

EDUCATION ISSUE PROJECT TEAM VISION STATEMENT

PROUD TO BE STRONG...

One of the most common and compelling tools used to measure the attractiveness of a community is the quality of the educational opportunities with its boundaries. Historically, the schools (PK-14) in Logan County have been among the best in the state! As move toward the year 2020, it is imperative that the Sterling community, the school districts, and the college work hand in hand to insure that educational opportunities in northeast Colorado remain the highest quality possible. It is the teachers, parents, community members, students and staff working together that ensures excellence in our schools.

VISION STATEMENT

Education is a vital component to attract and retain people and businesses. School at every level have become on the most significant “assets” available to attract higher wage industry and commerce. Our community should have the availability of lifelong educational and vocational opportunities offered by the educational resources in our area. Programs should be designed as industry specific training for new and existing workforces. As employers see the need for business locations that will attract a higher caliber workforce; the reputation and resources of educational systems are a major consideration.

Success relies on the constant cooperation of various agencies within our region, we are envisioning the region’s educational network playing a major role in our community’s economic growth.

There will be many factors that will contribute to the success of students and education in the area. The following is a list of our goals to ensure academic excellence:

- Recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff.
- Maintain high quality and safe educational facilities.
- Establish programs to meet student and community needs.

RE-1 VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

RE-1 Valley School District’s vision is a comprehensive, focused, efficient, and effective educational program with proficient staff supported by the community to provide academic excellence.

The RE-1 Valley’s school district education facilities include five elementary schools, and three high schools, one of which is an alternative school. The most recent school opened in 1996. The school district is very progressive and is charged with the responsibility of insuring that facilities are kept current to accommodate planned growth. New technology is at the forefront of all-educational planning. The expanded are included thirteen schools districts in the five county area of northeast Colorado.

RE-1 Valley’s quality programs are reflected in our student’s ACT scores being consistently above the state and national average. Also, RE-1 Valley students’ Colraod Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores are above the state average in all areas tested. The district’s attendance rate of nearly 95% along wit the graduation rate of nearly 90% contributes to the district’s success.

The state legislature has created a method to provide communities feedback on the quality of PK-12 education in the form of a school accountability report. This “report card” is a marketing cornerstone in the competition for economic development, home ownership and quality of life. Our local district’s schools have all received very good ratings.

RE-1 Valley schools offer a wide range of educational and extracurricular programs and activities for all students, thoroughly grounded in the basics of education, excelling state wide in academic and athletic competitions. The district will continue to strive to maintain and increase those ratings. Our schools and their ratings will contribute to the choices that citizens make when selecting a place in which to live and work.

The district currently serves approximately 2,800 students. Current growth trends would indicate that the student population could exceed 3,500 by the year 2020. This growth is based on the current growth rates of up to 1.5% annually as estimated by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Certainly future economic conditions will have a major impact on the growth trend in our community and in our schools.

Northeastern Junior College

Our continuing pursuit of excellence focuses on our mission. NJC will continue to be recognized for superiority and creativity in its academic, career, technical and transfer programs to become one of the best regional high education centers for the 21st century.

Northeastern Junior College is the largest residential comprehensive learning community college within the state. The campus includes 18 buildings. The newest addition is the athletic and events center which is well used by both the campus and community. NJC has a well-defined master facilities plan that has been recognized by the State of Colorado. The Colorado State Legislature has approved NJC for a major capital construction project. This project will provide for modern science labs and technologically advanced classrooms. A second phase of this master plan is to renovate the humanities building giving the students and community not only a better facility, but also additional cultural events.

NJC is well respected by Colorado four-year colleges and universities by having the highest community college transfer rate in the state. NJC has more than 87 different certificate and associate degree programs. NJC’s graduation rate is twice the national average for two-year colleges. NJC produces skilled and knowledgeable citizens who have and will transfer successfully to four-year colleges, enter the workforce productively and contribute positively to their own and society’s economic and social well being.

NJC works closely with agencies state wide and in their specific five county service area. The annual impact of the NJC payroll in Logan County is approximately \$48 million. It is widely believed that education and employment have a direct correlation. Economic development is furthered by education as a means of employment opportunity and business relocation. The NE Colorado Technology Institute at NJC provides continual training and updates to business/industry, education and the community.

NJC is a vibrant comprehensive community college of nearly 4,000 full-time and part-time students. These students come together to explore knowledge and exchange ideas. Beyond the classroom NJC offers a wide range of athletics and extracurricular

programs. There is a solid base of community support for scholarships and tuition assistance for academics and athletics. Approximately 91% of NJC full-time students receive some form of tuition assistance.

Residential growth, by itself, cannot generate the tax base to support the cost of new infrastructure in the public school environment. School districts have statutory imposed debt ceilings that may limit the construction of new facilities without significant growth in the assessed value of the school district. Additionally, taxpayer willingness to support bonds or new school construction or mill levy increases for school operations are influenced a great deal by the community's ability to pay for such improvements and programs. The assessed value of the local school district is a major determiner of the community's actual perceived ability to support quality schools.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Retain high quality faculty and staff.
- Provide high quality and safe educational facilities.
- Establish programs to meet student and community needs.

GOAL #1

RETAIN HIGH QUALITY FACULTY AND STAFF

Rationale:

Recruitment and retention of high quality faculty and staff will ensure that academic excellence in all educational programs will continue.

Strategies:

We recommend the following actions:

1. Retention of high quality staff will enhance educational services to promote student achievement and fulfillment.
2. Commitment of significant resources for professional development must be maintained in order to enhance the professional and educational level of preparation and training for all educators.
3. One of the highest priorities must be to offer competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain high quality faculty and staff.
4. Providing alternative teacher education programs within the local community to meet the critical teach shortage projected for the next twenty years.
5. Explore distance-learning opportunities to provide students and teachers access to the highest quality educators and educational opportunities.

Implementation:

- Set aside adequate funding resources to support attractive salaries benefit packages, and professional development partnerships/programs.
- Use the positive attributes of our community to attract educators to our area.
- Monitor and adjust salaries and benefits of educators to be competitive with state and national compensation plans.

Funding:

An increase in educational funding must be legislatively supported on an annual basis at a rate similar to the consumer price index for maintaining current real income levels for educators. The community, local school district, and junior college must support and recognize the value of recruiting and maintaining highly qualified educators.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

1. Current and projected educator salaries for both the school district and local college as they relate to comparative values.
2. Seek alternative financing through educational grants, business partnerships, and other state and federal sources to supplement budgets for educators' salaries.
3. Create partnerships between the school district, NJC, and institutions of higher learning bringing teacher education programs to the local community.
4. Use mill overrides and property tax revenues to fund additional teacher salaries.
5. Consider the value of volunteer contributions to all aspects of success in education.

GOAL #2

PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY AND SAFE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Rationale:

Demands of the job market may very well cause the need for additional facilities and technology. A focal point in long range planning will be to meet the demands of our changing society by maintaining adequate facilities and technology.

Strategies:

We recommend the following actions:

1. The amount of resources available for construction is increased when a balance of commercial and residential growth is maintained.
2. Encourage the joint use of facilities between governmental agencies and local school districts and junior college where possible in order to maximize community resources and taxpayer contributions.
3. Support land dedications to assist the school district and junior college in the acquisition of educational learning sites based on growth in the community.
4. Through incentives such as the Bean Pole project, city and county resources will be enhanced for developing technology infrastructure for the community and schools.

Implementation:

- Plan for the development and maintenance of adequate facilities and technology.
- Develop intergovernmental agreements between the city, county, local school districts and junior college for use of facilities.
- Initiate technology agreements.
- Develop land dedication policies.

- Review, update and monitor the implementation of the above as needed.
- Refer to task force.

Funding:

It is clear that the school districts and junior college will need the support of the communities. This may entail approval of ballot issues to generate the revenue necessary for replacing and upgrading existing facilities. There may also be a need to pass mill levy increases to support the staffing and operation of these facilities as the communities continue to grow.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

1. Current and projected student populations for school districts and local college as they relate to funding formulas for all entities.
2. Seek alternative financing in other ways that the city and county might contribute to joint construction projects and resources that benefit all entities.
3. Examine alternative financing solutions such as capital construction bonds, grants, mill levy overrides, and other funding sources.
4. Seek partnerships to create a sound technology infrastructure for our schools and communities.
5. Promote fiscal responsibility and efficient use of resources.

GOAL #3

ESTABLISH PROGRAMS TO MEET STUDENT AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Rationale:

The educational systems within the community recognize that learning changes and improves lives. There is a commitment to high quality, to life-long learning through a proactive curriculum, which in turn meets the needs of the individuals and workforce.

Strategies:

1. Offer programs that enable students to be adaptable and productive in the changing job market and society.
2. Enhance linkages for educational opportunities and economic growth in the northeast region of the state.
3. Create partnerships that will integrate educational opportunities and effectively make use of the resources available.
4. Strengthen the awareness of racial, ethnic and economic diversity.

Implementation:

- Offer programs that enable students to be adaptable and productive in the changing job market and society.
- Develop partnership agreements between education and the private sector.
- Incorporate innovative and effective teaching, technology and alternative delivery systems to meet the needs of the students and community.
- Review, update and monitor the implementation as the educational needs of the community changes. Task Force.

Funding:

An increase in educational funding must be legislatively supported on an annual basis at a rate similar to the consumer price index for creating and maintaining new and innovative programs.

To facilitate these strategies, the public should review the following:

- Develop financial partnerships within the private sector for creating and delivering new educational programs.
- Develop partners in the community to fund new and innovative offerings.
- Pursue incentive grants.
- Evaluate tax revenue sources to fund additional educational programs.

EDUCATION PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS:

Terry Sanger (Chairman)

Marty Foster

Tammie Howard

Jim LaForce

Rhonda Monheiser

Joelle Parker

Katie Shea

Cindy Vanderomoer