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News Release

Commissioner Dwight D. Jones Publishes “Choices and Innovation—Stimulating Education Reform”

Today Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones published “Choices and Innovation—Stimulating Education Reform.” The paper discusses the need to engage in real conversations about innovation and change in schools and how best to capitalize on choice opportunities for students.

The entire paper may be found on the commissioner’s Web page at this address: http://preview.cde.state.co.us/index_commiss.htm

This morning *The Denver Post* published a column about the major themes of the full document. Newspapers and other media outlets are welcome to reprint. The full text follows:

Everywhere we turn, we hear about the need for innovation in education. Four months ago, a *Denver Post* editorial proclaimed that “tinkering around the edges of reform” is insufficient to produce sustained improvements in public education. I could not agree more.

Education reform is easy to talk about, but hard to do. At its core, *reform* is doing things a better way. With regard to education reform, however, we not only must do things better, we must get better results. Innovation is key.

As highlighted in a recent *Post* article, Colorado could soon receive several million dollars in federal stimulus monies for public

education. In addition to a fair share for programs that serve underprivileged students and those with disabilities, there is the prospect of additional funds earmarked for innovation. Known as "Race to the Top" funds, these monies will go to "a handful of states that devise the most innovative ways of improving education" ... to the potential tune of \$500 million per state.

The article concluded that Colorado has every reason to be optimistic. After all, with initiatives on longitudinal growth, charter school development, updated standards and performance-pay programs, Colorado has been in the forefront with regard to innovation and school reform.

Innovation is more than just a good idea, it's about putting that good idea into practice. The Colorado Department of Education is presently pursuing a wide variety of innovative educational models, including new approaches to teacher preparation, leadership development, school choice and the way in which education is funded. We are organizing strategies and directing resources in ways to innovate intentionally, and in so doing, increase capacity to take to scale what improves education for Colorado's students.

At the same time, the department is creating a statewide system of support for districts, built upon internationally competitive standards and greater expectations for ourselves and our students. This system will monitor, measure and foster what matters most – increased student achievement.

The department's pursuit of innovation began in earnest in September 2007 when the state board of education called upon the department to modernize the Colorado Model Content Standards. The spirit of innovation was further kindled last year when Senate Bill 08-130, commonly referred to as the Innovative Schools Act and led by Peter Groff, president of the Colorado Senate, was enacted into legislation. This bill has allowed Manual High School and Montview Elementary School (Denver) to implement new programs outside the constraints of traditional school policy.

This year, through the leadership of state Senators Evie Hudak and Keith King, Senate Bill 09-163 (known as the alignment bill) promises to streamline accountability and to devote great support to struggling schools and districts. It also promises to shutter those schools that persistently fail. This legislation, if passed, will play a key role in the promotion of intentional innovation by providing a

framework for us to fund what works and stop throwing money at what doesn't. Innovation without accountability is not in our students' best interests.

Working collaboratively with the Colorado Association of School Executives, the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Education Association, the governor's office and our 178 school districts, it is increasingly clear that we all have a role to play in obtaining Race to the Top funds.

As mentioned in the *Post*, "Colorado is positioned well to win innovation money." Winning the money, however, cannot be the goal, less we win the race and miss the top. Instead, we must remain focused on supporting initiatives that transform the delivery of education and improve student achievement. Now that's a race worth running!

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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