

Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire

THE SUNDAY DENVER POST



CLOUDS, WIND ▲75° ▼47° »11B • OCTOBER 26, 2014 • DENVERPOST.COM • © THE DENVER POST • \$2 PRICE MAY VARY OUTSIDE METRO DENVER

★★

DP DENVER POST VOTER GUIDE: Learn about the candidates before you vote. »denverpost.com/voterguide

AIR POLLUTION

Any link to baby deaths studied

Drilling's possible effects on fetal health remain a concern.

By Nancy Lofholm
The Denver Post

VERNAL, UTAH» The smart-phone-sized grave marker is nearly hidden in the grass at Rock Point Cemetery. The name printed on plastic-coated paper — Beau Murphy — has been worn away. Only the span of his life remains.

“June 18, 2013 – June 18, 2013”
For some reason, one that is not known and may never be, Beau and a dozen other infants died in this oil-booming basin last year. Was this spike a fluke? Bad luck? Or were these babies victims of air pollution fed by the nearly 12,000 oil and gas wells in one of the most energy-rich areas in the country?

Some scientists whose research focuses on the effect of certain drilling-related chemicals on fetal development believe there could be a link.

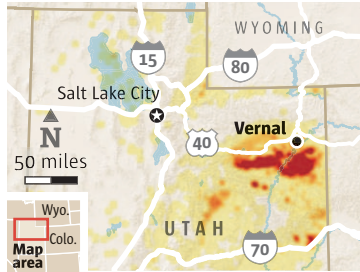
But just raising that possibility raises the ire of many who live in and around Vernal. Drilling has been an economic driver and part of the fabric of life here since the 1940s. And if all that energy development means the Uintah Basin has a particularly nasty problem with pollution, so be it, many residents say. Don't blame drilling for baby deaths that obituaries indicate were six times higher than the national average last year.

“People like to blame stuff on that all the time, but I don't feel like it has anything to do with oil and gas. I just feel like it's a trial I was given,” said Heather Jensen, whose two infant sons are buried near Beau. One died in late 2011 and another early in 2013.

VERNAL » 18A

Drilling activity

Some of Utah's highest concentration of oil and gas wells is found south of Vernal.



Source: Utah Automated Geographic Reference Center
The Denver Post

DPS's Struggle with English-Language Learners

At a loss for words



McMeen Elementary School fifth-graders Abril Magallanes, left, and Julie Vazquez, both age 10, work together on a math problem. English-language learners in Denver Public Schools are given assistance in their classrooms. Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post

By Yesenia Robles The Denver Post

Three decades after federal courts ordered Denver Public Schools to better serve English learners, its efforts remain plagued by inconsistencies and a large number of students who haven't shown progress in learning the language.

The district is two years into its latest plan to educate English learners, who make up nearly 35 percent of the district's 90,000 students.

But based on the most recent annual tests, nearly one in three of the district's English learners who have been in the system for the past two years failed to make progress on their English skills.

Students who don't adequately learn the language are more likely to drop out and less likely to graduate. In the 2012-13 school year, Colorado had a 76.9 percent graduation rate, but for students with limited English, the graduation rate was just 58.5 percent. In DPS, English learners had a 53.1 percent graduation rate, compared with the overall district's graduation rate of 61.3 percent.

“That is the crisis in America today, providing comprehensive

quality education to our Latino students so that they can be successful, productive citizens as they enter the workforce,” said Lorenzo Trujillo, a Denver attorney who has been involved in high-profile education court battles and follows the DPS case. “The history in the schools has been to fail these students.”

For DPS, moving more English-language learners — or ELL students, as the district calls them — to English proficiency without letting them fall behind in their core classes is a key piece of improving the district's overall performance.

Data paints a mixed picture. Denver's English learners still lag behind students who are native-English speakers. But ELL students who successfully learn the language have recorded better test scores than native-English students.

ENGLISH » 20A

BUSINESS LET THE SUN SHINE IN

Solar companies try to sell homeowners on rooftop panels as a key tax credit is set to expire in 2017. »1K

COLLEGE FOOTBALL CSU WINS; CU FALLS

Rams hold off Wyoming, while Buffaloes lose in overtime. »SECTION C

ARTS & CULTURE

OFFBEAT

Artist and Devo co-founder Mark Mothersbaugh has a show, “Myopia,” at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. »1E



DENVER & THE WEST MIDTERM RAKING IN THE CASH

The 2014 election is on track to be the most expensive midterm battle in history — at about \$4 billion. »1B

INSIDE Books » 7-8E | Crosswords » 12E | Lottery » 2B | Movies » 4E | Obituaries » 8-10B | Paper Trails » 11E

MediaNews Group NEWSPAPER 0 842767 0

WE HELP KIDS WITH ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES BREATHE EASIER.

WE NEVER SAY NEVER.® Whether your child has mild or severe eczema, allergies or asthma, coming to National Jewish Health as early as possible can lead to better outcomes. Our Pediatric Specialists use innovative approaches that address each child's individual needs, helping them (and you) breathe easier. **Make an appointment now by calling 1.800.621.0505 or visit njhealth.org**

