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**News Release**

### ***Standards Review Process Moves Into High Gear***

The process of reviewing and revising the state's model content standards—descriptions of what every student is expected to learn by subject and grade—is moving into high gear.

#### **Today (Tuesday, April 8)**

The Colorado Department of Education is releasing a briefing paper that provides a review and analysis for definitions of 21st century skills, college readiness and career readiness. The analysis was conducted at no cost to CDE by WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency. The complete report will be posted on the CDE Web site at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

#### **Wednesday, April 9**

Key stakeholders will gather for the first time to begin overseeing the review process. Using the WestEd briefing paper as context, the stakeholders will identify Colorado's definitions for 21st century skills, college readiness and career/postsecondary readiness.

The stakeholders will also decide whether the standards should be articulated for each grade level (currently, standards are defined only for groups of grades) and assign subcommittee work.

The stakeholder meeting will be held at the Education Commission of the States (700 Broadway, Suite 1200) beginning at 8:00 a.m. The meeting is open to the public.

“The content standards form the bedrock of our work in schools,” said Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. “They represent a joint understanding of what is expected of teachers to teach and of students to learn. It’s critical that we gather the state’s best thinking about updating these standards as this revision process goes forward.”

Commissioner Jones announced the re-evaluation process in September 2007.

The concept of content standards was developed in Colorado in the early 1990’s. Statewide standards for the first time defined the knowledge and benchmarks that students should acquire within each grade span and in each subject. Under state law, local school districts may adopt their own content standards as long as they are at least as rigorous as the state’s version.

The Colorado General Assembly passed the standards-based education law in 1993 and standards were written for reading, writing, mathematics and science. Additional standards have been developed in civics, dance, economics, foreign language, geography, history, music, physical education, theatre and visual arts.

The standards have not changed since schools started using them in 1994. The first strand of what has become the full Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) exam was given in 1997, when fourth-grade students were tested in reading and writing based on those standards.

The department’s Office of Standards and Assessment expects to deliver proposed new standards to the state board of education by December 2008.

### **The Review Process**

The review process is expected to provide students, parents, teachers, educators, business leaders and community members across the state with an opportunity to participate in the process of developing proposed changes to the state’s model content standards.

Recently, CDE commissioned the Southwest Regional Comprehensive Center (SWCC) at WestEd to guide and support the review process.

SWCC obtained the assistance of the Assessment and Standards Development Services (ASDS) program at WestEd to perform the

analyses, because of their specific expertise and experience in performing these types of analyses.

The project consisted of four tasks intended to provide information that will refine Colorado's model content standards:

1. A review and analysis of major definitions related to 21st century skills, college readiness and career/postsecondary readiness;
2. A state-by-state profile of how states articulate their standards across individual grades and grade spans;
3. A review and a gap analysis of the model content standards;
4. An evaluation of existing external reports on the Colorado standards.

### **Major Steps Ahead**

Four major steps will occur prior to the state board of education receiving recommendations for revisions to the current model content standards.

The steps begin with the release today of WestEd's "Review and Analysis of Definitions of 21st Century Skills, College Readiness and Career/Postsecondary Readiness."

After the state reviews and determines Colorado's definitions, next steps include:

- Publication of an analysis of the other 49 states (and several nations) and how they break out by grade levels what students should know. This information will assist in deciding if Colorado should continue with broad grade spans—only defining what students should know at end of various stages of academic growth (for example, fourth grade, eighth grade and 12th grade) — or whether precise standards should be set for all grades.
- A review of the current model content standards will be performed to provide qualitative feedback on the current rigor, clarity, balance and relevance of the Colorado standards. For each content area, a gap analysis will be conducted by a nationally recognized, independent firm. This analysis will inform Coloradoans of the differences between and among the best states and international content standards.
- Finally, a trend study will be done based on recent reports from the Colorado Alignment Council, Education Trust, Achieve,

Fordham Institute and others to indicate common and repeated recommendations for all of our content areas.

"The overall intent of the process is not to abolish the current standards in place," said Jo O'Brien, assistant commissioner of standards and assessment. "Instead, the review will modernize the core content, articulate new skills and attempt to tighten the focus of a viable scope of expectations."

The state of Colorado will be fully involved in the process with the following assumptions:

- WestEd research and analysis will initiate each step in order to ensure third party objectivity
- All briefs and gap analyses will be shared in their entirety with public
- A representative and demographically diverse core stakeholders group will help to both frame the reports and charge regional conversations throughout the year in order to give focus to the analysis
- Higher education, pre-school leaders, the business sector and career and technical education will join primary and secondary education leaders in sub-content reaction and advice
- The state board of education is the final audience and authority to determine the recommendations adopted
- A variety of methods will be employed to reach the maximum number of citizens
- All feedback, reports and recommendations will be written by another third-party entity to present to the Colorado Department of Education for presentation to the state board of education.

**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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