



COLORADO

State Board of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

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

September 10, 2014

Dear Honorable House and Senate Education Committee Members:

This letter is submitted pursuant to section 22-2-106(1) (b.5), C.R.S, 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.”

Section 22-2-110(5), C.R.S., 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 2014, Commissioner Hammond completed his third year of service to Colorado as Commissioner of the Colorado Department of Education. At the August 13, 2014 state board meeting, the state board conducted an evaluation of Commissioner Hammond as commissioner of education. The state board is unanimous in its conclusions regarding Commissioner Hammond’s performance over the past year.

Under his leadership the Department is working effectively and efficiently on targeted initiatives such as educator effectiveness, accountability and support, implementing the READ Act, increasing the Department’s outreach to rural districts, and providing support to Turnaround and Priority Improvement Districts. Additionally, the Commissioner has worked collaboratively with legislators, state and community leaders, educational organizations and non-profit entities towards implementing education reforms in Colorado so as to improve every child’s access to quality educational opportunities.

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 “strongly agree, agree, neither disagree or agree, disagree, strongly disagree” and were provided an opportunity for additional comments regarding each question or any other comment the

Paul Lundeen
Chairman
5th Congressional District

Marcia Neal
Vice-Chairman
3rd Congressional District

Elaine Gantz Berman
1st Congressional District

Jane Goff
7th Congressional District

Pam Mazanec
4th Congressional District

Debora Scheffel
6th Congressional District

Angelika Schroeder
2nd Congressional District



recipient wished to submit. The 82 responses received were remarkably favorable. Below is a list of all questions and the percentages of the responses, as well as some notable comments.

1. Commissioner Hammond understands the unique needs of rural, urban and suburban school systems and he along with his staff, have supported rural, urban and suburban school systems in their efforts to graduate all students and prepared for postsecondary and workforce success. 81.71% strongly agree or agree.

"I have found Robert to be tremendously supportive of the work in our district in rural Colorado. He has a strong understanding of the needs of all types of districts."

"Commissioner Hammond has excelled at understanding and working with the needs of all school districts in this most complex time in our state. He goes beyond being professional and assisting each and every individual school district in understanding the needs and legislative rules regarding student achievement and the importance of our graduates to prepare for post-secondary experiences."

"This commissioner and his staff make more effort, create more avenues and listen more to understand our different districts than any commissioner since Cal Frazier."

"Working within a rural western slope community I feel that Commissioner Hammond has implemented multiple efforts to engage rural school s in the greater conversations within the state."

2. Commissioner Hammond is an effective spokesperson for strategic education initiatives in the State: he listens well and works to strengthen the collaborative relationships among education stakeholders in Colorado. 78.04% strongly agree or agree.

"I have not known a commissioner who attends meetings of school districts, other state organizations and listens as well as he does. One of many strengths of the commissioner is his ability to engage and establish and maintain relationships with the stake holders in Colorado."

"He is honest and direct in his communication. Whenever I have spoken with him, I feel that he has been sincere in his communications and understands some of the challenges that we face as superintendents."

"He is able to pull together different constituencies and create a "path forward" that honors all opinions."

"Commissioner Hammond is always appreciated when he takes the time to attend and speak at regional or state education leadership forums."

3. Commissioner Hammond demonstrates leadership in his continued support for school choice, his understanding and support for innovation and reform initiatives, and the use of data to inform best practices. 72.84% strongly agree or agree.

"Commissioner Hammond has an extreme level of understanding about the reform effort in Colorado and the use of data to inform school districts on how to engage in the reforms. His oversight on the CDE web site is a perfect example of how his leadership has provided support for school district especially in the legislative are of 212,168,191."



"This is a particular strength. Commissioner Hammond is a true champion for choice for Colorado families."

"As an Integration District over the last three years, we have had opportunities to participate in innovative activities that would not have been possible without the support he has provided to districts."

4. Commissioner Hammond understands state and local school finance and funding, including the current challenges, realities, and trends in school funding. 82.72% strongly agree or agree.

"Commissioner Hammond's background has been in school finance and state funding! He understands and the challenges and realities going on in the state and he finds ways to mitigate the impact on poor funding by providing opportunities at CDE for districts to utilize methods and venues to support and increase funding opportunities."

"His experience working at the local district level gives him better insight into the challenges created by school finance than most state level leadership."

"Absolutely. His diplomacy and support during the current legislative session was very much in evidence."

5. Commissioner Hammond has demonstrated a commitment to the successful implementation of education initiatives including standards, assessments, accountability and support, and educator effectiveness; and, he understands the capacity of the field to implement these initiatives as well as the capacity of the department staff to provide support to the field. 71.96% strongly agree or agree.

"Commissioner Hammond understands that our plates are full and the initiatives that have been placed upon districts is truly a difficult task with not enough dollars to get the job done effectively."

"His responsiveness to the challenges districts are facing and his staff's willingness to listen, respond as much as they are able has been a huge help to us."

"I really appreciate Commissioner Hammond being firm in adhering to the accreditation standards and expecting all schools and districts to provide quality education to all of the students."

6. Commissioner Hammond has worked collaboratively and effectively with other education leaders including the Lt. Governor, members of the House and Senate Education Committees, members of the Joint Budget Committee, and the U.S. Department of Education staff. 68.36% strongly agree or agree.

"I know first-hand of Commissioner Hammond's efforts to create and maintain the collaborative work with education leaders across the state and in other states. I had the opportunity to talk with the Commissioner of Iowa who had the utmost respect of the Commissioner and efforts going on in Colorado. He is frequently seen at our State Capitol building testifying and meeting with our elected leaders."

"I definitely feel that Colorado's voice is in the room."



"While I don't have direct evidence of the work he has done, it is apparent to me, based on the direction the department has been going in this year, that he has worked collaboratively with Higher Ed and elected officials to help them understand the challenges and opportunities the field faces."

7. Commissioner Hammond has demonstrated leadership in his participation on local, state, and national boards, panels and other forums, and in meetings with local district leaders where he has appeared in his official capacity. 72.84% strongly agree or agree.

"From what I have seen, Commissioner Hammond has been active in working with other states as the challenges of 21st century learning unfold around the country."

"I have appreciated Commissioner Hammond's approachability to superintendents and his willingness to participate in all levels of educational meetings and conferences across the state. As someone new to the state, I was impressed by his accessibility."

"He is very visible, vocal, and understands the many issues surrounding these interests."

8. Commissioner Hammond is an effective administrator and has hired competent staff and manages the Department of Education's resources for support to the field, ensure regulatory compliance, and to achieve measurable student outcomes. 81.70% strongly agree or agree.

"Commissioner Hammond does not hesitate to make sure as Jim Collins says, "having the right people in the right place on the bus." He will quickly address any issues he sees with incompetent staff. He always seeks the best for CDE."

"Under Commissioner Hammond's leadership, the team at CDE has become increasingly talented, flexible and dedicated to supporting schools and districts."

"The CDE leadership staff is stronger than it has ever been."

9. Commissioner Hammond and his staff have worked to improve the relationship between CDE and school districts and CDE's service and support for districts has improved. 81.48% strongly agree or agree.

"Absolutely!! He and his staff are attentive, quickly responding to questions from the field, addressing concerns, and seeking ways to assist and find solutions. Best customer service I have ever experienced from CDE since Commissioner Hammond took over CDE."

"The units that I work most directly with have been very responsive to my questions and concerns."

"I have been a school or BOCES Administrator for 19 years in Colorado. Today CDE's image among school districts is as positive as it has ever been. Most school officials trust the Commissioner and his staff and do see CDE as a service and support organization."

"I am most impressed by the changing nature of relations between CDE and districts/schools. There seems to be a fresh breeze blowing. Change like this is hard to and slow, but CDE has made strides in being more of a partner and service provider, and less as a forceful hand of compliance. I'm especially impressed by personnel and culture changes over the last couple years in the charter schools office and in the turnaround office."



10. Commissioner Hammond has demonstrated personal and professional integrity, is committed to department transparency and accountability, and has a passion for educating all students. 90.25% strongly agree or agree.

"I greatly appreciate his visibility and commitment to transparency. We are lucky to have him in Colorado."

"Robert is consistently putting his passion for the students in the state first! If you engage in a conversation one of the first things you notice is his concern for all children and what we are doing to assist them in their learning and schooling. His integrity, honesty and loyalty to the mission of education is beyond reproach! He has been the only Commissioner that I know in my 37 years in Colorado education that takes time to listen, respond and follow through with what he says he will do. He has established a high level of trust across the state and is an extremely successful ambassador of education. This state will truly miss his leadership, passion, wisdom if he ever leaves."

"I feel strongly that I can trust his words and actions will always align. It is a pleasure to work for a leader with such clear lines of integrity."

Based on these responses as well as first-hand knowledge of the commissioner's work, the board unanimously agreed that the commissioner has done an outstanding job this past year. The state board supports the commissioner's initiatives and strategies, and is confident in the coming year that he will advance the bold objectives he has set for the Department of Education and Colorado's educators and students.

Very Truly Yours,



Paul Lundeen
Chairman
On Behalf of the State Board of Education

