

## Mapleton reforms turning district around

Nelson Garcia 13 hrs ago

THORNTON - When fifth grade teacher Debbie Wilson first heard about the changes in store for her school district, she wasn't quite a believer.

"I'm an old teacher, you know, to me, tradition works," said Wilson, a teacher at the York International School in Thornton.

But for the Mapleton School District, tradition had not been working.

"Pretty low graduation rates, low achievement results, very few kids attending college," Charlotte Ciancio, superintendent of the Mapleton School District, said.

That's why six years ago she pushed for a big change, to redesign every school in the district. She wanted to create smaller programs, each with a unique philosophy.

"People were able to choose what type of learning did they want, what type of teaching worked best for them," Ciancio said. "Our intention was to design schools that matched those learning styles."

A total of 17 programs were created. Some buildings are housing two different schools with themes ranging from the arts, to leadership skills, to Montessori, to international baccalaureate.

"I thought it wasn't a wise idea," Wilson said. "There's no way it was going to work."

However, Ciancio believed in giving students and parents more choices.

"When you've chosen the instructional design and the programs and you know your teachers, then you're engaged in what's going on there," Ciancio said.

Ciancio wanted to create a community of believers, people who were invested in making their schools better. At first, test scores took a dip.

"Personally, there have been many days that I think, 'What if this isn't working?'" Ciancio said.

The results say otherwise. Over the past two years, scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests have increased in math and reading. Mapleton's graduation rate increased by more than 10 percent. During the past two graduating classes, nearly 100 percent of the students were accepted into the college of their choice.

"I know it's working. I know that it's better today than it was when we started our work," Ciancio said. "I know that the kids are getting a better education."

Ciancio knows she has more believers in Mapleton Schools, especially Wilson.

"Throughout the whole district, I think that students' needs are being addressed more," Wilson said. "Maybe we're not up exactly where we want to be, but look at what you've done."

(KUSA-TV © 2010 Multimedia Holdings Corporation)

**USA TODAY**  
**AutoPilot** 

The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®

Presented by: 

**SEE HOW IT WORKS >>**

The advertisement features a smartphone displaying the app's interface with flight information and a 'SEE HOW IT WORKS' call to action.

Print Powered By 