

2009



FORWARD THINKING PROGRESS REPORT

A note from Commissioner Jones

To the Education Community of Colorado,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Charles Dickens’ “A Tale of Two Cities” may not have been about the state of modern-day education in Colorado, but 150 years later, the book’s opening line strikes a chord.

The 2008-09 school year saw the **good** and the *not-so-good*: **Gov. Bill Ritter Jr.’s Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids**. *The state budget crisis*. **The Colorado Growth Model**. *Stagnant student achievement*. **The revision of state standards**. *A shortage of highly qualified teachers*. **Promising pilot projects**.

This much seems clear: The state is shifting its view of education. From early childhood to higher education, the preparation, progress and success of each child has moved to the forefront. For the Colorado Department of Education, increasing academic achievement for all students remains our driving force.

In fall 2007, and in alignment with the strategic plan of the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado Department of Education released “**Forward Thinking**,” a plan which publicly announced seven goals that, when attained, would culminate in **a statewide system of accountability and support** addressing the needs of all districts. Some called them too lofty. Others believe the department was over-reaching. Many doubted anything would change.

Two years later, the same seven goals continue to direct our work. Though the “sub-goals” change as we accomplish some and add others, the progress we’ve made continues to confirm we are headed in the right direction. And for that success, we thank all those who have partnered with us, including the Colorado State Board of Education; superintendents, principals, teachers and school staff; Gov. Bill Ritter Jr. and the Colorado State Legislature; the Colorado Association of School Executives; the Colorado Association of School Boards; the Colorado Education Association; all Boards of Cooperative Educational Services and too many in the business and foundation world to count.

The level of teamwork, leadership and creativity demonstrates what we already know and appreciate — we are all in this together.

Most sincerely,



Dwight D. Jones
Commissioner of Education





... showed it under the others.
... Corner heard William. "I'm all set
... and I'm going to be on my way
... Come to sleep."
... can see the shadows. But the
... as William drove away. He sighed
... headed down the road.

By shadows of the next day, William had stopped
... to show. "I brought seeds and plants from
... in the morning. Be on foot at dawn!"
... came to the door of her cabin.
... "Yes."
... "The three."
... to the front of the Big House the
... seeds and plants.
... always made her happy
... the beautiful plants on
... the ground.
... the ground was bright.
... the plants out of the



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GOAL 1

Provide guidance and support to meet school and district needs.

Strategy

Helping build the capacity of districts to develop “high-performing schools” is the mission of the department and the foundation of CDE’s statewide system of accountability and support. It describes how CDE will partner with and aid districts in their pursuit of educational excellence and high achievement. Communication with and input from stakeholders statewide is critical to the success of this system.

Milestones

- Between January and March 2009, staff from the Colorado Education Association and CDE visited 13 communities (Denver, Lamar, Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Sterling, Limon, Durango, Alamosa, Pueblo, Telluride, Grand Junction, Eagle and Burlington) to engage in conversations with 500 teachers. The feedback gathered is informing the department’s organization of professional development related to standards and assessments. A 75-page summary of the findings from this tour can be viewed at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/download/PDF/CAP4KTeacherTourreport.pdf>
- Making true on his promise to personally visit all 178 school districts, this year Commissioner Jones spent time with students and staff in 86 districts, bringing his two-year total to 124. (He plans to complete the entire round in the 2009-10 school year.)
- The Office of Professional Services (i.e., educator licensure) is midway through an improvement process to enhance licensure cycle time. For example, the former 14-week process for an initial license has been reduced to four to six weeks. A paper application system is being replaced by an online system, which will increase efficiency.

In the course of a year, CDE processes approximately **35,000** professional licensure applications.

Next Steps for 2009-10

- Finalize, implement and continuously improve CDE’s statewide system of support.
- Continue and expand, where possible, efforts to receive stakeholder input.
- Develop and implement a unified plan application and necessary software.

GOAL / DESCRIPTION	Goal Drafted & Approved	Resources Committed	Approval Given for Project Launch	Project Gains Traction	Implementation Evaluated	Goal Attained
1A Develop a mission of service and support						
1B Enhance the CDE brand						

GOAL 2

Enhance professional development involving best practices.

Strategy

Professional development, focused on a district’s specific needs, plays a large role in CDE’s statewide system of accountability and support. What services do all districts need? What additional resources do some districts require? And which districts would benefit from intensive, targeted assistance? To answer these questions, CDE condensed accountability measures (by which district need would be identified) and consulted with experts in specified content areas.

Milestones

- Senate Bill 09-163 or the “Accountability Alignment Act” brings the three forms of educational accountability — Adequate Yearly Progress, School Accountability Reports and accreditation — into greater harmony for districts to be held accountable for their students’ achievement.
- Collaborative efforts with the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd, a regional research and development agency, continue to keep Colorado out front with regard to innovation in education.
- Now on staff at CDE are four content specialists — math, science, arts and social studies — who have played a central role in the revision of content standards, and have helped to provide support for content and curriculum efforts in the field.
- A partnership with Southeast Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Santa Fe Trails BOCES and the South Central BOCES allowed the successful launch and completion of the first year of the three-year Learning Force math intervention pilot project, providing targeted, evidence-based intervention for students who scored unsatisfactory on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Preliminary data is encouraging.
 - In the San Luis Valley, CDE launched a three-year secondary math intervention pilot using online instructional tools provided by Compass Learning.
 - In the southwest area of the state, CDE collaborated with the local BOCES on a summer conference focusing on effective instructional practices for Native-American students preK-3. Personnel from Ft. Lewis College, the University of Northern Colorado and Southwest BOCES participated.
- CDE is midway through a three-phase revision of the content standards for 13 subjects. Phase One (math, science, reading/writing and music) was completed in May.

Next Steps for 2009-10

- Hold informational meetings, training and professional development on the implications and implementation of S.B.09-163.
- Expand existing pilots and/or the initiation of new projects.
- Identify model curricula and effective practices for specific content areas.
- Complete Phase Two of the standards revision process in July 2009 (history, geography, civics, economics and financial literacy) and Phase Three in September (art, dance/theater, physical education and world languages).
- Present the revised standards to the state board for approval in Dec. 2009. Begin evaluation of the state assessment program.

GOAL / DESCRIPTION	Goal Drafted & Approved	Resources Committed	Approval Given for Project Launch	Project Gains Traction	Implementation Evaluated	Goal Attained
2A Design/implement a statewide system of support						
2B Restore CDE credibility by enlisting top experts						
2C Hire content experts						
2D Help rural districts via BOCES partnerships						
2E (formerly Goal 4B) Revise standards and assessments						

GOAL 3

Develop tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all.

Strategy

CDE is committed to developing an aligned preschool through postsecondary system that prepares all Colorado students for success after high school — without remediation for those headed to college — and equips students with the necessary skills to acquire knowledge; analyze, synthesize and apply information in decision making; and effectively communicate to a variety of audiences.

Milestones

- CDE's Closing the Achievement Gap pilot completed the first year of a three-year project in which six districts are partnering with national service providers (Edison Learning, McREL and America's Choice) that provide onsite consultation, various student and teacher resources and professional development. Early evidence indicates that while the gaps haven't narrowed, students are showing increased achievement.
- In December 2008, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted a "school readiness" description, which applies to the youngsters entering school and the schools receiving the youngsters. On June 30, 2009, the state board and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education jointly adopted a description of "postsecondary and workforce readiness" or PWR, describing what a high school graduate needs in order to succeed in either college or the workforce. Both descriptions fulfill requirements outlined in S.B. 08-212 or Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K).
- House Bill 09-1243 or "the Dropout Prevention Act" was created to ensure that districts with uncommonly high student dropout rates create graduation and completion plans designed to promote greater student engagement and decreased student attrition.
- CDE expanded literacy initiatives to include school readiness, preschool through twelfth-grade standards revision, school improvement initiatives, Read to Achieve interventions, expanded learning opportunities and Response to Intervention (RtI) problem solving and progress monitoring modules.
- Under the Charter School Grant Program, more than \$6.5 million dollars was awarded to 34 new charter schools. In addition, a common charter school application and review rubric was created in collaboration with the Colorado League of Charter Schools and the Colorado Charter School Institute.
- In April Commissioner Jones released a paper titled "Choice and Innovation," articulating the department's commitment to supporting innovative reform that leads to improved opportunities and outcomes for students. View the document at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/download/pdf/CHOICE.pdf>

Next Steps for 2009-10

- With an additional \$1.7 million in state appropriations, expand the Closing the Achievement Gap project among additional schools in existing pilot districts and initiate like projects in other districts.
- Via interagency cooperation (to include health, welfare and mental health) develop an integrated P-3 system of support to increase third-grade student achievement.
- Establish a state-level early childhood council as directed by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Begin the design of a PWR assessment to be implemented in districts by December 2012.
- Establish within CDE an Office of Dropout Prevention.
- Launch a statewide literacy achievement plan that creates a coherent system for preschool through post-secondary literacy initiatives.
- Expand the existing committee created by H.B. 08-1223 to form a statewide literacy advisory council.
- Develop a range of tools and frameworks to provide support to all Colorado school districts on revised content standards.

GOAL / DESCRIPTION	Goal Drafted & Approved	Resources Committed	Approval Given for Project Launch	Project Gains Traction	Implementation Evaluated	Goal Attained
3A Close achievement gaps related to ethnicity and income	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #4F81BD;"></div>					
3B Provide model curricula and related assessment tools	<div style="width: 25%; height: 10px; background-color: #4F81BD;"></div>					
3C Use incentives to support the use of model curricula and related assessment tools	<div style="width: 25%; height: 10px; background-color: #4F81BD;"></div>					
3D Support creative, innovative and high-quality choice solutions	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #4F81BD;"></div>					

GOAL 4

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

Strategy

In order to allow districts time to adjust to the streamlined accountability process introduced in spring 2008, districts were “held harmless” for the 2008-09 school year. (Exceptions were made for a small handful of districts that experienced financial difficulty.) This transition year was to ensure the stability of the new procedures and to build widespread understanding of the system among superintendents, staff, local board members and the public. The Colorado Growth Model, which measures longitudinal growth at the student level, will play an integral role in district accreditation and the department’s statewide system of accountability and support.

Milestones

- Completion of a stakeholder-informed new accreditation process for the 2009-10 school year.
- Roll-out of initial phases of the Colorado Growth Model.
- CDE’s Unit of Online Learning accepted 22 applications for certification. An additional 19 online programs received multi-district certification after state board approval.
- As required by the state legislature, CDE prepared a summary report providing details on student achievement and student demographics in Colorado’s online programs. View the report at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/reports.htm>

Next Steps for 2009-10

- Gather statewide stakeholder input to inform accreditation rules (per S.B. 09-163) to be adopted by the state board and implemented by June 2010.
- Refine standards and processes for content review of teacher preparation programs so classroom teachers know and apply research-based practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment.



GOAL / DESCRIPTION	Goal Drafted & Approved	Resources Committed	Approval Given for Project Launch	Project Gains Traction	Implementation Evaluated	Goal Attained
4A Revise and improve district accreditation						
4B (formerly 5D) Implement standards for multi-district online support						





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