



Colorado Department of Education  
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



***"Things do not change; we change"***

- *Henry David Thoreau*
- *Walden*

April 16, 2007

## **I. A Productive Day for Superintendents Advisory Council**

Last Monday (April 9, 2007), the Commissioner's Superintendents Advisory Council (CSAC) held its regular meeting in Denver. Chairman from all five of the state's Regional Superintendents Councils (Western Slope, Northern, Southern, Denver Area, and Pikes Peak) were on hand for what proved to be one of the most important and productive sessions in CSAC's recent history.

The growing status and influence of CSAC was amply demonstrated by the distinguished array of guests who attended the meeting for purposes of dialogue with Colorado's superintendent leaders. Among these, were a bipartisan group of leading legislators including the Chairman of both the Senate and House Education Committees, the entire State Board of Education, the Executive Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE), and senior members of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

The opening hour of the meeting saw updates on important ongoing CSAC projects.

CSAC Director Phil Fox briefed the group on the financial, political, and educational implications around the issue of declining enrollment, which flowed from CSAC's earlier meeting with Augenblick & Palaich's staff who had done an analysis of this issue, which impacts the majority of Colorado school districts.

Karen Stroup, head of CDE's largest unit – Management Services – provided an update on developments in the always-topical matter of data. This included implications of the longitudinal data law recently signed by Governor Ritter and the often-mystifying interplay between state and federal data issues.

Dr. Edward Steinberg, leader of the state's programs in Special Education gave a progress report on the "Fast-Track" certification program, which holds much promise for districts now struggling to obtain staff in this critical shortage area.

The second hour of the meeting involved a dialogue between the Superintendents and the State Board of Education on a wide range of topics.

Not surprisingly, the current search process for the new Commissioner of Education was the prime topic of interest.

State Board members described the process undertaken by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), which has, over the years, performed this task for over twenty states seeking commissioners. They particularly stressed the extensive input from stakeholders that is a key part of the process including meetings held with Governor Ritter, his staff, two separate gatherings for legislators including one for the Senate and House Education committees, and a large number of individuals from the education community. Even now, NASBE is still receiving written and internet input from across the state.

As with other meetings on this topic, the State Board sought CSAC's candid opinions on the main education issues facing Colorado and the characteristics that Superintendents would like to see in a new Commissioner.

The final hour of the meeting was devoted to an in-depth discussion with David Skaggs, the new Executive Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

Prior to assuming his new post, Mr. Skaggs had served many years in the Colorado General Assembly, and then a decade as a U.S. Congressman from the Second Congressional District.

Mr. Skaggs had no difficulty holding the interest of the superintendents, legislators, and State Board members alike as he delivered an informative overview on a number of current issues including Governor Ritter's hopes for a new P-20 initiative, and relations between K-12 and post-secondary education. He followed this by an extended period in which he fielded questions from the group.

The topic that consumed the most time, and that was of greatest interest to Superintendents was the implementation of the new admission requirements for four-year institutions promulgated by CCHE a few years back.

These new requirements, which take effect between 2008 and 2010, have raised substantial concerns in the state's 178 school districts. A particular concern again voiced by superintendents was the challenge of obtaining staff to meet the programmatic implications of the new requirements. Particularly impacted would be our state's small and rural districts.

David Skaggs showed himself to be very aware of these concerns and very responsive to the idea of a greatly improved dialogue around them.

He concluded by expressing his willingness to work with CSAC as a principal avenue of communication between CCHE and Colorado's superintendents.

## II. A New Deputy Commissioner at CDE

As most know, the position of Deputy Commissioner at CDE has been vacant for some time. Historically this is not the first time CDE's number two position has been vacant for an extended period, but as we move through a critical period of transition both the State Board of Education and I felt this post needed to be filled.

To those both inside and outside CDE the appointment of Karen Stroup last Thursday (April 12, 2007) to be Deputy Commissioner was a choice most logical, and even obvious.

The State Board has long been unanimous in its high regard for Karen. My own admiration and appreciation of her exceptional talent and devoted service has been evident throughout my tenure.

To those new to Colorado, a brief bio of this superb public servant is in order:

A thirty-year veteran of CDE, Karen has for half that time headed CDE's largest unit – Management Services (see preceding story). In addition to this responsibility, she has held the title of CDE Chief of Staff. Throughout these years she has been a strong right arm to Commissioners Cal Frazier, Bill Randall, and me.

Part of Karen's excellence as an administrator is reflected in the superb team she has built for her unit over the years. Folks such as Director of Public School Finance Vody Herrmann, Legislative Liaison Byron Pendley, and many others represent the high standards of professionalism that Karen has stood for over the years.

The critical areas over which Karen presides – finance, budget, legislative relations, data management and state contracts to name a few – are at the very heart of CDE's role as a state agency. Countless times senior state officials from legislators to Joint Budget Committee staff have praised Karen's extraordinary knowledge and skill in navigating the complex, and often-treacherous waters of state government.

As Deputy Commissioner of Education, Karen now has the title that accurately reflects her vital contributions to CDE and the entire state.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Moloney  
Commissioner of Education

cc: Governor Ritter, General Assembly, State Board of Education, David Skaggs, CDE Cabinet, CDE Staff, BOCES, CASB, CASE, CEA, and CFT