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Colorado is implementing significant education reforms aimed at ensuring all students graduate college- and career-ready. While much research and discussion has gone into the policy development, we're now putting those policies into action. Here's a brief snapshot of the most significant initiatives and the latest key implementation milestones.

Educator Effectiveness

Overview:

More than 200 attendees ranging from superintendents to teachers attended the S.B. 191 Pilot/Integration District Summit in Breckenridge June 26-27. Districts celebrated the progress they've made during the 2011-12 pilot, shared lessons learned with colleagues and received key informational updates including implementation of the Colorado Academic Standards and [Content Collaboratives](#).

Engaging in cross-district conversations was especially helpful for CDE pilot districts and Colorado Legacy Foundation Integration Districts paving the way with evaluation and standards implementation: "We're actually getting the chance to solve problems we're grappling with on a teacher-to-teacher level across districts," stated a summit attendee. This summit also provided the opportunity for CDE and CLF to collect valuable feedback to inform efforts moving forward into 2012-13.

The Summit was held in response to pilot districts asking for more time together to collaborate and learn from each other. Given the upbeat energy, engaging conversations, and obvious dedication, there is no doubt 2012-13 will be another successful pilot year!

What's Happening Now:

As the CDE Model Evaluation System for teachers moves forward in 2012-13 and as full implementation of S.B. 191 gets closer in 2013-14, a critical component is defining structures for inter-rater agreement or IRA. Because observation data will help inform decisions about teacher tenure, evaluators' ratings must be fair and consistent within and across districts.

With funding from the Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF) and working closely with the Colorado Education Association (CEA), the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) and 30 Colorado teachers and principals, the IRA work has begun. Using the CDE observation rubric for teachers, these 30 teachers and principals are engaging in a calibration process using videos to establish inter-rater agreement. We are in the learning process for this calibration and the IRA process, and are determining if we have the correct amount of videos to be able to calibrate our full rubric. When this summer calibration process is complete, the next step will be to create an online tool for training and calibration that all districts can access to ensure rater agreement and consistency.

Over time, the IRA process will continue to be refined and training improved based on the lessons learned and the acquisition of additional videos to use in calibration. If you are in a pilot district, we hope to have the initial IRA training (face-to-face) available in the fall of this year (September-November). We know this will be a work in progress and we will all improve our consistency over time and experience using the rubric. It is important to note that all districts can still use the CDE model rubric this year even if they have not had the training.

What's on the Horizon:

The Big Question: How and when do we put together the 50 percent student growth side of the evaluation? Pilot districts - and all districts - are thinking about how to compile appropriate student growth measures that will comprise 50 percent of their evaluation score. CDE is too!

CDE is working on a number of fronts to provide comprehensive guidance and training to pilots (and then later in the 2012-13 school year to all districts). CDE is using the Content Collaborative process, national researchers and a technical steering committee to obtain potential assessments for all grade levels and subject areas. These assessments could be voluntarily used by educators as measures of student growth.

The technical steering committee, as well as other experts, will provide models and guidance on how to aggregate the multiple assessments into one final 50 percent student growth score. This score would be combined with the 50 percent professional practice (or rubric) score and result in an overall rating.

The Content Collaboratives, in partnership with technical advisors, are creating a guidance tool to assist districts in evaluating their current assessments and determining if they would be good options to use as a measure (one of multiple) in their 50 percent student growth score. This tool will roll out in the next month or two and CDE is hiring trainers that will work with the pilot districts this fall, using the tools from the Content Collaboratives, to put together their measures for the 50 percent student growth. Training and support is on the way!

Important Upcoming Deadlines:

None at this time.

For more information about educator effectiveness, contact Katy Anthes, executive director of educator effectiveness, 303-866-6654.

Standards

Overview:

CDE continues its support of Colorado districts and schools during transition to the new standards. CDE recommends districts use 2012-13 school year to begin phasing in the standards-based curriculum in preparation for full implementation in 2013-14.

What's Happening Now:

- **Model Curriculum:** Responding to the Colorado Association of Superintendents and Senior Administrators, numerous requests from Superintendents Advisory Councils, and the field as a whole, the Standards and Instructional Support Team presented the first draft of the model curriculum template to educators in attendance at CDE's Summer Symposia and the Colorado Legacy Foundation's Integration Summit. A central component of the proposal to create curriculum samples aligned to the

Colorado Academic Standards, this template must reflect not only the needs and input of educators but also the flexibility and customizable capacity that will make its usage viable in our local-control state. Thus, the feedback-gathering at the Symposia and Summit represented just the first stage of an on-going process that will allow the team to continually refine the template as a key piece of CDE's statewide collaborative efforts to create model curricula. CDE will continue to gather feedback through SAC meetings in the fall. Questions can be directed to Brian Sevier at sevier_b@cde.state.co.us.

- **School Readiness Plans and Assessment:** Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids requires school districts to develop individual school readiness plans for all children in state-funded preschool and kindergarten beginning in the 2013-14 school year. The law also requires the State Board of Education to adopt one or more assessments for measuring students' levels of school readiness. This fall, CDE will engage the school readiness assessment subcommittee to review potential assessments for Board consideration. The process will utilize the State Board adopted assessment attributes and recommendations from the assessment subcommittee. Questions can be directed to Melissa Colman at colman_m@cde.state.co.us.
- **The Colorado READ Act:** The Colorado READ Act passed in May 2012, repeals CBLA as of July 1, 2013. The READ Act provisions have implications for assessing literacy skills in kindergarten through third-grade, identification of and interventions for students with significant reading deficiencies, parent involvement, and school and district performance ratings. Included in the act is funding to support intervention for students with significant reading deficiencies, regional literacy support, and a new literacy grant program. Questions can be directed to Dian Prestwich at prestwich_d@cde.state.co.us.

What's on the Horizon:

- Knowing our website is an important source of information and support for educators during transition to the new Colorado Academic Standards, the SIS team has revamped its web pages. The new site provides a more navigable and integrated space with a visual design that better communicates the transformational educational changes embedded in the standards. The website will still house support tools, such as the Standards Implementation Tool Kit, Vertical Progressions, Elementary Concept Connections, and Discipline Concept Maps, to help educators (re)assess their curricular and instructional practices. As full implementation draws near, these new pages will provide a better means to continually "refresh," improve, and augment resources.
- CDE is scheduling regional outreach for district and school leaders and educators beginning in August through October to seek feedback on plans for implementation of the READ Act and school readiness assessment. Dates and locations for regional feedback meetings will be published and disseminated in early August through the Scoop and posted on the READ Act homepage: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/ReadAct/index.asp>

Important Upcoming Deadlines:

None at this time.

For more information about standards, contact Melissa Colman, executive director of teaching and learning, 303-866-6737.

Assessments

Overview:

The state legislature provided funding for CDE to pursue the development of summative assessments in science and social studies for implementation in the spring of 2014. Science assessments will be administered in grades 5, 8 and 11, while the social studies assessments will be administered in grades 4, 7 and 11. These grades were selected to allow maximum flexibility at the local level in determining scope and sequence in teaching the high school social studies and science standards.

It is expected that both the science and social studies assessments will be computer-based. The science and social studies assessments will be designed to measure the Colorado Academic Standards, adopted in 2009. CDE continues to work with CTB McGraw Hill to administer the TCAP in reading, writing, math, and science. The request for proposals for the new 2014 social studies and science assessments was awarded to Pearson.

What's Happening Now:

Assessments for Educator Evaluation. In late July in Pueblo, five more content collaboratives of educators (math, science, physical education, health and wellness, and world languages) met for initial introduction and training necessary to establish an assessment bank which may be used for future educator evaluation. Over the course of this fall and early winter, educators will identify assessments for a statewide resource bank.

Online Assessment Readiness and each District's Technology Coordinator. As the state begins the transition to computer-based assessments, it is important for districts to participate in the Online Readiness Survey that will initially occur in September and will continue to gather information in the future. This survey will support transition to online assessments. Districts were recently asked to identify a district technology coordinator to support this effort. More information regarding the role of the district technology coordinator and the survey will be shared with your district assessment coordinator.

What's on the Horizon:

2012 State Assessment Results Embargoed and Sent to Districts

August 3 Embargoed data is made available to media and districts upon signing an agreement

August 8 Embargo is lifted; Student assessment results are publically released with growth results

Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Assessments. For assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, S.B.12-172 directed Colorado to join, as a governing member, a multi-state consortium that is developing a common set of assessments. CDE will work with the State Board of Education to select the multi-state assessment consortium, with action expected by the State Board at the August meeting.

Important Upcoming Deadlines:

None at this time.

For more information about assessments, contact Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner for assessments, research and evaluation at 303-866-6852.

Accountability and Improvement

Overview:

The Department will release TCAP growth data and preliminary District and School Performance Framework reports to districts this month.

What's Happening Now:

TCAP Growth Data Release. Districts will be able to download growth data for TCAP reading, writing and math from CEDAR by Monday, Aug. 13. CDE will notify DACs by e-mail when a firm date for access to the data is determined, with download instructions also provided. Initially, data are only available for district-level users; school-level users will be given access approximately one week later. The data in CEDAR are provided as flat files, with the same file format as last year (http://www.schoolview.org/documents/Flat_File_layout_2012.docx).

As in previous years, the growth data will only become public after districts have had an opportunity to look at their results. Once publicly available, CDE will publish the data on www.schoolview.org. After other reporting is complete, CDE will produce Individual Student Reports and notify DACs and superintendents of how and where to download their packages of reports when they become available.

District and School Performance Frameworks. The Department will release the preliminary 2012 District and School Performance Framework (DPF/SPF) reports to districts by August 22. **Reports are draft versions for district review; they are not public and are considered unofficial until adopted by the State Board of Education in December.** **Access the reports in CEDAR using the instructions that will be e-mailed to districts on August 22.**

The 2012 DPFs and SPFs include the addition of two new measures: (1) growth in English language proficiency (CELAppro) and (2) disaggregated graduation rates. Districts will receive their simulated 2011 results (2011 DPF data using the 2012 modifications) to allow for comparisons to 2012 results. Visit the Performance Framework website for more information: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability/PerformanceFrameworks.asp>.

District Accountability and Tracker Contacts. Please confirm or update your district's Accountability Contact and your district's Tracker Contact by August 15 using [this form](#). The Accountability Contact will receive all state accountability-related communications for your district, including information on performance frameworks and accreditation. The Tracker Contact will receive all improvement planning-related communications, and also be responsible for submitting improvement plans to CDE. As in previous years, improvement plans are to be submitted to CDE via the C-FIRS Tracker system. We understand that in some cases, the district's Accountability Contact and Tracker Contact may be the same individual.

NCLB Flexibility Waiver – Title III. CDE has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education to align Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) with our state accountability system. There are three AMAOs, the accountability measures for Title III funds in support of English learners. The measures approved for each AMAO are described at the link below and the Title III AMAO Manual will also be updated with the details around the new calculations. **Districts will receive their 2012 AMAO reports via CEDAR reports in September.** Visit the AMAO website for more information: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/tiii/amaos.asp>.

Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) Templates Now Posted. The 2012-13 district and

school UIP templates and addenda forms have been finalized and are now posted on the “Templates” page of the UIP website. There are minimal changes to the templates based upon feedback from the field, the ESEA waiver and CDE’s review of improvement plans. Note that Improvement plans are designed to incorporate planning efforts for at least two school years, and be revised at least annually. The 2012-13 UIP should therefore incorporate the plans for the current 2012-13 school year, as well as future plans for the 2013-14 school year. The UIP Handbook and Quality Criteria are available in draft form under the training link. Visit the UIP website at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/index.asp>.

Accountability for Alternative Education Campuses. The State Board of Education will review and approve applications for school designation as Alternative Education Campuses at the August state board meeting. The approved list will be published on the website. The Department is currently reviewing submitted measures, metrics and cut-points, and will follow up with districts as needed. Visit the AEC website for more information: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability/StateAccountabilityAECs.asp>.

What’s on the Horizon:

Accreditation Forms and Requests to Reconsider. Based on the preliminary DPF and SPF reports, by October 15, districts must submit (1) Accreditation Forms that indicate their local school board’s accreditation ratings for their schools, and (2) Requests to Reconsider for any districts or schools that wish to appeal the district’s accreditation rating or the school’s plan type assignment. CDE will send districts the required form in September. Visit the State Accountability website for detailed policy guidance on the Accreditation and Request to Reconsider process, with samples of last year’s form: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability/RequestToReconsider.asp>.

Unified Improvement Planning Pre-Populated Report. The school and district pre-populated reports will be released to districts approximately two weeks after the release of the preliminary performance frameworks. The estimated date is now Sept. 7. A link to access the documents (MS word format) will be e-mailed to Accountability Contacts.

Unified Improvement Planning: Fall Training Schedule. This fall, the Department will host several regional UIP training sessions to support districts through the stages of the improvement planning process. The sessions will allow districts to receive training in data analysis, action planning, progress monitoring, and to engage in facilitated peer reviews. Visit the “Training” page of the UIP website for training dates, locations, and session descriptions: http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/UIP_TrainingAndSupport_Register.asp.

Important Upcoming Deadlines:

- **August 15:** Deadline for districts to update Accountability and Tracker contacts.
- **August 22:** Release of preliminary 2012 District and School Performance Framework reports to districts for review.
- **September 7:** Release of preliminary pre-populated 2012 Unified Improvement Plans (Section I) to districts.
- **October 5:** Release of preliminary 2012 AEC School Performance Framework reports to districts for review.
- **October 15:** Deadline for all districts to submit School Accreditation Form and (if desired) Requests to Reconsider district accreditation ratings and school plan type assignments.

For more information regarding accountability and improvement, contact Keith Owen, deputy commissioner, 303-866-6099.

Innovation and Choice

Overview:

The Division of Innovation, Choice and Engagement develops partnerships, ideas, and thinking about education to create bold solutions that launch and sustain learner success inside and outside the classroom.

What's Happening Now:

- **New study released this week:** [Blended Learning in Rural Colorado: Status and Strategies](#) Earlier this year, CDE asked Evergreen Education Group in Durango to conduct research to help the Department understand how best to support the expansion of quality educational options to students across Colorado, especially in rural areas. Released at the end of July, the report shares best practices and findings from interviews and surveys of rural leaders across Colorado about the barriers to blended learning as well as the opportunities in the short and long-term to bring more quality content and educators to rural Colorado through a mix of online and face-to-face learning. CDE will be integrating the findings of this study into the [expanded learning opportunities implementation strategy](#) and will be working closely with rural leaders from our state to take the recommendations Evergreen offers in the report and turn them into actionable strategies.
- Amy Anderson, associate commissioner, hosted a division kick-off Meeting in July. The purpose of the meeting was to have staff from across the division identify ways to cross-collaborate to increase efficiency and share resources.
- The State Library recently launched a website that provides technical training for libraries. The [website](#) contains computer class lesson plans, staff training materials, and tech trainer competencies suitable for various library types.

What's on the Horizon:

- The State Library has received the applications for the [2012-13 LSTA \(Library Services and Technology Act\) Grants](#), which assists libraries and library-related agencies in developing or enhancing programs and projects to improve library services. Application reviews will take place at the end of August.
- Training for new and returning directors of Adult Education and Family Literacy centers will be held July 18-20.
- The Schools of Choice team is looking for **application reviewers** for its Colorado Charter Schools Program Grants, which provide start-up funds to new or significantly expanding charter schools. Interested individuals, email your resume to SOC@cde.state.co.us

Important Upcoming Deadlines:

None at this time.

For more information on innovation and choice, contact Amy Anderson, associate commissioner of innovation, choice and engagement 303-866-6938.

Organizational Effectiveness

Race to the Top

Overview:

In December 2011, Colorado was awarded a \$17.9 million Race to the Top Phase 3 (RTTT) grant. The four-year grant is split evenly between the state and local education agencies (LEAs), with each receiving \$8.9 million. The Race to the Top grant program is focused on four key areas: 1) building capacity to implement the state's education reforms; 2) implementing the Colorado Academic Standards; 3) designing the state's educator evaluation system; and 4) advancing science, technology, education, and math (STEM) education.

What's Happening Now:

LEA-BOCES Information: The RTTT Request for Funds form has been uploaded to C-FIRS Tracker. Participating LEAs can now request funds for reimbursement if they have submitted their signed Terms and Conditions letter to the Race to the Top office. For more information on how to request funds, please visit http://www.cde.state.co.us/RTTT/LEA_Resources.asp.

Content Collaboratives: Cohort 1 (Reading, Writing and Communicating, Social Studies, and Arts) met four times during the first half of 2012 to review and score assessments for PK-12 in each of their content area. CDE is currently determining how to organize and make available these assessments to districts.

Educator Effectiveness: As CDE draws closer to full implementation of S.B. 191 in 2013-14, the Educator Effectiveness Unit is currently focused on defining structures for inter-rater agreement or IRA for evaluators. Educator Effectiveness plans on creating an online tool this Fall for training and calibration that all districts can access to ensure rater agreement and consistency in evaluation ratings.

STEM: CDE hired Violeta Garcia as its new STEM Coordinator. Garcia will ensure integration of STEM into all content areas and oversee the creation and implementation of the STEM in Action program.

What's on the Horizon:

LEA-BOCES Information: CDE is in the final stages of completing the RTTT Monitoring Plan for participating LEAs and BOCES. CDE plans on submitting the monitoring plan to the USDoE within the next two weeks, and hopes to hear back from the USDoE within ten to fifteen business days after submission. Once CDE obtains approval from the USDoE, CDE will e-mail the monitoring plan to each LEA and BOCES and will host a webinar reviewing the monitoring plan, handbook, and reporting requirements and supports available.

Content Collaboratives: Cohort 2's (Math, Science, Health, PE, and World Languages) first meeting will be July 23-24, 2012 in Pueblo and their work of reviewing/scoring assessments will conclude in mid-November.

STEM: The first call for proposals for the STEM in Action program will be announced Spring 2013 with more details about the program being available in January.

For more information about Race to the Top, contact Tricia Miller, director (303-866-5735), or Tiffany Deines, project manager (303-866-5723).

For More Information

If you have general questions or need assistance, please contact:

- John Condie, field services manager for the Northwest, Southwest, West Central and Pikes Peak regions. Contact John at 303-866-6630 or condie_j@cde.state.co.us
- Jhon Penn, executive director of field services, and field services manager for the Northeast, North Central, Southeast and Metro regions. Contact Jhon at 303-866-6632 or penn_j@cde.state.co.us