



Highlights of Our Work During 2013

- Published two policy briefs discussing the challenges and benefits of different approaches to evaluating teacher preparation programs.
- Published a Web feature to guide districts in the use of rigorous methods to evaluate programs in schools.
- Partnered with the Colorado Department of Education to seek federal funding in an ongoing project to assess the implementation and effectiveness of statewide policies for targeting interventions to meet each student's needs using an approach called Response to Intervention.
- Was selected to evaluate the effectiveness of a large, federally funded project to create early college high schools in several Denver public schools.
- Helped UNC faculty complete a project funded by the Colorado Department of Higher Education to train teachers in northeastern Colorado districts to build academic language skills in students with limited English.
- Spoke to the University of Northern Colorado community about key legislation from the 2013 session.
- Continued expanding an internship program we created to train graduate students to conduct education research with an emphasis on policy relevance. Issues investigated by interns have included college remediation, math instruction, and codification of state education data.
- Worked with a campus committee to codify security levels for using sensitive data in UNC-affiliated research.
- Monitored discussions on proposals to change licensure standards for Colorado educators.
- Monitored discussions on whether to collect more detailed data on attendance to enable earlier identification of habitually truant students.

EDUCATION INNOVATION INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY 2014

A Brief Overview

The mission of the Education Innovation Institute (EII) at the University of Northern Colorado is to work to improve education at all levels in Colorado by encouraging policy development informed by both research and practice. To this end, we seek to build bridges between researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to foster better understanding and appreciation for each other's needs and work. As Vivian Tseng wrote in *Leveraging Learning: The Evolving Role of Federal Policy in Education Research*, a recent publication from the Aspen Institute: "...using research is not simply a matter of transferring research 'facts' from researchers to decision-makers, who then apply them. Using research involves busy policymakers deciphering what research means for their local context and determining its implications given their goals, resources, and the political ramifications of any decision." This broad-based, collaborative view of policy is particularly appropriate in Colorado, which as a leader in education reform, is closely watched by other states.



One example of our work connecting research, policy and practice is our facilitation of a partnership between UNC faculty and the Colorado Department of Education to study the impact of a statewide policy that Response to Intervention (RtI) be implemented in all schools by August 2009. One component of the work of the partnership is developing and administering a survey to understand RtI-related school practices across the state as perceived by principals, special education teachers, and third grade teachers. This information will help identify exemplar schools that can be used as models for professional development.

Another example of our policy-research-practice work is a Web site on the importance of conducting high-quality evaluations to assess the effectiveness of interventions and other programs in schools. Called "[Taking the Bogeyman Out of Evaluation Planning](#)," it provides dozens of resources to help local districts approach the potentially daunting requirements of rigorous evaluation research with confidence and appreciation of its benefits.

Outreach and dissemination are integral parts of our mission. In the two and a half years since our founding, the two-person EII staff has produced a collection of policy briefs, op-ed pieces, and other publications on topics of current importance in Colorado. All are written in plain English and de-

EDUCATION INNOVATION INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY 2014

signed to appeal to a range of audiences. You can read our policy briefs on teacher education evaluation [here](#) and [here](#).

A third part of our mission is to serve as a link between the UNC community and policy makers in the General Assembly and departments of education and higher education as well as nonprofit organizations involved with education and children's issues. To that end, we hold sessions to discuss legislation and other developments with UNC faculty and staff whose work requires implementation of policy changes. We also serve on state advisory committees investigating policy areas related to our mission. Also, an internship we created trains a select group of graduate students each year to apply rigorous research techniques to current policy issues with a goal of placing some with agencies and/or nonprofits for practicum experiences.

In the coming year, we plan to continue our focus on developing partnerships with organizations like CDE, CDHE, and the Colorado Legacy Foundation to creatively address the state's most urgent, policy-relevant research questions. To provide support for these partnerships and to expand the pool of data-savvy education policy researchers in the state, we will continue to expand the EII Internship program. We will also be looking for summer opportunities for EII interns to experience education research and policy in action by spending time in other organizations. We will continue our emphasis on making the research results of these partnerships accessible so that they might be incorporated into policy and practice.

History of the Education Innovation Institute

The General Assembly created EII in 2009 (SB 09-032) to leverage new and existing applied research to solve practical problems in education reform. It is located at the University of Northern Colorado, which has the state's largest educator preparation program. UNC secured non-state funding for the institute, which began operating in spring 2011. The primary work of the institute during its first few years has been to establish itself as a nonpartisan source of research-based recommendations on implementation of Colorado's many recent education reforms as well as on issues under consideration for future legislation. As a young, small organization EII often seeks to amplify its influence by collaborating with others, including established nonprofits, school districts, and faculty researchers. The institute also has participated in applications for major research grants and continues to seek other potential sources of public and private funding.