

## Program Characteristics

Whittier Elementary School is a neighborhood school with an international focus. The international population of the Whittier neighborhood, with students from more than 25 countries, lends itself like no other to the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This diverse population and the IB curriculum work together to create a unique and rich school culture.



Three years ago, Whittier began implementation of the International Baccalaureate/Primary Years Programme (IB/PYP). IB/PYP provides a well-rounded program that incorporates the BVSD curriculum with an international focus. Students in grades K-5 learn French as a world language. In addition, our curriculum builds on state standards delivered through internationally developed, research-supported educational practices. "Inquiry" is a primary strategy used to integrate higher-order thinking, questioning, and application of content knowledge through science and social studies. At the completion of "Units of Inquiry," students participate in projects that promote responsible citizenship, applying content knowledge through community action. We know that IB/PYP offers tremendous opportunities for students and helps them to take their place as "citizens of the world." Our school's high quality staff with their dedication to academic achievement for all, make Whittier a choice for over 300 students K-5.

## Teacher Quality

The influence of a highly qualified teacher cannot be overstated. In fact, research continues to confirm the greatest gains in the classroom can be made through a mix of instructional strategies, including high quality teachers, strong parental support, adequate facilities, class size, and ongoing professional development. Eighty percent of our staff is trained in the International Baccalaureate Primary Years program methods and curriculum.

Average years of teacher experience: 14

One important factor in assuring academic achievement for all students involves making sure each student gets the attention he or she needs. Boulder Valley School District has focused on literacy improvement at the elementary level and has concentrated district funds in this area. This effort has resulted in improved student-teacher ratios and reduced class sizes during literacy learning periods.

Student:Teacher Ratio: 13.5:1

According to the 2002-03 Snapshot Survey . . .

- 99 percent of parents say teachers at this school encourage their student to do his/her best.
- 100 percent of parents agree teachers at this school are committed to maximizing student achievement.
- 97 percent of parents say the school principal demonstrates personal and professional commitment to school improvement.

## Demographics

Gender				Ethnicity									
Female		Male		American Indian		African American		Caucasian		Asian		Hispanic	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
116	48.5	123	51.5	0	0.0	13	5.4	150	62.8	35	14.6	41	17.2

Special Programs											
ELL		Free Lunch		Reduced Lunch		SPED		504		TAG	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
70	29.3	56	23.4	23	9.6	33	13.8	3	1.3	12	5.0

## Special Programs and Opportunities

Whittier is an IB Primary Years program. This program, offered in only 70 schools nation-wide, provides the best of an international education. In addition to our curricular programs, Whittier students have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of other programming options. Some of these are before school, some are after, and a few occur during the school day. These programs include, Whittier Historians, Hand Bell Choir, Vocal Choir, Chess Club, Jump Rope For Heart, Inquiry Fair, Intramural Basketball, Egypt Club, French Club, Beginning Spanish, Rocket Club, Computer Club, Running Club, Art Classes, Crochet Club, Homework Club.

## Safety

Whittier Elementary actively promotes a healthy school community that respects differences and welcomes diversity. Our families come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and often have different ways of communicating, learning, and behaving. Students are encouraged to share their home languages, customs, and diverse perspectives in the classroom and on the playground with the understanding that we all make a positive contribution to our school environment. This is supported by positive results on our student climate survey.

We strive to maintain a safe, drug free environment where students learn to be responsible for their own behavior. We teach conflict-resolution skills through two recognized programs, Second Step and Peace Place which are introduced by the classroom teacher. Through role-plays and empathy training, students learn to recognize feelings in others and to act responsibly. Peace Place is a student-directed plan for mediating conflict. Students learn and practice the Peace Place "steps" by agreeing to solve the problem, stating feelings, and looking for win-win solutions. Every classroom has a designated Peace place with the steps prominently displayed. Peace Places are also set up in hallways and on the playground. It is an expectation that students will seek to resolve conflicts first before enlisting the aid of an adult. Many times, older students assist younger students in mediating conflicts with this process. With ample practice and support, we believe that students can resolve most conflicts themselves. Adults provide clear codes of conduct and opportunities for students to reflect or assess their actions on a regular basis.

Finally, our school Crisis Management Plan is in place and reviewed annually. Safety is of paramount importance to us. Evacuation plans and monthly drills ensure that students know how to safely exit the building in an emergency. Our Emergency Response Team is trained in first aid and CPR to come to the aid of students or staff who may be injured or ill. Working together we promote and maintain a safe environment.

# What you want to know about Whittier Elementary

an  
International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program

## Message from the Principal

Dear Parents:

Whittier Elementary School is a neighborhood school in the heart of downtown Boulder with an international focus. We are a fully authorized International Baccalaureate Primary Years program. Three years ago, Whittier began implementation of the IB/PYP. Since then, our teachers have been involved in overseas workshops and over eighty percent have received extensive IB training in methodology, curriculum planning, and organization. Last spring we completed a rigorous authorization process and have joined only forty other schools with IB/PYP status nationwide. We know that IB/PYP offers tremendous opportunities for students and helps them to take their place as "citizens of the world."

IB/PYP provides a well-rounded program that incorporates the BVSD, standards-based, curriculum with an international perspective. Students benefit from transdisciplinary, inquiry units in the areas of science and social studies that are relevant, challenging, and engaging. Units of Inquiry integrate higher-order thinking, questioning, and application of content knowledge to the world beyond the classroom. At the completion of each of the six Units of Inquiry, students participate in projects that promote responsible citizenship, applying content knowledge through community action. Character education, another component of the IB/PYP, is approached through IB Attitudes and Outcomes. Students regularly assess themselves as thinkers, inquirers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced, and reflective individuals. Finally, all students K-5 learn French as a world language. Our goal is to promote an appreciation for languages, to reinforce the understanding that people use languages other than English to communicate, and to empower students to continue their study of French or another world language when they leave Whittier.

As a principal, I have often heard parents talk about the positive atmosphere here. They describe Whittier as a "school with heart" where there is a deep caring about students and families. Our school's high quality staff with their dedication to academic achievement for all, make Whittier a choice for over 300 students from twenty-two countries who speak eighteen different languages. Welcome to our neighborhood, focus school where the world comes together to bring out the best in us all.

Sincerely,

Lauren Hoyt  
Principal

2008 Pine Street  
Boulder, Colorado 80302  
<http://www.bvsd.k12.co.us/schools/whittier/index.html>  
303.442.2282  
Principal: Lauren Hoyt

## What the Whittier Community is Saying

I want to thank you for Latino Family Nights, for your support, and to tell you that this is the best school we've ever known.

Jenny Gutierrez, Parent

Six years ago I was a fifth grader at Whittier. The memories I have of this school are the best! It is a warm and welcoming community. I had good friends, wonderful and caring teachers. I'm in high school now and I come back to volunteer often. Thankfully, nothing has changed.

Vanessa Cook, Former Student

## Parent Satisfaction

According to the 2002-03 Snapshot Survey . . .

- 96 percent of parents say their child has a positive attitude about his/her school.
- 96 percent agree that the school sets high and realistic expectations for their child.
- 99 percent of parents say they feel welcome at this school.

## Family and Community Involvement

Family and community involvement at Whittier has grown steadily. Conference attendance increased (67% to 93%) in spring with student-led conferences. After a year of Latino family support programs, we also saw an increase in the number of Latino families in attendance. Parent and volunteer hours also increased dramatically from fall to spring. Parents serve in the classroom, extracurricular activities, the Roundtable (PTO), on DPC and DAC.

We communicate through regular newsletters (published in English and Spanish). The Roundtable meets monthly (Spanish translation provided). It addresses school improvement, budget, committee progress, and parent involvement. Parents also give feedback through parent response sections in newsletters. End of Year Reports and School Improvement Plan are discussed and distributed to the Roundtable, and are available on community information tables. Ninety-seven percent of parents responding to the Snapshot survey felt informed about the school improvement goals.

The IB Program requires community action by the students as the culminating event of each unit of inquiry. Community links include the Christmas Giving Tree, Coats for Kids, Latino Leadership training, and CU Volunteers. Our business partnerships connect Whittier with the Boulder business community.

*Whittier has always been a close-knit and caring school. The faculty works together to make sure each student is treated fairly and receives the best education possible. Parents are very involved in decisions and love the family feeling this school has. Whittier excels in leadership and I feel this has made the school the wonderful learning environment it is.*

Dar Del Pizzo, Community Volunteer

## Achievement Data

**CSAP Tests:** The achievement data below will look a little different from how it has been presented in the past. Boulder Valley has adopted the Colorado Department of Education's weighted index for analyzing CSAP data instead of percent proficient and above as we have historically.

The main limitation of using percent proficient and above is that it is not sensitive to all changes in performance. For the highest achieving students, progressing from proficient to advanced is of value. For lower achieving students, progressing from unsatisfactory to partially proficient is a meaningful step on the way to reaching proficiency. Yet neither of these improvements is recognized when we focus exclusively on proficient and above.

One of the biggest advantages of the weighted index is that it recognizes gains or losses across all performance levels, not just from partially proficient and below to proficient and above or vice versa. Also, the weighted index allows for averaging across grade levels and comparison across years in school.

To calculate the weighted index, each performance level is given an assigned value and then the values are averaged. An advanced proficient score is worth 150, proficient is 100, partially proficient is 50 and unsatisfactory and not tested receive -50. If all students were to achieve a score of proficient, a school's weighted index score would be 100. The weighted index calculation works in much the same way as a grade point average (GPA). Point values are given for each grade (or level of proficiency) and the average falls between the values associated with those categories.

Please note, weighted index calculations must be viewed in light of standard error. Standard error gives a rough idea of how much we might expect the average score for all students to vary due to chance, based on the number of students who were assessed. Standard error figures are given in the End of Year report for each school.

You can find CSAP data analyzed in terms of percent proficient and above on the BVSD website at: [http://www.bvsd.k12.co.us/assessment/bv\\_csapdownload.shtml](http://www.bvsd.k12.co.us/assessment/bv_csapdownload.shtml). The Colorado Department of Education school accountability reports also present the data in this way.

