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## **News Release**

### ***Commissioner Jones Joins Other State Chiefs In Meeting with Vice President, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for White House Briefing On Stimulus Plan***

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today thanked U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan and Vice President Joe Biden for providing background information regarding the federal stimulus plan and the distribution of money for public education this afternoon after a briefing for state chiefs at the White House.

"We thoroughly appreciate the significance of this opportunity and the commitment of President Obama's administration to improve public education," said Commissioner Jones. "Today's briefing was very useful and set the stage for the important funding streams that are coming to schools and school districts in Colorado."

Associate Commissioner Richard Wenning, who was also in attendance, said the meeting set the context for future expectations. Biden and Duncan called for thoughtful spending, transparency and public awareness about the process for distributing the funds. They also asked state chiefs for their commitment to work in partnership with their governors.

"We need a clear set of standards, benchmarks and assessments to assure that every child has an equal opportunity to achieve high results," said Sec. Duncan. "We need to work together as a group of states to create an equal playing field."

Biden said, "We need to use this money wisely...shame on us if it doesn't make a lasting impression on education."

While transparency, public awareness and accountability were key themes in the discussion, other topics included:

- Early childhood, K-12 and postsecondary education to create jobs, upgrade facilities and protect America's children.
- State Incentive Grants for Education, specifically a Race to the Top Fund which will help students become college ready, set international benchmarks and invest in data systems that link teachers to students and higher education.
- Reward teacher excellence and provide incentives.

The stimulus rollout will happen in three stages. The first will involve formula grants which will occur over the next four to six weeks. These could be more than \$400 million for Colorado in the form of Local Education Agency grants, targeted grants and financial incentive grants.

"These short-term dollars can be used to create long-term results," said Commissioner Jones in reference to the formula grants. "There needs to be a focus on students that have been underserved."

Next, the State Stabilization Fund will rollout an estimated \$611.5 million for Colorado school districts and public colleges and universities. The third cycle is in the form of discretionary grants. Applications for discretionary grants will be available at the end of March. The governor in partnership with the commissioner apply to the secretary of education for these funds (stabilization and discretionary) and provide assurances.

Commissioner Jones looks forward to leveraging all the funds to deliver a lasting impact on Colorado districts. "Colorado is well-positioned to make these assurances," said the commissioner. "Last year with the support of the governor and legislature we implemented CAP4K, this year we have the Alignment Bill and will continue to implement the policies and expectations of the Colorado State Board of Education. We are at an advantage to make the most of these outcomes."

Additional guidance is expected next week from the federal government. For more information on the federal stimulus package, visit [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov).

**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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