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News Release

State Board of Education Approves New Rules for Accreditation

There are new rules on the way for how the state Department of Education will accredit local school districts.

The new rules, adopted unanimously, will take effect on June 30. They incorporate Colorado's Growth Model, include measures of post-secondary readiness, add a requirement for the Department of Education to provide pre-populated data reports to districts and revise accreditation labels.

The rules were presented by deputy commissioner Ken Turner and regional manager Jhon Penn following a months-long process that involved conversations with superintendents and school district leadership across the state.

The changes are designed to focus the department's work on service and support of school districts, to preserve district autonomy, to ensure accreditation decisions are defensible and comparable and to focus work on results (particularly in terms of longitudinal data). The changes are also designed to link greater achievement to more autonomy, to eliminate duplicative paperwork and to provide districts with transparent and pre-populated data.

Under the new rules, districts will be placed in one of seven categories—"Accredited With Distinction," "Accredited," "Accredited—

Notice With Support," "Accredited—Probation," "Probation," and "Nonaccredited."

Onsite reviews will be reduced under the new rules. Currently, every district receives an onsite review every year. Under the new rules, districts with the highest student performance will only receive an onsite review every three years and districts in the mid-range of student performance will receive visits every two years. Districts with low student performance will continue with annual onsite visits. (Annual financial and school safety plan reviews will continue for all districts.)

The new rules drew praise from board members.

"I am ecstatic," said board member Evie Hudak. "These changes have been a long time coming."

Board Chair Pamela Jo Suckla lauded the work of staff in developing the revisions. "You have done a phenomenal job," she said to deputy commissioner Turner and regional manager Penn. "Revisions of accreditation rules are no easy task."

In other action, the board approved:

- Two-year certifications of Branson School Online (Branson School District), Colorado Connections Academy (Denver), Colorado Virtual Academy (Adams 12 Five Star Schools), Kaplan Academy of Colorado (Garfield School District Re-2), Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op (Douglas County Schools), Insight School (Julesburg School District Re-1) and Karval Online Education (Karval School District).
- Notice of permanent rulemaking for the administration of the School Counselor Corps Grant Program.
- A six-month extension of current district accreditation contracts through December 2008 to permit an orderly and effective implementation of the new accreditation process resulting from revised accreditation rules (referenced above).
- Waiver requests on behalf of Widefield School District 3 and James Madison Charter Academy.

- Waiver requests on behalf of Boulder Valley School District and Horizon K-8 Alternative School.
- Disciplinary proceedings involving seven professional license-holders.
- A motion that grants authority to the department to disburse June 2008 and July 2008 state share payments to school districts.
- A motion that allows for a proposed fee increase that will enable the Office of Professional Services to meet expectations outlined in House Bill 1344. That bill will change the response time for the department in processing requests for background checks of prospective employees. The new language requires the department of education to respond to a background query within 10 business days. The bill contemplates increasing fees to support the additional necessary staff. Jami Goetz, Director of Professional Licensing, reported to the board that the current \$60 license application fee will increase to at least \$70 but no more than \$80. The process of determining the new fee is still underway.
- The principal induction program for Expeditionary BOCES, the cooperative board that manages the Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning in Denver.
- The teacher induction program for Odyssey K-8 School in Denver.
- The teacher / special services provider induction program for Telluride School District R-1.
- Payments to administrative units under the Exceptional Children's Education Act for evaluations of children ages birth to three, 2007-2008.
- Excess cost rates for eligible facilities for extended school year 2008.
- Daily tuition rates for the Rocky Mountain Deaf School for the 2007-2008 school year.

- Two emergency renewal authorizations and five emergency initial authorizations.

The Board of Education also:

- Certified amounts (\$1.8 million total) payable to eligible school districts for military dependent supplemental funding. These payments are based on a voluntary February public count that allows school districts a second count for new students who are dependents of full-time active military personnel. These students must have moved to the district after the October 1 pupil count and also must not have been counted by any other district in the state.
- Granted authority to the department to disburse second reimbursement transportation payments to school districts.
- Approved payments to administrative units under the Exceptional Children's Education Act for reimbursement of payments for students in high cost, out-of-district placements or programs, 2007-2008.
- Granted exclusive chartering authority to Pueblo School District 60 and Montezuma Cortez School District Re-1.
- Approved emergency rules for the administration of the School Counselor Corps Grant Program. House Bill 1370 created a three-year school counselor corps grant program to increase the number of school counselors for secondary students. The legislation directs the Colorado State Board of Education to adopt rules to implement the program. Funds will be available for this purpose through school districts, boards of cooperative services and charter schools.
- Nominated Randy DeHoff to submit an application for president-elect of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

Graduation Guidelines Development Council – Report

During its work session May 14, the Board of Education heard a report from the Graduation Guidelines Development Council. The 12-member council was charged by a new state law (C.R.S. 22-7-414) to “develop and recommend to the state board for adoption a comprehensive set

of guidelines for the establishment of high school graduation requirements.”

In its report, “Reimagining High School In Colorado,” the council urged a “paradigm shift from ‘seat time’ to content mastery,” and made six recommendations:

1. Standards-based education

The 21st century demands standards that reflect both academic and applied mastery of workforce and postsecondary readiness. Mastery of the subject matter should indicate whether students have an adequate understanding of the content rather than whether they have taken a specific course as evidenced by time in the classroom. Therefore, the Council recommends a learning approach that focuses on mastery of content versus number of courses taken.

2. Core Curriculum to Meet the Needs of the 21st Century

The global economy demands that skills be transferable and application-based. A core curriculum that includes both academics and 21st century skills—and assessments that show that students can apply those skills—is needed to help students be successful in life. Therefore, the Council recommends that a core curriculum focus on 21st century skills and content.

3. Assessment

The Council believes that assessments are a powerful tool that should be used more often than just at the end of a learning process. In addition, assessments should be both theoretical and applied and the state should make these assessments available to all districts statewide. As such, the Council recommends the use of multiple, student-based assessments that give students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned and that provide teachers with the data to assess student performance and level of proficiency.

4. Multiple and Diverse Pathways to a Diploma

The unique and individual aspirations of students should be recognized by creating multiple and diverse pathways for them to achieve diplomas. In order to recognize the different interests and abilities of all students, the Council recommends adopting a pathways model that shows a clear connection to postsecondary life and that does not foreclose opportunities. In addition, dual credit should be recognized, so students have the opportunity to take as many courses as they want or need to earn both a high school diploma and post-secondary credentials.

5. Career Planning

The Council recommends putting more resources and a greater emphasis on career planning. Effective counseling will connect the current situation with a desired future. To that end, schools should consider ways to implement a Personal Education Plan (PEP) (also referred to as an Individual Career and Academic Plan or ICAP) for each student.

6. Post-secondary alignment

The successful implementation of P-12 content standards is dependent upon an alignment of these standards with admission requirements for post-secondary education. Therefore, the Council recommends aligning P-12 content standards with postsecondary admission requirements—which requires revising the Higher Education Admission Requirements. The Council recognizes that these recommendations require systemic changes, and that systemic changes require more resources—which are sorely lacking in education. However, in order for major reform of our education system to take place, a new system needs to be implemented, one that doesn't just align standards, but aligns the systems within the entire P-12 continuum. Finding the resources today for this realignment will be an investment in our students', state's and—ultimately—our nation's future.

A complete copy of the report is posted on the council's Web site:

<http://ggdc.pbwiki.com/>

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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