



COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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House and Senate Education Committees
Colorado State Capitol
201 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Honorable Members of the House and Senate Education Committees:

This letter and the attached summary are submitted pursuant to § 22-2-106(1)(b.5) Colorado Revised Statutes, which states:

“(1) It is the duty of the state board: To review and evaluate annually the job performance of the commissioner of education using procedures and criteria determined by the state board. The procedures and criteria shall include, at a minimum, consideration of the comments and opinions of school district superintendents and school board members regarding the commissioner's job performance. The state board shall report the results of its evaluation to the education committees of the house of representatives and senate, or any successor committees.”

§ 22-2-110(5) Colorado Revised Statutes further states:

“(5) The state board shall annually review and evaluate the job performance of the commissioner, as provided in section 22-2-106(1)(b.5), and report the results of its evaluation to the public and the education committees of the house of representatives and senate, or any successor committees.”

The state board conducted its evaluation of Commissioner Jones, compiling questions taken from the qualifications included in the job posting. The state board is unanimous in its assessment that the commissioner has demonstrated exceptional skills and qualities during his first year and has exceeded the state board's expectations. We commend him on the excellent job he is doing for the state and are honored by his service as commissioner of education.

Pursuant to the aforementioned statutes, the state board also sent a confidential questionnaire to all superintendents and local school board members in Colorado. Recipients were asked to respond *yes* or *no* to six statements and invited to expound upon those answers if they so chose. A seventh option allowed for additional comments. These statements follow:

1. Commissioner Jones has supported rural, urban and suburban school systems in their efforts to graduate students and prepare them for success.
2. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated a capacity to develop new strategies for educating all students in the state.

Pamela Jo Suckla
Chairman
3rd Congressional District

Bob Schaffer
Vice-Chairman
4th Congressional District

Elaine Gantz Berman
1st Congressional District

Randy DeHoff
6th Congressional District

Evie Hudak
2nd Congressional District

Peggy Littleton
5th Congressional District

Jane Goff
7th Congressional District

3. Commissioner Jones communicates, listens, builds and strengthens the working relationships among all education stakeholders in Colorado; including parents, teachers, local school districts, the early childhood education community and the higher education system.
4. Commissioner Jones has improved the relationship between CDE and the school districts, educational organizations and the legislature.
5. Commissioner Jones is an effective administrator with the skill to hire and delegate competent staff.
6. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated personal and professional leadership success in the administration of public education.
7. Other Comments:

The results were overwhelming. Local school board members, school administrators and superintendents from the vast majority of the state's 178 school districts responded. Without exception, *all* agreed with the state board that Commissioner Jones had done an outstanding job in his first year. Attached is a summary of the responses we received. The comments included are direct quotes and are representative of the entire group.

Commissioner Jones has gained the respect of superintendents, legislators, the governor's staff and the educational community as a whole. He is a remarkable leader who will continue to work with the state board to achieve the aims we have set for ourselves. We are confident in his ability to increase Colorado's capacity to move student achievement forward, and we look forward to realizing this success for all of Colorado's children.

Please let us know if you have questions regarding this report. We welcome your input regarding the information collected from our constituents.

Very Truly Yours,



Pamela Jo Suckla
Chairwoman

On Behalf of the State Board of Education

PJS/mfn

A SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE FIELD

Question 1

Commissioner Jones has supported rural, urban and suburban school systems in their efforts to graduate students and prepare them for success.

He absolutely has supported rural, urban and suburban school systems. His visits to so many school systems has had such a positive effect on our students, staff, parents and community in our efforts to help students achieve. Our community commented that it was the first time in history that a state commissioner had come into our school district. They were not only impressed that he came, but that he talked with students, staff and parents to learn about our school district.

For his first year the commissioner has done a great job in this area. He asks questions and gets input on what is needed around the state. 10+ on a 10 scale.

The Commissioner has done an excellent job of reaching out to and learning about rural and particularly SW Colorado schools and districts.

Commissioner Jones has visited school districts in Colorado as Commissioner of Education for the first time in decades. He clearly has demonstrated his care and concern for all of the students in Colorado and eagerly wants to know how folks are doing everywhere. Those of us who have the good fortune of being a “mainstream” district don’t need his attention as direly as those in the rural areas across the state. Kudos to him for doing what is right.

Question 2

Commissioner Jones has demonstrated a capacity to develop new strategies for educating all students in the state.

Yes. He advocated for funding of the Closing the Achievement Gap assistance program, subject matter experts within CDE, brought staff on to focus on longitudinal growth. His work on data-driven decision-making as superintendent of Fountain/Fort Carson shows his capacity to help students from all demographics succeed.

Commissioner Jones’ work to redevelop and modify our state accreditation process as well as our new longitudinal process are just two great examples of this.

Strategies look promising, but he will need the help and cooperation of the legislature and your board to ensure he has the leeway and authority and the resources to make them work.

Question 3

Commissioner Jones communicates, listens, builds and strengthens the working relationships among all education stakeholders in Colorado; including parents, teachers, local school districts, the early childhood education community and the higher education system.

Yes. He is accessible and a good communicator. He listens well, and ensures that different points of view are heard. He doesn't seem predisposed against particular perspectives even when he takes a different view.

This is clearly the Commissioner's strength. It feels like this is the first time in the 40 years of being in education in the state of Colorado that we have a commissioner who does listen and works with us to build relationships. I have personally known the past two commissioners and cannot believe what a difference we have now! Thank you for bringing him on board. We have never had such a clear focus on early childhood education and its needs before. This is critical. Higher education must be part of the conversation as we build on developing the skills for all students to be prepared for their next level.

Commissioner Jones has a wonderful combination of humility and assertiveness that is very appealing in a leader. He also is a warm, genuine person who treats others with respect. These human characteristics are central to his effectiveness as a leader.

The commissioner's outreach to various stakeholders from the very important to the daily performers and to our students and parents especially are testaments to his super efforts to meet and talk to people and to listen and then follow up.

Question 4

Commissioner Jones has improved the relationship between CDE and the school districts, educational organizations and the legislature.

Absolutely! The superintendents agree, it is a new day at CDE!

He has improved this by leaps and bounds. I know districts trust him more. CASE and the superintendent organizations also have a much greater trust. 10 out of 10.

I believe that because who he is, relationships are much more positive than ever before. It is important, however, that relationship building goes both ways. He must have equal cooperation, planning and organizing with the members of the groups addressed in this question. There is no doubt his first concern is with others and finding ways to make sure that he holds his end of the communication process up. I hope other see the value we have in this man and that they will seek his counsel before acting.

Yes. He has accomplished this by balancing enforcement with services, through positive changes in accreditation, funding for the CTAG assistance program, and clear positions with the legislature on standards and assessments.

Question 5

Commissioner Jones is an effective administrator with the skill to hire and delegate competent staff.

Commissioner Jones has reorganized and hired staff that has been successful on providing leadership and support for school districts. We have never had the type of support and leadership that we have now from the state department.

He's hired two great deputy commissioners, both of whom I know personally. I believe he will continue to hire high caliber people.

I think his staff appointments are very competent. Jhon Penn is outstanding.

Question 6

Commissioner Jones has demonstrated personal and professional leadership success in the administration of public education.

The commissioner has absolutely demonstrated personal and professional leadership. His passion for students' achievement, his respectful and collaborative style with other professionals, and his strong communication style sets a new standard for all of us to aspire to. He and his new leadership team have truly been a "breath of fresh air" to those of us in school districts.

Yes, he remains a figure of hope and promise in our state education system.

I agree with this statement. As you said, he hit the floor running and he's doing everything he can to improve the image of CDE and make it a more service oriented organization.

Very accessible to the public and school districts.