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News Release

Aspen School District Superintendent Diana Sirko Appointed Deputy Commissioner

Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today announced the appointment of Aspen School District Superintendent Diana Sirko as deputy commissioner for learning and results.

"We are extremely pleased that Diana Sirko has agreed to bring her extraordinary talents as an educational leader to the department," said Commissioner Jones. "She will lead a number of critical initiatives that go to the heart of transforming the learning experience for students statewide. She brings 35 years of experience as a teacher and administrator in a variety of communities, including rural and city school districts and all in Colorado. I can think of no better person who understands what's needed and who can organize the work that's needed to reach our collective goals."

Sirko will begin work at CDE on June 4. She replaces former Deputy Commissioner Ken Turner, who retired last month.

"It's very exciting for me as a life-long member of Colorado's educational system, to try to have an impact at the state level; to do what's best for all kids across the entire state," said Sirko in a statement issued by the Aspen School District.

Commissioner Jones said Sirko would head up the implementation of the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K or House Bill 08-2120) and the state's new accreditation process as envisioned in the state's new Education Accountability Act (Senate Bill 09-163). She will also oversee the implementation and training of new statewide content

standards and manage many of the initiatives detailed in “Forward Thinking,” the department’s blueprint for reform.

Sirko has served on numerous statewide educational committees, worked on curriculum and instructional programs statewide and has served on a variety of professional boards. Sirko has led the Aspen district and its elementary, middle school and high school since 2003.

Previously, she served as deputy superintendent for instruction in Colorado Springs School District 11 (2001—2003), as assistant superintendent for instruction in Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8 (1997—2001), as acting superintendent in Falcon School District 49 (1996—1997) and as an elementary school principal in Douglas County Schools (1990—1996). She has worked as a math, science and computer science teacher in Falcon, Delta, Montrose and Gunnison.

Sirko is currently adjunct professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and she has taught classes at the University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, Adams State College and University of Phoenix. She was nominated three times for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching and in 2006 was nominated for the Colorado Superintendent of the Year award from the Colorado Association of School Executives.

Sirko earned a Ph.D. in administration and supervision from the University of Colorado at Denver (1999) and a master’s degree in education technology from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of Northern Colorado in 1975.

Interim Deputy Commissioner

Commissioner Jones also announced the appointment of Larry Vaughn as interim deputy commissioner. Vaughn has extensive experience in transforming struggling schools and districts nationwide and will support the department’s initiatives to assist such schools in Colorado.

Vaughn is the founder of Quality Leadership Resources, Inc. and has served as superintendent in school districts in Texas and Kansas. He holds a doctorate of education from the University of Houston and a master’s degree in education from Mississippi State University.

Vaughn will assist Commissioner Jones with managing projects under the learning and results portion of the CDE organization until Sirko’s arrival in June. Vaughn will join the department on Tuesday, Jan. 19.

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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