



**EVERY STUDENT.
EVERY DAY.**

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**Open Letter to Parents, Community Members, and Elementary Staff
Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1
Regarding the 2026–2027 Elementary Curriculum Implementation**

August 8, 2026

Dear Parents, Guardians, Community Members, and Elementary Staff:

As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, I want to provide clarity and reassurance regarding the implementation of our new elementary instructional model and the curriculum resources that will support teaching and learning across Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1.

Our district is implementing an instructional model based on the **Houston Independent School District (HISD) approach to explicit instruction**, utilizing curriculum resources that draw upon the **Core Knowledge** framework and materials published by **Amplify**. The purpose of this implementation is straightforward: **to improve student achievement by providing our teachers with a coherent, standards-aligned, rigorous, and highly structured instructional program.**

Our Commitment to Colorado Academic Standards

The Reading, Mathematics, and Science curriculum resources being implemented by Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 have been carefully reviewed for alignment with the **Colorado Academic Standards**. Our review indicates approximately **95% alignment** with the applicable Colorado standards.

Where gaps have been identified, the district will make the necessary curriculum adjustments throughout the academic year. Teachers and instructional leaders will work together to ensure that **all required Colorado Academic Standards are addressed within the instructional calendar.**

Our responsibility is not simply to adopt a curriculum. Our responsibility is to ensure that the curriculum we use meets the needs of our students and fulfills the academic expectations established by the State of Colorado.

DIRECTORS: JUSTINE BAYLES, LARA MARIA BLAIR, DR. LAURA DEWITT, JASON HALL, MIKE LYNCH, BARBARA MATE, DR. JOSHUA SHUMWAY

M-CSD Re-1 Vision: *Montezuma-Cortez schools inspire resilience, lifelong learning, and civic purpose by fostering high expectations, critical thinking, and accountability in a safe, and diverse environment.*

M-CSD Re-1 Mission: *As we strive to become a district of choice, we celebrate diversity, build meaningful relationships, and open doors to personal growth and a world of possibilities for every student.*

Clarification Regarding Biblical Content

I also want to directly address questions that have arisen regarding references to biblical or religious content within some of the curriculum resources.

Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 will edit the curriculum materials used in our schools so that biblical instruction or religious teaching is not part of our elementary academic instruction.

Our schools will not use the curriculum as a vehicle for religious instruction. Any content that is inconsistent with the district's educational purpose, Colorado Academic Standards, or our expectations for a public-school instructional program will be reviewed and, where appropriate, removed or modified.

This does not diminish our responsibility to teach students about history, literature, cultures, civilizations, or other subjects in an academically appropriate manner when such content is required by the standards. Rather, it means that our instruction will remain focused on **academic learning and the Colorado Academic Standards**, not religious instruction.

Our Focus: Reading, Mathematics, and Science

Our elementary instructional priorities are clear.

Reading.

We will place a strong emphasis on ensuring that every child develops the foundational literacy skills necessary to become a successful reader. This includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and the development of background knowledge.

Mathematics.

We will strengthen students' mathematical understanding through explicit instruction, purposeful practice, problem solving, fluency, and opportunities for students to explain their mathematical thinking.

Science.

We will ensure that students receive meaningful, standards-aligned science instruction that develops knowledge, inquiry, reasoning, and an understanding of the natural world.

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These are not competing priorities. **Strong literacy, mathematics, and science instruction are foundational to our students' future success.**

We Must Be Honest About Our Starting Point

As a district, we must also be honest about our history.

Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 has experienced **historically low student performance and achievement**, and these challenges did not develop overnight. They will not be solved overnight either.

We cannot continue doing the same things and expect different results.

Our students deserve our urgency. They deserve highly effective instruction every day. They deserve access to rigorous curriculum and excellent teachers. They deserve consistent expectations from classroom to classroom and school to school.

Most importantly, **they deserve our belief that they can achieve at high levels.**

The implementation of our new instructional model is one part of our commitment to changing the trajectory of student achievement in Montezuma-Cortez RE-1.

This Is a Partnership

Successful implementation will require partnership among teachers, principals, instructional leaders, parents, and our community.

Our teachers are working diligently to learn and implement new instructional practices. Our principals and instructional leaders are providing support and monitoring implementation. The district leadership team will continue to review curriculum materials, student data, classroom instruction, and feedback from our educators and families.

We will also listen.

If a curriculum resource does not align with Colorado standards, does not meet the instructional needs of our students, or raises legitimate concerns regarding its appropriateness for our schools, **we will review it and make the necessary adjustments.**

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Our Promise

I want to assure our families and community that Montezuma-Cortez RE-1 will remain focused on its fundamental responsibility: **providing every student with a high-quality public education that prepares them for success in school, career, and life.**

Our elementary classrooms will focus on teaching students to **read, write, think, calculate, investigate, communicate, and solve problems.**

We will use the best available instructional resources, align them to Colorado Academic Standards, address identified standards gaps, and continuously evaluate whether what we are doing is producing better outcomes for our students.

Our goal is not simply to implement a new curriculum. Our goal is to change student outcomes.

I appreciate the professionalism and commitment of our elementary teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, and instructional leaders as we undertake this important work. I also appreciate our parents and community members for asking questions, seeking clarification, and holding us accountable.

Together, we can create a stronger instructional foundation for every child in Montezuma-Cortez RE-1.

Our students are capable of achieving at high levels. Our responsibility is to ensure that we provide them with the instruction, curriculum, support, and opportunities necessary to make that achievement possible.

Respectfully,

Eddie Ramirez

Superintendent

Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1

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