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News Release

Colorado's Growth Model Approved; New Tool In Place To Chart Student Progress Toward Post-Secondary Readiness

The Colorado State Board of Education today adopted rules that will lead to implementation of a new system of accountability based on the progress of individual students over time in reaching state standards and readiness for post-secondary success. The system is called Colorado's Growth Model.

Colorado's Growth Model is an essential part of the Colorado Department of Education's goal of developing a system that relentlessly focuses on the learning of all students. This commitment is central to "Forward Thinking," the department's blueprint for transforming its role in public education.

To focus on the learning of all students, Colorado needs a tool to understand the progress of all students based on where each student starts. Colorado's Growth Model enables parents, schools, districts, and the state to understand how individual students are progressing from year to year and provides a common, statewide means to understand how much growth is needed for each student to reach post-secondary readiness.

The model focuses attention on maximizing student progress over time and reveals where, and among which students, the strongest growth is happening—and where it is not.

This will allow educators from the state, district and school levels to focus service and support on closing the achievement gap. It also offers a means for schools and districts to learn from one another, and allows the department of education to target its limited resources toward the greatest need.

Colorado's Growth Model recognizes that the most effective schools and districts are those that produce the highest sustained rates of growth in student achievement, which may or may not be districts and schools with the highest test scores each year.

"Colorado's Growth Model exemplifies the department's commitment to serve and support districts and schools across the state," said Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones. "Through this model department staff will be able to target support, shine light on what is working and what is not, and have an open and honest discussion about what it will take to get the results we want for all students."

The model has been previewed with groups of superintendents and other constituents and educators across the state, to upbeat reviews.

"We have visited with stakeholders across the state and have received overwhelmingly positive feedback," added Commissioner Jones. "Practitioners welcome the department's emphasis on high quality information that is useful to the teachers and principals engaged in instruction daily."

Background

The development of the model was based on three essential questions about student, school and district performance:

- What is the growth rate of a student, a school and a district?
- What should be the growth rate be in order for a student to reach a desired level of achievement?
- What are the highest sustained growth rates that exist today and under what conditions might they improve?

In addition, the model provides information based on measures that are fair, balanced, and transparent:

- Fair—as perceived by all stakeholders
- Balanced—in that the information recognizes multiple ways of understanding school quality, not just a single test score

- Transparent—in that all stakeholders can understand the language used to describe results

History

Over the last decade, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has actively pursued the analysis of student, school and district CSAP data over time at the individual student level.

Legislation enacted in 2004 (HB 04-1433) established growth analysis techniques employed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for diagnostic purposes.

Building on this initiative, legislation enacted in 2007 (HB 07-1048) directed CDE to refine the methodology and produce more useful information for schools and parents, while expanding its use for accountability purposes. A technical advisory panel (TAP) was appointed by former Colorado Governor Bill Owens and tasked with recommending a model to the State Board of Education.

The advisory panel recommended that Colorado's Growth Model calculate a growth percentile for each student relative to all other students in the state with the same prior academic history (academic peers).

Prior to making this recommendation, the advisory panel relied on the resources and expertise of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (particularly Dr. Damian Betebenner) to develop procedures used to derive student growth percentiles and to provide technical advice on their implementation in a state accountability system.

Colorado's Growth Model provides students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, policy makers and the public with an easily understood yet rigorous means by which to understand student progress over time. Colorado's Growth Model:

- Quantifies year-to-year growth
- Defines what constitutes "typical growth" (or "one-year's growth in one-year's time")
- Defines what constitutes "adequate growth" to reach proficient and advanced performance within one, two, or three years.

The anticipated roll out of the information from Colorado's Growth Model to school districts is scheduled for August following availability of the 2008 CSAP results. Between now and then, CDE staff is working on incorporating the new growth measure into State Accreditation, School Accountability Reports, and criteria for identifying schools whose growth makes them eligible for the Governor's Improvement Award.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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