COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-2022

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

ALL MEANS ALL

QUALITY SCHOOLS

MORE OPTIONS

EDUCATORS MATTER

UPDATE JUNE 2019
Our Vision

All students graduate ready for college and careers, and prepared to be productive citizens of Colorado.

Our Mission

Ensuring equity and opportunity for every student, every step of the way.
GOALS

- Third graders will meet or exceed expectations in English language arts.
- Schools needing support and academic improvement will raise and maintain their performance.
- Students will earn a postsecondary credential, degree or certificate after high school.
- Historically underserved students will achieve academic expectations.
KEY INITIATIVES

STRONG FOUNDATIONS
Support High Quality Early Learning and Literacy for All Students

ALL MEANS ALL
Expand Access and Opportunity for Historically Underserved Students

QUALITY SCHOOLS
Prioritize and Maximize Support for Schools and Districts Identified for Academic Improvements

MORE OPTIONS
Expand High School Options to Ensure All Students are Ready for College and/or Living-Wage Jobs

EDUCATORS MATTER
Develop a Strong Pipeline of High-Quality Teachers and Principals and Provide Deeper Support for School and District Leaders

Guiding Principles
- Equity and Access for All Students
- Flexibility, Choice and Innovation
- Continuous Improvement of Systems and Structures
- Collaboration and Partnership

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE
Underpinning our success with each of our key initiatives will be our commitment to excellence with each of our core programs and operations. By holding ourselves to the highest degree of excellence in customer service and performance, we will effectively implement our key initiatives and accomplish our goals.
Support High Quality Early Learning and Literacy for All Students

Research shows that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning how to read to using reading skills to master the more complex subjects in fourth grade and beyond. In fact, students who cannot read by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. By focusing on support for our youngest students and their educators, the department can ensure more students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade and build a strong foundation for continued success in school.

Strategic Activities

We will promote and develop high-quality, evidence-based early learning and literacy strategies.
- Support effective instruction and intervention for all students by providing research-based resources and training
- Increase quality preschool programming
- Coordinate CDE’s improvement planning for preschool through third-grade programming and services
- Maximize and align local, state and federal funds to increase effectiveness and value
- Collaborate with CDHE and institutions of higher education to review and support implementation of research-based reading instruction

We will expand professional training and ongoing development of our preschool through third-grade educators.
- Support, provide and fund evidence-based, ongoing professional development
- Align higher education programming with teacher competencies and professional learning in schools and districts

We will strengthen partnerships with state and local agencies, communities and libraries to support early learning and literacy in preschool through third grade.
- Engage and maximize Family, School and Community Partnering program toward early literacy goals
- Partner with community and state resources to ensure needs are met among special populations, including students with disabilities, English learners, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, migrant students and others

We will support districts in implementing full-day kindergarten programs.
- Coordinate with University of Colorado to develop a best practices guide for implementing full-day kindergarten
- Provide technical assistance to districts in developing plans for using E-CARE program slots
- Conduct survey of superintendents to gather information about district plans for implementing full-day kindergarten programs and use survey results to inform CDE supports
What Progress Looks Like in 2022

- 50% of students who were identified with an SRD in kindergarten, first or second grade are no longer identified by 3rd grade
- 1.5% annual increase among students on READ plans who meet or exceed expectations on the third grade CMAS English language arts assessment
- 10% increase annually in the number of early childhood settings rated as high quality by Colorado Shines Quality Rating Improvement System
- 3% increase annually in the number of students who are proficient in at least five of six areas measured by the Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- 3% increase annually in the number of 4-year-olds in the Colorado Preschool Program who meet expectations for literacy and math as measured by Results Matter assessments
- 50% of all third grade students will meet or exceed expectations on the CMAS assessment in English Language Arts by 2022
- 5% of public libraries will see an increase in children’s and young adult’s programming attendance and/or circulation to support literacy rich engagement at public libraries during out-of-school time

Early identification of reading challenges is critical to supporting struggling readers. The chart above demonstrates how students who are identified and supported in early grades are more likely to resolve their reading deficiencies by third grade.

Early Intervention Produces Results for Struggling Readers
Expand Access and Opportunity for Historically Underserved Students

In Colorado, students from a number of historically underserved backgrounds ─ specifically those from economically challenged communities, racial minority groups, English Learners and students with disabilities ─ continue to fall short of their academic potential and are missing the skill sets to compete with their middle-class peers. By concentrating on equity as a foundational construct of our work at CDE, we will empower schools and districts in their efforts to increase access and opportunity and ultimately reduce the pervasive influence that systemic inequities have on student outcomes.

Strategic Activities

We will establish a Strategic Equity Team within CDE to align data, projects, systems, practices and programs to facilitate closing the opportunity and achievement gaps across Colorado.

- Define theory of action
- Prioritize areas for increased access and define metrics
- Hone strategies for increasing access to high quality education
- Monitor progress and adjust plans
- Build our internal equity learning agenda

We will identify and engage external partners that will work collaboratively with CDE and districts to address issues of equity, access and opportunity.

- Collaborate with key stakeholders to host, organize and execute special events, joint ventures and activities that increase awareness and promote action around reducing opportunity and achievement gaps throughout the state
- Help establish community-wide practices that address issues of equity in educational settings as well as other arenas that impact the experiences of all learners
What Progress Looks Like in 2022

- 25% decrease in state-reported exclusionary disciplinary actions involving underserved students
- 35% of students with IEPs who spend the majority of their time in general education settings will show high growth on the state assessment
- 50% of underserved students will complete an AP course or obtain college credit while still in high school
Prioritize and Maximize Support for Schools and Districts with Struggling Students

Schools and districts that are identified for improvement through the state and federal systems all have different needs, based on the context of their communities. By working with each district and school to understand their needs and invest in evidence-based strategies to be successful, we will help them progressively improve and maintain their improvement on the state performance frameworks.

Strategic Activities

We will strategically allocate both human and financial resources to maximize impact for schools and districts needing improvement.

- Continue to develop and implement the CDE Support Coordinator role, with one staff member assigned to individual districts to help streamline resources and supports from the department
- Continue to review CDE’s resources to determine how best to leverage existing resources and grants on behalf of identified schools and districts

We will work across CDE to leverage our expertise and resources in support of schools and districts in the areas of leadership, talent, culture, instruction, including early literacy, services for English learners and students with disabilities, dropout prevention and wrap-around service models.

- Develop processes and protocols for cross-department teams to coordinate support and increase coherence on behalf of districts through the Support Coordinator role.
- Deploy CDE cross-unit teams to schools and districts based on their articulated needs and focus areas
- Provide direct supports through initiatives such as the Turnaround Network and Connect for Success
- Help districts access and coordinate resources to meet the needs of their students

We will develop and promote a single menu of all CDE supports and interventions for schools and districts needing improvement.

- Expand the “menu” of options of the support and services available through CDE based on identified needs in the state
- Continue to build and refine the single application (EASI) for districts to match unique local needs with state and federal resources and decrease the administrative burden on districts
- Continue to develop criteria around matching needs with supports

We will evaluate the effectiveness of our support for schools and districts and make adjustments needed to increase students’ academic outcomes.

- Research potential partners and opportunities for evaluation support to get a deeper understanding of the impact of different support strategies
- Monitor the impact of each support on student outcomes, as measured through the School Performance Frameworks
- Use evaluation results to drive the strategic allocation of school improvement resources
2017-2018 Schools Moving off of Priority Improvement or Turnaround

Each of the 170 schools in the Priority Improvement and Turnaround categories in 2017, the lowest two categories in the state’s accountability system, have different challenges to overcome to increase their students’ academic performance. Through grants and support programs, individual schools identified have made progress since 2010. Additional focus and clarity around support available for schools currently identified will increase the academic performance for approximately 79,000 students.

What Progress Looks Like in 2022

- 80% of the 170 schools with the lowest two ratings (Priority Improvement or Turnaround) on the state’s accountability system in 2017 will improve to earn a satisfactory rating or higher rating (Improvement or Performance) and will sustain that rating for at least three years.
- 80% of districts with eligible schools will receive support and/or funding through the single application process.
- 100% of improvement plans for identified schools and districts will meet quality criteria and identify evidence-based strategies after working with CDE.
Expand High School Options to Ensure All Students Are Ready for College and/or Living-Wage Jobs

Students who graduate and work in Colorado need in-demand skills that meet business, industry and higher education standards. Three out of four jobs in Colorado will require education or training beyond high school. That adds up to three million jobs.

By increasing options for high school students and fostering expansion of successful high school models, we can ensure that at least 66 percent of the class of 2022 go on to earn a postsecondary credential, certificate or degree within five years. When we achieve this goal, we will fuel Colorado’s economy with educated students who are prepared for a college education, good paying job or military service.

Strategic Activities

We will increase awareness and availability of public school choice options designed to support students who are at risk of not graduating.

- Expand options for more Colorado students to attain a high school credential

We will help school districts implement rigorous and useful Graduation Guidelines.

- Support community implementation strategies and expansion of options, such as work-based learning experiences and industry credentials

We will foster expansion of innovative models and promising practices that are making a difference.

- Identify noteworthy gains in high school completion as well as college- and workforce-readiness outcomes for students
- Bring innovative practices to scale for the benefit of more students statewide through professional development and consultations

We will promote Individual Career and Academic Planning (ICAP) as a tool to help students complete high school and plan for their futures.

- Leverage the ICAP process to increase students’ awareness of seamless pathways and opportunities beyond high school
- Equip all educators to have meaningful career conversations with students

We will engage community partners as an effective resource for getting students to the finish line and planning for their futures.

- Expand work-based learning opportunities to help students prepare for living-wage, in-demand jobs
- Assist educators in building effective partnerships with business, based on existing infrastructures
- Collaborate with other state agencies, libraries, area workforce development boards and community partners to meet students’ needs, including participating in Two-Generation programs that meet the workforce training needs of students and their caregivers simultaneously
There are many pathways to a successful career, with colleges and employers both demanding the same knowledge and skills from their incoming students and workers. Apprenticeships, internships and concurrent enrollment classes are examples of ways to earn college credit or obtain a postsecondary credential while still in high school. These programs bridge the gap between education and career, increase the relevancy of high school and open a wide variety of options after high school, including meaningful careers and college.

**What Progress Looks Like in 2022**

- 90% of all students will complete a high school credential within six years
- 95% of all students will be making progress toward a high school credential
- 100% increase in the number of high school students attaining an industry credential by 2022
- 100% of school districts will have at least three pathways or options for students by 2022
- 50% of all students will earn college credit in high school
Develop a strong pipeline of high-quality teachers and principals and provide deeper support for school and district leaders

Research shows that teachers have a bigger impact on student performance than any other school-based factor. And the number one reason teachers leave is lack of support by a high-quality principal. We can learn from the workforce development approaches of public and private industries that focus on growing talent in a strategic and intentional way by recruiting, developing and supporting their workforce. By developing, deploying and supporting talent management and human capital development strategies for districts and schools, we can ensure that every classroom has an effective educator and all students are prepared for college, career and life.

Strategic Activities

We will work in partnership to create high-quality educator preparation programs.

- Conduct a strategic analysis of educator preparation program rules, support and business practices involving educators in hard-to-fill content areas
- Complete necessary improvements in rules and support for educator preparation programs and the CDE licensing unit
- Review programs for high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction

We will improve support to future and current educators and expand quality educator pipelines.

- Align the CDE Educator Talent division to focus on educator recruitment, development and career counseling within districts, communities, businesses and educator preparation entities
- Reposition licensing evaluators and call center representatives to improve customer service to educators through one-on-one licensing consultations and more proactive outreach
- Implement relevant Teacher Shortage Strategic Plan to encourage teachers entering the pipeline, including kindergarten teachers

We will deepen our support for principals as they work to hire, develop and retain high-quality teachers to provide the highest outcomes for students.

- Facilitate collaboration with teacher-leaders, principals and principal-managers to focus on support for teachers, solutions for school improvement and professional development for principals
- Support principals’ efforts to support their workforce through implementation of educator effectiveness laws and human capital strategic systems
Colorado has approximately 1,400 annual openings that the current educator workforce is not able to fill. Normally, these positions are filled by students graduating from educator preparation programs at colleges and universities or professionals who have completed an alternative license program. However, with the 16 percent decline in individuals completing an educator preparation program in Colorado since 2010, some of these open positions – especially in rural areas and in specific endorsement areas including mathematics, science, and special education – end up either: (1) being filled by shortage mechanisms that make provisions for emergency authorizations, long-term substitutes, alternative licensure enrollees and retired educators; or (2) going completely unfilled during the year.

What Progress Looks Like in 2022

- 18% increase in initial educator licenses, including:
  - 6% increase in diverse educators
  - 15% increase in educators endorsed in high-need content areas
- 2% decrease in the turnover rate of teachers statewide
Organizational Excellence

By committing to excellence in our core programs and functions, we can support each of our key initiatives and ultimately accomplish our goals. Several teams within the department are responsible for essential programmatic and operational functions that allow the department to achieve our broader goals. These teams include School Finance, Human Resources, Accountability, Data Analysis, Standards, Assessment, Educator Talent, Communications and Information Management Services.

Key Services

Distribute Funding to School Districts

Districts rely on CDE to allocate funds as part of its implementation of the School Finance Act and various other state and federal programs. Because district budgets depend on these funds, it is imperative these allocations are made with accuracy and efficiency. As such, the distribution of funding to school districts is a foundational function of CDE and helps to ensure that the department can achieve its key initiatives and broader goals.

Strategic Operation

We will accurately and efficiently distribute state and federal funds to Colorado districts.

Metric

- 100% of the distributions by line item, per cycle will be error-free by 2022. This metric reflects over 4,000 payments made each quarter

Recruit and Retain Quality Employees

Human Resources (HR) is a strategic partner within CDE that works to develop, implement and support programs and processes that add value for CDE employees. The services and supports provided by HR are designed to optimize employee empowerment, mutual trust, growth, learning, retention, diversity and accountability and create an overall great place to work! To recruit and retain quality employees, HR must provide appropriate systems and structures, talent engagement, talent lifecycle management, and support and growth for CDE employees. In turn, this will enable quality customer service and support for school districts.

Strategic Operation

We will connect CDE employees and our work to CDE’s values, creating a mission driven and values based culture.

Metrics

- CDE will monitor and measure both retention and turnover rates
- CDE will reduce the unfavorable turnover rate by 5% annually, with high-performer retention rate to be achieved and sustained at 90% or more
Successfully Administer State Assessments to Measure Mastery of Colorado Academic Standards

The Standards and Instructional Supports team helps districts implement the Colorado Academic Standards for preschool through 12th grade. Colorado’s state assessments provide critical data and feedback to determine whether educational goals are being met. CDE is responsible for administering these assessments and any subsequent changes approved by the legislature and State Board of Education.

Strategic Operation

We will successfully administer the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and the SAT suite of assessments to Colorado students in a timely manner.

- Implement assessments for math and English Language Arts (ELA) that result in reduced operational testing time for students and turnaround of individual student results within 30 days of receipt of all assessments at the direction of the State Board of Education

Metric

- 100% of state assessments will be fully developed and available for administration on the scheduled assessment date

Create and Disseminate Academic Performance Reports

CDE serves a unique role securely collecting, storing and publicly reporting key education data. While most of these data are already currently reported publicly, making the reporting more accessible and transparent for the public, while ensuring data privacy is upheld, is a priority. In the last few years, CDE has focused on creating and disseminating academic performance reports, including the growth summary reports and the school and district performance framework reports, which are fundamental components of providing public transparency around academic outcomes and identification of schools and districts most in need of support. These existing reports are more appropriate for school and district staff than the general public. Moving forward, CDE intends to expand this goal to include the design, development and production of public friendly reporting that could include demographics, assessment, accountability and post-secondary workforce readiness data.

Strategic Operations

CDE will provide meaningful performance data to schools, districts and the public.

- Publicly provide accurate and timely school and district performance frameworks
- Publicly provide accurate and timely student growth reports
- Design, develop and launch a reporting system intended for the general public

Metrics

- 100% of district and school performance frameworks will be produced error-free annually
- 100% of student growth reports will be produced error-free annually
- New/improved public reporting system will be made available as of 2021
Key Services Cont.

Efficiently Process Educator License Applications

The Educator Talent Unit is responsible for the regulation, support, and development of educator quality and talent, including activities related to educator licensure. For the department to meet its key initiatives and broader goals, Colorado must have a strong pool of qualified, licensed professional educators to work in our schools and support student achievement. The licensing process must be efficient to make sure these educators are available to schools in a timely manner. With this in mind, the Educator Talent Unit strives to continually decrease the amount of time it takes to process educator licenses.

Strategic Operation
Decrease the average cycle time between receiving an educator’s completed application and issuing their license

Metric
- Decrease the average cycle time – from receipt of a completed application and cleared fingerprint report to a PDF license sent via email – from 17.33 business days to 10 business days

Provide Secure Technology, Applications and Information to CDE Staff and School District Employees

CDE’s Information Management Services Unit (IMS) supports the department and Colorado school districts through multiple services, including: providing network and Help Desk services; overseeing data collection, management and reporting; delivering project management; and ensuring information privacy and security. It is essential that the IMS teams provide secure tools for everyday use across CDE, while at the same time ensuring that technology can be used in a manner that reduces burden on school and district personnel.

Strategic Operation
We will support internal and external customer data needs and technology tools, while protecting state systems and sensitive information.

- Enable secure data transfer across Colorado districts
- Implement two-factor authentication for CDE supported applications
- Complete an evaluation of the feasibility, pros and cons of implementing a state-wide student information system
- Maintain industry-established baseline security procedures

Metric
- 100% implementation of SharePoint 365
- Move primary technology infrastructure to an off-site data center
- All districts that choose to participate will have the capability to securely send electronic data to one another
- Results of the SIS evaluation will be presented to the commissioner
Support Implementation of Existing and New Legislation, Rules and Regulations

Staff across the department are responsible for implementing new and existing legislation effectively and efficiently. In carrying out our duties prescribed by federal and state laws, the department collaborates across units to address challenges proactively and in a manner that does not create unnecessary burden for districts, teachers or other stakeholders. We work to meet the intent of the legislation and strive to optimize resources.

Strategic Operation

We will build awareness and understanding of the requirements of the law among CDE staff, SBE members, district staff and educators.

- Implement comprehensive strategies for communicating about the law to district staff, educators and other key stakeholders
- Provide support to help districts implement laws, including training and templates as well as ideas for maximizing the intended outcomes of the law while decreasing burden of implementation

Metric

- Develop and disseminate an integrated timeline document that provides superintendents with key dates for implementation of new and existing legislation
- Survey CDE staff and develop strategies for better leveraging fiscal note submissions process to assist with implementation of new legislation
- Facilitate cohesive implementation of laws and regulations across the department, making connections to and between existing programs and services