



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



"One Nation Under God."

- Pledge of Allegiance

July 15, 2002

I. THE PLEDGE

We have had a number of inquiries as to whether Colorado is now or is likely to be affected by the recent 2-1 decision by a panel of three judges on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Our best advice is: No effect now; no effect later.

The 9th is by far the most overturned circuit in the country. In this case, the full court will probably overturn it's own three judge panel, which will save them further embarrassment at the Supreme Court level.

I think the best comment on all of this was by Democratic Senate Majority leader Tom Daschle, "This decision is absolutely nuts!"

II. UPDATE ON CSAP RELEASE

As you know, this month will see the largest ever release of CSAP test results.

In this, our sixth year of test releases, we follow our familiar sequence. Here is the schedule for the upcoming release:

July 24th (Wednesday)

All local districts should have their results by the end of this day. Should any last minute issues arise, I know you will directly contact Carolyn Haug (303-866-6664), who has already sent you a good bit of material.

July 30th (Tuesday)

This is the day set aside for briefing key editorial boards. **IMPORTANT:** Please note that we are giving districts a full week between your receiving results and our statewide release. Preparing this volume of results for your various audiences is no small task. These boards, however, like everyone else, have had to agree to embargo this information until the official statewide release.

It should be noted that when we provide results to the newspaper, they get fully disaggregated scores just as you do. As you know, however, a large proportion of these folks prefer to use the simpler aggregated numbers. With the media, "simple" commonly trumps complex. Hopefully, you can give a broader picture to your local press.

July 31st (Wednesday)

The official release of the statewide results will be in the morning, at 11:30 a.m., in the Colorado Department of Education lobby.

I would reiterate what have been key priorities through every release:

1. Our highest priority will be to ensure that local districts receive their results prior to any statewide release.
2. At both the state and local levels, we need to represent these results in the most honest and positive manner.
3. As important as the results themselves, will be describing how we are meeting the challenges they represent. In that regard, one of the strongest arguments will be the striking progress we are seeing in so many areas.

III. ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Serious commendations go to Roscoe Davidson, Gary Sibigroth, Gerry Difford, Keith Blue, and all of the Regional Managers for meeting their June 30th deadline for completing and delivering the first Annual Accreditation Reports to all 178 of our school districts.

High marks also go to our Superintendents who reviewed final drafts of these documents to ensure the level of accuracy and completeness we wanted.

Thanks to the efforts of so many people, we now have in place a system for the ongoing oversight and support of the improvement process in every district. We also have in this excellent instrument the “single accountability system” that HR – 1 requires for every state. In fact, the USDOE went out of its way to commend Colorado for the completeness and the balance of our Accreditation system.

In the four years since Governor Romer signed the Accreditation Accountability Act of 1998, no one did more to shape and ensure its success than Dr. Gerry Difford. Fittingly, when he handed in the final Accreditation Report he had taken responsibility for, he said, “I’ve earned a little time off!” What an understatement! He is just simply one of the greatest educators this state has had the good fortune to claim as its own.

As he and his lovely wife Kristi head off for several months of travel, Gerry takes with him the esteem and the gratitude of all who have known the pleasure of his company and the honor of working with him.

IV. UPDATE ON SAR II

At the same special meeting that the State Board of Education unanimously endorsed the Accreditation Report process, they voted in similar bipartisan fashion to direct CDE to complete the SAR process of 2002 by December 15th.

In doing so, they heeded the advice of the SAR Working Group: “Get It Right, Not Quick.”

This result followed discussions with key legislators and the endorsement of Governor Owens – all of whom recognize the complexity of the task at hand.

Thus, the learning process goes on. As did this year’s and the one before, next year’s “Clean-Up Bill(s)” will bring us yet closer to fully matching our experience to the legislative intent of carefully fashioned SARs.

V. STATE BOARD APPROVES SB-94 IMPLEMENTATION: SAR RATING EXEMPTIONS

At the same busy special meeting, the State Board brought closure to the often thorny issue of SAR Rating Exemptions.

That they were able to do so owed much to the skilled and careful efforts of Roscoe Davidson.

Roscoe sent every Superintendent a copy of SB-94 and invited them to nominate any of their schools that they viewed as meeting the rather stringent legislative exemption criteria.

He then convened an excellent Advisory Committee comprised mostly of individuals nominated by our education organizations.

The unanimous recommendations of the committee were sent to the State Board who endorsed them – also unanimously.

A special thanks must go to Senator Norma Anderson who crafted an excellent piece of legislation, and with her usual incomparable skill steered it through to passage. Ten months ago she said she would get this issue fixed and she did.

VI. AS TIME GOES BY: RETIREMENT OF GENE CAMPBELL

Veterans of Colorado education inevitably came to know Gene well over the years. As an Assistant Commissioner, head of the Professional Services Unit, and “Czar” of all things in the always vital area of Licensure, Gene for many years held one of the most visible positions at CDE. Legislators and Superintendents alike respected his encyclopedic knowledge of his field.

This month, after thirty years of distinguished service, Gene is retiring from CDE. We all will miss one who was at once a great professional and a consummate gentleman. We wish him all the best in those new careers that yet lie ahead.

While one does not “replace” a person like Gene, we do have a successor who offers exceptional credentials in her own right.

The new head of the Professional Services Unit is Dorothy Gottlieb. Many of you knew her as a member of the General Assembly where she served on the House Education Committee ending as Vice-Chair of that key panel.

While in the Legislature, she sponsored a number of important bills which are now foundations of Colorado Education law (e.g. School Safety, and Teacher Education Reform).

Earlier in her career, Ms. Gottlieb has served on both the State Board of Education (for two years its Chair) and the Board of the Denver Public Schools, a system in which she also served as an education professional. Foundations, publishing, and various private sector posts round out a career of great breadth and depth regarding things educational.

We welcome her with full certainty that her contributions will be most substantial.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Moloney
Commissioner of Education

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