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## **News Release**

### ***School Accountability Alignment Bill Introduced***

Gov. Bill Ritter, Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien, Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones and a unanimous state board of education announced their support for a bill introduced today in the state legislature that would fuse the state's school accountability systems into a single approach that uses Colorado Growth Model results as its foundation.

The Accountability Alignment Bill, Senate Bill 09-163, was introduced today by Sen. Evie Hudak (D), Westminster and Sen. Keith King (R), Colorado Springs. The House co-sponsors are Rep. Karen Middleton (D), Aurora and Rep. Tom Massey (R), Poncha Springs.

Specifically, the bill:

- Aligns conflicting accountability systems into a single system intended to meet state and federal needs
- Modernizes and streamlines reporting of state, district and school performance information
- Calls for a more effective cycle of school support and intervention
- Enhances state, district and school oversight of improvement efforts

Currently, public schools in Colorado are subject to three different waves of analysis and reporting each year. Two are state—School Accountability Reports and annual accreditation reports. The third is federal—Adequate Yearly Progress—required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

"In addition to presenting a more coherent accountability system for all our stakeholders, the Colorado Department of Education envisions a system that encourages educators to focus on maximizing every child's progress toward ambitious standards," said Commissioner Jones. "We also believe this bill will eliminate the sometimes confusing messages generated by the variety of school reporting mechanisms that exist today."

Gov. Bill Ritter also lauded the proposal. "The bill is an important complement to last year's landmark legislation, the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, as well as the Education Innovation Act," he said. "Together, all these steps continue to bolster Colorado's national leadership in education reform."

Added Lt. Gov. O'Brien: "The bill sponsors, Commissioner Jones and the Colorado State Board of Education are to be commended for working together in a bipartisan manner to develop this important piece of legislation. The bill promises to deliver vital information to parents and educators alike about the progress made by students and schools in reaching high standards. Best of all, it does so within existing resources while streamlining the work of educators."

The bill would establish an expanded and more balanced set of common state performance indicators for districts and schools. The performance indicators envisioned by the bill were selected to be consistent with the revised district accreditation process and federal expectations. They also capitalize on data from the Colorado Growth Model. Earlier this month, the Colorado Growth Model was accepted as part of the federal government's pilot analysis of using student growth data to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The state performance indicators include:

- Student academic growth (measured by the Colorado Growth Model)
- Student achievement levels (measured by the percent of students scoring advanced, proficient, partially proficient and unsatisfactory)
- Extent of gaps in achievement and growth based on income and ethnicity

- Postsecondary readiness (measured by graduation rates and results from college readiness tests)

The bill would assign accreditation categories based on results related to meeting targets for the state performance indicators, as well as trends in achievement. Under the bill, district accreditation categories would be matched with required levels of support and intervention. The six levels of performance would be:

- Level 1: Accredited with Distinction
- Level 2: Accredited
- Level 3: Accredited with Improvement Plan
- Level 4: Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan
- Level 5: Accredited with Turnaround Plan
- Level 6: Unaccredited—State Board determines whether situation warrants district reorganization, external management, conversion to a charter school or school closure

“I am eager to see this bill adopted and build upon what we accomplished on the State Board of Education with the improved accreditation process and development of the growth model to now make these the core elements of a single system,” said Sen. Hudak, who served on the state board prior to her election to the Colorado Senate in November 2008.

Added Sen. King: “This bill decreases burden on districts, simplifies accountability expectations, and keeps our focus squarely on all children reaching post-secondary and workforce readiness.”

The bill would establish the EDGE (Education Data and Growth Exchange), a Web-based portal for the public and educators to access all publicly reported data about state, district and school performance. The EDGE would generate print summaries and also reduce school and district reporting burdens.

The bill calls for CDE to report state, district and school results on the state performance indicators along with other information such as that contained in School Accountability Reports (SARs). The EDGE replaces the familiar, printed versions of the SARs.

A key performance tool in the accountability alignment bill is The Colorado Growth Model. The model shows whether a student is growing at an adequate rate to reach proficiency—as measured by the Colorado Student Assessment Program—within three years (or by 10th

grade). For students already at proficient levels, the growth model also shows whether they are on track to remain at proficient levels or reach advanced levels. The model also measures a student's rate of growth compared to all other students with the same starting point, much like a pediatric growth chart, which is familiar to parents.

The Accountability Alignment Bill calls for CDE to measure the percentage of students in each school and district that are on track to catch up to proficient levels, keep up at proficient levels or move up to advanced. CDE also would disaggregate the growth data to determine the size of gaps in growth associated with race and poverty.

"In Colorado, we have serious challenges not shown by the federal measure of Adequate Yearly Progress," said Commissioner Jones. "We know already from the Colorado Growth Model that only a small percentage of our students not yet proficient are making enough progress to catch up to proficiency. The new bill asks schools to be accountable for the growth rate of all students and provides them with the information to show which students need more than a year's growth in a year's time to reach proficiency."

The bill would create authority for the commissioner to appoint a state review panel to evaluate district and school improvement strategies and make recommendations on needed interventions. The bill also spells out a process for high-quality service and support from CDE, including ready access to data and research, consultation on best practices and support in developing and implementing district and school improvement plans.

"We look forward to discussing this bill with the public and all legislators as this proposal moves through consideration by the General Assembly," said Commissioner Jones. "It's our goal to emerge with a single, practical accountability system that presents to parents, educators and all taxpayers a credible and clear picture of school performance and at the same time identifies schools and districts that may need critical advice—and care."

### **About The Colorado Growth Model**

The Colorado Growth Model supports a common understanding of how individual students and groups of students progress from year to year toward state standards based on where each individual student begins. 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.

### **Commissioner Letter to Superintendents**

Commissioner Dwight D. Jones sent a letter to all superintendents about the alignment bill along with a summary of its components. To read that letter, follow this link:

[www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/SuperintendentLetterAlignmentBill.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/SuperintendentLetterAlignmentBill.pdf)

For more information about the Colorado Growth Model, visit:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/growthmodel.html>

**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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