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News Release

Colorado Launches New Strategy Focused on College Readiness; Seven Schools Receive Grant For Implementation In 2010-11

Seven high schools have been selected to participate in a new Colorado Legacy Foundation program that will implement a proven model for dramatically increasing student success in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in math, science and English.

The new initiative, known as Colorado Legacy Schools, is the result of the state's partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative and the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program.

The initiative aims to significantly increase the number and diversity of students enrolling in and passing math, science and English AP exams. The goal is to prepare more students for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (also known as STEM).

The program trains and coaches AP and Pre-AP teachers, provides resources and support for AP students, broadens enrollment opportunities, extends learning time and provides incentives.

The seven schools selected for the 2010-2011 school year are:

- Abraham Lincoln High School, Denver Public Schools

- Centennial High School, Pueblo City School District
- Columbine High School, Jeffco Public Schools
- Fruita Monument High School, Mesa County Valley School District 51
- Grand Junction High School, Mesa County Valley School District 51
- James Irwin Charter High School, Harrison School District
- Northglenn High School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

In all, the Colorado Legacy Schools initiative seeks to serve more than 16,000 students, 400 teachers and 60 schools statewide over the next five years. The initiative is focused on high-poverty, high-minority high schools and their feeder middle schools.

“The Colorado Legacy Schools program is an essential component of a broader, statewide strategy to close achievement gaps and provide necessary supports to minority and low-income students to tackle challenging courses and realize their potential to attend college,” said Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones.

Colorado is including the program in its Race to the Top application and has partnered with the National Math and Science Initiative on an Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) application. Full implementation of program components is contingent upon the state’s ability to raise funds at the both the state and national level. Colorado expects to receive notice of federal funding in September 2010.

In two years, the National Math and Science Initiative has taken the Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program to 140 schools across six states and has trained 3,585 existing AP and Pre-AP teachers in curriculum development, effective pedagogy and specialized content knowledge.

The program resulted in significant improvement—a 52 percent increase in AP exams passed; a 72 percent increase in AP exams passed by African American and Hispanic students; and a 48 percent increase in AP exams passed by female students.

Gov. Bill Ritter and Colorado State Sen. Chris Romer have been major supporters of bringing the partnership to Colorado and secured a \$150,000 challenge grant to the Colorado Legacy Foundation to launch the program in schools this year.

To date, the Legacy Foundation has secured \$128,640 against this match. Contributors have included \$75,000 from Daniels Fund, \$25,000 from El Pomar Foundation, \$18,640 from Amgen Foundation and \$10,000 from Xcel Energy.

"This program enhances our state's STEM, postsecondary and workforce readiness initiatives and will foster the next generation of scientists and engineers who are competitive nationally and internationally," said Gov. Ritter. "The National Math and Science Initiative and the Colorado Legacy Schools work will impact Colorado by investing in teacher skills that align with student outcomes."

Colorado Legacy Schools will transform the culture for student expectations by forging inclusive environments that encourage open enrollment and recruit high-need and reluctant students into AP courses. Nationally, for every 1,000 African American and Hispanic juniors and seniors, only 30 exams are passed. That compares with 108 passed nationally among all student populations.

For every 1,000 minority juniors and seniors who take AP math, science and English exams in Colorado, only 29 pass. By comparison, out of 1,000 juniors and seniors in all student populations, 141 pass the same exams.

The Colorado Legacy Foundation will partner with schools to implement the program's key components, including leading teachers to coach other AP and pre-AP teachers; training to upgrade the content knowledge for AP teachers currently in the classroom; providing financial incentives for teachers and students based on results; allowing open enrollment to AP classes to provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds; allowing more time on task for students through prep sessions and after-school tutoring; and establishing high standards with accountability for results.

"It has been shown that this model has a proven track record of increasing college matriculation, increasing college freshman grade point averages and improving participating students' college persistence," said Samantha Long, director of Colorado Legacy Schools at the Colorado Legacy Foundation. "We are excited to begin this work in earnest with these seven schools."

Long said the schools were selected based on their readiness and interest to implement the full spectrum of program components in the 2010-2011 school year.

About Colorado Legacy Foundation

The Colorado Legacy Foundation is a privately funded nonprofit organization that works to address emerging educational issues and spark innovation in schools throughout Colorado.

Founded in 2007, the Colorado Legacy Foundation is governed by an independent board of trustees that develops initiatives to support the Colorado Department of Education's work—innovation, entrepreneurship, 21st-century teaching and learning, and the dissemination of best practices.

The Colorado Legacy Foundation helps the department leverage scarce resources, convenes education groups for dialogue and collaboration, and provides recommendations for sustainability and continuous improvement.

About National Math and Science Initiative

A non-profit organization, NMSI's mission is expanding programs with proven success in math and science education across the nation. The initial focus is on replicating two programs—the AP Training and Incentive Program and UTeach, a program to recruit and prepare college students to become qualified math, science and computer science teachers. Both programs have 10 years of proven success.

Major support for the national initiative has come from the Exxon Mobil Corp., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, with in-kind assistance provided by IBM and Perot Systems.

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