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News Release

State Board of Education Expresses Support for “Reading First”

The Colorado Board of Education today unanimously approved a resolution expressing support for Colorado Reading First.

Reading First, a federal program that uses scientifically based research practices to teach reading to students in kindergarten through third grade, has sustained a 62 percent reduction in federal appropriations for the 2008-2009 school year.

“The Colorado State Board of Education fully endorses the Colorado Reading First model, as an example of the Response to Instruction reform effort that is working in Colorado for some of our most challenged students,” the resolution states, citing a 5 percent gain in students scoring proficient or advanced on CSAP exams over two years of implementation.

Currently, the program involves 49 schools in the 35 districts across the state. The goal of Reading First is to bring students to grade level in reading by the third grade.

The resolution was introduced by board member Bob Schaffer, who lauded the fact that the program’s approach to instruction is based on what’s proven to work. “Research actually works and should be relied on and insisted upon in the context of spending federal resources,” he said.

The vote on the resolution was 6-0.

Six Board Members

The seat previously held by Karen Middleton is vacant. Former board member Middleton, who represented the 7th Congressional District, was sworn-in Wednesday, Feb. 13 as a member of the State House of Representatives. Middleton was appointed to fill a vacant seat representing House District 42.

State board of education chair Pamela Jo Suckla said she expects a replacement for Middleton to be named before the March meeting. Under state law, the appointment is made by the congressional central committee of the same political party as the vacating board member. Middleton is a Democrat.

Military Compact for Children

The state board of education unanimously approved a resolution in support of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children.

The compact is designed to promote flexibility and cooperation between states to ease transitions for military children and families when they move from one state to another.

"A streamlined, consistent procedure for facilitating the student placement process through which children of military families are not disadvantaged by variations in attendance requirements, scheduling, sequencing, grading, course content or assessment is needed," the resolution states.

States participating in the compact agree to transfer educational records quickly, to place students in the same grade and same courses as in their previous school, to provide matching special education services to students with individual education plans and to ensure receipt of a diploma for students whose families are transferred during a student's senior year of high school, among many other provisions.

The resolution was introduced by board member Peggy Littleton.

Mesa County Valley 51 School District Waivers

The state board of education voted 6-0 to grant a series of waivers to allow Mesa County Valley 51 School District to work collaboratively with a group of home school parents and students as a contract school.

The proposal earned considerable praise from board members for its creativity and the level of detail in the thick notebook that covers how the Mesa Valley Vision Home Community Program "school" will be managed.

Mesa 51 Assistant Superintendent Steve Schultz told the board that the district has worked closely with parents to develop the concept.

"We are building a network of partnerships within our community to ensure students can have multiple pathways to graduation under high expectations," said Schultz. Mesa County Valley 51 Board of Education President Leslie Kiesler also attended the meeting.

Jhon Penn, senior regional manager from the Colorado Department of Education, said the proposal had been approved by every affected unit within the department. He called the proposal "good, creative choice" and said the new school will be managed by a district with a "strong history of fulfilling its accreditation duties."

The waivers will be granted for three years, Penn added, and the project will be evaluated before any waivers are extended. Students will take the CSAP as required. District representatives will serve on the school's committees. All teachers will be screened with criminal background checks, including fingerprinting and a check with the CDE database.

"We are very committed to the success of every student in our system," said Assistant Superintendent Schultz.

"I commend the work that went into this," said Board member Elaine Gantz-Berman, encouraging all school planners to look through the binder of materials submitted by Mesa 51. "Thank you for being a model."

In other action, the state board of education:

- Postponed proposed approval of Rules for the Administration, Certification and Oversight of Colorado Online Programs. Board

members requested additional time to review comments submitted on the proposed rules through Tuesday, Feb. 19.

- Held rulemaking hearings on Amendments to Permanent Rules for the Administration of School District Budget Law and Amendments to the Permanent Rules for Accounting and Reporting. Changes to both rules were scheduled for adoption at the March 6 meeting.
- Approved a waiver request from the Aspen School District on behalf of Aspen Community School, a charter school.
- Approved induction programs from Widefield School District 3, Strasburg School District 32-J, Mountain BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), Manzanola SD-3J, Garfield County School District 16, Fremont RE-2, Briggsdale RE-10J, Aguilar RE 6 and Brighton 27-J.
- Approved Excess Cost Rates for Eligible Facilities for Fiscal Year 2007-2008.
- Certified Amounts Payable to School Districts for Public School Finance Act of 1994 (as amended).

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