



Colorado Department of Education – Communications Office  
201 East Colfax Ave.  
Room 103  
Denver, CO 80203  
Phone: 303-866-3898  
Fax: 303-866-6938

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## **News Release**

### ***Colorado Education Commissioner Dwight D. Jones Recognizes 13 School Districts and Schools for Innovation in Health and Wellness***

#### ***New Web site helps parents, educators and communities create healthier schools***

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today recognized 11 school districts and two schools at the second annual Commissioner's Choice Awards hosted by the Colorado Legacy Foundation. The awards recognize school districts and schools that apply best practices and get results.

"Schools are ideal settings for developing healthy habits that last well into adulthood, especially considering that kids spend almost half of their waking hours in school," says Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. "Healthy schools provide nutritious meals, snacks and beverages, and require that students are physically active every day. They teach students what it means to be healthy, offer access to health care services and have effective workplace wellness programs."

This year's award winners are taking innovative steps to improve health education, nutrition, physical activity, school health services and workplace wellness. They are:

- Adams County School District 14, Commerce City
- Boulder Valley School District, Boulder
- Denver Public Schools, Denver
- Douglas County School District RE-1, Castle Rock
- Durango School District 9-R, Durango

- East Grand School District 2, Granby
- Garfield School District RE-2, Rifle
- Gunnison High School, Gunnison
- High Point Academy, Aurora
- Las Animas School District RE-1, Las Animas
- Montrose County School District RE-1J, Montrose
- Poudre School District R-1, Fort Collins
- Pueblo City School District 60, Pueblo

Five award-winning school districts are profiled online at [www.colegacy.org/guide\\_2009](http://www.colegacy.org/guide_2009). Those five school districts are: Adams County School District 14, school-based health clinics; Boulder Valley School District, nutrition; Douglas County School District RE-1, workplace wellness; Durango School District 9-R, health education; and East Grand School District 2, physical activity.

“Healthy kids learn better, so creating healthy schools makes good sense,” says Helayne Jones, executive director, Colorado Legacy Foundation. “Everyone has a role—school board members, administrators, educators, parents, students and the community.”

The announcement of award winners coincides with the Colorado Legacy Foundation’s release of its new online 2009 Health and Wellness Best Practices Guide.

This Web site offers best practices, action steps, and success stories for educators, parents and community members who want to create healthier schools. It features at-a-glance checklists to help school districts measure their efforts in health education, nutrition, physical activity, school health services and workplace wellness.

It’s packed with practical resources, including strategies for handling pushback from those who might argue that health and wellness are not the responsibilities of schools.

Healthy students and academic achievement go hand in hand. Research shows that obese students are more likely to have lower grade point averages than their more fit peers, and health-risk behaviors increase the likelihood of students dropping out of school.

Available at [www.colegacy.org](http://www.colegacy.org), the guide is the second in a series of annual best practices published by the Colorado Legacy Foundation in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education. Shorter print versions in English and Spanish are available to download.

Award-winning Boulder Valley School District was recognized for its cutting-edge work in nutrition. The district has reinvented its school lunches by eliminating all highly processed foods. Students are served fresh fruits and vegetables daily—many of which are locally grown.

“Previously, our food service employees’ tools of the trade were a box cutter and a can opener,” says Boulder Superintendent Chris King. “We weren’t cutting up fresh food and cooking it. Now it’s fresh food cooked from scratch.”

King says science shows good food is good for students. “There is a lot of research that supports the link between good cognition and good nutrition,” he says. “Clearly when you eat well, your brain and body perform better.”

In Commerce City, award-winning Adams County School District 14 is focusing efforts on keeping students healthy by providing greater access to health care. About 80 percent of the district’s students come from low-income families, and health care is hard to come by. The district stepped in not only to keep kids healthy, but also to keep them in school.

“I truly believe school-based health clinics have improved our attendance rate,” says School Board Member Jeannette Lewis. “It’s critical that all school districts support school-based clinics. They improve the quality of students’ lives, the quality of their education, and they have a huge, positive impact on the community.”

The release of the new Web site and awards announcement are part of today’s Healthy Kids Learn Better! Legacy Luncheon and Summit hosted by the Colorado Legacy Foundation, whose health and wellness initiative is funded through a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation.

For more information, contact Helayne Jones, executive director, Colorado Legacy Foundation, 303-866-6193 or [hjones@colegacy.org](mailto:hjones@colegacy.org).

#### **About the Colorado Legacy Foundation**

The Colorado Legacy Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization created to support the Colorado Department of Education.

The foundation convenes educators, policy makers and community leaders to improve schools, and identifies and invests in promising ideas. Successful best practices are shared with Colorado school districts. Founded in 2007 by the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Legacy Foundation is governed by an independent board. Visit [www.colegacy.org](http://www.colegacy.org).

**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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