



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



**"Learning without thought is labor lost;
thought without learning is perilous."**

- Confucius

February 20, 2002

I. REPORT OF THE WORK GROUP ON DATA AND THE SAR

In the December issue of Chiefline (12/17/01), we reported on the formation of the above noted group under the chairmanship of Dr. Roscoe Davidson. We also sent along a list of "Issues Relating to Data and the School Accountability Reports" which formed the core of the group's efforts.

Through many meetings over the last two months, the group operated through four sub-committees, which allowed them to closely define their work by category and also bring to bear the best expertise on these often highly technical topics.

Their efforts have resulted in a most impressive work product – a highly lucid and well organized 39-page report, which encompasses 34 separate recommendations for improving the way we report data via the SAR.

The recommendations are a mix of things that require legislation (20) and things that do not (14). Some things could be done in this current year, while others realistically could only be accomplished in subsequent years.

The report was sent to all of the organizations and individuals who participated in the original convening meeting on December 11, 2001. This highly representative group, which includes representatives from our five regional Superintendents Groups, will reconvene in the Board Room at the Colorado Department of Education at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, March 1, 2002. At that time, there will be a general discussion of the report and some reflection on the uses, which it can best serve.

It is important to note that parallel to this effort there are a number of bills moving in the General Assembly that also address changes in future SARs. As always, we seek to be

responsive to our elected officials, offering help when asked, making improvements when possible, and generally seeking to reconcile the differences that arise among these numerous and diverse initiatives.

In our next Chiefline, we will report on some of these legislative initiatives and our efforts to harmonize them with what the Work Group has produced.

II. LOOKING AT HR-1: THE ULTIMATE IN FEDERAL EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Unless one was living in a cave somewhere, no one could have missed the fact that a huge and important piece of federal education legislation was recently signed into law by President Bush. Beyond its size and importance however, accounts of what it all means are a little sketchy and highly varied. Herewith, we offer a bit of illumination on how to think about all this.

A couple of years ago, most of us thought SB-186 was a rather lengthy bill (118 pages in its final cut). Now, imagine something more than ten times that size, and you begin to get a notion of the vast dimension of HR-1 or, to give its proper title, “The 5th Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).”

On the one hand, we can note that date, and realize that not all of this is entirely new; it has been with us for 37 years. Almost all of its components (Title I is the biggest and best known) are things that school districts have been dealing with for years. On the other hand, this latest edition is very different from its predecessors, and attention must be paid.

The most fundamental difference is that HR-1 – subtitled “No Child Left Behind” – represents a dramatic change in the whole approach of federal education law from a culture of entitlement to one of achievement. In a nutshell, HR-1 brings the Feds into line with the throbbing pulse of standards based reform that has animated most states over the last decade. Its powerful emphasis on themes of Standards, Assessments, Accountability, Results, Flexibility, Parental Choice, and Closing the Achievement Gap reveal it to be quite familiar, and in keeping with those issues that we in Colorado have been dealing with for several years.

Probably the best news in all of this is that among the fifty states, Colorado is at the head of the pack in terms of already having put in place the major elements of HR-1, such as annual math and reading assessments (CSAP), a basic accountability system (Accreditation), and Annual Report Cards (SAR).

Also good to know is that where we have missing pieces, there will be adequate time and resources provided to add them. Some examples of things to be added include:

- Accountability reports must include achievement gap information by 2005 (already prefigured in Accreditation Rules).
- New math assessments must be added in grades 3 and 4 by 2005.
- A science test in one grade between grades 3 – 5, and a science test in one grade between grades 10 – 12 must be added by 2007.

Much of what we need to know and do is still unknown simply because the Rules for HR-1 have not been written yet (yes, the Feds add rules to all their laws just like the states). In fairness, HR-1 was only signed last month. Still, rule making is a very involved process at the federal level, which will stretch over many months and years. There are still missing rules from the 1994 reauthorization.

It must be stressed that there is a great deal of opportunity here and also a great deal of new money. Overall, Colorado's funding allocations jump to a new total of 502 million dollars.

About this money, however, a word of caution is in order: "The check is not in the mail!" Federal money flows very slowly at the outset of new legislation. The different titles have different timetables and conditions. Once it starts issuing from the pipeline, however, it will have reasonable predictability in the years ahead.

In the months ahead, you will rarely attend a CDE sponsored meeting that will not include further information about this landmark legislation. Staff members have already spent a vast amount of time here and in Washington seeking to gather the information that we still need.

Last week I met with Peg Portscheller of CASE and Ken DeLay of CASB to discuss ways in which their organizations can work with CDE to ensure that there will be a proper flow of useful and timely information regarding a phenomenon that will touch every school in our state. As is usually the case, things go better when we work together as a team.

Sincerely,

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