VDI last year with teachers in all schools and with students at Prairie View Middle School. In addition to updating classroom desktops, Prairie View converted one computer lab last year and a second lab this year – equipping 75 desktops with VDI. The school also has mini-labs, each with 6-8 computers, that it will convert next year. By giving students and teachers 24/7 access to district resources, school administrators have noticed

positive results.

“It’s been huge for our teachers, having the ability to prepare their lessons and access their files at home,” said Prairie View Middle School Principal Tom Delgado. “And the same goes for the kids. The software we use at the school isn’t always the same as what they have on their own computers. This way, everyone’s on the same page.”

Having access to VDI can also help to foster collaboration among users, both in and out of the classroom.

“If students are working on a group project or report at home, they can share it and interact with each other or with their teachers through the network,” Heide said.

Currently, there are nearly 1,000 virtual desktops district-wide, supported on Tegile Systems. That number will increase next year when VDI is made available to all students in grades 6-12.

## In an Emergency When you see it. Do it.



Lockout



Lockdown



Evacuate



Shelter

### Lockout! Secure the Perimeter.

**Students**  
Return inside  
Business as usual

**Teachers**  
Bring students into the building  
Increase situational awareness  
Take roll  
Business as usual

### Lockdown! Locks, Lights, Out of Sight.

**Students**  
Move away from sight  
Maintain silence

**Teachers**  
Lock classroom door  
Turn out the lights  
Move away from sight  
Maintain silence  
Wait for responder to open door  
Take roll

### Evacuate! (Directions to Follow.)

**Students**  
Leave your stuff behind  
Form a line  
Hand in hand

**Teachers**  
Lead evacuation to location  
Take roll  
Notify if missing, extra or injured students

### Shelter! (Directions to Follow.)

**Students**  
Shelter types:  
1. For tornado  
2. For bomb  
3. For hazmat  
Shelter methods:  
1. Drop, cover and hold  
2. And seal  
3. In silence

**Teachers**  
Shelter type  
Shelter method  
Take roll



# District 27J, how does your garden grow?

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

In the north end of the parking lot behind District 27J's Educational Services Center sits a 5,850-square-foot garden, planted with seeds of love.

The 27J Community Garden, in its fourth year, grew out of a brainstorming session by the 27J Wellness Committee. It is a joint project between the district and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) federal supplemental nutritional program. WIC, which provides direct food assistance and education to children ages 5 and under and income-qualifying women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, took an interest in the garden in an effort to provide its clients with access to fresh, organic fruits and vegetables, engage them in physical activity and introduce them to food science, home gardening and nutrition.

Members of the 27J Wellness Committee and WIC staff and clients care for the raised-bed garden, along with other community volunteers. Those who work in the garden are able to take home fruits and vegetables at harvest time. Any produce that remains at the end of a workday is brought to a nearby WIC clinic's waiting room and/or donated to a local food bank. The produce is also used in the district's summer food-service program. All children age 18 and under are eligible to participate in the free-meal program and are encouraged to do so.

Last year, the group – including

27 families and one daycare center – harvested 1,286 pounds of produce. Most went to families, while 113 pounds were given to the food bank. The volunteers planted a wide variety of items, including eggplant, cauliflower, beans, peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, turnips, strawberries, herbs, leeks, onions, spinach and lettuce among the 35 raised beds. In addition to the beds, the garden also features 12 fruit trees and open areas for squash and pumpkins. Because the 2013 crop yielded an excess amount of tomatoes, many were used in school lunch programs in the fall.

“Interest is growing because the garden just keeps getting bigger and bigger,” said Nichole Poppie, the district's Nutrition Services coordinator.

The project was funded at the start-up with donations and expanded by the second summer with funds from the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant. It is sustained through donations.

From early June through September, the garden will be open 8:30-10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 8-10 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up. WIC also hosts nutrition classes and tastings at the site, showcasing healthy recipes.

For more information, contact Nichole Poppie at [npoppie@sd27j.org](mailto:npoppie@sd27j.org) or 303-655-2988.



Kendall Poppie does some gardening at last year's planting day.



Cafeteria employees Lisa Herrera, left, and Dona Sawdy used produce from the garden, shown on the right, in last year's summer food-service program.



# Read Across America Day



Students at Pennock Elementary School in Brighton joined millions of their peers across the district and country on March 3 to celebrate the 16th annual National Education Association's (NEA) Read Across America Day.

They were delighted to hear some of their favorite stories read aloud by Brighton Mayor Richard McLean, the city's firefighters, district personnel and members of the local business community. The event celebrates Dr. Seuss' birthday and encourages students to appreciate the joy and value of reading. Nationally, more than 45 million readers picked up a book for the occasion.

The Colorado Education Association leads the state's celebration of Read Across America Day, raising awareness of its K-12 literacy programs and encouraging community members to pay a visit to young readers.

"The students love having the guests come in," said special education teacher Sharyl Kay Lawson, who coordinated the event at Pennock — the 10th year the school celebrated the occasion. In addition to enjoying the visits from the guest readers, the students also celebrated with literacy-themed activities all day.



City of Brighton Mayor Dick McLean reads a Dr. Seuss book to students at Pennock Elementary School in honor of Read Across America Day.



Pennock Elementary School Principal Val Ortega has students play act as she reads a story by Dr. Seuss.

## AROUND DISTRICT 27J SCHOOLS

### DISTRICT

Four School District 27J teachers have been chosen to represent 27J and the state of Colorado in a national discussion about the development and implementation of Common Core State Standards-aligned assessments for K-12 students.

Keri Gillespie (South Elementary), Bill Parker (Northeast Elementary), Julie Schwab (West Ridge Elementary, below) and Elizabeth Tarbutton (Stuart Middle School) will join educators from across the country in an effort to ensure the new planned standards and



assessments meet the high bar of quality necessary to inform instruction and will have the opportunity to lead the development of other instructional supports and materials. They were selected by the National Education Association (NEA) to serve as State Educator Reviewers as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) partners with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the NEA on the implementation of the new standards. PARCC is a multi-state assessment consortium that is developing shared English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments.

School District 27J has been awarded a \$50,000 Thriving Schools grant from healthcare provider Kaiser Permanente. The grant will be used by 27J to promote health and wellness among students. Launched nationally by Kaiser Permanente in February 2013, Thriving Schools engages school communities to champion change by incorporating evidence-based, community health improvement practices. Last fall, Kaiser Permanente Colorado invited school districts in its service area up and down the Front Range to apply for Thriving Schools Grants. A total of more than \$1.4 million was awarded to 21 school districts representing 633 schools and more than 400,000 students and staff.

### BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL

Twelve Brighton High School students will represent their school and the state of Colorado at the 2014 DECA International Career Development Conference May 3-6 in Atlanta, Ga. The students qualified for the international conference through their superb work at the state DECA conference Feb. 22-23 in Colorado Springs. Students who will attend the international conference are: Madison Marrs, Dominique Wilson, Cole DeShazer, Will Dutcher, Taylor Young, Jonathan Martinez, Jazmin Morales, Saul Jurado, Miranda Sena, Alex Meier, Marlene Sanchez and Aey Jay Parker.

DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe.

### WEST RIDGE ELEMENTARY

More than 50 seniors from the Todd Creek Hatters group, an active retirement community in Thornton, visited West Ridge Elementary Feb. 7 to deliver books and read to students. The Hatters collect money throughout the year with the goal to purchase a new book for every student. The group then picks a day to visit a school, deliver the books and spend the day reading to children. Hatters members Nancy Skeels and Judi Frost, both retired educators,

began the Reading Literacy Project seven years ago as a way to provide 27J students a book of their choice to keep.

"We want to make a difference in the education of one school's children. We are totally committed, after we see the twinkling eyes and hear the appreciative giggles, as we read to these charming children," said Skeels, below.



# Building a tobacco-free environment

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The decision to pick up a cigarette is, unfortunately, one that often occurs before a student leaves high school. And it is a decision that has devastating consequences.

With grant support from the Tri-County Health Department, School District 27J has made a commitment to implement and revise tobacco-free policies at the district level, while also educating and engaging students on the dangers of tobacco use.

The leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., tobacco kills more than 400,000 people annually. Yet, more than 3,000 kids are still trying their first cigarette each day. In Colorado alone, 10.8 million packs of cigarettes are bought or smoked by kids each year. If current trends continue, 6.3 million of today's youth will ultimately die from a smoking-related disease.

"We're trying to make the kids aware that every choice can and will have a consequence," said McKenzie Toellner, a math interventionist at Prairie View Middle School who is leading the district's tobacco-free committee with Heidi Thomas, a health teacher at Overland Trail Middle School. "Smoking is one choice they can say no to."

Toellner is confident in the influence she and other educators can have, as a result of her own childhood experience.

"The reason I never picked up a cigarette was because I was taught at a very young age that smoking is bad," said Toellner. "I understood the implications and I chose not to—because of my educators. I want to be able to do that for my students."

District 27J was awarded the three-year grant, totaling \$110,000, last April and was required to spend its allotted budget for the first year by June. That allowed Toellner and Thomas to immediately purchase new materials and equip health classrooms with iPads and cafeterias with televisions scrolling anti-smoking messages.

"Last year was about preparation; this year we're hitting home with events," said Toellner. "We couldn't have done any of this without the grant."

On Jan. 25, the committee set up an informational booth at the district's annual wellness event, held at Prairie View Middle School, and returned to Overland Trail Middle School on March 12 for a health-awareness event. At both events, students got an up-close look at two types of pig lungs—one healthy, and one damaged by tobacco—to see the true effects of smoking. On March 18, students at all four middle schools had the opportunity to pledge to quit or not start using tobacco as part of a nationwide event, Kick Butts Day. In addition to a verbal pledge, the students signed their names on banners that are hanging in the schools, and received trinkets with tobacco-free messages on them.

Additionally, all middle schools are currently working on a T-shirt contest promoting anti-smoking. Toellner and Thomas are also trained to implement Not On Tobacco (N-O-T), the American Lung Association's voluntary smoking cessation program for teens age 14-19. In the fall, they plan to use this program to reach out to high school students who use tobacco products.

"We'll continue to educate and fight against big tobacco because we know the consequences, otherwise, could be very dangerous," said Thomas. "We're very excited to have this opportunity to reach out and make our community aware of the effects tobacco has, and through it we are seeing positive results."

Below, role-model playing is an important aspect of Amy Nissen's health class at Prairie View Middle School.

(Inferior) representación de modelos a seguir es parte de la clase de salud de Amy Nissen, de la secundaria Prairie View.



Below, students attending the Overland Trail Health Fair were asked to answer smoking questions to win a prize. (Inferior) estudiantes de Overland Trail durante su Feria de Salud se divierten con un juego de preguntas sobre las consecuencias que causa el fumar.



Students at Overland Trail Middle School increase their breathing rates thru exercise as part of the health fair sponsored by the tobacco-free grant. Durante la Feria de la Salud patrocinada por la subvención Smoke Free, estudiantes de Overland Trail, aumentan su frecuencia respiratoria a través del ejercicio.



Students find out first-hand the differences in the color and textures of pig lungs between smokers and non-smokers. Estudiantes observan la variación entre los colores y texturas de pulmones de cerdo, como muestra de las diferencias visuales entre los pulmones de fumadores y no fumadores.



A student in Amy Nissen's Health class uses an iPad secured through a Tobacco Free grant. Estudiante de la secundaria Prairie View, usa un iPad durante la clase de salud de Amy Nissen, patrocinado por la organización Tobacco Free.



Students at Overland Trail Middle School inspect a sample of the fluids that will build up inside a smoker's lungs in a matter of months. Estudiantes de la clase de salud de Overland Trail, inspeccionan una muestra de líquidos que se forman dentro de los pulmones de un fumador.

# Formando un ambiente libre de tabaco

POR MEAGHAN CASEY

La mayoría de los jóvenes se encuentran con la decisión de probar un cigarrillo, en algún tiempo dado, antes de graduarse de la preparatoria. Una decisión errónea puede traer consecuencias devastadoras. Con la ayuda de una subvención del Departamento de Salud Tri-County, el Distrito Escolar 27J se ha comprometido a implementar y revisión de regulaciones para crear un ambiente libre de tabaco en las escuelas. El distrito también tomará la iniciativa de educar a los estudiantes sobre los daños y efectos que produce el uso del tabaco.

El uso del tabaco es la causa número uno en Estados Unidos de muertes preventivas, matando a más de 400,000 personas anualmente. Aun con cifras alarmantes, cada día más de 3,000 niños prueban su primer cigarrillo. Se estima, que en el estado de Colorado se venden más 10.8 millones de cajetillas de cigarrillos al día. Aproximadamente 6.3 millones de jóvenes morirán en un futuro de enfermedades relacionadas con el tabaco.

"Tratamos de que los niños reconozcan que cada decisión que toman tendrá una consecuencia", comentó McKenzie Toellner, especialista en matemáticas de la Secundaria Prairie View que en colaboración con Heidi Thomas, maestra de salud en la Secundaria Overland, dirigen el Comité de Un Distrito Libre de Tabaco. "Es fácil rechazar un cigarrillo".

Toellner confía que ella y otros docentes logran tener gran influencia en los estudiantes, debido a sus propias experiencias.

"La razón por la cual nunca he probado un cigarrillo es porque desde niña me enseñaron a que fumar no es sano", compartió Toellner. "Yo comprendí que el fumar cigarrillos trae complicaciones y opte por no hacerlo- esto se lo debo a mis maestros. Quiero poder tener el mismo efecto en mis estudiantes". El Distrito Escolar 27J fue beneficiado el pasado abril, con la subvención de tres años, sumando a un total de \$110,000. El dinero destinado para el primer ciclo escolar, deberá ser gastado antes de junio. El dinero asistió en las compras de útiles nuevos y para equipar las clases de salud con iPads (tabletas digitales) y las cafeterías con televisions que desplazarán mensajes contra del tabaco.

"El ciclo escolar pasado fue todo sobre la preparación; este año hemos logrado gran éxito con los eventos", dijo Toellner. "Esto no sería posible sin la subvención".

El 25 de enero, el comité ofreció información en el evento de Bienestar de Salud de 27J, en la Secundaria Prairie View y también asistió en un evento similar el 12 de marzo, en la Secundaria Overland Trail. En ambos eventos, los estudiantes tuvieron la oportunidad de ver dos pulmones de cerdo, uno saludable y el otro dañado por el tabaco. Estos pulmones fueron expuestos para mostrar los efectos que causa el fumar. En marzo 18, los estudiantes de las cuatro secundarias de 27J, tuvieron la iniciativa de dejar y no comenzar a usar tabaco, como parte del evento a nivel nacional Kick Butts Day. Además de su promesa, los estudiantes firmaron sus nombres en pancartas colocándolas dentro de las escuelas y también recibieron regalitos con mensajes anti-tabaco. Las secundarias actualmente tienen un concurso de camiseta que promueven contra el uso de cigarrillos. Toellner y Thomas están capacitados para implementar Not On Tobacco (N-O-T, Di 'no' al tabaco), programa de la Asociación Americana de Pulmones (American Lung Association) designada para jóvenes de 14 a 19 años que desean dejar de fumar. Este próximo, otoño se espera usar este programa para los estudiantes de las preparatorias de 27J, que lo necesiten.

"Nosotros continuaremos educando y luchando contra el uso de tabaco en nuestros jóvenes, ya que sabemos de las consecuencias dañinas que produce", agregó Thomas. "Nos encontramos muy emocionados de tener esta oportunidad para informar a nuestra comunidad sobre los efectos del tabaco y estamos teniendo buenos resultados".