

Shaping Tomorrow Today

Public Education

Volume 14/ Number 1

A Community Newsletter of the Jefferson County Education Association

December/2000

New Year brings opportunity to dialogue and learn



by Dale Gatz,
JCEA President

First, let me take this opportunity to introduce myself. For the past twenty-eight years, I have spent a most rewarding career as a sixth-grade teacher in four Jefferson County schools. My first classroom was at Daniels Elementary—a school that was closed twenty-two years ago.

Since then, I have taught at Green Gables, Normandy, and Peiffer Elementary schools.

Through those varied school experiences, I have certainly learned many of life's lessons. Like many of you, I decided it was time for a change in my career—a time to implement some of those ideas that I've only discussed in small circles.

Hopefully, through this publication, you will get to know more about JCEA, the voice of the educators in Jeffco Public Schools. You may not always agree with our positions on certain school-related issues, and that's OK. My wish is that you give me a call for a meaningful, two-way conversation.

In the years to come we may also find ourselves with differing opinions about a teacher's working conditions, teacher pay, and a teacher's responsibilities. Again, through meaningful dialogue, we can improve our mutual understanding of those issues. Because of our past dialogues, we have made progress on class size, compensation, textbooks, the Strategic Plan, and numerous other concepts. I believe we move ahead when dialogue occurs.

I firmly believe that nothing can tear apart a community more than not communicating. Not getting all the facts is a great way to walk away with egg on one's face. Besides, we are all here for the "Big Picture" of providing a free public education for all school age children. I know there is nothing more valuable than teaching students how to listen to other points of view and then making a respectful decision. If we could do that as well, what a powerful lesson we could teach the next generation!

This leads me to my next topic. All of us have just experienced the election of 2000. One item that should be of importance to all is the passing of Amendment 23. We all read and discussed

the pros and cons before Election Day and thought we had it in the "I Understand" category.

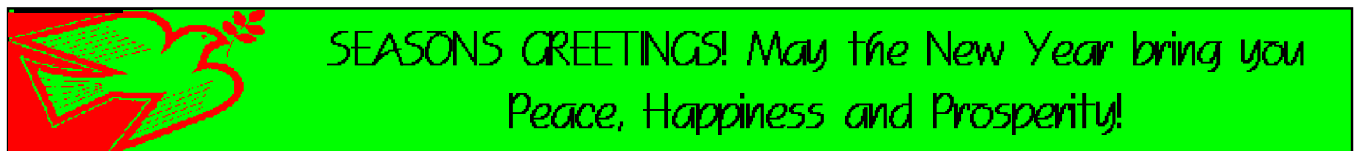
Now, thanks to Colorado voters it is in the state Constitution, but there is little agreement as to what it really says and means. Let's hope our elected officials listen over the next few months to what all sides say and then do what is best for children and public education. After all, Amendment 23 was proposed to help the public school system in the state of Colorado overcome a decade of under-funding and the restricting impact of the TABOR (Bruce) Amendment.

Please keep this point first and foremost in your mind as you listen to the debate. You might have an opinion that Amendment 23 money should come with no strings attached by the legislature. You might believe that all Amendment 23 monies should be spent yearly. Or, you might believe that no money should be spent on the building of charter schools. These are all issues that have been proposed since November 7. I encourage each of us to study all proposals before jumping on a bandwagon.

The November elections also brought the news that the Colorado Senate will have a Democratic majority. With one house controlled by the Democrats and the other house controlled by the Republicans, will all sides of public education issues now be openly discussed? I hope so! Having been a legislative liaison over the past few years, it has been difficult for public school educators to get their voices heard the past two years with both houses and the Governor's seat in the control of one party. Simply put, there was not much opportunity for constructive dialogue. Now, balance is a word that comes to mind when thinking of our legislature.

For all of us who believe in and support public education, let's approach the next two years as an opportunity to dialogue and work together. Let us also be effective role models for Jeffco students, showing them how adults with differing views are capable of accomplishing great deeds and, yes, learning too.

In that spirit and on behalf of the nearly 3,700 JCEA members, we sincerely wish you and yours a safe and happy holiday season!



'Developmental Asset: A Profile of Your Youth'

Too often teachers wonder why Johnny didn't complete his homework, and why Mary's parents didn't attend conferences last week.

Increasingly, they ask what's bothering Sara so much that she can't get her Algebra done, and why can't Andy stay awake through 10th Grade English.

Some possible answers to these questions can be found in the results of a survey done last April in Jeffco Public Schools by Search Institute. Their report *Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth* strongly suggests that the answers to these questions are the "baggage" students carry to class each day. For some of them that can be a very heavy load.

Johnny may have left his homework at Dad's house when he returned to Mom's as 15% of 6th graders live sometimes with Mom and sometimes with Dad. Also, 57% of 6th graders said they sometimes come to class with unfinished homework; 69% of 10th graders said the same.

And Mary may be one of the 16% of 6th graders whose parents "seldom" go to meetings or events at school; 8th and 10th graders reported 20%.

Sara may be one of the 28% of 8th and 10th graders who "at times" think they are "no good at all," so she may not see a need to even try to do her assignments.

Andy may just be bored—56% of 10th graders said they "usually" were bored in class and 43% "sometimes" were. Or Andy may be hung over because he's one of too many

10th graders admitting to binge drinking over the last two weeks.

And if students are having difficulty with their reading, the following percentages may help in better understanding this problem: 38% of 10th graders do not read anything out of school "just for fun," and 27% spend just 1 hour per week on reading that is not part of school work.



Kids do want to do well, though. Across the board high percentages of them responded they agreed or strongly agreed they were bothered when they didn't do something well. Yet 41% of 6th graders, 41% of 8th graders, and 29% of 10th graders "sometimes come to class without paper or something to write with."

Finding out about the "baggage"

In an effort to uncover just what kind of "baggage" Jeffco students carry with them each day to school, Search Institute surveyed 10,241 6th, 8th, and 10th graders in elementary, middle and high schools in all Jeffco articulation areas.

What you are reading is just a sampling of the findings. For more information or the complete report, *Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth*, contact Betsy Thompson at Safe and Drug-Free Schools (303-982-7263).

Parents were informed and given the option of withdrawing their student(s) from the survey. Also, 843 (8%) survey forms were discarded for not meeting one or more of the following criteria for good quality responses—inconsistent responses, missing data on 40 or more items, reports of unrealistically high levels of alcohol or other drug use, or grades other than those intended to be surveyed.

JCEA President Dale Gatz says the Association strongly supports any effort that helps teachers teach. "Every day we see evidence of negative 'baggage' on the faces of students. We know that overcoming those influences is a growing challenge. The Search Institutes report gives us practical information that will help us find new ways to maintain high standards while dealing with the realities our students face."

Developmental Assets

Survey results are based on the 40 developmental assets—**external and internal**—Search Institute says are necessary for the healthy development of young people.

External assets are positive developmental experiences that surround youth with support, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, and opportunities for constructive use of time. They stimulate and nurture positive development.

Internal assets are a young person's own com

(Continued on page 3)

Figure 1: External Assets

Percent of Your Youth Reporting Each of 20 External Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition	Percent
Support	1. Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.	72
	2. Positive family communication	Young person and his or her parents communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel.	33
	3. Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.	44
	4. Caring neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.	37
	5. Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.	29
	6. Parent involvement in schooling	Parents are actively involved in helping young persons succeed in school.	35
Empowerment	7. Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.	22
	8. Youth as resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.	23
	9. Service to others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.	51
	10. Safety	Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.	49
Boundaries and Expectations	11. Family boundaries	Family has clear roles and responsibilities, and models the young person's whereabouts.	43
	12. School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.	50
	13. Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.	47
	14. Adult role models	Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	28
	15. Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.	61
	16. High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.	45
Constructive Use of Time	17. Creative activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.	21
	18. Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.	59
	19. Religious community	Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.	54
	20. Time at home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.	48

Developmental Assets gives insights to student 'baggage'

mitments, values, and competencies. They are grouped into categories of educational commitment, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

The asset framework is based on years of scientific inquiry—much of that done in Jeffco—into risk and resiliency factors, as well as normal developmental processes. Researchers and evaluators at Search Institute have combined and analyzed numerous studies to create the asset framework.

This framework of developmental assets provides a way to assess the health and well-being of middle and high school age youth and how these assets relate to their behavior in a particular community.

According to the Search Institute, a community should strive to ensure that all youth experience 31 or more of the 40 developmental assets. This is important because research shows that **youth with higher levels of assets are more likely to exhibit indicators of resilience and thriving, such as school success, resisting danger, impulse control, and overcoming adversity. Significantly, they are much less likely to engage in substance use, delinquency, school truancy, too-early sexual activity, or risk-taking behaviors.**

Overall, Jeffco students fall well short of this goal. According to the survey, they experienced an averaged of only 19 out of 40 assets: 22.8 for 6th grade, 18 for 8th, and 17.8 for 10th.

Eight percent (8%) of students surveyed reported 31 or more developmental assets, typical of groups across the nation; 34% showed 21-30 assets; 42%, 11-20 assets; and 15%, 0-10 assets. The Jeffco survey did not, however, include any youth who have dropped out of school, which would make the findings even more somber.

This provides clues as to why 55% of 6th graders, 64% of 8th graders and 65% of 10th graders agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that they liked to do exciting things even if they are dangerous. Search Institute data indicate that these percentages would be significantly lower if the overall levels of assets were higher.

Information for parents

The report also gives helpful information for parents. For example, when asked to agree with the statement "I get along well with my parents," 82% of 6th graders, 72% of 8th, and 75% of 10th agreed or strongly agreed. Equally encouraging is that 91% of 6th, 82% of 8th and 81% of 10th graders agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "my parents often tell me they love me." Likewise, by large percentages surveyed students reported feeling supported by their parents, and agreed they helped them feel useful and important while setting clear rules.

However, 46% of 10th graders disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that

"it is against my values to have sex while I am a teenager. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of 8th graders gave the same response, as did 15% of 6th graders.

Underage, binge drinking remains a problem. When asked to think back two weeks and recall how many times they have had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row, 8% of 6th, 24% of 8th and 32% of 10th graders answered this had occurred between 1 and 10 or more times.

What's next?

Search Institute's report provides insights about the young people in Jeffco schools and can be a powerful tool for community-wide discussions about how to improve the well-being of Jeffco students.

The good news is that much of the responsibility and capacity for the healthy development of youth is in the hands of the people who interact with them every day—parents, grandparents, educators, neighborhoods, children, teenagers, youth workers, employers, health care providers, law enforcement, religious institutions, coaches, and others, though support from professionals and the public sector is needed

Ideally, the whole community—through a "complementary approach"—can get involved to ensure that young people build the necessary assets for the solid foundation they need to become tomorrow's competent, caring adults.

For more information about how parents can build developmental assets, see the **Helping Kids Thrive** article on page 4.

Figure 2: Internal Assets

Percent of Your Youth Reporting Each of 20 Internal Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition	Percent
Commitment to Learning	21. Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.	65
	22. School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.	53
	23. Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.	54
	24. Heading to school	Young person cares about his or her school.	53
	25. Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.	23
Positive Values	26. Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.	51
	27. Equality and social justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing danger and poverty.	51
	28. Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs.	70
	29. Honesty	Young person tells the truth even when it is not easy.	63
Social Competencies	30. Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.	63
	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.	43
	32. Planning and decision-making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.	29
Positive Identity	33. Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.	48
	34. Cultural competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.	46
	35. Resistance skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	40
	36. Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.	40
Positive Identity	37. Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over things that happen to him.	45
	38. Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.	48
	39. Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."	57
	40. Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future.	73

Helping Kids Thrive Conferences begin February

For over fifteen years JCEA has had a sincere commitment to helping kids grow in healthy and positive ways. Beginning with Jeffco's youth suicide epidemic in the mid-'80s, JCEA initiated the first county-wide response. This eventually led to working with the Jefferson Center for Mental Health and other school and community-based organizations in creating the highly successful Helping Kids Thrive parenting conferences.

As a result of back-to-back grants from the National Education Association (NEA) totaling \$10,000, Helping Kids Thrive just keeps getting bigger and better. Now in it's twelfth year, the regionalized parenting conferences will once again seek to provide parents practical, hands-on information that can be used immediately. For the second year, the trainings will also feature an emphasis on the 40 developmental assets.

HKT Conference schedule

The **kickoff event** will be February 12 from 6-9:00 PM at the Sheraton West Hotel.

Saturday classes from 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM will be held on February 24 (Jefferson Sr.) and March 3 (Evergreen Sr.).

Monday classes from 5:30 - 9:30 PM will be held on February 26 (Arvada Sr.) and March 5 (Bear Creek Sr.)

For more information please, call 303-432-5170 or visit www.jeffersonmentalhealth.org.

More parenting information and support

Have you visited JCEA's new web site: www.jcea-cea.org? Look for our "parenting" pages which are devoted solely to information for parents. In addition to Helping Kids Thrive, we provide links to the Jeffco PTA web site and information about our newest project, **Parents as Partners** . Finally, we also provide information about **JCEA's Professional Tutor Referral Service**. We invite you to come in, spend some time and just browse around.



Shaping Tomorrow Today

Shaping Tomorrow Today is the community newsletter of the Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA) and is published periodically throughout the year. Comments may be mailed to: JCEA, 1050 Wadsworth Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80215. Our phone number is 303-232-6405; our FAX number is 303-238-2215.

President: Dale Gatz

Executive Director: Jim Hodges

Director of Political Action: Kathy Bridges

Director of Communications/Editor: Dexter Meyer

JCEA welcomes new readers to *Shaping Tomorrow Today*

JCEA is continually updating the mailing list for **Shaping Tomorrow Today**. If you are a new reader, welcome!

Obviously, this is a newsletter that reflects the thinking of the teaching professionals in Jefferson County. We hope you find the information in this newsletter helpful and at times provocative. We want you to be able to trust the information you read in this newsletter, and we hope it reflects the integrity of the profession it represents.

Shaping Tomorrow Today

Public Education



Jefferson County Education Association
1050 Wadsworth Blvd.
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

"The Jefferson County Education Association exists to empower educators to promote professional rights, responsibilities and practices to achieve educational excellence within a changing society."