

COLORADO **DEPARTMENT**
of EDUCATION



Forward Thinking
PROGRESS REPORT

JULY 2008

TO THE Education Community of Colorado,

In September 2007 the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado State Board of Education jointly announced the launch of *Forward Thinking*, an ambitious plan “to create a purpose-driven and dynamic system of educational leadership, service and support that relentlessly focuses on the learning of ALL students.”

When *Forward Thinking* was first released, I pledged as commissioner that the department would report to the public about our progress on an annual basis.

The steps detailed in the pages that follow provide a transparent overview of how the organization is gearing itself to support the seven detailed goals embedded in *Forward Thinking*. To read a copy of the plan itself, please visit this Web link: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/download/PDF/ForwardThinking.pdf>

The work is just beginning, but our progress to date—coupled with the response from school districts to the changes we have made so far—confirms we are heading in the right direction.

Forward Thinking requires teamwork, leadership and creativity and we thank everyone who has contributed to date: superintendents, principals, teachers and school staff; Gov. Bill Ritter and the Colorado state legislature; the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE); the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB); the Colorado Education Association (CEA); all Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES); and the business and foundation communities. The level of support demonstrates what we already know—we are in this together.

Sincerely,



Dwight D. Jones, Commissioner



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Progress Chart** A graphic display of progress on each of the *Forward Thinking* goals . . . p2

- Goal 1** Provide guidance and support to meet school and district needs p3

- Goal 2** Enhance professional development involving best practices p4

- Goal 3** Develop tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all p5

- Goal 4** Implement a seamless, collaborative leadership system with intentional intensity, urgency and impatience . . p6

- Goal 5** Make efficient, effective use of federal, state and private funds p7

- Goal 6** Become a reliable source for research, data, and analysis that is envied by all professionals p8

- Goal 7** Define, detail and implement a model that builds and expands leadership capacity p8



Progress Chart

Goal #	Goal Description	Talks Occurred	Goal Drafted	Plan Drafted and Approved	Resources Committed	Approval Given for Project Launch	Project Gains Traction (Maintenance of Effort)	Implementation Evaluated	Goal Attained
1A	Develop mission of service & support	██████████							
1B	Enhance the CDE brand	██████████							
2A	Implement statewide system of support	██████████							
2B	Restore CDE credibility by enlisting top experts	██████████							
2C	Add content experts (sci, math, arts, soc st, gap)	██████████							
2D	Help rural districts via BOCES partnerships	██████████							
3A	Close achievement gaps related to race & income	██████████							
3B	Provide model curricula and assessment tools	██████████							
3C	Use incentives to support use of model curricula	██████████							
3D	Support high-quality choice solutions	██████████							
4A	Revise and improve district accreditation	██████████							
4B	Revise standards and assessments	██████████							
5A	Make budget transparent and understandable	██████████							
5B	Implement position control	██████████							
5C	Fund schools that reflects priority based on need	██████████							
5D	Implement standards for multi-district online	██████████							
6A	Improve how data are managed & research done	██████████							
6B	Rely more on longitudinal data (for accountability)	██████████							
7A	Implement network of distributed leadership	██████████							
7B	Establish Colorado Legacy Foundation	██████████							

Goal 1 [Provide guidance and support to meet school and district needs.]

Goal 1A: Develop a department mission that espouses service and support to the field.

Status: While a formal mission statement for the department has not yet been adopted, there is widespread agreement that the actions of department staff reflect a greater commitment to service aimed at supporting greater student achievement.

In fall 2007, while preparing to revise how districts are accredited, regional managers conducted workshops throughout the state.

A similar tour of the state took place in winter 2008 to support development of The Colorado Growth Model.

In response to House Bill 07-1118 and in conjunction with the Graduation Guidelines Council, the Colorado State Board of Education conducted six community meetings to solicit input concerning the adequacy of state standards and assessments. Those meetings took place on the following dates:

Feb. 20	Summit County - Public Meeting
March 17	Jefferson County - Public Meeting
April 1	Colorado Springs - Public Meeting
April 15	Denver - Business Community & Junior Achievement
April 21	Denver - Business and Higher Education Community
April 22	Grand Junction - Superintendents

Finally, the state board is reviewing its strategic plan. As that takes place, the department is prepared to act on changes that may emerge.

Future: Draft a formal mission statement for the department that emphasizes service in support of enhanced student performance.

Goal 1B: Enhance the CDE brand by publicly reporting how well stakeholders perceive the brand experience matches the brand promise; i.e., that CDE delivers on its espoused mission of service and support to the field.

Status: Since coming on board June 1, 2007, the commissioner has visited 55 of 178 districts. Responses from the 162 superintendents who participated in an end-of-year survey administered by the state board in spring 2008 show that they appreciate the outreach effort.

In July 2007, CDE created a communications office to improve the quality of information available to districts. The office is close to completion on a Web site redesign and funnels all communications to the field via an e-newsletter titled "The Scoop."

Additionally, the communications office provides regular updates on news and events related to the department. Visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html> to sign up.

Finally, steps have been taken to embed the brand of service in support of better student results deep within the CDE culture. To this end, the commissioner has hosted three workshops for the 50-member CDE leadership team. Workshops were held July 2007 and March and June, 2008. Topics included translating the state board's strategic plan into an operational plan, enhancing service and support, and translating department goals into achievable results.

Future: Periodically survey the field about perceptions of the department.

Goal 2 Enhance professional development involving best practices.

Goal 2A: Design and implement a more consistent and comprehensive statewide system of support that helps schools and districts build the capacity needed to achieve ambitious student outcomes.

Status: A cross-unit team of CDE staff has forged partnerships with six districts to close achievement gaps associated with race and income and deliver customized resources to needy districts. A second partnership called “Learning Force” was formed with districts in southeast Colorado.

The student support unit has embarked on a statewide effort to promote Response to Intervention (RTI), involving numerous presentations to the field as well as professional development workshops.

Future: A study by WestEd, a non-profit research, development and service agency, will identify how CDE resources can better align with priorities. Findings from this study are forming the basis for action within each unit.

Goal 2B: Restore the credibility of the department by enlisting top experts in the country who have unimpeachable credentials and no record of ideological bias to serve on the technical advisory panels which the department convenes for the purpose of studying the validity, reliability and/or adequacy of standards, assessments and practices.

Status: Solid work done by the Colorado Reading Directorate cleared the way for the department to establish the Colorado Literacy Council, which will broaden membership, add national experts and more representation from higher education and the field.

CDE is collaborating with the Vaughn-Gross Center (Texas), the Florida Center for Reading Research and the New England Comprehensive Center on statewide K-12 literacy models and exemplary practices related to quality teacher education programs.

With respect to assessments, the CDE Technical Advisory Committee has helped ensure that the effort is on track. Members include the following:

Dr. Bob Linn, University of Colorado at Boulder
Dr. Micheal Kolen, University of Iowa
Dr. Martha Thurlow, University of Chicago
Dr. Elliot Asp, Cherry Creek School District
Dr. Jonathan Dings, Boulder Valley School District
Dr. Rachel Quenemoen, National Center for Educational Outcomes, University of Minnesota
Dr. Jamal Abedi, University of California at Davis

To support the standards revision effort (called for by S.B. 08-212), the department convened a stakeholder group. It includes statewide representatives as well as nationally-recognized experts in standards and assessments.

Further, the department has enlisted the assistance of a well-known regional lab (WestEd) to help with standard revision and assessment redesign.

The department has also engaged a national expert (Dr. Douglas Reeves) to support the Closing the Achievement Gap initiative.

Future: As the standard revision initiative gains momentum, CDE staff will enlist the assistance of content experts in the areas of math, science, social studies and the arts.

Goal 2C: Provide more and better support for content- and curriculum-based efforts through the acquisition and development of in-house expertise in math, reading, science, writing, arts (including music), social studies and languages.



Status: The department requested \$450,000 from the legislature to add content and curriculum experts in the areas of math, science, arts, social studies and closing the achievement gap.

Future: Develop model curricula and disseminate best practice guides.

Goal 2D: Enhance support to smaller and more rural schools and districts through a partnership with the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services and do so in a way that makes it feasible for more BOCES to offer a full array of services.

Status: With the support of the state board, the department worked with BOCES directors to enact Senate Bill 08-38. This new law will increase the capacity of BOCES to support improvement efforts in small and rural districts. CDE activity has focused on gaining an understanding of the 21 BOCES organizations, their financial structure and the array of services currently provided. Work with the BOCES on Response to Intervention state-wide implementation remains a high priority. CDE will continue its partnership with BOCES, with particular emphasis on providing RtI regional support and service to smaller and rural districts.

CDE has engaged in Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute projects which are targeted to student attendance, student participation and cultural bias. CDE is also exploring a partnership with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs.

Future: CDE will collaborate with the Southwest BOCES on the design of a pilot for RTI implementation. It will focus on the Native American student population in Colorado and help ensure targeted interventions for preschool and kindergarten students.

A capacity-building grant for formative assessment is in the planning stages. The overarching next step will be continuing the dialogue and implementation of RTI regional training and coaching. Work is also underway to pursue other aspects of enhanced service to rural areas, including technology (distance learning, video conferencing) and data collection/reporting.

Goal 3 [Develop tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all.]

Goal 3A: Support districts and schools in ways that narrow and eliminate the race and income gap.

Status: The department received approval for \$1.8 million in new funding to support efforts designed to close the achievement gap. The department identified a set of providers with a record of success in closing achievement gaps and entered into "Closing the Achievement Gap Partnerships" with six districts: Eagle County School District 50J, Greeley-Evans School District 6, Roaring Fork School District, St. Vrain Valley School District, Summit School District and Yuma School District-1.

All six districts fit the two criteria to be included in the initiative. First, achievement gaps in all six districts are larger than the state average, and second, district leadership in all six districts demonstrated willingness and capacity to take on the project.

The three-year pilot will begin with comprehensive appraisals of district improvement needs, identification of resources to meet these needs and the development of comprehensive plans. A visiting team of eight evaluators will share informal feedback on their findings shortly after their visit. A more formal report will be presented in August and recommendations for changes at the district level will emerge from that analysis. The department will provide each of the six districts with an achievement gap consultant, instructional programming and professional development. The department will work with each of the six districts to determine provider(s) that best meet their needs.

Beyond that, the department is participating in a Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)-sponsored study that examines "what works" for the English-language learner population. A total of 23 Colorado schools participated in this study.

Future: Implementation will follow in 2008-2009.

Goal 3B: Design, detail and disseminate model curricula and related assessment tools that districts may voluntarily use and that are aligned with research, proven to deliver results and supported through vendors that are competent providers of technical support.

Status: Initial talks have occurred, a goal has been drafted, but a plan has not yet been adopted.

Future: Work will begin once content experts are hired. Discussions are ongoing with a provider who could potentially provide a platform for the dissemination of model curricula and assessment tools.

Goal 3C: Identify and implement incentives that make it easy for districts to adopt and use model curricula (and related assessment tools) that the department has developed and offered.

Status: Initial talks have occurred, a goal has been drafted, but a plan has not yet been adopted.

Future: Work will commence once content experts are hired.

Goal 3D: Provide support to creative, innovative and high-quality choice solutions that are capable of efficiently delivering results.

Status: Thus far, more than \$6 million dollars has been given to 29 charter schools in their first three years of operation through the charter school grant program during the 2007-08 fiscal year. The schools of choice unit collaborated with the online education unit in reviewing the online application. Charter school liaisons have met four times to discuss best practices, network and share resources. A literacy workshop was conducted for charter school administrators and teachers. This was followed by the release of a reader's handbook designed for increasing literacy in secondary school students. Finally, monthly workshops titled "Improving Instructional Practices" were held for charter school administrators.

Future: The department is re-doubling its efforts to attract grant funds for this purpose.

Goal 4

Implement a seamless, collaborative leadership system with intentional intensity, urgency and impatience.

Goal 4A: Revise how schools and districts are labeled via accreditation so the label stigma is removed. Doing so will provide information that is more informative, helpful and fair to struggling schools and the results will more likely funnel resources toward schools and programs with the greatest need.

Status: Based on conversations between regional managers and local school district superintendents and staff, CDE prepared a unified approach to accountability that is based on longitudinal growth. At the March and May state board meetings, department staff demonstrated a fully-functional online tool that will make the growth information (at the student, school and district levels) available to the field. A video was produced that is available on the CDE Web site.

Future: A training plan and tools are in development. In August 2008 the tool will be rolled out with the most recent 2008 CSAP results included.

Goal 4B: Develop and implement a revision of standards and assessments so clear expectations exist for P-3 learners. Such revisions must also occur so that opportunities and outcomes for K-12 students are enhanced and so that students exiting high school are prepared for success in life, work or the next level of schooling.

Status: With the support of the state board, CDE worked with the Governor's office and with legislative sponsors in drafting Senate Bill 08-212 (otherwise known as the Colorado Achievement Plan For Kids or CAP4K). This legislation will create a seamless system of standards from pre-school through freshman year of college. With the assistance of WestEd, CDE launched a standards revision process.

A review of the state model content standards involves Colorado educators at all levels and from all regions of the state with the objective is to revise and update our expectations with respect to what students should know and be able to do. The calendar of events has been adjusted pursuant to Senate Bill 212.

A Web page has been created at http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html to gather input and disseminate news about Colorado model content standards.

Future: The department will invite membership and representation on all content specific sub-committees. Final recommendations will go to the Colorado State Board of Education.

Goal 5 [Make efficient, effective use of federal, state and private funds.]

Goal 5A: Make budgeting transparent and understandable so that beginning-of-the-year budget allocations and monthly reports budget managers receive show revenue by source and expenditure by function. Further, this should be done in such a fashion that it is clear to see which funds are compliance dollars and which are discretionary. There needs to be a clear and easy distinction drawn between earmarked, specific-purpose funds — monies that are committed by law or rule and are strictly for use for compliance purposes — and those funds that are not committed by law or rule and are thus discretionary.

Status: Budget reports have been redesigned. They are issued to budget managers once each quarter and show expenditure by object.

In April, WestEd produced a study showing how department expenditures align with department priorities. The study identifies areas of need and recommended next steps. Simply, goal statement 5A cannot be accomplished without a strong position control system in place to account for payroll budgeting and expenditures in the department. The current system needs to be altered to address breakdowns in the methodology and use of the organization code system. The department is producing an action plan to address each of the recommendations from the WestEd study.

Future: CDE will develop of a comprehensive plan to address the areas identified in the WestEd report and identified by the goal 5A and 5B committees.

Goal 5B: Design and implement a position control system at CDE to manage (initially through workflow changes and later via software) human resources that provide staff with tools needed to align human resources to the highest priorities of the department.

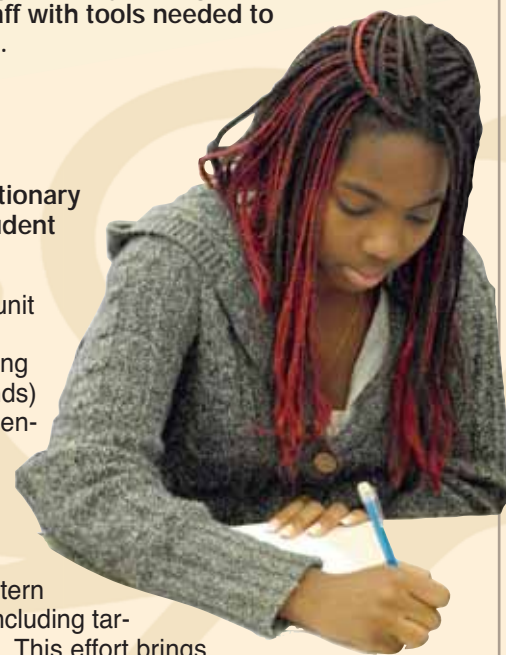
Status: See comments under 5A

Future: See comments under 5A

Goal 5C: Develop a consistent, comprehensive statewide system of discretionary department funding for schools that reflects priority based on student need.

Status: As part of reorganization, the department has formed a new unit (Office of Teaching and Learning). The unit brings together resources from across the department of education (including but not exclusively District Improvement Funds and Title I funds) to develop and deploy tools, strategies, and processes that enable districts to achieve greater growth and performance.

In addition, the state department of education has started to partner in new ways with regional organizations throughout Colorado to provide enhanced support in identified areas of need. As an example, partnerships with districts in southwestern Colorado focus on the Native American student population, including targeted interventions for preschool and kindergarten students. This effort brings together services from English language acquisition, special education, and early childhood units. The state department also created a partnership with rural districts in southeastern Colorado called "Learning Force." The department provides support for local efforts to implement standards-based reform aimed at raising overall achievement and closing achievement gaps. Work is also underway with other regions to deliver enhanced service to rural areas in the area of technology and data collection and reporting.



Future: RTI contacts attended the Rocky Mountain Institute held in June 2008. Trainers are preparing this summer to do regional trainer-of-trainer sessions and a problem-solving/consultation module will begin in the fall. A training video is nearing completion.

Goal 5D: Implement quality standards for the operation and administration of multi-district online educational enterprises and develop the infrastructure (policies, procedures, curriculum, practices and management tools) needed to support this effort.

Status: Quality Standards for Online Learning have been adopted and incorporated into the Rules for the Administration, Certification and Oversight of Colorado Online Programs. The Application for Certification has been completed, reviewed by the Educational Data Advisory Committee (EDAC) and utilized by online programs for submission. Certification has been granted to seven programs and seven others are revising portions of their applications. The unit of online learning is developing a template for the annual report required to be submitted by all programs.

Future: CDE is looking for a way to implement an online system for the submission of applications and annual reports. Additionally, the department is supporting the online community by sponsoring two workshops this summer — a June workshop for program administrators and an August best practice workshop for online teachers.

Goal 6 [Become a reliable source for research, data and analysis that is envied by all professionals.]

Goal 6A: Revise the data management, tool development and the research request process in ways the field finds useful.

Status: Initial talks occurred, a goal was drafted, but a plan has not yet been adopted.

Future: The department established an Institutional Review Board to develop membership protocols for the review of research requests and operating principles. This IRB is in a regular meeting cycle and has reviewed requests to conduct research.

Goal 6B: Increase the reliance on longitudinal data within the state system of educational accountability.

Status: The state board adopted a growth model that will be used in the accreditation process, the School Accountability Report (SAR) and for identifying recipients of the Distinguished Improved Awards. In May, the department rolled out growth model data and displays that were based on 2007 data (this included a training video).

Future: The department is coordinating all efforts for an August 15, 2008 release of growth data.

Goal 7 [Define, detail and implement a model that builds and expands leadership capacity.]

Goal 7A: Define, detail and implement network of distributed leadership within CDE that includes a Principal Center, a Superintendent and School Board Center, a Futures Center and a Coaching Center.

Status: With the support of the state board, the department collaborated with CASE and legislative sponsors in drafting and helping to enact House Bill 08-1370. The law established a statewide leadership academy. The department and its partners are gathering information so a conceptual framework can be created. Agreement has been reached to join forces on needed grants and other funding sources. Partners have gathered, reviewed and discussed strategies implemented by other states for building leadership capacity.

Future: With a law in place, the department is seeking to secure \$50,000 in seed money. Once secured, the department will hire a director and apply for foundation funding. At that point, CDE will build the program, including the development of a concept paper that defines and details assumptions, assets, a leadership development model for Colorado, and key benchmarks for the project. CDE will develop this with assistance from McREL.

Goal 7B: In concert with business and non-profit interests, establish the Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF), a new nonpartisan 501(c)(3) to build statewide leadership capacity and support for aligning Colorado's emerging P-20 education delivery system that meets the global demands of today's rapidly expanding, knowledge-centered economy.

Status: The Colorado Legacy Foundation was founded in December 2007 (registered with Colorado Secretary of State) to "accelerate improvements within the P-12 education delivery system through strategic, statewide public-private partnerships that prepare an increasing number of college-ready students for an economically and socially vibrant Colorado." Secured grants from the Berman Foundation, Rose Foundation, Donnell Kay Foundation and the Gary Williams Energy Foundation total \$425,000.

The Colorado Legacy Foundation Board of Trustees will consist of eight to 10 committed members with a range of professional experiences. Board members will share a common passion for helping transform Colorado's education system and will be in place by July 2008.

To date, the following individuals have agreed to serve on the board:

Dr. Stephen Shogan, Board Chair
Neurosurgeon

Elaine Gantz Berman
Member of the Colorado State Board of Education

Barbara O'Brien
Colorado Lt. Governor

Karen LeFever
Executive Vice President, Educational Services of America

Marla Williams
Attorney, Holme Roberts & Owen LLP

Rob Witwer
Former State Legislator

Jerry Wartgow
Former Superintendent, Denver Public Schools

Honorary Members:
Bruce Benson
President, University of Colorado

Dan Ritchie
Chancellor, University of Denver



Future: An application has been submitted to the IRS to secure public 501(C)(3) status. Fundraising efforts to support program initiatives will continue. The foundation will prepare for the Commissioner's Cup to highlight schools demonstrating sustained progress. A Best Practices Guide and companion video will be completed. Leadership will host planning meetings to outline the Colorado Legacy Scholars initiative to recruit top students to the field of teaching in hard-to-staff areas (June/July 2008). Efforts will take place to meet operational requirements for a fully functioning nonprofit (ongoing throughout 2008).



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

201 E. COLFAX AVE., DENVER, CO 80203

www.cde.state.co.us