

EDUCATION

D60 Innovation Zone producing positive results

Progress report provided to school board this week

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During a work session Thursday, the board of education of Pueblo City Schools (D60) received an update on implementation of the six-school innovation zone.

Approved in September by the Colorado Department of Education, the zone is made up of Irving, Benjamin Franklin and Minnequa elementary schools, Roncalli STEM Academy, Risley International School of Innovation and Pueblo Academy of Arts.

"When most schools are in hibernation mode in June and July, our innovation zone schools were a whirlwind of activity," Karen Ortiz, executive director of continuous improvement and innovation, told the board. "Staff, hiring and preparation were taking place, with staff being trained in several areas."

The preparation, Ortiz noted, paid off handsomely during the recently concluded first quarter.

"As you can see, I'm very proud to report that we have made tremendous gains and progress in this short time," Ortiz said. "We are most proud of the initiatives that have brought us together as a zone."

Among the implementations:

- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Schools are utilizing the same data-driven instructional practices throughout, with a focus on regular teacher common collaborative times and regular days to analyze interim assessment data.

- **Assessment:** IZ schools utilize a common interim formative assessment system to regularly check the progress of student mastery, in line with the schedule of assessed standards to aid in the Data-Driven Instructional practice.

- **Calendar:** Schools operate under a common elementary and common middle school calendar, which supports collaborative efforts.

- **Coaching Process:** Schools use a formative teacher coaching model entitled Observation/Feedback as a primary



CHIEFTAIN FILE

Karen Ortiz stands in front of the Pueblo Academy of Arts.



We are most proud of the initiatives that have brought us together as a zone.

KAREN ORTIZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF CONTINUOUS
IMPROVEMENT AND
INNOVATION

driver of improving instruction in all classrooms.

While IZ principals and administrators have been trained in the process, all district principals, assistant principals and instructional support staff will soon receive similar training.

- **Student Culture Expectations:** Each campus has developed student culture expectations specific to each community. District leadership provided professional development in the area of school culture to support the efforts of Innovation and non-innovation schools.

Also, adults continue to support a positive relationship with students that fosters mutual respect.

- **Performance Management Tool:** Utilized to review and manage data, this tool has been supported by representatives from CDE, who meet regularly with leadership teams.

- **Advancement Via Individual Determination:** The three elementary schools have received AVID training and are well into first-year implementation. A recent site visit from AVID leaders was favorable in terms of the timeline and progress.

Additionally, Risley,

which has been implementing AVID for the last three years, recently received recognition as a certified AVID site. And Roncalli and Pueblo Academy of Arts are currently exploring implementing AVID.

- **Teacher Commitment Form:** To ensure that common values and expectations are upheld.

- **Parent and Student Compact:** To ensure both have a clear understanding of the philosophical values.

- **Teacher Evaluation:** School leaders worked together to determine appropriate student measures that will be utilized in the teacher evaluation system.

- **Collaborative Decision Making:** This process, at both the school and district level, determines what is best for the zone. Zone schools are involved with Colorado SPARK, a statewide support system for innovation schools.

- **Educational Programming:** Schools have the flexibility to determine a school model and the specific courses to support it.

The options include Expeditionary Learning, Project-Based Learning, Blended Learning, Arts Integration, International Baccalaureate and STEM.

- **Professional Learning:** Schools have the flexibility to opt out of district professional development in exchange for school-based and zone-based professional learning opportunities.

- **Schedule:** Daily zone schedules have been developed to support the school initiatives, including professional learning communities, data analysis and professional development.

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