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News Release

Colorado State Board Of Education Adopts New Content Standards Unanimously; Spells Out New Expectations For Student Learning

Following a two-year statewide conversation, the Colorado State Board of Education today formally adopted new standards that detail the broad themes, ideas and concepts that the state expects students to learn, experience and demonstrate for postsecondary success.

The new standards replace those adopted in 1994 when the state first shifted to a common statewide understanding of what schools are expected to teach.

“This is a substantial improvement over Colorado’s 15-year-old standards,” said State Board of Education Chairman Bob Schaffer. “The board applauds the efforts of the many individuals who have spent countless hours carefully crafting the language and doggedly pursuing this finished product. These are fewer, clearer and higher.”

The state board adopted standards in 14 areas including civics; dance; economics; geography; comprehensive health and physical education; history; math; music; reading, writing and communicating; science; drama and theatre arts; visual art and world languages and English language development.

The standards were adopted unanimously in a spirit of celebration with applause as each was forwarded and approved.

Some changes were made in moments of group editing, including work on grade level expectations in the comprehensive health and physical education standards.

Board member Elaine Gantz Berman pointed out that the adoption of health standards was historic, since the state previously only provided physical education standards. The decision is timely, she noted, given that far more children than adults are considered obese in Colorado.

The English language development standards presented a minor wrinkle, as board members struggled with the draft language of the "proficiency standards" as opposed to all other "academic standards."

In the end, the board approved a motion by Peggy Littleton to adopt the proficiency standards "with assurance" that they would be aligned to all of the other newly-minted academic standards.

"These are not content standards, these are the way English language learners can access the rest of the content," said Jo O'Brien, Assistant Commissioner for Standards and Assessment, who has led the staff work on the statewide conversation leading up to the final adoption.

The upgrade of the standards began in 2007 when the state board recommended the revision and was given a further push in 2008 when the Colorado State Legislature affirmed and further articulated the nature of these changes. Senate Bill 08-212 expanded the vision of public education outcomes with the inclusion of higher education and early childhood education goals into one seamless standards policy.

The standards approval marks the end of one phase of work and overlaps with the next phase, which is choosing a new state assessment.

Full drafts of the content standards may be found online here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/DraftStandards.html>

Up-to-date information about the assessment revision process may be found online here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/asmtrev/home.htm>

Resolution in Support of Educator Effectiveness

The State Board of Education approved a resolution encouraging districts to adhere to key principles when designing and implementing teacher evaluation systems.

“The State Board of Education has a significant interest in ensuring that educator evaluation systems throughout the state are of high-quality and serve to improve student outcomes, and so should provide guidance to districts on the characteristics of high-quality evaluation systems and is authorized to do so under the Licensed Personnel Performance Evaluation Act,” the resolution states.

“To have the potential to be considered fair, transparent, rigorous, and relevant,” the resolution states, “an evaluation system should have the following features:

- a. The standards for evaluating performance are clear and relevant to the individuals’ roles and responsibilities and advance the system’s goal of improving student outcomes; and
- b. Multiple valid and reliable measures are used to assess performance against the standards, and multiple objective measures of student growth serve as the predominant factor in assessing performance for those educators with direct responsibility for students; and
- c. Evaluations provide useful information about the performance of the individual to both the individual and the system through the use of multiple overall rating categories and personalized feedback on performance with respect to each standard used; and
- d. Evaluators are well-trained with respect to the standards, appropriate assessment methods, and resources available for improvement; and
- e. The standards used to evaluate performance are widely known, embedded in the culture, and consistently used to provide frequent feedback designed to improve student outcomes; and
- f. Sufficient and meaningful resources are available to assist educators seeking to improve their performance; and
- g. The evaluation system is consistently monitored for its fairness, transparency, rigor, and relevance, and its design and implementation are adapted as needed.”

The resolution states that evaluation systems incorporating the criteria above should result in:

- a. Educators who are consistently high performers are recognized and rewarded, and have multiple opportunities to develop their leadership and share their knowledge and skills for the benefit of students in the school, district, and/or state; and

- b. Educators who are solid performers are recognized and rewarded, provided with multiple opportunities to share their knowledge and skills in their areas of strength, and provided with ongoing high-quality professional development targeted to areas in need of improvement as identified by evaluations; and
- c. Educators who are consistently poor performers despite opportunities to improve are removed from their positions in a process that is both quick and fair.

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones said the board is “rightfully taking its leadership role” by approving the resolution and that the support for the language “sends the right message” for Colorado’s application for federal Race to the Top grant dollars.

“I wholeheartedly support it and it’s one more example of Colorado leading the way,” said state board member Marcia Neal, who added that the resolution is another example of Colorado’s strong position in the competitive federal grant process. “We’re winning. We’re ahead,” she added.

“This is a pretty remarkable day for education in Colorado and this is a big part of that,” said state board member Jane Goff.

Annual Report from State Advisory Committee for Gifted Student Education

The State Advisory Committee (SAC) for Gifted Student Education presented its annual report to the state board. The report offered a summary of current local and statewide topics and the committee’s comments on those issues. “It is a vision of SAC that gifted student education integrates into quality instruction, as general and special education, so that advanced programming needs and interests of learners are recognized and nurtured.”

The report includes recommendations for implementation of elements from “Forward Thinking,” the department’s guiding document for improving support to service to school districts statewide. The report also commented on the state’s new accreditation process, currently being developed under Senate Bill 09-163; on the use of the Colorado Growth Model in supporting gifted learners; on the development and growing use of the Response to Intervention approach in classrooms; on parental/family engagement issues; and other issues.

Additional Agenda Items

In other matters, the board:

- Approved requests for emergency renewal authorizations (two total) and requests for initial emergency authorizations (six total).
- Approved a waiver request from certain statutes by Adams County School District 14 on behalf of Community Leadership Academy.
- Adopted permanent rules for the authorization of charter schools as Food Service Authorities. Charter schools that are granted the designation will have more flexibility in managing their food service programs. The rules include a timeline and procedures for a district charter school or an institute charter school to apply to the department for authorization as a school food authority. The rules also include a timeline, standards and procedures for the department of education to use in granting or denying authorization as a school food authority. The rules state that the department will not grant authorizations until July 1, 2011 and that no more than four applications may be approved.
- Adopted rules pertaining to the Closing the Achievement Gap initiative. State law calls for the state board to set rules determining the selection criteria for schools to be included in the Closing the Achievement Gap program. Under the rules, schools become eligible based on persistent gaps in achievement and growth rates between minority and non-minority groups and poverty and non-poverty groups. The rules require the department to provide an outline of the different strategies that eligible districts and schools may implement to improve academic achievement. The rules also require eligible district and schools to provide to their local school board a list of strategies selected by the school or district and to send that information to the department of education.
- Held a rulemaking hearing but decided to forestall adoption on the proposed rules for the administration of Individual Career and Academic Plans. Board member Peggy Littleton said she needed more time to read the draft rules and board chair Bob Schaffer questioned whether the draft rules exceeded what state law requested of the department. Following S.B.09-256, the board is required to promulgate rules that establish standards for individual career and academic plans (ICAPs) for students enrolled in all public schools in the state.

ICAPs are designed to assist a student and his or her parent or legal guardian in exploring postsecondary career and educational opportunities, aligning course work and curriculum to that plan, applying to postsecondary education institutions and securing financial aid and ultimately entering the workforce.

Recognition of Distinguished Title 1 Schools

The Colorado State Board of Education took time today to recognize La Jara Elementary School and Stein Elementary School as Title I Distinguished Schools of the year.

La Jara Elementary School is located in North Conejos RE-1J School District and Stein Elementary is in Lakewood in Jefferson County Schools.

The award recognizes two Title I schools—one that has achieved academic success, and one that made progress in closing achievement gaps associated with race and poverty.

La Jara principal Brian Crowther told the board that “there is no magic bullet...It’s hard work and quality instruction in the classroom.”

State board chair Bob Schaffer commended the schools for their success.

“We are honored to have you here and thankful for what you do,” he said. “Everybody knows that the real rubber meets the road where you are. You are the ones doing the heavy lifting, the heaviest lifting of delivering quality academic instruction to Colorado’s schoolchildren.”

The Title I Distinguished School Program is a joint project of the U.S. Department of Education and the National Association of State Title I Directors. The distinguished schools receive an award of \$10,000 and will be recognized at the National Title I Conference in Washington, D.C. in January.

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

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