

Putting Children First

A Plan for
Safe & Excellent
Public Schools

Governor Bill Owens

BILL OWENS
GOVERNOR



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

Dear Fellow Coloradan:

Improving public education is Colorado's number one priority for a simple reason: Children are our future. Universal public education is a fundamental building block of America and of equal

opportunity. Colorado's quality of life and economic future are dependent on the public education system graduating citizens equipped with the knowledge and skills to compete and succeed in the world.



One out of every three third graders cannot read at grade level.

Unfortunately, public education today is failing too many children. Illiteracy and high dropout rates plague too many low-income children. Middle-class children are too often faced with a mediocrity that rarely challenges them to excel. Two-thirds of Colorado's fourth

graders cannot write at grade level and nearly half of seventh graders cannot read at grade level.

The voices of the status quo blame these dismal results on society's influences, poverty, race or family structure. But Colorado can no longer tolerate excuses for failure. Every child can learn. No child should be left behind. It is time to put the children before the bureaucracy in public education.

I have met with thousands of parents, principals, teachers, school board members, superintendents and students. Overwhelmingly we share a common goal: Every child in Colorado — regardless of race, income or background — should be guaranteed a quality teacher, a safe and orderly school, and an education that prepares them to succeed. My education reform plan, *Putting Children First*, is designed to achieve that goal.

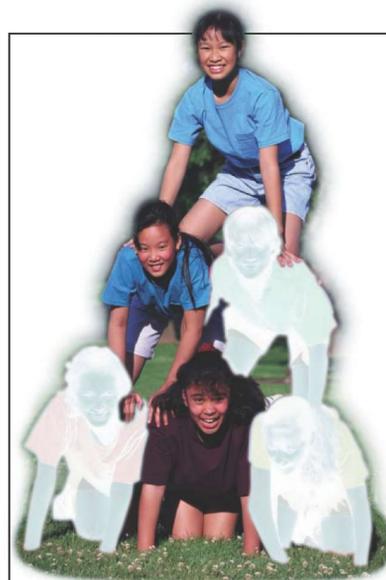
Sincerely,

Bill Owens

Putting Children First

Providing the Resources Needed for Public Schools to Succeed

- \$25 million in new money for *Read to Achieve*
- \$111 million in new money to fully fund K-12 public education student enrollment growth and inflation for the second year in a row
- \$4 million in new money for professional development to train teachers in how to teach the basics of reading, writing and math
- \$15 million in new money for an improved assessment and accountability system
- Millions of dollars in savings for local schools, as the financial burden of assessing students in every grade will shift from the school district to the State



For every two Hispanic students who enter first grade, one will drop out of school before graduating from high school.

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also means parents, law enforcement, community and faith-based organizations coming together to help children overcome many of the challenges they face today outside school.

Top Disciplinary Problems Facing Teachers

1940's	1990's
Talking Out of Turn	Drug Abuse
Chewing Gum	Alcohol Abuse
Making Noise	Teenage Pregnancy
Running in the Halls	Suicide
Cutting in Line	Rape

A Plan for Safe & Excellent Public Schools

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Putting Children First increases parental involvement in their child's education by:

- Issuing a School Report Card each year on every public school that includes information to help parents make critical decisions regarding which school is best for their child
- Providing essential information on teacher qualifications, school academic performance, school safety and use of taxpayer dollars
- Ensuring School Report Card accuracy and credibility through independent third-party audits

Putting Children First provides safe and excellent schools by:

- Measuring academic performance of each school by year-to-year growth, overall performance and how all students — including low-income, minority and exceptional students — perform
- Focusing on the basics and grading school performance on how well schools teach reading, writing and math during the seven hours a day children attend school
- Determining the overall safety record by the appropriateness of school response to violations of the Code of Conduct

Putting Children First recognizes and rewards academic success by:

- Awarding annual grants to the top 5% all around best academic performing schools in the amounts of \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$15,000, depending on school size
- Awarding annual grants to the top 5% of schools that have shown the most overall academic improvement in the previous year in the amounts of \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$15,000, depending on school size
- Giving principals and school advisory committees the power to determine how best to use these no strings attached awards
- Increasing the flexibility for high academic performing schools to waive stifling rules and regulations that stand in their way
- Providing high academic performing schools the option of converting to *Neighborhood Charter Schools*

Putting Children First stops school failure and leaves no child behind by:

- Providing low-income parents of children in schools with low academic performance — a measure of D or less on overall academics — with transportation tokens to offset the costs of transporting their child to a better public school
- Establishing a new and proven management, academic, and operating program, in truly failed schools, by converting them into *Independent Third Party Charter Schools*

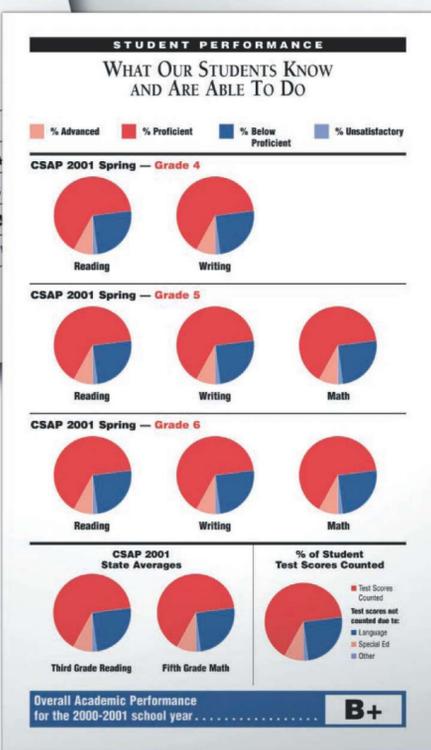
Putting Children First focuses on academic excellence by:

- Ensuring that every child is given the opportunity to make a year's worth of academic progress in a year's worth of schooling
- Ensuring that children are taught the most basic skills they will need to succeed: reading, writing and math
- Establishing high academic standards and assessing student achievement each year in reading and writing for grades 3 through 10, and in math for grades 5 through 10
- Requiring every 11th grade student to take the ACT, paid for by the State

School	Academic	Safety
Ponderosa Elementary	A	A-
Lodge Pole Elementary	C	C
Eagles Nest Elementary	B+	A-
Rainbow Trout Elementary	B-	A-
Bighorn Sheep Elementary	B+	B+
Lark Bunting Elementary	F	C+
Gold Rush Elementary	C	D+
Rocky Mountain Elementary	D	C
Aspen Leaf Elementary	C+	A
High Peak Elementary	C	A

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT						
SAFETY & SCHOOL PROFILE						
Safety and Discipline Safe Schools are the number one priority for parents, schools, and teachers. Your school's safety record is:						
Type of Incident	Number of Incidents Reported	In School (Suspension)	Out of School (Suspension)	Equipped	Referred to Law (Offense)	Other
Substance Abuse						
Classroom Disruptions						
Assault/Rights						
Habitually Disruptive Students						
Deadly Weapons						
Other Incidents as Defined by C.R.S.						
Other Violations of Code of Conduct						
Overall Safety Record for the 2000-2001 school year						A-

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS			
WHAT OUR TEACHERS KNOW AND ARE ABLE TO DO			
Professional Experience of Teachers			
Average teaching years of experience	Your School	District	
Percent of teachers with a degree in their teaching subject area	60%	46%	
Teacher Attendance*	91%	96%	
Number of Teachers who left teaching at this school last year	4	2	
* Percent of teachers who missed fewer than 5 days in 1998-99.			
Professional Development Professional development days provide for continuous training of teachers in improved teaching methods.			
Professional Development Days	Your School	District	State
Teachers	10	10	9



Putting Children First will provide safe and orderly public schools by:

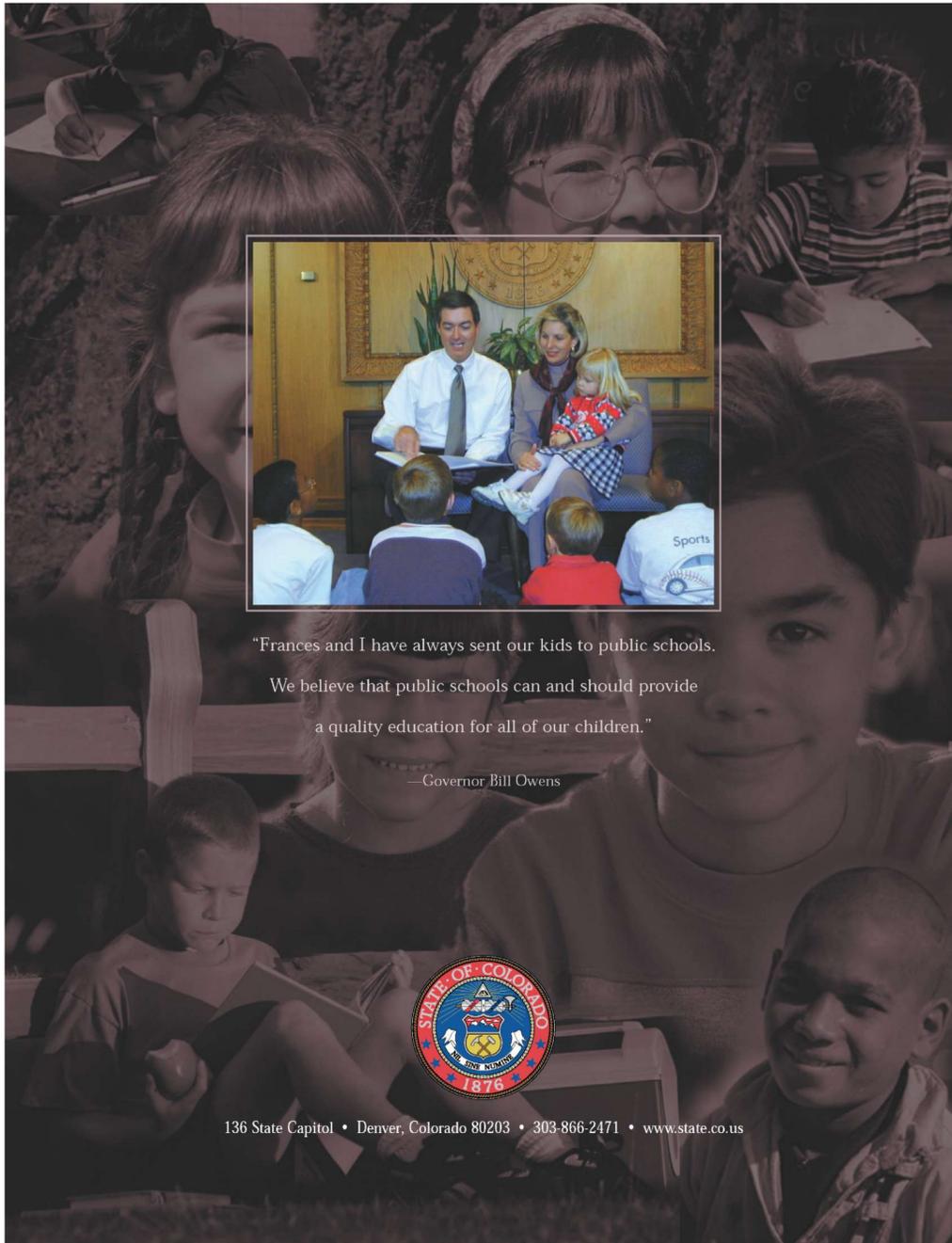
- Establishing zero-tolerance policies for weapons, drugs and violent behavior in schools
- Establishing a "three-strikes and you are out" policy for disruptive behavior
- Strengthening school Code of Conduct policies and establishing financial sanctions for schools that fail to enforce the Code
- Providing teachers the freedom to enforce class rules or to remove troublemakers from their classroom
- Establishing *Alternative Charter Schools* for high-risk and expelled students so that they are in schools capable of coping with their needs rather than roaming the streets
- Strengthening the sharing of information between law enforcement agencies and local schools so they may collaborate to ensure that high risk students do not fall through the cracks and potential trouble makers are spotted early

Putting Children First provides teachers with the tools to educate students by:

- Providing \$10,000 professional development grants to school principals to train teachers in how better to teach the basics of reading, writing and math
- Providing teachers with assessment result data that allows them to measure their effectiveness at moving all students forward
- Eliminating tenure for new teachers so principals can retain and reward the best teachers, while having the ability to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom
- Creating the *Read to Achieve* initiative to provide intensive reading help to third grade students who cannot read at grade level

Putting Children First creates a coherent and robust assessment system by:

- Measuring student performance in reading, writing and math every year — thus providing a measure of student growth over time
- Diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing and math of each student to provide parents and teachers with the specific information they need to move children forward
- Assessing with secure cheat-proof tests and providing the results in a timely manner, to help teachers and parents respond quickly to the needs of specific children



"Frances and I have always sent our kids to public schools.
We believe that public schools can and should provide
a quality education for all of our children."

—Governor Bill Owens



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