



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



"We should stop worrying about aligning the three accountability systems and realize that they just answer three different questions:

- 1.) *Are you succeeding in core academic subjects? SAR*
- 2.) *Are you closing the achievement gap? NCLB*
- 3.) *Are you providing a well-rounded educational experience? Accreditation*

Essentially all answer the question: Are you improving student achievement?"

- *Mr. Rico Munn*
- *Member, State Board of Education (1st C.D.)*

February 23, 2004

I. EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY IN COLORADO

NB Prior to the passage of Colorado's landmark Education Reform Act (HB 93-1313) a decade ago, the only statewide accountability system was the accreditation process, which derived from the constitutional authority of the State Board of Education for the "general supervision of education." In the absence of legislatively ordained statewide standards, for what children should know and be able to do or assessments to measure same, this process carried little weight.

The Education Reform Act changed all this by setting in motion a broad-based process that created both standards and assessments (CSAP) that would affect every school district.

Subsequent to the first CSAP results (1997), the General Assembly and finally the Congress of the United States created three (3) different but essentially complementary systems of accountability that established benchmarks for progress and consequences when schools persistently failed to meet them. These three systems are:

- 1998** Accreditation Accountability Act signed by Governor Romer
- 2000** School Accountability Reports signed by Governor Owens
- 2002** No Child Left Behind Act signed by President Bush

A. HOW THE THREE SYSTEMS ARE THE SAME

1. **All three focus on improving student achievement**

2. All three utilize CSAP as the primary measure of progress
3. All three allow for refinement through legislative action

B. HOW THE THREE SYSTEMS ARE DIFFERENT

1. ACCREDITATION:

- A. It is the principal instrument for enforcing all of Colorado's education laws.
- B. Assesses district performance using multiple indicators and a broader body of evidence than just CSAP.
- C. Consequences include incremental steps (Accreditation Watch, Probation) leading to loss of Accreditation.

2. SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS:

- A. Rates performance and improvement for all schools.
- B. Strong focus on core academic subjects of reading, writing, and math.
- C. Consequences include reconstitution for persistently unsatisfactory schools.

3. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

- A. Primary focus on closing the achievement gap.
- B. Requires "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) for all student groups disaggregating scores by ethnicity, language ability, and handicap.
- C. Consequences include expanded choice options, reconstitution, and loss of federal funding.

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The above document – I. Education Accountability in Colorado, including the masthead quote of Mr. Munn, was presented in a joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Committees, on January 28, 2004, during testimony by State Board of Education Chairman Jared Polis, Vice-Chairman Randy DeHoff and me.

The Education Committees indicated their general satisfaction with these approaches, as has the leadership of the General Assembly. In a similar vein, Governor Owens, during a meeting with the State Board of Education on February 11, 2004, stated that he, like Governor Romer, greatly relied on his partnership with the State Board and lauded their consistent commitment to reform through the years.

Nonetheless, all of the above noted folks recognize that reform is general, and accountability, in particular, is a “work in progress.” The following items are illustrative of this evolving process:

1. Concerns that NCLB's complex processes undermine its' admirable focus on the “achievement gap” have led many, including the State Board of Education, to petition Washington for modifications, though the current consensus suggests we are unlikely to see substantive change prior to the November election.
2. As in each of the last three years, a number of bills are moving in the General Assembly aimed at strengthening the SAR, both as vehicles for effective parent communication and as measures of student progress.
3. Accreditation – at once the widest in reach and most flexible in application of the three systems – continues to evolve to meet changing realities in Colorado education, as is illustrated by the next story.

II. ONLINE EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENTS REPORT

Nearly one year ago – as a follow-up to an Interim Committee created by the General Assembly – the State Board of Education directed me to convene a broad-based committee of Colorado educators to examine and make recommendations regarding the rapidly growing, always complex, and often controversial field of online education.

This most able group labored long and hard. Their report will be formally presented to the State Board of Education at its March 10, 2004 work session. Subsequently, the State Board in consultation with the Governor and General Assembly will examine ways in which these recommendations may find useful reflection in their rule-making process, notably the rules for Accreditation.

The report – a model of brevity and clarity – is reproduced here in its' entirety on the next four pages.

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

MEMORANDUM

To: William Moloney, Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education
From: Tim Snyder, Chairman, Colorado Department of Education Online Advisory Committee
Subj: Final Committee Report
Encl: 1) Committee Recommendations
2) Consensus Statements
3) Colorado Cyberschools and Enrollment—as of October 2003
Date: February 9, 2004

As per your direction, the Online Advisory Committee was formed in April, 2003 for the purpose of advising the department on state-level policies needed to guide the development of K-12 online learning. The committee focused on the issue areas of equity and access, quality and accountability, cost and funding, and organizational roles. Committee members were:

Bill Powell, Strasburg Superintendent	Ken DeLay, CASB Executive Director
Stan Scheer, Littleton Superintendent	Phil Moeckli, CEA Executive Director
Dale McCall, Centennial BOCES Executive Director	Kin Griffith, Colorado Virtual Academy Director
Lorenzo Trujillo, Lester B. Arnold Alt School Principal	Don Wilkinson, Monte Vista Superintendent (retired)
Tim Snyder, Colorado Online Learning	Eric Feder, CDE Technology Education Center
David Gray, CDE Southeast Region Director	

Ed Steinbrecher chaired the committee through the summer but was unable to continue due to a change in personal circumstances. Tim Snyder filled that role starting in September. Committee meetings drew regular guest attendees and inspired frequent questions from others interested in the evolving arena of online learning in Colorado.

Early meetings of the committee were devoted to conversation regarding State Board of Education (SBE) rules for the administration and funding of cyberschools—in particular, attempting to establish parameters for the at-risk student exemption from the 135 student-slot limit on PPR allocations for cyberstudents not previously enrolled in public school. Later meetings focused on the heart of the committee's charge and a subcommittee was appointed to propose recommendations. The committee-as-a-whole then met and approved those recommendations submitted as Enclosure (1). Although the work of the committee is essentially finished, we would like the opportunity to provide an oral report of the issues and reasoning behind the recommendations and to respond to any questions you may have. Please let me know of a suitable time and location for this meeting and I will invite the committee.

Enclosure (2) represents core beliefs of the committee and Enclosure (3) provides details on the enrollment of students in the state's 20 cyberschools, as of October 2003.

The committee's most important recommendation concerns quality assurance. The committee recommends that the State Board direct the development of quality assurance guidelines that would inform accreditation, cyberschool development, and educational consumer choice. The Colorado Cyberschool Association and other online practitioners have already begun conversation in this area and stand ready to provide assistance.

It is increasingly evident that online learning can be a highly-effective tool in educating students. Colorado has been one of the most active states in promoting the growth of K-12 online learning programs, and we urge consideration of these recommendations as a means of addressing issues critical to the continued viability of the online teaching and learning tool.

The committee also discussed its role in the establishment of state policy and recognizes that the development of statute and rule is a complex process with the interaction of a variety of organizations and individuals and their associated ideas. This report further recognizes that its use of the consensus process allowed recommendations to be adopted that may not necessarily be endorsed by individual members of the committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CDE ONLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 28, 2004

State Support for Online Program Development. Provide state funding support for Colorado Online Learning (COL) to assure its continued ability to provide supplemental online courses to all Colorado school districts and assume the additional mission of providing technical support, grant-developed online curriculum, and access to library and other resources to schools and BOCES desiring to develop and maintain online learning programs.

Local Control. Preserve local control by not creating a state agency to run, create or administer a statewide cyberschool. Continue to allow LEA's the authority to run, create or administer cyberschools or supplemental online programs.

Quality Assurance. Establish and periodically update a set of quality assurance guidelines. These guidelines should be provided by the State Board of Education to LEA's for use in determining accreditation of online programs within a school district or BOCES. The Colorado Department of Education should review the LEA's use of the guidelines in its accreditation process. The state should ensure adequate funding for the preparation, promotion and updating of the quality assurance guidelines. Existing accountability measures common to all Colorado public schools—CSAP, SAR's and district accreditation—should remain in place for cyberschools.

Access and Funding. Ensure unrestricted access to online learning for all Colorado students; e.g., remove present funding restriction for students not included in the prior-year student count. To assist in programming quality, provide in-district PPR for in-district online students and state-average PPR for out-of-district online students.

Special Education. Reform the financing of special education services to ensure adequate services and resource support for students with special needs and to distribute fairly the educational and financial responsibilities related to these students.

CDE Online Advisory Committee Consensus Statements

January 28, 2004

Public education delivers alternatives by which each student will meet or exceed Colorado's model content standards in all subject areas.

Students have individual and diverse learning needs and a student who is unsuccessful in one learning environment may find success in another. Colorado public schools are obligated to adopt policies, develop and implement instructional strategies, and institute management practices that will enable all learners to succeed, regardless of their circumstances. These schools must provide educational environments that will meet the varied needs of all their students. Online education helps to meet those needs.

Each Colorado student has the right to choose from all available public school educational options.

Public school districts have created traditional and alternative educational environments to meet the needs of their students. Each student is entitled to select from all available learning environments and to choose that which best meets his or her learning needs, including online education, regardless of the choices made in the past.

Colorado should support the development of online education resources.

Online education is new and provides different opportunities and challenges than do physical schools. Colorado should research best practices; develop, promote, and update quality assurance guidelines; and help online schools create the best possible programs for student success.

Colorado Cyberschools and Enrollments — as of October 2003

Enclosure (3)

School Name	District	Number of Students Enrolled (10/03 count)				
		Total	FT Res	PT Res	FT N-Res	PT N-Res
Alamosa Open High Cyberschool	Alamosa	7	7	0	0	0
Branson School Online!	Branson	987	1	0	946	40
McKinley Elem.; Canon City MidSchool; Garden Park HS	Canon City	5	1 (EI) 2 (HS)	0	1 (MS) 1 (HS)	0
Colorado Virtual Academy	Adams 12	1472	57	15	1150	250
Connections Academy; Online HS	DPS	300	41 (CC) 2 (HS)	4	227 (CC) 4 (HS)	22
Cotopaxi Home School Partnership School	Cotopaxi	34	11	0	23	0
Eagle View Academy	Walsh	2	0	0	2	0
Edison Academy	Edison	17	2	0	13	2
Hayden HS	Hayden	6	0	0	1	5
JeffcoNet Academy	JeffCo	0	0	0	0	0
Karval Online Education	Karval	45	0	0	44	1
La Jara Second Chance School	North Conejos	37	10	0	27	0
Lester Arnold High School	Adams 14	16	5	0	9	2
Mancos HS	Mancos	1	1	0	0	0
Monte Vista Online Academy	Monte Vista	88	3	0	85	0
North Park Jr.-Sr. HS	North Park	1	1	0	0	0
Peyton HS	Peyton	1	0	1	0	0
Southern Colorado Connections Academy	Pueblo 60	32	16	0	16	0
Vilas Online	Vilas	290	0	0	282	8
Ranum HS; Westminster HS	Adams 50	9	0	9	0	0
Totals		3334	160	29	2831	330