
September 9, 2010

update



Dwight D. Jones

Commissioner of Education



The buses are running, the backpacks are growing full, and I trust you and your students are off on a start to a great school year! I also hope you found some time during the summer to unwind, relax and enjoy time with friends and family.

As you might imagine, we are disappointed in the loss of Race to the Top, but we remain undaunted in pursuit of our state education reform agenda – all aspects of which are codified in law. While we think they made a big mistake (!), our task now is to follow through and deliver with excellence for all stakeholders.

Existing resources will allow us to launch the implementation of the reform efforts, but additional resources are necessary if indeed we are to follow through with excellence. Our stakeholders deserve the investments specified in our Race to the Top proposal pertaining to great teachers and leaders, standards and assessments, data systems and struggling schools. We are developing a strategy to make this happen, and it will require both cooperation and collaboration among our law makers, business community, private funders and, most important, our educators.

What follows are brief status updates to help catch you up on the latest developments of five major initiatives CDE is continuing to implement. Web links and staff contact information is included should you want additional information.



BUDGET CAUTION

On Tuesday (Sept. 7), Assistant Commissioner Vody Herrmann attended a meeting of the governor's Office of State Planning and Budget related to the upcoming economic forecast. The meeting was short and the message was one of caution: "Be careful as you consider the use of the Education Jobs funding."

The next economic forecast will be made on Sept. 20, and OSPB anticipates the forecast will be lower than the one made in June. Numbers are not known at this time, but if the shortfall grows, it becomes more likely that K-12 will have to be included in the balancing plan. New forecasts will be made in December and in March 2011, which will be used by the governor and general assembly to inform the budget setting process. This means that the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund monies that have been used for

September 9, 2010

higher education funding through FY2009-2010 could become part of the K-12 education funding formula to some extent. Again, what the scenario will be is still unknown.

The department will keep districts posted as more information becomes available.



SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORKS (SENATE BILL 09-163)

On Aug. 15, initial 2010 School and District Performance Frameworks were provided to districts, signaling the onset of the first phase of Senate Bill 09-163. The district performance framework determines a district's initial accreditation category, while the school performance framework determines each school's initial plan assignment.

Superintendents are encouraged to review these reports to determine if they accurately reflect their schools' and district's performance and, if not, to submit to the department by Oct. 15 any additional information they believe warrants inclusion in the evaluation of their schools' and district's accreditation process. Detailed information and guidance on this process is available at <http://www.schoolview.org/documents/SubmittingSchoolAccreditationandRequeststoReconsider.pdf>.

Originally, all schools' and districts' framework reports, plans and accreditation categories were to be finalized by the state board at the Nov. 4 board meeting. However, for those districts that are satisfied with the initial frameworks and ratings or that desire earlier approval, CDE has employed a "rolling timeline" and will also present frameworks, plans and categories to the board at their Sept. 16 and Oct. 6 board meetings. Accreditation results will be announced to the public only *after* they are approved by the state board.

Additional resources are available in the SchoolView Learning Center (www.schoolview.org), including links to the Colorado District Accountability Handbook, an online tutorial of the school performance framework, PowerPoint presentations on accreditation requirements and unified improvement plan templates.

For more information, contact Richard Wenning, associate commissioner for policy and performance, wenning_r@cde.state.co.us or your district's performance support manager.



EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS (SENATE BILL 10-191)

STATE COUNCIL FOR EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS

First created by Gov. Ritter in January 2010, the State Council for Educator Effectiveness (SCEE) comprises 15 members appointed by the Governor and charged

September 9, 2010

with issuing recommendations for changes to state policy and local evaluation of educators. In May, Senate Bill 10-191 codified the council and incorporated their recommendations into the rule-making process for implementing the legislation.

The council has an ambitious set of deliverables which fall generally into the following categories:

- Teacher and principal evaluation guidelines based at least 50 percent upon student growth measures.
- Guidelines for effective implementation by school districts of new evaluation systems.
- Analysis of costs to local districts to implement Senate Bill 10-191.
- Recommendations for CDE monitoring of local district implementation efforts.

These recommendations are due to the state board on or before March 1, 2011, which will reference them as they adopt rules by September 2011.

More information about the State Council on Educator Effectiveness, its meeting schedule and prior meeting minutes is available on the governor's Web site:

<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=GovRitter%2FGOVRLayout&cid=1251573887411&pagename=GOVRWrapper>. You may also submit questions, comments or materials to the council at scee@cde.state.co.us or contact Vanessa Roman, CDE's council staff person, at roman_v@cde.state.co.us for more details.

CDE SUPPORT FOR DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF SENATE BILL 10- 191

CDE is committed to provide support to local school districts as they begin the implementation of Senate Bill 10-191. Fundamental to that support is a recognition that different districts are at a different starting point and will need to implement SB 191 in a manner that meets or exceeds the minimum requirement ultimately put into rule, while still honoring and reflecting local values and community needs. CDE has plans to provide support in several ways.

Later this month, CDE will distribute via the *Scoop* a simple tool to help districts to self-assess where current systems are consistent with the legislation and where they will likely need to be revised. CDE also will develop a set of online resources, including a resource bank of assessments of student growth in untested subjects, and model evaluation systems which districts can use in the implementation of systems locally. While schools and districts are not required to use these tools, we hope that providing these resources will allow districts to plan and devote resources to those elements of local implementation that are of highest priority to them.

At present, CDE is in the process of hiring an SB 191 Supervisor and an Educator Special Advisor to me. The SB 191 supervisor will guide the implementation of the state's new educator evaluation system, while the educator special advisor will serve as a

September 9, 2010

spokesperson for Colorado educators, facilitate input from the field, and provide a constant classroom perspective to the work of the department. We look forward to welcoming these new members to our team!

For more information about Senate Bill 10-191 and the department's efforts to support local implementation, please contact Nina Lopez, Lopez_N@cde.state.co.us.

STATE VISION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

With support from Rose Community Foundation, CDE has partnered with The New Teacher Project and the Colorado Legacy Foundation to strategically align activities and resources to better recruit, prepare, support and retain effective teachers and school leaders. The aim of the project is to focus the department's work to ensure educators are supported at every step in their careers. This work will also complement the department's efforts to effectively implement the requirements of Senate Bill 10-191.

At present, the project work team is conducting an inventory of Colorado's policies, programs and funding streams to identify opportunities to align and leverage current activities to enhance the effectiveness of all Colorado educators. The team is also reviewing and analyzing data to identify useful metrics to help monitor and inform educator effectiveness. **Draft findings and recommendations from this work will be shared with stakeholders in October for feedback and input.** CDE will use these results to inform and articulate statewide goals, metrics and strategies for increasing the number of effective educators across the state.

The project partners will assist CDE in implementing the determined strategies to reach these goals, which will include aligning department activities, coordinating funding streams to maximize impact in the field, disseminating promising practices and recognizing the accomplishments of Colorado's most effective teachers and leaders.

Draft findings and recommendations will be posted on the CDE Web site and released in October, as will the means for providing input. In the meantime, for more information, contact Jill Hawley, CDE's resident partner from The New Teacher Project, jill.hawley@tntp.org.



STANDARDS (SENATE BILL 08-212)

On Aug. 2, 2010, the Colorado State Board of Education, along with the boards of 37 other states, adopted the Common Core State Standards which standardize the language of student expectations in two content areas: mathematics and English language arts. These standards, which resulted from an effort spearheaded by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, were found to be more than 90 percent aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards that were adopted last December. In fact, when the independent third-party reviewer did a

September 9, 2010

side-by-side examination of the Colorado Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards, the documents were substantively identical. Thus, districts can confidently continue awareness campaigns on the 21st century skills and professional development seminars about standards.

The CDE Standards Implementation Team continues to support district and school leaders through face-to-face regional sessions, online office hours, and Web-based narrated presentations and tools. The focus of support is on key components of the standards: 21st century skills and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Through October and in partnership with the Tointon Institute, the Standards Implementation Team will be conducting a series of standards workshops for school leadership. For more information about the workshops and associated resources, visit CDE's standards implementation Web site:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/StandardsImplementation.html>.

This fall, the department will re-issue the standards to ensure that the rigor, critical thinking and decision making skills, personal financial literacy acumen and other expectations that Colorado values are imbedded within these standards.

More information about the standards and their implementation can be found on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/StandardsImplementation.html>. You may also contact Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner for standards and assessments, obrien_j@cde.state.co.us, or Melissa Colman, director of academic initiatives, colman_m@cde.state.co.us.



ASSESSMENTS (SENATE BILL 08-212)

You might be interested to know that Colorado has had one of the nation's longest running – and stable – assessment systems. With the advent of new standards comes the need for new state assessments to measure new expectations. Comprised of professionals from across the education sector, the assessment revision stakeholders have established terms and principles for a new system which include a value for a seamless P-20 system, the timely delivery of results, signals for on-going progress and indicators of a student's preparedness for college and career work.

To define more specific recommendations for the new system, 90 individuals were selected from a pool of more than 400 applicants to participate in one of five subcommittees addressing early assessments for school readiness; postsecondary and workforce readiness; summative assessments; formative/interim assessments; and assessments for special populations.

These groups will continue to meet through summer into fall in Pueblo, Denver, Grand Junction and Fort Collins to arrive at the recommendations they will present to the

September 9, 2010

Colorado Department of Education in late fall, to be adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education in December. (The postsecondary and workforce readiness recommendations will be co-adopted with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.)

Come springtime, **CSAP** will be administered in its same form as it has in prior years. In 2012, the existing CSAP will be edited and used to measure only the new academic standards. In spring 2013, students will take a CSAP-like exam which is anticipated to include new items and methods to demonstrate understanding and proficiency of concepts. And in 2014, the transition from the “old CSAP” to the new state assessment system will be complete.

On the national front, the USDE recently awarded \$330 million to two consortia of states to develop national assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards which include K-12 mathematics and English language arts. Colorado is presently a participating state on both the SMARTER Balanced consortium and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium, though great consideration is being given to the pros and cons of aligning with one consortium and becoming a lead state. Either way, by 2015, national assessment items will be available for access and use to enhance the Colorado assessment system and to ensure Colorado of its standing among other states.

While the consortia work will be an asset to the Colorado assessment system, it will concentrate primarily on the common core state standards. The assessment system for which Colorado stakeholders are presently designing recommendations will include all the components that Colorado values in an aligned P-20 assessment system as outlined by CAP4K legislation, among them postsecondary and workforce readiness, school readiness and 21st century skills, as well as science, writing, and personal financial literacy content.

For more information about the state’s process, the stakeholder group and subcommittees or to complete a brief survey, visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/asmtrev/home.htm>. You may also send comments to assessment_review@cde.state.co.us or contact Jo O’Brien, assistant commissioner for standards and assessments, Obrien_j@cde.state.co.us.



LICENSURE CYCLE TIME

It is my great pleasure to announce that as of Wednesday, Sept. 1, applications for *initial licensure* can now be submitted online!

Progress for implementing a completely electronic application system was stalled due to a number of issues with the state selected vendor and subcontractor. The project was delayed even further due to the state’s agreement with the vendor which calls for the

September 9, 2010

Department of Regulatory Agencies' licensure system to be implemented prior to CDE's licensure system – which could take up to a year. Fortunately, an arrangement was made to implement the portion of CDE's system for new applicants. All other licenses (i.e., renewals, moving from an initial license to a professional license, alternative licenses and those for career and technical education) will be phased in the months ahead.

In the meantime, as we continue to “deal with” the antiquated system, staff shortages and budget cuts, the department is revising protocols to decrease processing time. Earlier this year, the department contracted with a facility in Pueblo to open all mailed applications and to perform data entry – a cost-saving alternative that maximizes staff time and saves on return postage costs. Also, applicants are now notified by e-mail if there is a question or problem with their application, whereas before requests for additional information were done via U.S. mail. Another positive: electronic transcripts can now be sent between colleges, universities and CDE for application review. Colorado is the only state that offers this service statewide.

A webinar has been created to provide more information and can be accessed on the Educator Licensing portion of CDE's Web site or by visiting <http://connect.cboces.org/p12036360/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>.



IN CLOSING ...

To superintendents and their districts, I wish you a great year. I look forward to completing my tour of all 178 districts (I've 37 more to visit!), as well as attend as many of your upcoming regional superintendents meetings as I can, along with your performance support manager and one of my deputy commissioners.

Please know that whether via a district visit or a regional meeting, my desire for attending is to hear about the issues you are facing and all that is going on in your part of the state. The implementation of recent legislation and related initiatives keeps us all quite busy, but we at the department cannot provide you true support and service if we don't take the time to listen to what you need.

To all of you, thank you for your interest in and support of Colorado's efforts to reform, transform and improve public education and provide the best possible opportunities for all students.



For more information, please visit the department's Web site: <http://www.cde.state.co.us>.

September 9, 2010

UPdate is a periodic review of matters and issues pertinent to education across Colorado. Written by Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones, this brief is distributed via e-mail to district superintendents and staff, board of education members, state legislators, community leaders, educators, parents and other concerned citizens.

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