

Delia Armstrong-Busby



Equality in Education

Former students of Delia Armstrong-Busby remember her passion, innovation, and advocacy. As a teacher, counselor, vice-principal, principal, author, and non-profit founder, she has dedicated her life to improving outcomes for students. At Mitchell High School, she worked with the police department, families, and businesses to address local criminal activity. In 2023 City Councilwoman Nancy Henjum offered a special thanks to Armstrong-Busby for bringing the “American Dreams Academy” program funded by the Milken Foundation to Mitchell.

Despite his 1871 vision to create, “the most attractive place for homes in the West, a place for schools, colleges, literature, science...”, General William Jackson Palmer focused on business ventures, leaving school board matters to others. There is no evidence that he created an integrated vs. segregated school system, instead credit belongs to the District 11 School Board founded in 1872, and the authors of the 1876 Colorado Constitution.

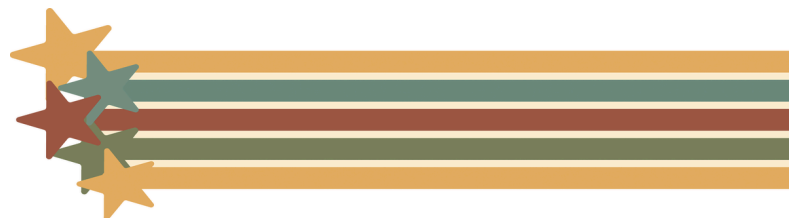
Article IX, Section 2: “The general assembly shall...provide for the establishment and maintenance of a thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state...” Section 8: “No sectarian tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public school, nor shall any distinction or classification of pupils be made on account of race or color.” However, what is decreed by law is not always practiced. In a landmark 1973 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, the court ruled that Denver’s “neighborhood schools” created “de facto” (by practice) segregation and inferior schools – a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Denver desegregated through a controversial but mandatory bussing program in place from 1974-1995.

Despite integrated schools in Colorado Springs, there were no Black teachers, counselors, or principals until after 1954, when Nina Stroud Pellerin became the first Black teacher in the region. Interestingly, unlike Denver, Colorado Springs School District 11 proactively sought to avoid segregation in the late twentieth century.

Before Coronado High School opened in 1970, Superintendent Thomas B. Doherty redrew school boundaries with input from local parents, teachers, students, and community leaders. Their plan sought, “...the creation of new, racially inclusive attendance zones for the district’s high schools,” according to a positive report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1977.



Colorado Springs
PIONEERS MUSEUM



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The Colorado College

Department
of Education

November 6, 1990

Ms Delia Busby, Principal
Mitchell High School
1205 Potter Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80909

Dear Delia:

Congratulations on being named one of six outstanding 1990 Colorado Educators. The award speaks highly of your leadership qualities, achievements at Mitchell High, and for your commitment to excellence on behalf of young people. I hope that you are able to take time away from your many responsibilities to do some well-deserved celebrating!

Sincerely,


Paul J. Kuerbis,
Professor



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