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News Release

Colorado Joins Multi-State Effort to Develop Common Core Standards in English and Mathematics; Voluntary Agreement with Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association

Gov. Bill Ritter and Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today announced a pledge to join a state-led effort to create a common core of standards in English and mathematics from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Forty-nine states and U.S. territories have committed to the process.

The goal is to produce standards that are based on research, aligned with the college and workforce readiness definitions, include rigorous content and skills and are internationally benchmarked. The pledge is in the form of an agreement to work with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers in developing the standards.

"To improve and maintain the competitive advantage of students graduating from schools in this country, we need to ensure that students are being prepared to meet or exceed what's expected of students around the world," said Gov. Bill Ritter. "This effort clearly complements Colorado's agenda. I'm thrilled that so many other states are taking seriously the need to develop standards and assessments that are aligned with postsecondary and workforce readiness expectations."

Commissioner Jones said the agreement will merge smoothly with the ongoing statewide effort to revise and update Colorado's content

standards. That work began 18 months ago and has engaged statewide stakeholders, national policy experts and hundreds of educators and citizens around the state. Under the existing timetable, adoption of the updated standards by the Colorado State Board of Education is scheduled for December 2009.

Colorado's content standards have not been refreshed since they were first adopted in 1994. (More about the standards work is available here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/index.html>)

The Colorado State Board of Education first called for revising the standards in the fall of 2007. This effort gained momentum when the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids was enacted by the Colorado State Legislature in 2008 (Senate Bill 212).

"The standards revision discussion in Colorado and the pledge to join the national conversation are an excellent hand-in-glove fit," said Commissioner Jones. "We have said all along that our new standards will match top international expectations and the work of drafting these new standards has incorporated what's expected in Finland and Singapore, two countries with higher graduation rates than ours. We are eager to build on the work being done here and continue to raise the bar for Colorado students."

Commissioner Jones pointed out that the engagement in the effort in no way forms an obligation to adopt the proposed common core standards but potentially provides a way to leverage the good work already underway in the state to develop and adopt new 21st Century content standards.

In a letter to the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, Gov. Ritter and Commissioner Jones said they were "hopeful" that the effort to facilitate the articulation and adoption of common core standards by a majority of states "will embody the goals that Colorado sought to achieve through our own standards review."

The letter continued: "Central to this work is the notion that internationally competitive standards tend to be 'fewer, clearer and higher' than those typically seen in the U.S. today."

The Common Core State Standards Initiative builds directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on

developing college-and career-ready standards and ensures that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world. The goal is to have a common core of standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English language arts and mathematics.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are coordinating the process to develop these standards and have created an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to—and independent of—the process. The college-and-career-ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

About National Governors Association

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit www.nga.org.

About The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy-and technical assistance on major educational issues. The council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress and the public. More information: www.ccsso.org

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