

Ranum Reimagined



Imagine an alliance of educators, non-profits, industry leaders and workers all focused on the jobs of the future. Imagine the boundaries between agencies blurring and as “silos and turf” recede it is our success not my success that matters. Imagine a regional focus, not solely a district focus. The future is bigger than anyone of us, and we need to dream together.

To paraphrase John Lennon, *you may say we're a dreamer, but we haven't been the only one.*

There have been visionaries before us. Trailblazers who have harnessed local talent to push the district to new heights.

Iver C. Ranum was one such visionary. Born May 7, 1911, right out these doors on the banks of Mud Lake he was eight in a family of twelve children. His father was a farmer who, for a variety of reasons, lost the farm and had to provide for his family through several low-paying odd jobs. For a time, he worked on projects supported by the WPA, the Works Project Administration a new deal agency that provided jobs for those in need. Watching his father struggle would have a lasting impact on Ranum and he would devote his life to improving the lives of others.

Young Iver attended Baker Elementary School and he would often joke he was a minority at the school, being from one of the five families enrolled, not Italian. His education continued at Berkley Gardens and then he transitioned to Skinner Middle School and finally North High in Denver as Westminster had yet to build a secondary school. Forced to leave the community for a secondary education helped Ranum understand the power of bringing education to the people, not sending people to the education.

Upon high school graduation, college was on the horizon and Iver was toying with the idea of the ministry as a vocation. He soon found, like many a college student, that life has unexpected twists and turns and after college he took a job with the Kansas City Journal Post to pay back his student debt all the time longing to return home to Westminster. His break came in 1935 when he was offered a teaching and coaching job at Union High School a newly built, and the first, high school in Westminster. His work ethic, outgoing personality, and commitment to the community put him on the fast track to success and in 1940, five years after taking his first teaching job, he was named principal of the school and by 1950 he was named superintendent of the Adams County School District 50 a position he held until 1975.

As superintendent, Ranum was well aware that he was preparing students for the day after graduation, and he had his finger on the pulse of the local business community. In 1951, as part of a joint publication of the Westminster Journal and the Lion's Club, Ranum penned "Business Development in Westminster" a historical sketch of the previous 40 years. The economic vitality of the community continued to feature prominently in Ranum's vision of education. In 1956, he supported district efforts to provide adult shop classes at the Junior high. The twelve-week course provided adults with hands-on skills in basic shop and construction. At the time, Ranum assured the community that as soon as a qualified teacher was found the district would expand to sewing and interior design.

In 1963, Ranum was appointed to the Governor's Manpower Advisory Committee, a group formed to advise the State Department of Employment and the State Department of Vocational Education on matters pertaining to Manpower development and training for workers 16 years and older displaced by automation or lacking the necessary skills in demand by employers at that time.

Ranum was also a bridge builder understanding the power of working together for a regional goal. In 1967, coordinating with representatives from the City of Westminster, Federal Heights, the county commissioners, regional school districts, and the local chamber of commerce Ranum was a leader in efforts to bring higher education to the region, presenting the State Board of Community Colleges a proposal to transform Mapleton High School into a Community College. While this proposal was not adopted by the State Board and instead a temporary drive-in college campus was opened in leased facilities, Ranum continued to push for a permanent community college in the area. By 1971, Ranum and other community leaders were lobbying the Joint Budget Committee to allocate funds for the purchase of 160 acres at 112th between Sheridan and Federal for the permanent location of the Community College of Denver's North Campus. This proposal met with success and over the years has transformed into the Front Range Community College campus we are now familiar with.

Also, in 1971, along with four other area districts, Ranum supported a feasibility study to determine whether a regional vocational school would be the best method for meeting the future needs of students in Adams County. The area school concept proposed an interchange of students between two or more districts allowing for a more complete range of vocational programs than could be offered by any one district alone. By pooling both resources and students, the concept envisioned maximum flexibility in the delivery of programs and use of facilities while eliminating the duplication of training and expenses wherever possible. By working together, the districts wanted to stop high school dropouts; provide every high school graduate with an employable skill; and to train skilled workers so that business and industry could continue to grow and develop. I have just described our vision of Ranum Reimagined—first proposed by Iver C. Ranum in 1971.

Administration can think of no other individual that personifies our vision for the future programs and innovations that will come to life at 80th and Zuni. Iver C. Ranum looked to the future, he had his fingers on the pulse of industry, he was committed to the economic vitality of region, and he knew we are stronger together. We recognize the importance of placemaking and how it can assist in economic development and community design. We are creating a place—a magnet for industry, education, and the community to come together. Our place is a campus that will honor a pioneer in, not only the development of our district, but in the region and the state.

Currently, administration recommends the Board of Education adopt resolution 22-12-13 that names the campus at 2401 W. 80th Avenue the Iver C. Ranum Campus.