

What Colorado Educators are saying about No Child Left Behind

"I am in a rural agricultural area, and my school population is largely mobile Hispanic children, some 92 percent of whom qualify for free lunch and speak Spanish as their primary language. I am not making excuses for the great gains my students make; however, the ESEA one-size-fits-all idea has left my co-workers and students discouraged because all of the creativity has been taken out of the curriculum.

"My school is in its second year of academic/accreditation watch. Last year, the fourth- and fifth-grade students lost morning recess. Social studies, geography, history, and government have been relegated to the occasional minute, if available. Art has been totally cut out, as have many field trips.

"This has been destructive to students who have no physical or artistic outlet for their energy and creativity."

Susan Banning

Third Grade Teacher
Center Consolidated
Center, Colorado

"Our district, like many other districts, is gradually eating away at all of the classes that are not tested on the CSAP. Social studies -- the original purpose of the public education system was to have an informed electorate -- are being reduced or eliminated.

"Arts and other electives are being eroded. We will be creating a generation of students who cannot think critically and who have little or no cultural awareness. This must end."

William Doshier

High School Teacher
Cherry Creek School District
Aurora, Colorado

"My district tried to be proactive and prepare our ESPs for the deadline to be highly qualified. If the ESPs did not have the required education, they had to take a test. As a high school mathematics teacher, I tutored many ESPs to help them pass the test. "Most of my 'students' passed the test, but they agreed that the test was traumatic, demeaning, and that it cost us many people who found the experience simply not worth the reward of being allowed to keep the job they had loved.

"We are losing great people who love students, who work with disabled students unable to add one plus one, and who give our students the love and support they are not getting at home. And now, our new EAs must have certain educational qualifications, which are expensive to earn. Who in their right mind would go to school for this, then go to a job where they earn less than the average clerk at McDonald's?

"Teachers cannot do their work without their co-workers who are ESPs. Thanks for ensuring that a whole generation of potential ESPs never even consider the profession."

Kathryn Freidel

High School Math Teacher
Colorado Springs District #11
Colorado Springs, Colorado

"I work at a school that has a 75 percent free lunch rate and about a 65 percent Hispanic population. We have never made AYP and have been on academic watch because:

1. "We house severe-needs special ed students, and all 21 of those youngsters receive a grade of 0 (zero) on the Colorado state tests, known as CSAP. Most of those youngsters do not even have verbal skills, never mind the ability to read and pass the test.
2. "We also house the Newcomers Program, special classes for youngsters who are coming into American schools for the first time. They spend about one year in that special program, and they make enormous progress in their English language abilities; however, they do not have enough skill to read the test during that first year so they, too, all get zero.

"As you can see, there is no way that my school will ever get off academic watch with at least 60 youngsters being graded as zero every year. The frustration of the students, staff, and administration is becoming overwhelming, and we all have a sense of failure. True education in our school is being beaten down and destroyed by this legislation. Thank you, NEA, for trying to fix this legislation."

Virginia Villafranca
Middle School Teacher
St. Vrain Valley
Longmont, Colorado

"As president of the Aurora Education Association, I have heard from members regularly about how the current version of ESEA has siphoned joy from the work they do with students and the passion they originally had in coming to our profession.

"Teachers in my district are required to assess student progress on a continual and rotating basis to such an extent that there is little time left for actual teaching, and there is literally no time left for anything that might be deemed creative or fun. Social studies and science (until last year) had become expendable content areas (particularly at the elementary level) and were simply not taught. Now, because science will be tested on the state assessment, students do get science on a more regular basis, but social studies is almost forgotten. The only areas of emphasis are math and literacy.

"Teachers are required to teach in a way that does not allow for their professional expertise or judgment to be applied to the work they do with their students. ESEA has placed such an emphasis on student proficiency based on performance on one state assessment that little else appears to matter, neither providing students with a well rounded, creative, and engaging learning experience, nor encouraging teachers to be passionate, creative, engaging practitioners of their profession.

Brenna Isaacs
Elementary School Teacher
Aurora Public Schools
Aurora, Colorado

*Send your opinions of NCLB to Ski Country UniServ at scuu@nea.org
We will print those opinions in our next Ski Country Educator.*

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NEA Courses On Line <http://www.nea.org/academy/index.html>

Whether you're a new or veteran teacher, ESP, or staff member, NEA Academy will meet your needs for improving your knowledge and skills. Some examples of the courses available are

- **[I Can Do It](#)**: This course, built by NEA members, is designed to help teachers and paraprofessionals run a highly effective classroom. I Can Do It features more than a dozen highly skilled members offering advice and telling their stories. (4 hr. run-time)
- **[Effective Teaching in Diverse Classrooms](#)**: (Coming January, 2008). An intense classroom-focused, research-based program that helps teachers transform their classrooms to address the needs of a diverse student population. Great for school-based or district cohorts of colleagues.
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University of Colorado Denver's Courses Now Available Globally

In continuing Marshall McLuhan's axiom of a global village, all Colorado teachers and educators have a new pedagogical format available to further their own education. With the help of the internet, the University of Colorado Denver (UCD) is bringing Masters level degrees and certificates to current teachers who don't have access to a traditional brick and mortar University. The School of Education at UCD now has seven online degree and certificate programs focused on improving the quality and caliber of all Colorado teachers in this rapidly changing and diverse society, especially in light of No Child Left Behind and state initiatives like the Colorado Basic Literacy Act. Accordingly, since the inception of their online courses, the School of Education's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program has lead the state in the number of Early Childhood Specialist Education licensure candidates. They're also proud of the following ECE stats:

- 95% of students work full time while completing their degree.
- 98.6% comprehensive exam pass rate for Masters degree candidates.
- 100% proficient or advanced ratings on all performance based assessments.

However, like all new concepts, it has taken time to be accepted as an equal with the more traditional methodologies.

In this case, it has taken nearly 10 years for online learning to garner the same respect and recognition that comes from a traditional terrestrial University. UCD points out that compared to for-profit e-colleges, they are a fully accredited institution that's concerned with continuing the quality and peer interaction of their traditional on-campus courses. According to Jennifer Ream, instructor, their programs are not designed for students that only want to complete a generic program as quickly as possible while avoiding peer interaction.

Ream says on the contrary, their collaborative and personal program is unique. Their mission is to meet the needs of the entire state of Colorado by sharing the research and information of the downtown Denver campus with those that might not otherwise be able to take advantage of it. In particular, she focused on two aspects that separate their online program from their peers.

- 1.) The courses focus on collaboration and peer interaction (through chat, email, threaded discussions and informal get-togethers when possible).
- 2.) All courses are rooted in real world practice with less emphasis placed on theoretical postulates.

Following a general curriculum, students also form teams of common interest and are given the freedom to study and investigate what they feel passionate about and that they can directly apply to their own personal experience. Their findings are then brought back to the class as a whole, so they can share and benefit from each other's research.

All of the online courses can be applied to either a Master's degree or to a Certificate, which is a complete unit (for a transcript), but can also be directly applied to the Master's degree or to a state endorsed certification.

Below are the complete online education programs at UCD:

- Master of Arts in Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) with an emphasis in eLearning Design and Implementation (M.A.)
- Master of Arts in Information and Learning Technologies (ILT) with an emphasis in School Library (M.A.)
- Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education
- Designing and Implementing Web-based Learning Environments Certificate Program
- Early Childhood Special Education, Specialist License
- Special Education Generalist Licensure Program
- Early Literacy Certificate Program

Courses are still available for Spring registration, but are likely to fill up fast.

To find out more information on a specific program or to find out how to get started, you can go to <http://teach.cuonline.edu>. The Village indeed has become Global.
