

## **The Dolores Star**

### **Dolores School District construction challenges profiled in new online report**

**January 12, 2007**

**by Illana Poley**

A new online report documents the deteriorating conditions of buildings at school districts across Colorado, including Dolores.

Colorado's Donnell-Kay Foundation developed [crumblingclassrooms.com](http://crumblingclassrooms.com) to highlight the urgent construction needs facing Colorado's public schools. A comprehensive study commissioned by the foundation estimated Colorado's school construction and maintenance needs at between \$5.7 billion and \$10 billion.

Dolores Superintendent Larry Archibeque said the foundation is trying to collaborate information across the state to appropriate funding for upgrades.

"A lot of districts are having trouble maintaining their buildings," he said. "Anything supportive of upgrading and maintaining buildings to support academic learning is a plus and something that we need to continue to look at."

The review includes summaries of the specific maintenance and construction challenges facing 18 different school districts throughout Colorado, including Dolores.

Pressing needs in Dolores identified in the report include:

- All buildings on the K-12 campus have cracked and crumbling walls that need to be replaced. Because the buildings are on an old river bed, they flood frequently in the spring.
- The district's elementary and middle schools have defunct heating systems that need to be replaced.
- The administrative building is a temporary structure nearly 30 years old that is infested with mice and mold, causing serious health concerns for district employees.

The report also includes regional summaries.

Some districts on the Western Slope cannot keep up with exploding student growth from new development.

In the Central Mountains, economically depressed school districts away from resort towns have found that their residents cannot afford property tax hikes to pay for school repairs and maintenance.

Many districts on the Eastern Plains do not have the tax base to support even one new school building, though some schools in the region were built as many as 80 years ago.

On the Front Range, fast-growing districts or older communities with aging buildings struggle to raise enough money to meet their school construction needs.

The report says that one way to help address these pressing school construction needs would be for the state to raise the “severance tax” on companies that extract oil or gas from Colorado. Currently, Colorado’s severance tax is substantially lower than other western states.

“This report clearly demonstrates that many Colorado school districts simply are unable to address their pressing construction and maintenance needs,” said Tony Lewis, executive director of the Donnell-Kay Foundation. “As a result, students face serious health and safety threats and seriously compromised classroom conditions that undermine learning. It’s clear that the state has to step up and take responsibility for solving this problem.”

To view the complete summary of Dolores, visit [crumblingclassrooms.com](http://crumblingclassrooms.com) and click on “School Profiles.” The Denver-based Donnell-Kay Foundation focuses on funding systemic reform and state level policy in the areas of early childhood, K-12 and higher education.

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