

TURNING THE CORNER WITH CSAP ??
BY
BILL CHRISTOPHER

It's not monumental, but yet it shows some selected degree of "turn around" and progress. The scores are not stellar---far from it, but yet they show some areas of encouraging improvement. And while there is a long way to go, there is optimism as Adams 50 School District reflects on the recent announcement of the latest CSAP scores. According to Interim Superintendent of Schools Pamela Swanson, the scores are "humbling as she and the staff recognize the challenge." I like the attitude reflected in her comments---no political spin. No excuses. Just an honest assessment and a challenge to meet head on.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

Adams 50 School District has its challenges with the high mobility, the further evolving demographics, the number of students who need to learn English and a student population that includes 78% who are eligible for the free/reduced lunch program. Demographics do make a difference. We are not a wealthy school district nor a predominately "white" populated district. I am bringing these influencing factors to your attention. The Interim Superintendent and Oliver Grenham, Chief Education Officer, who I met with, did not bring these factors up in the conversation. Instead they talked about "targeted learning" through the Standards Based System (SBS), consistency, using a common language, how instruction is delivered to the students and application of effort in the delivery. And especially they emphasized the focus being individual learning.

SLICING AND DICING

The CSAP scores can be sliced and diced a number of ways, but I found the charts, which showed "Growth" in the selected subject areas to be the most encouraging. For example, in math, among all students tested, a 10% growth or improvement was realized going from a combined percentage of 31% to 41%. In writing, a 4% growth was documented. In reading, a 5% improvement was shown. The scores for proficient and advanced students were toward the bottom among other metro Denver school districts which reflects the Administration's acknowledgement that the District has a long way yet to go. But the point to be extracted from all the numbers is that hopefully the District has "turned the corner".

POSTAL SERVICE IS IN A FISCAL HOLE

The U.S. Postal Service is "on the ropes" facing financial collapse we have been told. This has been coming for some time as the Postal Service has racked up deficits year after year. Just as with our ailing economy, there is no one single "silver bullet" that will turn things around. The Postmaster General has told Congress that the elimination of Saturday delivery is necessary along with laying off 120,000 employees and closing thousands of post offices.

CHANGING TIMES

As Bob Dylan sang, “the times they are a changing.” And they affect everyone and every institution in some form or fashion including the U.S. Postal Service. The Internet has played a huge role in impacting the Postal Service with “letters” being sent over the Internet versus snail mail with a 44-cent stamp. And more and more people are paying their bills on the Internet versus writing a check and mailing it. Plus, look at all the competition the Postal Service has in package delivery and overnight mail.

We need to have a central postal service system, but perhaps the time has come to “outsource it” to the private sector. As I have shared before, I favor discontinuing Saturday postal service. We can learn to adjust without Saturday mail delivery. And as far as laying off the mentioned number of employees and closing thousands of small post offices, perhaps when you stand back from the institutional home town “feelings”, it is telling the American people that the U.S. Postal Service as we have known it in the past has outlived its way of doing business. Yes, that would mean closing Post Offices that we have become attached to and many small town Post Offices would be consolidated. But remember, “the times they are a changing.”