
April 9, 2010

*up*date

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Dwight D. Jones

Commissioner of Education

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It has been far too long since my last *UPdate*, and for that I apologize. What follows will give you a glimpse of the initiatives we at the department have been working to move forward, as well as information on pertinent topics, including common core standards and everyone's favorite, the budget. As the country and state continue to dig themselves out of this recession, we at the department remain committed to the work at hand.

Thank you for standing by the department and supporting the reform initiatives we are initiating on your behalf and that of your school districts, teachers and students. Together we truly are making strides in improving public education in Colorado, as highlighted in the following briefs. Your partnership makes all the difference.

ON THE RADAR

"RACE TO THE TOP" ROUND TWO

As we begin revising Colorado's proposal, we continue to be mindful of the fact that the initiatives presented in the state's application comprise Colorado's education reform framework. Each of the reviewers commented on the strength of the plan, and we received accolades for the bold and ambitious initiatives put forth. At present, we are analyzing the review panel's comments and related scores for guidance.

In our revision, we will more clearly explain these initiatives, the measures by which their outcomes will be evaluated and their direct ties to increasing student achievement. We are also examining the initial budgets, determining how to eliminate components without compromising the fidelity of the plan's implementation. We will be eligible for a maximum of \$175 million in this second round, which is approximately 54 percent less than the initial request of \$377 million.

The MOU between the department and districts will be modified to reflect any revisions to Colorado's plan. As we did in the fall, Nina Lopez, CDE's director of ARRA initiatives, and I will be attending regional meetings across the state in early May to meet with superintendents and school board members to discuss the commitment expressed in the MOU. A schedule will be released once logistics are finalized.

Colorado's application is due to the U.S. Department of Education by June 1, 2010.

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For more information, contact CDE's director of ARRA initiatives, Nina Lopez, lopez_n@cde.state.co.us, or visit our Web page at <http://www.cde.state.co.us>.



EDUCATOR IDENTIFIER

Last spring's HB 09-1065 set forth the implementation of educator identifier system for the purpose of linking data sets, gathering information to identify areas for growth and ultimately to eliminate achievement and teacher gaps. We are now at the point in its development to begin generating unique identifiers for educators employed by a public K-12 school in Colorado.

To do so, districts and charter schools are asked to identify a contact person who will be responsible for assigning educator identifiers to staff members. Please complete the [Educator Identifier System Respondent form](#) and return it CDE by April 30, 2010.

As each identifier will need to be an 8-digit number, districts are encouraged to contact their vendors as soon as possible to get this data element incorporated into their systems. CDE is working on a plan to provide training this spring for district human resources and technical staff on assigning educator identifiers.

For more information, please see the Educator Identifier Project update located on CDE's Web site: <http://www.cde.state.co.us>.

For more information, contact Lisa Bradley, project manager, bradley_l@cde.state.co.us.

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

SENATE BILL 08-212 – CAP4K – ASSESSMENT REVISION

As part of the ongoing effort to discuss the next generation of the state assessment system, CDE and the Colorado Department of Higher Education jointly hosted 13 town hall meetings across the state. Results of the tour will be compiled and published on the CDE and DHE Web sites later this month.

The information gathered from more than 500 people who attended the community meetings, as well as the 2,000 e-mail survey responses received, represents a broad spectrum of thinking. This input will be invaluable in creating a new assessment system, which will reflect the expectations of the updated Colorado Academic Standards and the CAP4K requirements which call for both school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness (or PWR) assessments.

Results of the past year's PWR assessment pilot will be presented to the state board during their April meeting. An executive summary for the pilot study, including data

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analysis of the assessments used along with both student and school survey results, will be released shortly thereafter.

Recommendations on conceptual guidelines for the new assessment system will be presented to the state board in December.

For more information, contact Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner for standards and assessment, at obrien_j@cde.state.co.us.



SMARTER CONSORTIUM

As a requirement in the first Race to the Top competition, Colorado had signed on with several other states in the SMARTER consortium to examine the idea of a national formative assessment system comprised of teacher-created questions, teacher scoring mechanisms and other components of adaptive testing. SMARTER is also considering how to include student performance acts or tasks as part of the assessment. This work is in addition to the assessment-revision work the department is undertaking at the request of the state board and in response to SB 08-212. The focus of the other multi-state consortium is on both formative and summative assessments that are not adaptive or inclusive of measures for student demonstration.

Colorado remains a lead in national decisions regarding the design and governance issues. A design team of representatives from the partnering states will prepare a proposal in response to a national RFP, vying for a share of \$350 million. The assessment systems proposed by the consortia will assess the Common Core standards. At time of publication, the RFP has not yet been released, though we anticipate the deadline for application submission will be in early June, with a grant award by September.

For more information, contact Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner for standards and assessment, obrien_j@cde.state.co.us.



THE COLORADO ACADEMIC STANDARDS ROLL-OUT

Colorado's Academic Standards continue to receive state and national recognition for their rigor, articulation and concise alignment across disciplines. They are tightly linked backward in every grade in every subject, and incorporate five essential "21st century" skills: reasoning, information management, collaboration, initiative and invention. They designed to provide students these skills, allowing them to be active learners, and so that teachers are facilitators in making learning relevant.

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In order to introduce the academic standards and familiarize educators with them, CDE's content specialists are planning regional training this summer (mid-May through mid-June) to support leaders in planning for standards implementation. Dates and locations soon will be announced. This training will introduce educators to the design, concepts and graduate outcomes of the new standards. Protocols for "unpacking" the standards will be shared, as will ideas for protocol modification so that schools and districts can best meet the needs of their teachers. (CDE's [FAQs Document](#) may also prove helpful.)

Receive more information and standards "eUpdates" by signing up at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/standardsupdateregistration>. You may also sign up to receive content specific updates for the arts, literacy, math, science and social studies.

[Standards crosswalks](#) are designed as working tools to compare the previous Model Content Standards to the revised Colorado Academic Standards.

A webinar orientation to the crosswalks will be held on Monday, April 12 from 3:15 p.m. to 4 p.m. Information about the webinar can be found at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/otl/ContentSpecialist.htm>.

For more information, contact Melissa Colman, assistant director of academic initiatives, colman_m@cde.state.co.us.

SUPPORT, DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

THE EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2009 (SB 09-163)

At the March 10 meeting of the Colorado State Board of Education, a hearing was held concerning amending rules for the administration of accountability for districts and schools. The state board will vote on the adoption of these rules at its meeting on April 15. Visit CDE's [Accountability Alignment Web page](#) to review these rules and for more information.

Along with its advisory committees, the department continues to develop the school and district performance frameworks for evaluating performance. These frameworks will be used by the state in accrediting districts and reporting on the adequacy of school performance. A draft of the school performance framework (SPF), populated with 2008-09 data, will be released to districts in April so that districts have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the framework and provide feedback.

Growth will be a leading indicator in the SPF. Use of the Colorado Growth Model continues to fulfill its purpose in changing conversations about education. All users can now access three years of data, not just the most recent year, via SchoolView (<http://www.schoolview.org>). Also, data for disaggregated subgroups can be viewed at

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both the school and district levels. Principals, teachers and other building and classroom level staff will find the data extremely beneficial in monitoring student achievement, tailoring instruction to individual students, and developing improvement plans. Superintendents are strongly encouraged to make growth model data available to principals and teachers. Please contact CDE at cdeidm@cde.state.co.us if your Local Access Manager (LAM) is having difficulty accessing this data.

A variety of resources are currently available about the changing accountability structures, the school and district performance frameworks, the Colorado Growth Model, and unified improvement planning through the “Learning Center” on SchoolView.org. CDE is also developing additional training modules and materials to support districts. Stay tuned for a schedule of professional development opportunities starting in May.

For more information, contact Rich Wenning, associate commissioner for policy and performance, wenning_r@cde.state.co.us.



TURNAROUND SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Targeting the 5 percent of Colorado’s lowest performing schools as indicated by the CSAP, CDE recently announced a new Tiered Intervention Grant program (provided via the USDE’s school improvement grant or 1003(g) funds). Districts will partner with the department in implementing of one of four intervention models specifically aimed at increasing the academic achievement of students.

The intent of the grant is to provide funding for districts to:

- partner with CDE in the implementation of one of the four intervention models provided in the draft guidance for the use of Federal Title I 1003(g) funds.
- increase the academic achievement of all students attending chronically low performing schools as measured by the state's assessment system.
- utilize support and services from state-approved turnaround providers to accomplish the determine outcomes.

Follow the [Tiered Intervention Grant Program](#) link for more information regarding eligibility for this opportunity and to access the RFP.

Proposals are due Wednesday, April 21.

For more information, contact Darryl Bonds, assistant commissioner for turnaround and intervention, bonds_d@cde.state.co.us.



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ACCESS TO CEDAR FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Principals and other school-level users will soon be able to access CEDAR, CDE's powerful data reporting system. Access to student-level data within the Colorado Growth Model has already been in place for school users since August 2009. By the end of April 2010, principals and other school leaders will also be able to log into the CEDAR system themselves and see student-level growth and achievement data, demographic data, and most of the same reports (aggregations of data) that district-level users have been able to see. This puts data access in the hands of the principals who need it directly, and district CEDAR users do not need to parse out the data for their district by school for distribution to principals.

The school district's LAM (Local Access Manager) can give school-level users access to both CEDAR and Growth Model data by logging into the Identity Management system and adding those users to the right data groups.

For assistance in securing log on and passwords, contact cdeidm@cde.state.co.us.

FINANCE

PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE

On April 5, House sponsors of the school finance bill (HB10-1369) requested a conference committee meeting, which would allow the House and Senate to come to agreement on their differences pertaining to bill language. (At time of publication, the meeting had not yet been set but is anticipated to occur sometime during the week of April 12-16.)

At present, the bill maintains a \$260 million reduction below the total program amount associated with the original state share appropriation for FY2009-10 – a targeted total program amount of \$5,438,295,823. This amount will carry forward to FY2011-12 and will serve as the starting point for the school finance discussion during the 2011 legislative session.

This reduction is also described as \$149 million below the final total program funding for school districts in FY2009-10, after the reduction authorized by the General Assembly for \$110 million.

The projected state budget stabilization factor—a percentage of reduction from what a district would have received under full-funding for FY2010-11—is 6.35 percent.

Online funding would be reduced by the same percentage, and hold-harmless full-day kindergarten funding would be reduced based on the districts' reduced per pupil funding.

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For more information, contact Vody Herrmann, assistant commissioner for school finance, herrmann_v@cde.state.co.us.

IN CLOSING

I look forward to resuming my tour of meeting with superintendents and visiting their districts. I also would like to invite myself to upcoming monthly area superintendent group meetings, so that I may hear directly from my colleagues in the field.

As always, thank you for your interest in and support of the Colorado Department of Education's efforts to reform, transform and improve public education for all of Colorado. Thank you also for all you do in your local communities to provide the best possible opportunities for students.



For more information, please visit the department's Web site: <http://www.cde.state.co.us>.

Update is a periodic review of matters and issues pertinent to education across Colorado. Written by Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones, this brief is distributed via e-mail to district superintendents and staff, board of education members, state legislators, community leaders, educators, parents and other concerned citizens.

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