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News Release

Colorado To Receive National Grant To Improve Low-Performing Schools

The National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices announced earlier today that Colorado is among four states to be awarded a \$150,000 grant to support the development of a comprehensive strategy aimed at improving chronically low-performing schools. Other states receiving grants include: Maryland, Massachusetts, and Mississippi.

The grants, awarded as part of the NGA Center's *State Strategies to Improve Chronically Low-Performing Schools* initiative, will assist Colorado with developing a school turnaround strategy that will implement new legislation intended to align and better organize our system of accountability, support, and intervention.

"This funding will help develop new flexibility and innovation in working with schools that have historically low scores," said Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien. "There are few options now other than turning these schools into charters."

"Identifying our low-performing schools is just one piece of the puzzle," said Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. "We want to work with our low-performing schools to strengthen and help them to find solutions and implement what works."

Using the grant, state teams will be asked to include the following strategies in the plan:

- Identify clearly the indicators that distinguish chronically low-performing schools;
- Assess the degree of authority the state has to intervene, and if necessary, offer proposals that strengthen and reinforce that authority;
- Recommend state policies regarding hiring, staff allocation and compensation, budgeting and contracting with education personnel.

More than 3 percent of America's public schools are in the most extreme federal designation of restructuring. This will represent an estimated 2.5 million students in 2009-2010. In all levels of restructuring in Colorado, 2.6 percent of public schools fall in this category, representing 29,817 students in 2008-2009.

The grants are made possible with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Prudential Foundation. To learn more about the efforts by the governors to improve America's schools, please visit: www.nga.org/center/edu.

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