

EDUCATION

# D60 teachers getting in the Zone

Three more schools will join three already in the Innovation program



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/BRYAN KELSEN

Jessica Martin with the Achievement Network gestures and uses humor as she leads a workshop on Common Core math for Pueblo City Schools (D60) elementary school teachers Wednesday morning at Centennial High School.

BY JON POMPIA  
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As Pueblo City Schools (D60) is adding three elementary schools into its Innovation Zone, a kickoff and training conference attracted 150 educators and support staff to Centennial High School Wednesday.

Irving, Ben Franklin and Minnequa elementary schools will join Roncalli STEM Academy, Risley International School of Innovation and Pueblo Academy of Arts in the zone. The plan already has been signed off by the D60 school board, along with teachers and staff within each school, and will soon be presented to state officials for final approval.

In welcoming the teachers and staff who will be responsible for implementing the curriculum that defines an innovation school, Charlotte Macaluso, acting superintendent and former principal of an innovation school, said, "You chose to be here, to do the hard work. And hard work it will be. It's a journey, but I will say it's worth it."

Cary Palumbo, principal of Franklin Elementary, broke down the components of innovation.

"Our innovation schools will be starting Aug. 10," she explained. "And among our innovations are AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a way for students to organize their thinking that will prepare them for the next level.

"We're also doing Blended Learning, giving students more access to technology, as well as extended learning oppor-

tunities — where they can explore some of their interests through classes not normally offered in elementary schools."

Monday's development included a presentation from Achievement Network, an educational nonprofit dedicated to helping schools excel.

"Everything the team will provide us revolves around the teaching and learning cycle," explained Melissa Patterson, principal of Minnequa Elementary.

Ted Johnson, principal of Irving Elementary, believes D60's Innovation Zone plan will receive a "thumbs-up" from state officials.

"We anticipate that happening within the next few weeks," Johnson said. "We feel confident that we will be able to move forward with the innovations we've selected."

Johnson, like all D60 administrators, is confident that the zone's creation indicates a commitment to improvement and achievement districtwide.

"Part of our work is looking at that transformation process and how we can make our schools more effective. And we fully intend to share that with our colleagues in other buildings that aren't part of the Innovation Zone."

Added Patterson, "We fully believe that this is the piece that we need to move the needle for our students to improve achievement and close the achievement gap." [jpompia@chieftain.com](mailto:jpompia@chieftain.com)

EDUCATION

# D70 seeks mill levy override

Money kept would help offset inadequate state funding

BY JON POMPIA  
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The Pueblo County District 70 Board of Education will place before district voters a mill levy override.

Citing the fact that D70 students are using outdated printed and digital resources, as well as the fact that the district is the lowest funded in the state, the board on Tuesday approved the 2 mill tax increase question for placement on the November ballot.

The mill levy is the as-

essed property tax rate used by jurisdictions such as school districts to raise revenue. Per D70's initiative, as much as \$1.3 million would be generated annually.

On the average, a business worth \$100,000 would see 2 extra mills translate to an additional \$68 on its annual property tax bill. A homeowner with a residence worth \$170,000 would see a \$27 annual increase.

Superintendent Ed Smith has said the education of students is being hindered by a lack of updated materials — both electronic (computers, technology, hardware) and printed — in nearly all disciplines.

In reading/English, as an example, some schools are using textbooks from the 1970s. Science, math and other kits are based on old standards. And from computers to servers to wireless access points, the district is in dire need of a major techno-

logical overhaul.

As a severely underfunded district, extra money to purchase needed materials and resources is in short supply.

Explained Smith, "District 70 is currently rated by the state as an accredited school district. This puts us in the category second from the top, which only a few districts in the state have achieved. However, in order to continue our success, we need some financial help." [jpompia@chieftain.com](mailto:jpompia@chieftain.com)