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News Release

Colorado State Board Of Education Schedules April Vote On Rules For New Accountability System

The Colorado State Board of Education agreed this week to vote in April on rules for the state's new school accountability system, primarily to allow more time to gather public comment.

The rules will give school districts the guidelines for following the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (following S.B. 09-163). The act rewrites the state's accreditation process, spells out how districts shall accredit schools, and details an active role for the state in intervening in situations where low achievement persists.

Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones characterized the new system as a milestone for the state and noted that the current version of the rules is a product of many rounds of public comment.

The board heard from representatives from school districts (Adams School District 50, Kit Carson School District), the Colorado Children's Campaign, the Colorado Rural Schools Caucus and the Colorado Association for Health, Recreation and Dance.

Colorado Association of School Boards Executive Director Ken DeLay encouraged the board not to rush.

"This is a complex statute and these are complex rules," said DeLay. "We can almost be certain in a year or two from now we will almost certainly discover [that] some modifications are needed." He noted in particular that the new system brings school under-performance issues

directly to CDE, changing the longstanding approach of expecting that local communities be responsible for struggling schools.

The new accreditation system envisions evaluating a variety of factors including growth in student achievement; postsecondary and workforce readiness; dropout rates and progress toward closing achievement gaps based on income and ethnicity. Under this system, the state board will adopt targets by Nov. 30 each year that will form the basis for the accreditation levels. Each year's targets will apply to the following full school year.

Districts will be assigned to one of six accreditation categories—accredited with distinction; accredited; accredited with improvement plan; accredited with priority improvement plan; accredited with turnaround plan; and unaccredited.

The law gives the commissioner of education the authority to create a state review panel that will evaluate improvement strategies and recommend interventions.

If a district fails to make adequate progress under a turnaround plan or remains under a turnaround or priority improvement plan for a combined total of five years, the commissioner has the authority to ask the review panel to consider conversion of the district.

Based on the state review panel's recommendation, the state board could ultimately determine that a district needs reorganization, external management, conversion to innovation status or charter, or school closure.

The state board will vote to adopt the rules at its April 14 meeting. The new rules will go into effect in May, with implementation of the new accreditation system beginning in the fall.

A complete version of the draft rules are posted at the following link:
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdegen/downloads/SBEAccreditationofSchoolDistricts.pdf>

The state board welcomes comments through March 25 to
state.board@cde.state.co.us.

The board cleared the way for the new accreditation system by approving two related measures. The board repealed rules relating to the administration of an Academic Performance Rating (a feature of

the previous accountability system) and adopted rules for the administration of a new Colorado School Awards Program.

Statewide Facility Assessment

The board received the Statewide Financial Assistance Priority Assessment findings from the Division of Public School Capital Construction Assistance. The assessment, which studied the condition and educational adequacy of all public schools in Colorado, was authorized by the 2008 state legislature to assist the Capital Construction Assistance Board (CCAB) in prioritizing grant applications for Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) awards.

Findings from the report indicate a combined current and forecasted need of \$17.9 billion for Tier 1 facilities for 2010-2018. A Tier 1 facility is a building or part of a building generally used for teaching and learning purposes.

More detail is available at the following link:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/20100311stateassessment.pdf>

Pikes Peak BOCES and Fremont School District RE-2

The board voted unanimously to uphold a decision by the Colorado Department of Education to allow Fremont School District RE-2 to withdraw from the South Central BOCES' administrative unit. Fremont School District will join Pikes Peak BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services).

Board Recognizes Award-Winning Teachers and Principal

The state board this week recognized two teachers who received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the highest recognition that a kindergarten through 12th-grade mathematics or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. Content specialists at state departments of education coordinate the Presidential Award program in each state.

Both recipients were Cherry Creek School District teachers—Kathryn Eyolfson (Coyote Hills Elementary School) for elementary science and Lana Hansen (Willow Creek Elementary School) for elementary mathematics.

Recipients of the award receive a citation signed by the President of the United States; a paid trip for two to Washington, D.C., to attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities; gifts from sponsors from around the country; and a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation.

In addition to honoring individual achievement, the goal of the award program is to exemplify the highest standards of mathematics and science teaching. Awardees serve as models for their colleagues, inspiration to their communities and leaders in the improvement of mathematics and science education.

The board also recognized Richard Hargrove, the 2009 Colorado Distinguished Title I Principal from Springfield High School (Springfield School District). Distinguished principal nominees had to demonstrate a high degree of skill in five areas—leadership, instruction, management, supervision and communication. The nomination indicated that 69 percent of Springfield High School's Title I students scored proficient on reading and/or math CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) or were classified as "catching up."

Prospect Ridge Academy

The state board voted unanimously to remand Prospect Ridge Academy Charter School's proposal back to Adams 12 Five Star Schools for reconsideration. The Adams 12 Board of Education had previously rejected the charter school application.

Representatives for Adams 12 indicated that an existing district Core Knowledge charter has proposed opening a second site and that the district is planning to open a magnet school focused on STEM skills (science, technology, engineering and math) in the fall.

A number of state board members said they saw no basis in state law for the local board's rejection of Prospect Ridge Academy. Said state board member Marcia Neal: "Simply looking at the charter school laws, I couldn't find a reason to reject this application."

"Give the parents the choice," state board vice-chair Randy DeHoff told the district. "That's the idea of choice."

Transportation Rules

Following a hearing on Wednesday, March 10, that drew testimony from transportation directors in Poudre School District and Jefferson County Schools, the state board approved revision to the rules for the Annual Inspection and Preventative Maintenance of School Transportation Vehicles.

One issue that surfaced was during an annual inspection of school transportation vehicles whether all four wheels need to be pulled for a

brake inspection if a school bus is equipped with a retarder or secondary braking system. The final rules continue the current rule allowing vehicles with less than 4,000 miles, and which are equipped with a retarder meeting the specifications of CDE minimum standards, to have the brakes checked on two wheels—one front and one rear. These wheels need to be different than those pulled for the previous inspection. All other vehicles must have all four wheels pulled for the brakes to be inspected.

Also, the final rules allow buses equipped with automatic slack adjusters to travel 6,000 miles before the requisite brake adjustment is checked. Manual slack adjusters still need checking every 4,000 miles.

Other Action

Key items the board also considered and approved include:

- A new General Education Development (GED) testing center planned for 231 N. Main Street, Brighton.
- Waiver requests from certain statutes by St. Vrain Valley School District RE-1J on behalf of Flagstaff Academy.
- Waiver requests from certain statutes by Harrison School District 2 on behalf of Atlas Preparatory School.
- Appointments to the Facility Schools Type 1 Board.
- A request by the Lewis-Palmer School District 38 for exclusive chartering authority for the 2009-2010 school year.
- Requests for initial emergency authorizations (monthly total of eight).
- The principal/administrator induction program submitted by Telluride R-1 School District.
- The teacher/special services provider induction program submitted by Fowler School District R4J.
- The five-year reauthorization of the teacher preparation program at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design.

- A new master's degree program in elementary education from Metro State College.
- A new master of arts American Sign Language teacher preparation program from the University of Northern Colorado.
- Notice of rulemaking to amend 1 CCR 301-5, rules for the administration of the accountability for alternative campuses to comply with the Education Accountability Act of 2009.
- Notice of rulemaking concerning alternative teacher preparation programs.
- Notice of rulemaking for the rules governing the Renewal Energy and Energy Efficiency for Schools Loan Program.
- Notice of rulemaking concerning rules for the administration of the Teacher of the Year Program.

For additional information about other approved items on consent, please visit the state board's Web page:

<http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/Public>

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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