

LOCAL NEWS

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Colorado Lt. Governor takes part in reading instruction in Thompson School District



Coyote Ridge second-grader Addison Gunter, center, reacts after reading her words correctly while reading with Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera, right, on Wednesday, as her reading coach Caroline Iussi, left, watches at the school. Iussi is with Reading Corps which places AmeriCorps members in classrooms for tutoring help. Primavera came to Coyote Ridge to learn more about the program and its success. (Jenny Sparks/Loveland Reporter-Herald)



Colorado Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera visited Coyote Ridge Elementary School to observe, and eventually participate in, a reading exercise performed by a member of AmeriCorps, a national coalition that places qualified individuals in roles including education and public service.

AmeriCorps works with a variety of local partners like Colorado Youth For A Change, the local organization that provided four, soon to be five, employees to Coyote Ridge to help with individual instruction for students in reading and math.

Caroline Iusi, an AmeriCorps member, demonstrated how the one-on-one instruction works with second grader Addison Gunter.

Iusi began by laying out three sounds and asking her student to say each one at a time, eventually saying what word the three combined to create.

“CH-I-P, chip,” Gunter read.

After that, Iusi presented Gunter with a short passage, reading one word herself and then asking Gunter to read the next, alternating back and forth, with Gunter finally reading the entire passage herself.

This was the task set to Primavera, who read the next passage with Gunter in the same alternating pattern.

“It’s hugely beneficial because essentially what we have are five essentially full time staff members who don’t come out of our (full time equivalents), don’t come out of our budget,” Coyote Ridge Principal Deon Davis told Primavera. “And they provide, as you saw, one-on-one direct instruction to our students that’s high quality.”

Iusi told Primavera that she had joined AmeriCorps as a reading instructor after graduating with a bachelor's degree in science and was considering shifting her focus to teaching. She has spent three years at Coyote Ridge and will leave this year to take over her own classroom.

Still, she said, not everyone pursues a career in education after participating in the program. A data sheet from Colorado Youth For A Change said that 79% of program members are interested in a career in education.

Part of the appeal, she explained, is that the program allowed her to dip a toe into education to see if it was a career path she enjoyed without committing to it fully.

"I wouldn't have had the opportunity to try it out at all if I hadn't come across the ReadingCorps program," she said. "So many people are coming together to communicate about how to best serve kids."

Primavera's daughter was herself an AmeriCorps member, she said, and was once reunited with a former student years after she left the program. Primavera eventually hired that student to work in her office.

"Whenever there are two candidates that are about equal, and one was in the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps," Primavera said. "I go with that one."

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