



**ESSA Hub Committee
January 9, 2017 Meeting**

Decision Point: Should CDE retain 3% of Title I funds to make Direct Student Services grants available to school districts and BOCES?

Majority Voted: CDE will not retain 3% of the State's Title I grant award to make Direct Student Services grants available to school districts and BOCES. Although this grant would provide additional funding to Colorado's most struggling schools, it would take funds away from those districts that do not have the most struggling schools.

Given the increase from a 4% set-aside for school improvement grants to a 7% set-aside, school districts will already be experiencing a decline in Title I funding. Setting aside an additional 3% would make it even more difficult for school districts to continue serving current Title I schools.

School districts allocate Title I funds to schools who use them to provide direct services to students who need them. For the most part, the activities that could be funded through a Direct Student Services grants can be provided by school districts and schools using their Title I allocation. CDE will work with school districts to help them utilize their Title I funds to provide the broader range of Title I services allowable under ESSA

Minority Voted: To support a process that favored allocations made through a competitive grant process.

Rationale for the minority position:

By choosing not to retain 3% of Title I funds to make Direct Student Services (DSS) grants to school districts and BOCES, Colorado is missing a golden opportunity to implement innovative strategies for school improvement. The state should pool this small percentage of money to enable innovations at the local level.

As noted by the education leaders at [Chiefs for Change](#), DSS could greatly increase "access to online courses not otherwise available, credit recovery programs for at-risk students, school choice, and personalized learning." Ideally, the state would set up an application process for districts who are interested in participating and award dollars based on local districts' plans for offering student-centered, performance-based programs for at-risk students. Course choice programs—which enable students to access courses that their school doesn't provide—could be greatly expanded by thoughtful implementation of DSS funding. The state should set a high bar for applications and only fund new

programs that hold great promise for students. If that bar is not met, the state would allocate the funds per the existing Title I formula

The Hub majority notes that “for the most part, the activities that could be funded through [DSS] grants can be provided by school districts and schools using their Title I allocation.” That is exactly the point: Districts have the power to do this, but the current funding structure does not create the incentives or funding levels necessary to spur innovative programs. By choosing not to reserve this additional 3%, the state is passing up on an opportunity to find new, creative ways to serve Colorado’s neediest kids.

Submitted by:

Luke Ragland, Colorado Succeeds