

Educational Success Task Force

2011 Report to Legislative Council

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Task Force Charge

Created by Senate Bill 11-111, the Educational Success Task Force within the Colorado Department of Education consists of members appointed by legislative leadership, the State Board of Education (SBE), and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE). The task force is charged with:

- identifying the junctures within a student's academic career at which grade-level academic performance, or higher, is critical to a student's continued academic progress and to ensuring the student can demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school graduation;
- reviewing the data and research on intervention education services and remedial education and identifying best practices and strategies for identifying students in need of intervention education services, for providing intervention education services at the appropriate junctures in the elementary and secondary education levels, and for providing remedial education at the postsecondary education level;
- reviewing the use of students' individual career and academic plans (ICAP) and making recommendations for diagnostically using a student's assessment results in creating and maintaining the student's ICAP and for including intervention strategies, where appropriate, in a student's ICAP;
- reviewing the practice of social promotion in the public schools of the state and recommending alternative strategies for ensuring students are making sufficient academic progress to demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school graduation; and
- reviewing state statutes, state board rules, and the guidelines adopted by the commission and recommending any appropriate changes to assist school districts and public schools in providing intervention education services to help ensure that students demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school graduation and to assist institutions of higher education in providing remedial education.

Although the task force is authorized to bring interim committee bills in accordance with Joint Rule 24 (b)(1)(D), the main charge of the task force is to submit an initial report to the SBE and the CCHE by July 1, 2012. The report will discuss the task force's findings and recommendations with regard to the critical junctures for ensuring students' academic progress, best practices and strategies for providing intervention education services and remedial education services, the use of ICAPs, and alternative strategies to social promotion. The report may also include any recommendations regarding changes to SBE rules or CCHE guidelines. If the task force makes additional findings or recommendations following submission of the first report, it must submit a second report to the SBE and the CCHE prior to July 1, 2013.

The co-chairs, who are appointed by the SBE and the CCHE, may establish subcommittees of the task force as necessary to complete the duties of the task force. A subcommittee may include persons selected by the co-chairs but who are not appointed members of the task force.

The task force is required to coordinate its work with the Education Leadership Council (ELC), created by executive order of the Governor. In addition, representatives from the task force are required to meet jointly with the House and Senate Education Committees during the 2012 and 2013 regular legislative sessions, no later than January 31, to report progress in fulfilling the duties. The task force reports in 2013.

Task Force Activities

The task force has held five meetings so far during the 2011 interim. Senate Bill 11-111 authorizes the co-chairs to call meetings as often as necessary to carry out the task force's duties, and the task force will continue to meet throughout this year and the next as it works on its report for the SBE and CCHE.

State remediation policies. Task force members began by familiarizing themselves with state remediation policies and outcomes, both in Colorado and across the country. The task force heard a presentation from the Education Commission of the States on "Getting Past Go," a national public policy initiative to improve remedial education in postsecondary education. Nationally, a high percentage of students are in remedial education, and these students tend to have low college attainment rates, particularly among community college students.

The Office of Legislative Legal Services provided an overview of Colorado's remediation statutes, which included information on the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA), the guidelines for high school graduation requirements, ICAPs, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act (CAP4K), performance indicators under the state's accountability system, the CCHE Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR), and the provision of basic skills courses at Colorado's institutions of higher education.

The Colorado Department of Education presented its research on the predictive accuracy of using the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) to identify students who are in need of remediation early in their academic career. The study found that there is a high degree of congruence between the state assessment results and the need for remediation in the first year of college, and that this need can be identified as early as middle school.

In addition, the Colorado Department of Education made a presentation about the "Results Matter" program, which promotes positive outcomes for children and families using ongoing child assessment and data to inform early childhood practices and policies. The data obtained through the program is used to describe children's progress and school readiness. Department staff also provided information on how CBLA data is predictive of CSAP achievement levels in grades three through five. Finally, the task force heard about response to intervention (RtI), which is the practice of systematically providing high-quality, research-based instruction and intervention that is matched to student need and uses frequent progress monitoring to inform goal setting for students.

The Colorado Department of Higher Education presented the findings from its annual remediation report. The study found that in Colorado in 2010, more than 28 percent of all incoming freshmen into higher education required some level of remediation. Fifty-two percent of students at two-year institutions and 18 percent of students at four-year institutions require remediation. Department representatives also provided information on a \$1 million "Complete College America" grant awarded to the state by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Eighty percent of the grant funding will assist the community college system in hiring a statewide dean of developmental

education and faculty for tutoring, and in providing support services, equipment, and student communication for remedial services. The remaining 20 percent will fund activities at the department.

Departmental perspectives. The task force heard from a panel of experts from the Colorado Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education. The panel provided departmental perspectives on four legislative concepts proposed by task force co-chair, Senator King. The concepts to which the panel spoke included: replacing the 10th grade CSAP with Accuplacer diagnostic testing; extending the use of the growth model used in K-12 to higher education; reverse-transfer degrees; and changes to the Gateway to College Dropout Recovery Program aimed at addressing program funding issues. The bulk of the conversation was around the proposal to replace the 10th grade CSAP with Accuplacer. The departmental experts discussed how CSAP and Accuplacer are used, and what questions the data from those assessments answer.

The task force devoted a meeting entirely to discussion of proposed legislation, with some input from the departments. After this discussion, the task force agreed to consider five bills, four of which were approved and forwarded to the Legislative Council. The six legislative members of the task force voted to approve the bills, which include:

- Bill B, which requires school districts to administer the Accuplacer to students in grades 9 through 12 at least once. The bill requires the Colorado Department of Education to fund one test per student.
- Bill C, which requires the CCHE to work with the state supported institutions of higher education to develop criteria for awarding credit for a student's prior learning through work experience, military service, community involvement, or independent study.
- Bill D, which requires school districts, and the Charter School Institute, to consider adopting procedures around interventions for students in grades six through nine who are at risk of dropping out of school.
- Bill E, which allows a student who successfully accumulates credits at a community college, but prior to obtaining an associate degree transfers to a baccalaureate degree program, to be offered an associate degree once enough additional credits have been earned at the four-year institution.

Not approved was Bill A, which would have modified the Concurrent Enrollment Program Act to create a dual-credit high school completion program, permitting a student who has dropped out of high school to obtain a high school diploma while simultaneously obtaining credit that might also apply toward academic programs in higher education.

Student and school district perspectives. The task force heard from a panel of four 11th grade students who shared their experiences in Colorado's traditional and non-traditional public high schools. In addition, the task force heard a presentation from Adams County District 50, which is using a district-wide standards-based learning system that, rather than placing students in traditional grade-level courses, places them according to their abilities and knowledge.

Online and blended learning models. Colorado Online Learning, the state provider of supplemental online educational content, made a presentation to the task force on online and blended learning. The presentation provided information on the landscape of online learning in the Colorado, including single-district programs, multi-district programs, and supplemental online programs. The task force also heard about the funding, oversight, and student reach of these programs.

Task Force Recommendations

As a result of committee discussion and deliberation, the committee recommends four bills for consideration in the 2012 legislative session.

Bill B — Basic Skills Testing in High School. Bill B requires that, no later than the 2012-13 school year, all public schools administer the basic skills placement or assessment test currently administered to all first-time freshman entering into community colleges. Schools may administer the test at any time, and as often as they deem necessary, to students enrolled in grades 9 through 12; however, the Colorado Department of Education will allocate money to the districts to pay for only one administration per student while he or she is enrolled in those grades. A student with disabilities receiving special services under an individualized education plan may be exempt from the required assessment. Schools are further required to analyze the results of the basic skills tests, include the scores in the student's ICAP, and identify the student's level of postsecondary and workforce readiness. If a student's scores indicate he or she is at risk of being unready for either higher education or the workforce upon graduation, the school must work with the student and parents to create an intervention plan, identifying the necessary courses and support services the student requires to achieve readiness, and preparing the student to pursue postsecondary education, if desired, without the need for additional remediation. Under current law, the SBE must adopt criteria that can be used by high schools to endorse a diploma. This bill modifies those criteria to acknowledge a student's stated academic career path.

Bill C — Higher Education Prior Learning Assessments. Bill C requires that the CCHE work with the state-supported institutions of higher education to develop criteria for awarding academic credit for a student's prior learning through work experience, military service, community involvement, or independent study. CCHE and the institutions must define a process to assess prior learning, and, beginning with the 2013-14 academic year, begin awarding academic credit for a student's prior learning.

Bill D — Interventions for Middle Grade Students. Bill D requires that school districts, and the Charter School Institute, consider adopting procedures to review data for students in grades six through nine to identify those students who are at risk of dropping out of school, as indicated by behaviors such as low academic achievement, truancy, insubordination, or disengagement. Once a school identifies a student as being at an increased risk of dropping out, the district procedures may require that the school provide appropriate interventions designed to help that student improve academic performance and behavior. Such interventions could include counseling, tutoring, parent engagement, and developmental education services.

Bill E — Award Associate Degree Transfer Students. Bill E allows a student who successfully accumulates credits toward an associate degree, but prior to obtaining the degree transfers to a baccalaureate degree program, to be offered the associate degree once enough additional credits have been earned at the four-year institution. Beginning with the 2012-13 academic year, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education must develop and implement the program, in coordination with the governing boards of the four-year institutions.