

Dr. John Covington
Superintendent
Pueblo City School District, Pueblo, CO
2006 – Present

The ability to manage toward rapid improvement of school performance, including the turnaround of low-performing schools

Accountability

- Dr. Covington sets high standards and clear expectations for those who work with him, and he holds them accountable for their performance.
- Dr. Covington is a strong advocate of accountability and the importance of testing to document improvement, even over opposition.
- Dr. Covington counters the typical “parent’s fault” for low performance with an attitude of “we have them for eight hours a day, we should make an impact.”
- Two low performing schools were closed and re-organized as magnet schools.
- The Pueblo City School District recently became a member of the National Charter Institute. Dr. Covington brought this organization in to examine their charter schools and help them establish quality improvement plans.
- All teachers and parents have access to student performance data. When Dr. Covington assumed his position in Pueblo, he replaced the existing IT manager with one trained at the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). The system developed by the new IT manager has been a huge success at student data tracking and transparency.

Student Achievement

- To promote the ability of Pueblo students to compete globally, Dr. Covington is realigning curricula to the TIMSS international standard. Current plans are to test the district in 2011 using TIMSS.
- Dr. Covington instituted a program of individual education plans for all students in the district to customize educational paths. This required development of a sophisticated database system. The result is student mobility is easier to manage between schools.

A proven track record of record of innovation, including actions supporting alternative models of education, district charter schools and extended days/year

Innovation

- Dr. Covington has used magnet schools as creative alternatives in his district. For example, Corwyn Magnet focuses on preparing its students for international competitiveness. The school has high tech classrooms with smart boards and international videoconferencing. Students have the opportunity to participate in an international baccalaureate program.
- Dr. Covington developed a program where advanced high school students enroll concurrently in the community college. The program grew from 30 students two years ago to 350 today. Last year, eleven students graduated with an Associates Degree at the same time they graduated with a high school diploma.
- Three charter schools are located in the District 60 Pueblo school system, including Cesar Chavez Charter School.

- Dr. Covington has focused on expanding the school year and extended day school reforms.
- Dr. Covington actively pursued external funding for school and district programs, including the Corwyn Magnet program. He has attracted \$20 MM in competitive state and federal grants to the Pueblo City School District.

Experience developing a performance culture for teachers and administrators, as well as a strategy for attracting and engaging new, creative staff

Human Capital

- At the request of Dr. Covington, the New Teacher Project evaluated the Pueblo City Schools District with respect to teacher performance. The report found that between 2005 and 2008, 99 percent of teachers received a “Satisfactory” evaluation, while principals and colleagues indicated separately that many were not. The report also criticized the evaluation process and the policy for cutting probationary teachers for budgetary reasons. Dr. Covington used this self-requested report as a basis for his teacher performance and accountability reform program.
- Dr. Covington has moved principals among schools to ensure the best talent was distributed among the district. In some cases, low-performing principals have been encouraged to retire. In other cases, principals were replaced twice when it was discovered the first placement was not performing to his standards.
- Dr. Covington has also worked with principals to teach them how to conduct rigorous teacher evaluations. He incorporated existing value-added teacher performance data (a growth model) into this system.
- Central office staff members are on one-year contracts in order to hold them accountable to performance.
- As part of a bond proposal in 2008, Dr. Covington included a performance-based pay package and salary adjustments to bring Pueblo City teachers to comparable salary levels.

Communication skills necessary to build excitement, confidence, and consensus within the community, in addition to work with local leaders and stakeholders

Vision

- Pueblo is a three and four generation industrial community where changing the status quo can be a difficult task. Dr. Covington initiated a community-led effort to develop a well-structured and accountable district strategic plan (over 300 participants). The strategic plan was finalized in June 2007, a year after Dr. Covington was hired. He re-organized the district administration around the strategic plan, and he is currently pushing a transparency initiative as part of the strategic plan.
- Dr. Covington has been described as possessing a vision in which each child must be educated to compete and thrive globally. As such, his goals describing a “world-class” school system should be interpreted literally as one competitive in a global economy.
- The Pueblo City school board chairwoman noted that Dr. Covington was actively recruited from Lowndes County, AL because of his reputation as a change agent.

Leadership

- Dr. Covington enjoys broad support from the Pueblo City District school board. His style of handling one school board protagonist is to engage the member with courtesy and focus on the issues of contention.

- The drive towards a district strategic plan was an intense effort involving the community, but the plan was developed within a year and currently serves as the guiding document for reform and achievement. The process meant Dr. Covington had to maintain community focus and energy for the entire duration.
- Dr. Covington serves on three statewide education panels as the request of the Governor of Colorado.

2007-2008 (unless noted)	East Baton Rouge School District	Jackson Public School District (Coleman-Potter)	Montgomery County School District (Dilworth)	Pueblo County School District (Covington)
<u>District Size</u>	89 schools 45,847 students Budget: \$429,756,000	61 schools 31,941 students Budget: \$308,000,000	61 schools 31,759 students Budget: \$350,000,000	38 schools 18,504 students Budget: \$196,000,000
<u>Student Population</u>	% African-American: 79% % Hispanic: 2% % White: 16% % Other: 3%	% African-American: 98% % Hispanic: <1% % White: 2% % Other: <1%	% African-American: 78% % Hispanic: 2% % White: 17% % Other: 3%	% African-American: 3% % Hispanic: 62% % White: 34% % Other: 1%
<u>School Performance</u> Note: Proficiency assessments differ from state to state	4 th grade ELA: 61% proficient Math: 53% proficient 8 th Grade ELA: 49% proficient Math: 49% proficient 10 th grade ELA: 58% proficient Math: 58% proficient Average ACT score: 20	4 th grade ELA: 45% proficient Math: 55% proficient 8 th Grade ELA: 31% proficient Math: 49% proficient High School English II: 64% proficient Algebra I: 61% proficient Average ACT score: 18	4 th grade ELA: 82% proficient Math: 76% proficient 8 th Grade ELA: 61% proficient Math: 51% proficient 11 th grade ELA: 77% proficient Math: 76% proficient Average ACT score: --	4 th grade ELA: 66% proficient Math: 70% proficient 8 th Grade ELA: 53% proficient Math: 25% proficient 10 th grade ELA: 52% proficient Math: 13% proficient Average ACT score: 17
<u>Graduation and Dropout Rate</u>	Graduation Rate: 66.4% Dropout Rate: 9.6%	Graduation Rate: 85.0% Dropout Rate: 3.4%	Graduation Rate: 75.5% Dropout Rate: 3.7%	Graduation Rate: 67.7% Dropout Rate: 5.1%
<u>Percent of Population Lacking Literacy Skills (2003)</u>	13%	12%	14%	13%
<u>Dual Enrollment Program</u>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<u>Percent Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch</u>	76%	84%	65%	67%

Source: GreatSchools, www.greatschools.net; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)