



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



"I got this job because no one else would take it."

- *Roy Romer*
Superintendent, Los Angeles

May 1, 2006

I. OF ALIGNMENT COUNCILS, CCHE REQUIREMENTS, P-16, AND THE FUTURE

Superintendent Romer was being a bit whimsical when he made the above remark, but a serious point was being made: For today's superintendent the challenges never end.

Colorado Superintendents may well have similar thoughts as they contemplate the interlocking realities of the new CCHE college admission requirements, the implications for their own high school graduation requirements, and all this talk about a P-16 education system.

When Governor Owens addressed the first meeting of the Alignment Council which was created to sort all these things out, he made clear that he expected the final report of the Council (due in October) to have a prominent place on the agenda of Colorado's next governor.

It will. It will, simply because the next Governor whoever he is will, no doubt, be as determined as was Roy Romer and Bill Owens to be an "education governor." What is being said on the campaign trail by all candidates makes this very evident.

We live in an age of education presidents and education governors because there is a national consensus that our system of schooling needs a bit of work if we are to be able to assure our grandchildren that this century will be as much an American century as was the last. Those of you who have read the endlessly referenced, The World Is Flat, by Thomas Friedman, understand what this is all about.

So, what does all of this mean at a practical level for principals, superintendents, school board members, and other folks who have to think about all this, and eventually be responsible for doing some of this stuff?

The good news is that if everyone – not just gubernatorial candidates – is thinking along the same lines ("let's make it right for our grandchildren") then there is an excellent opportunity for attaining a broad consensus on what we need to do.

In recent meetings the Alignment Council has been hearing some heavy testimony from the business community who, when they choose to weigh in collectively, can be the most influential group in this or any other state.

They are talking about wide-ranging issues like what employers need, what tomorrow's economy is going to look like, and more specific things such as the student work ethic and how much math or science is really needed in the

workplace. The Council which is highly diverse (including three superintendents) listens respectfully to this because everyone knows that how good the economy is going has a lot to do with how good the country is going.

Now, of course, the devil is in the details. Our highly diverse state and schools have different interests and views on all this. Nonetheless, these diverse interests can be reconciled if we respectfully work together.

I have spoken extensively with legislators of both political parties and I am struck that the similarities are greater than the differences. In a recent conversation with House Speaker Andrew Romanoff, these similarities were quite evident. He agreed that the economy was crucial and that the path we choose must represent a broad bi-partisan consensus. He also felt that now is the time to put the pieces together to ensure not just a good report, or good legislation for next year, but a result that will be good for the future of our state and nation.

Stay tuned to this important conversation.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES IN CDE REGIONAL SERVICES UNIT

As some of you may be aware, reasons of health will be requiring Assistant Commissioner Dr. Gary Sibigroth to cut back on his work schedule.

Accordingly, Gary will be officially converting to half-time status, commencing August 1, 2006.

As you know, for the purposes of Gary's unit, our state is divided into eight separate regions. In order to accommodate his new status, Gary and I worked out the following adaptations to our administrative structure, which will be effective May 8, 2006.

1. Regions III, IV, and V (North Central, North East, and South East respectively) will be under the overall supervision of Michael Clough, who will be assisted by Wendi Dunaway and Janice McDermott.
2. Regions VI, VII, and VIII (South West, West Central, and North West respectively) will be under the overall supervision of John Penn, who will be assisted by Judy Check and John Condi (who will be joining us as of July 1, 2006).
3. Region I (Metro Area) continues under the supervision of Dr. Gerry Difford, assisted by Ron Mitchell and Sally Sherman.
4. Region II (Pikes Peak) continues under the direction of Dr. Sibigroth, assisted by Jackie Webb.

During the month of July when Gary is absent, Dr. Difford will serve as Acting Assistant Commissioner for Regional Services.

III. DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS: URBAN EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE

As I write these words it is mid-morning (5/1/06), and as I look out the window at the thousands of people gathering around our State Capitol it is evident that quite a few high school students aren't in their 4th period classes. If this were the only day they missed class it would be one thing, but as Saturday's paper (Rocky Mountain News, 4/29/06, "DPS Faces Truancy Emergency") tells us, the average DPS high school student misses twenty-five days every year.

At this point, readers may be thinking, "I am glad that it is not my problem," but the truth is that it is your problem. All of us, from the Western Slope to the High Plains, must know that our future is very much bound up with the future of the children in this city.

Two weeks ago, DPS Superintendent Michael Bennet went before his Board of Education to urge their consideration of High School Graduation Requirements that would be the most demanding in the State of Colorado. It seems he is not ready to give up on these children. Neither should we.

It is said that the true test of any society is how it faces up to its greatest challenges. For those of us in education, the rescue of America's great city school systems is that challenge.

For some further thoughts on this challenge that all of us must embrace, see the attached op-ed "Michael Bennet vs. History" ([Denver Post](#), 3/14/06).

IV. COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MORE THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE

As reported in an earlier edition of Chiefline ("CDE Looks to the Future: Harmonizing Mission and Resources" 2/17/06) the State Board and CDE have spent most of a year in a "serial dialogue" about how we adapt to the ever-changing conditions that confront the world of Colorado education.

An important milestone in this process was reached at the State Board retreat, held in March, 2006. Rather than try to summarize these two days of intense deliberation, we urge readers to go to the CDE website, http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_commiss.htm and take a look at Colorado Education: Looking to the Future, the discussion paper around which the retreat revolved. In addition to fuller reflection on some of the issues discussed in this Chiefline, there is a broad overview of the challenges facing Colorado education and what we hope is a realistic appraisal of what is possible to us in addressing them.

While this conversation is by no means complete and further viewpoints are welcome – we are getting quite a few from the General Assembly – the State Board has urged us to intensify our address to certain of those basic themes identified at the retreat, notably literacy and early childhood education.

A practical example of such was on display at the April SBE meeting, when leaders of the Colorado BOCES came before the Board to enumerate growing difficulties in rural areas and a joint BOCES – CDE project on basic skills (math and reading) that has been under discussion for some time.

As was evident to all during this discussion, in a resource-scarce environment, cooperative efforts like this represent the surest path to future progress.

We will be reporting more on all of this in future editions of Chiefline.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Moloney
Commissioner of Education

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