



# COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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July 1, 2009

House and Senate Education Committees  
Colorado State Capitol  
200 E. Colfax Ave  
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(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.”

In June 2009, Commissioner Jones completed his second year of service to Colorado. At the June 10, 2009 State Board meeting, the State Board conducted an evaluation of Commissioner Jones regarding his second year as Commissioner of Education. In doing so, it utilized the questions it prepared as an evaluation tool last year. These questions were drawn from the qualifications included in the initial job posting. The State Board added additional questions relevant to the past year’s activities. (Please see attachment “A” for a list of the questions.)

**Bob Schaffer**  
**Chairman**  
4th Congressional District

**Randy DeHoff**  
**Vice-Chairman**  
6th Congressional District

**Elaine Gantz Berman**  
1st Congressional District

**Jane Goff**  
7th Congressional District

**Peggy Littleton**  
5th Congressional District

**Marcia Neal**  
3rd Congressional District

**Angelika Schroeder**  
2nd Congressional District

The State Board is unanimous in its conclusions regarding Commissioner Jones' performance over the past year. In a tremendously challenging year with increasing demands and shrinking financial resources, the commissioner has accomplished an astonishing amount of work in a very short time. Most notably, he has developed, educated and trained extensively on the growth model. He has placed Colorado in the forefront nationally regarding standards development and education reform. He has reached out to rural and urban areas regarding education reform. He has worked collaboratively with legislators, state and community leaders, educational organizations and non-profit entities toward a common vision of education. In a short amount of time, Commissioner Jones has revitalized a commitment of education reform in our state.

Additionally, pursuant to statute, the State Board sought confidential input from Colorado's superintendents and local school board members on the commissioner's performance over the past year. Respondents were asked to choose between "excellent, good, fair, and needs improvement" and were provided an opportunity for additional comments regarding each question or any other comment the recipient wished to submit. The responses were overwhelmingly favorable. Below is a list of all questions and the percentages of the responses, as well as some notable comments.

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

88% strongly agree or agree.

*"It doesn't matter the size of the district the Commissioner has set high graduation expectations for all students."*

*"CDJ has demonstrated his dedication to the rural districts by his attendance at their Superintendent meetings and his desire to pilot projects in the rural school districts."*

*"The innovative approach that the Commissioner has brought to CDE is a breath of fresh air."*

*"It has become clear from Dwight's actions and words that high-performing districts with fewer minority and high-risk students should take a back seat to the work at hand."*

*"We in the rural area are extremely pleased with his attention to our needs. His efforts to visit our schools and consider our needs are truly appreciated."*

*"First commissioner I can recall urging a "partnership" between schools and CDE."*

*"We appreciate the pilots he has promoted for such things as the Newton Learning Force Math pilot."*

*"His support for the CADI program gives hope to all of us."*

*"His ideas about providing help to the smaller districts for grants, funding, and data requirements will help tremendously."*

*"Commissioner Jones has been very proactive, and effective, in supporting schools and students in Colorado"*

*"Commissioner Jones has a sincere commitment to accurately calculating local graduation rates, preventing dropouts, and closing the achievement gap."*

**2. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated a capacity to develop new strategies for educating all students in the state. 85% strongly agree or agree.**

*"One example is his bringing a pilot math project into the San Luis Valley."*

*"Support for the student growth model of measurement is the best evidence of a far reaching strategy."*

*"Commissioner Jones' leadership has been exemplary."*

*"Again, his work on closing the achievement gap, an accreditation system that focuses on schools and districts that struggle to help their student succeed, and support for dropout prevention demonstrates his capacity on this."*

**3. Commissioner Jones adequately 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. 89% strongly agree or agree.**

*"Commissioner Jones is a strong and effective communicator - both in listening and in expressing himself."*

*"Participation in the CASB conferences and listening tours for stakeholders is good evidence."*

*"I have seen a marketed improvement in communications from CDE."*

*"This is evident in his official actions, his visits to school districts, and in his personal interactions with the education community. What a welcome change from his predecessor."*

**4. Within the past year, Commissioner Jones has improved the relationship between CDE and the school districts, educational organizations and the legislature. 82% strongly agree or agree.**

*"Absolutely! There was a widening canyon before Commissioner Jones arrived and he certainly has built bridges to all school districts."*

*"Superintendents have made comments, repeatedly, about the new attitude of support from CDE."*

*"Commissioner Jones is the first Commissioner of Education I've actually had the pleasure to introduce to my students and teachers."*

*"This has been a critical accomplishment in helping districts through tough economic times."*

*"As a district leader for the past 13 years I see a tremendous shift in CDE's desire to be of service to districts."*

**5. Commissioner Jones is an effective administrator with the skill to hire and delegate competent staff. 78% strongly agree or agree.**

*"Commissioner Jones certainly has brought in key educators not only in our state but other states too. The vision of CDE is clear and on target with the people he has hired."*

*"From my perspective the commissioner has made some "good hires," and he has allowed his Deputy and Assistant Commissioners the ability to speak for the department."*

*"Upper level staff is excellent. The systems in place and supervision of some other employees is really a problem."*

*"The student growth and benchmarking projects are evidence of getting things done through effective delegation."*

*"CDE staff that Commissioner Jones has brought in at all levels are much more progressive and proactive in a variety of areas than his predecessor's chosen staff. These areas include dropout prevention, teacher quality, closing the achievement gap, and fair accountability in student achievement."*

**6. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated personal and professional leadership success in the administration of public education. 89% strongly agree or agree.**

*"Best evidence is leadership in the administration of stimulus funds and other economic recovery programs."*

*"As a person he has charisma. I always enjoy listening to the Commissioner speak. He has attended many of the state-wide and local meetings for superintendents."*

**7. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated sufficient personal knowledge and competence relative to current education trends in order to serve as an effective leader in innovation and reform. 90% strongly agree or agree.**

*"Commissioner Jones is impressive on his knowledge base of innovative and new programs. He is current and is always exploring new frontiers of helping our state move forward with public education."*

*"Was impressed with his command of standards based education at CASB"*

**8. Commissioner Jones has represented Colorado well in his participation on national boards, panels and other forums where he has appeared in his official capacity. 65% strongly agree or agree.**

*"The state is fortunate to have such a first class individual representing this state."*

*"Yes I have attended a national forum with him. He is impressive when he speaks and represents Colorado as a leader in reform."*

*"It is very important that Colorado be seen as an active participant with CCSSO and similar groups. We have made great advances in the last 2 years, but our absence was conspicuous for many years previous."*

*"Commissioner Jones has renewed Colorado as a member of critical multistate organizations, including the Council of Chief State School Officers and MCREL, after his predecessor severed our state's ties to these groups, which left our state out of key informational loops."*

**9. Commissioner Jones has demonstrated expertise in matters of public-school finance.** 73% strongly agree or agree.

*"His hiring of Robert Hammond and the continued support and confidence in Vody Hermann earn him an A+ in my opinion. These are 2 of the best our business of K-12 has."*

*"He has shown his metal in these tough times!"*

*"Commissioner Jones has worked at clear communication in this area."*

**10. Commissioner Jones has successfully established a public-education vision for Colorado.** 84% strongly agree or agree.

*"The Forward Thinking document clearly established a vision and mission for CDE"*

*"As evidenced by his paper "Choices and Innovation—Stimulating Education Reform.""*

*"His vision of service to the district has been very successful!"*

*"Forward Thinking is a great document, but it's the commissioner's actions that really make this true - again on student achievement and accountability, teacher quality and effectiveness, closing the achievement gap, and dropout prevention. He and his staff are engaged in real work in these areas - developing and amending legislation and coordinating with state and local education stakeholders."*

*"This is evidenced by the national position Colorado holds in education reform and response to national initiatives."*

**11. Service and support from CDE has improved in the last year in your district.** 73% strongly agree or agree.

*"CDE is much more service oriented and beginning to switch from just a "compliance" mentality. Good work by Dwight and great service to kids."*

**12. The commissioner has worked collaboratively and effectively with the other branches of government to effect policy change regarding pre K-12 education.** 75% strongly agree or agree.

*"CAP4K is an example of working with the legislature and executive branch."*

*"Commissioner Jones has good bipartisan relations with legislators, works well with the governor, and the Department of Higher Education. He is also respectful of all views of the State Board of Education members and understands his role as the SBE's employee."*

**The following are some additional comments from recipients:**

*"Mr. Jones works with school districts and not as a independent commissioner"*

*"Commissioner Jones continues to build a positive relationship with all Colorado school districts and with the legislature. He is to be commended."*

*"Commissioner Jones has changed CDE to an organization of support and not just regulatory--well done!"*

*"In general I am very appreciative of the new direction that CDE is taking and I truly appreciate the efforts of Commissioner Jones."*

*"Commissioner Jones has had a very positive impact on this district through his expertise and support. We are very rural and very small and he has demonstrated his support on several occasions!"*

*"I am very appreciative that Mr. Jones is our Commissioner of Ed in the state of Colorado. I know that CDE is an awfully huge ship to turn (especially on dry land) for a smooth and quick transition. I look forward to seeing Mr. Jones and his staff at regional superintendents meetings for updates and feedback from superintendents. Sometimes (maybe most of the times, rural superintendents get information from somewhere that is not true and fanning the flames that do not need to be fanned. The more CDE and superintendents can communicate, the*

*better informed we will be.*

*"In my opinion Mr. Jones has done an excellent job. This is my fifth year as a school board member and second as board President. I hear nothing but great praise from my staff about how much better things are with the CDE since Mr. Jones took over. I have heard terms like collaboration, team work, great partnership when folks in my Admin group talk about working with Mr. Jones and the CDE. I would rate him very highly."*

*"We hope Dwight Jones will remain in his position for an extended time. We are very pleased with the direction he [and the State Board of Ed] are taking education and are concerned that his efforts to reform education may be lost if he does not serve long enough to bring them to fruition."*

*"In the 28 years I've been in this rural district, Commissioner Jones has been the only Commissioner to pay us a visit. The students and staff were impressed, not only with his visit, but with his charisma and charm."*

*"The commissioner has been very visible and involved across the state. He is an educator leader with vision."*

*"Commissioner Jones is a visionary...a breath of fresh air for this state. He is an incredible asset to this state!"*

*"The difficult position of Colorado Commissioner of Education is currently filled with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic individual. Commissioner Jones is doing a good job in tough times."*

*"Commissioner Dwight Jones has been a true inspiration to our school board during our CASB conventions over the last 2 years. His desire to visit all districts and interact with teachers and students is remarkable. He has such a vision for where the education system in Colorado needs to go. His commitment to our students' education and his sense of urgency to create an educational system that truly serves all kids is inspiring. He challenges school boards to step up to that difficult challenge. I also appreciate his progressive plan to give districts better tools and policies to do this job."*

*"Thank you Commissioner for all of your work. It is a monumental task and you are truly meeting the needs of the districts."*



*"Everything possible needs to be done by the State Board to support and retain the commissioner in his position. His leadership is invaluable to the children of the state."*

## **In Conclusion**

Of the 122 responses received, 53% were from superintendents and 47% were from school board members, while 75% came from Colorado's rural areas and 25% from urban areas. Based on these responses as well as first-hand knowledge of the commissioner's work, the State Board unanimously agreed that the commissioner has done an outstanding job this past year. The State Board fully supports the commissioner's initiatives and strategies, and is confident in the coming year that he will further the ambitious goals he has set for the Department of Education and Colorado's children.

Based upon both the State Board's own evaluation and the data gathered from Colorado's superintendents and school board members, all Board members unanimously supported and have agreed to authorize a 6% increase in salary to Commissioner Jones. This determination was based on the State Board's determination of the importance of providing competitive compensation relative to other chief education officers across the country, as well as a comparison to chief executive officers in the private sector with similar duties and a similar number of individuals the position oversees. Based upon its firm desire to retain Commissioner Jones as Colorado's chief state school officer, the State Board believes an increase is warranted, justifiable and necessary. The State Board gave Commissioner Jones an excellent review at the completion of his first year (please see attachment "C"). Without question, Commissioner Jones has served the state very well in his second year – a year that provided extraordinarily challenging financial circumstances. The State Board is unified in its establishment as a high priority the fair, adequate and competitive-level compensation of a leader of exceptional quality. Furthermore, the State Board has determined it is feasible to fund a six-percent salary increase under the Department's current appropriation without requesting an additional appropriation from the General Assembly.

As the letter from Commissioner Jones, herein appended, indicates, (please see attachment "B"), the State Board made this unanimously approved increase known to the commissioner. Commissioner Jones declined to accept the salary increase for the reasons set forth in his letter. The Board respectfully commends the commissioner for the magnanimity of his response and hereby exhibits his

response as yet another suitable example of his prudent leadership of the Department.

The State Board will adhere to and concur with the commissioner's judgment. Nonetheless, the Board regards the decision to increase the commissioner's salary by six percent as a valid decision and will postpone its implementation for an undefined period of time subject to the State's financial condition. By doing so, the State Board demonstrates to the commissioner and to all Coloradans its unqualified support and enthusiasm for the tremendous amount of work completed in 2008-2009, and the undaunted determination to forge ahead in the coming year, always with a focus on Colorado's schoolchildren.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Schaffer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Bob Schaffer  
Chairman  
On Behalf of the State Board of Education