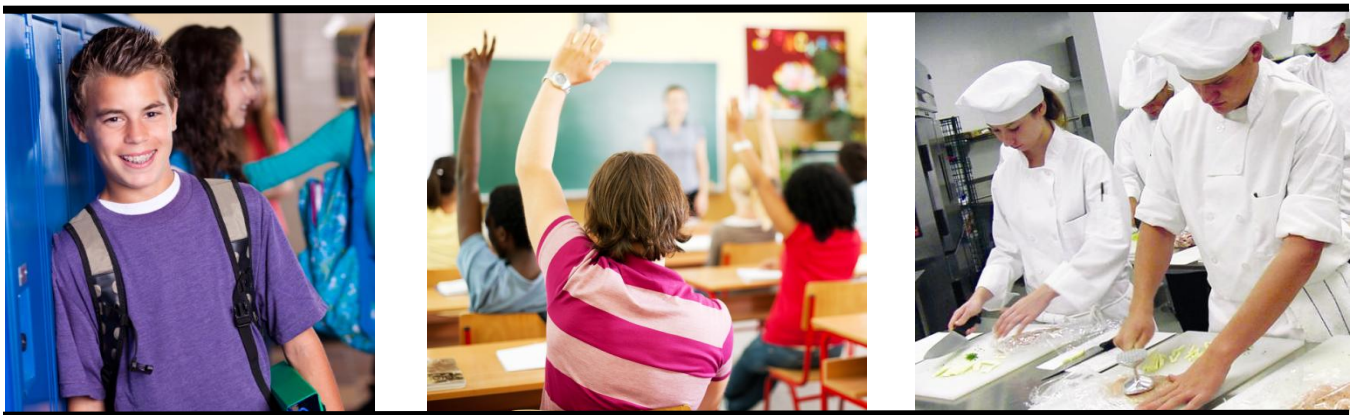# THE COLORADO EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS TASK FORCE INTERIM REPORT
JULY 2012

A REPORT TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND COLORADO COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF SB 11-111

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Finally, our greatest appreciation goes to all Colorado educators who contribute to the success of Colorado students every day.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report is presented in fulfillment of a reporting requirement under Colorado SB 11-111 that directed the Legislative Educational Success Task Force to prepare an interim report on the Education Success Task Force findings and recommendations. This report explores the legislative, programmatic, and statewide innovations that may positively impact student success.   Finally, this report will briefly explore the task force 2012-13 agenda.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

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.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the previous five years, the Colorado Legislature has passed several reform-based measures. The impact on school districts, charter schools, higher education institutions, as well as individual educators has been significant as resources declined and accountability standards increased.

Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), adopted in 2008, aligns Colorado's educational system from preschool through college by establishing new, streamlined content standards. The statute stipulates that students who graduate from high school and demonstrate their preparedness to enter postsecondary opportunities are eligible for automatic admission into Colorado's moderately selective colleges. In 2009, the School Finance Act added a requirement that by ninth grade, all students develop Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). Also in 2009, Colorado expanded support for and access to dual credit through statewide concurrent enrollment, and the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted new P–12 Academic Standards, which incorporate academic content with "21st Century Skills." In 2010, the SBE and CCHE jointly adopted a system to measure readiness along the P–20 continuum using formative instruction and interim assessments.

In 2011, CDE and CDHE jointly created high school diploma endorsements and establish graduation guidelines. The CDE is currently establishing new graduation standards including requirements for a postsecondary and workforce ready endorsement. CCHE is reviewing admission placement tests to ensure alignment with postsecondary and workforce requirements, and will, if necessary, revise the minimum academic admission standards and remedial cut-scores for colleges.

In May 2010, the Colorado Legislature passed SB 191, which established new requirements for evaluating teachers and principals. Among other requirements, this law mandates that at least 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation be determined by the academic growth of the teacher's students and at least 50 percent of a principal's evaluation be determined by the academic growth of the students in the principal's school. The new system will be piloted in 2012-2013, implemented statewide in 2013-2014 and finalized in 2014-2015.

The Education Accountability Act of 2009 authorizes the Colorado Department of Education to conduct an annual review of the performance of public schools and districts in the state, based on a common set of key performance indicators, and to use a common evaluation framework to assign districts to accreditation categories and make recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning the type of school improvement plan to be implemented in each school.

At the postsecondary level, institutional performance contracts create accountability between colleges and CCHE; annually report institutions' progress in: access and success (rates of retention, graduation, underserved populations); quality (attainment of general education requirements, grade distribution, faculty effectiveness); efficiency (costs, capital assets/management, facilities); and other metrics chosen by institutions (quality of teacher preparation programs, workforce training, graduate education). Legislation requires that by December 2012, all institutional performance contracts be renewed with performance measures tied to funding.

Additional legislation has related to K-3 literacy, drop-out recovery, teacher preparation and licensure and remedial reform. It is the goal of task force members to be aware of the enormous reform measures that are currently underway as new recommendations are introduced.

SUMMARY OF WORK

The Education Success Task Force convened in August 2011. Prior to the 2012 Legislative session, the 30 member task force met six times. Building on Colorado's education reform agenda, the task force reviewed remedial education, online and blended learning, literacy, at-risk students, assessment and data tracking. Given the information gained during the early meetings, four pieces of legislation were drafted and endorsed by the task force. These included:

SB 12-47 – Basic Skills Testing in High Schools, designed to provide state funding to districts that chose to administer basic skills testing such as the Accuplacer to high school students, died on the House floor but was later incorporated into the School Finance Bill.
Implementation Update: The Colorado Department of Education is in the process of developing an implementation plan that will be available in early fall, 2012.

HB 12-1072-Higher Education Prior Learning Assessment requires public institutions of higher education to develop a credit for prior learning policy.
Implementation Update: The CDHE Admission and Transfer Policy Review task force will be integrating prior learning assessment criteria into existing Admission and Transfer Policy. In addition, CDHE is working with the statewide Academic Council stakeholders to examine and consistently apply prior learning assessment scores across state public institutions.

HB 12-1013- Interventions for Middle Grant Students requires that local school district boards of education consider adopting procedures to identify and provide intervention services to middle school students who are at risk for dropping out.
Implementation Update: Implementation is the responsibility of local districts. The Colorado Association of School Executives and The Colorado Association of School Boards may partner with local districts on design and implementation of middle school intervention plans.

SB 12-045-Award Associate Degree Transfer Students 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.
Implementation Update: CDHE is currently working with several 4 year institutions, and state community colleges to create a seamless reverse transfer structure. The Department has applied for scale up funds from the Lumina foundation to support this work. If granted, these funds would be used to cover the majority of one-time implementation costs. In addition, the Admission and Transfer Policy Review task force will be integrating reverse transfer language into existing CCHE Admissions and Transfer Policy.

Two sub-committees were formed to investigate additional reform efforts. The **Prevention/Intervention Points & Transitions for P-20 subcommittee** was charged to:

- Identify the transition points within a student's academic career at which grade-level performance is key to future success and ensure that students can demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school graduation. Identify key college transition points to ensure improved college graduation rates.
- Ensure identification of students at-risk of not being "ready" for post-secondary success and college graduation based on research and make this information available to school districts, schools, and institutions of higher education.
- Review use of students' individual career and academic plans (ICAPs) and recommend how students' assessments can be linked to the ICAP.
- Review the practice of social promotion and recommend alternative strategies for ensuring students are making sufficient academic progress.
- Review all state statutes, state board rules, and guidelines adopted by the Commission to assist school districts, schools, and higher education in providing identification and information to help ensure students demonstrate academic success through college graduation. Identify the transition points within a student's academic career at which grade-level performance is key to future success and ensure that students can demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school graduation. Identify key college transition points to ensure improved college graduation rates.
- Ensure identification of students at-risk of not being "ready" for post-secondary success and college graduation based on research and make this information available to school districts, schools, and institutions of higher education.
- Review use of students' individual career and academic plans (ICAPs) and recommend how students' assessments can be linked to the ICAP.
- Review the practice of social promotion and recommend alternative strategies for ensuring students are making sufficient academic progress.
- Review all state statutes, state board rules, and guidelines adopted by the Commission to assist school districts, schools, and higher education in providing identification and information to help ensure students demonstrate academic success through college graduation.

The second sub-committee, **P-20 Effective Interventions & Best Practices in Basic Skills Education** charge was to:

- Identify research-based strategies and best practices around developmental education and remedial education that will ensure students are postsecondary and workforce ready and will increase the likelihood that they will complete postsecondary education efficiently.
- Review data and research on effective interventions at the elementary and secondary levels and the postsecondary level to keep kids on a path for high school and college graduation. Make this information available to school districts, schools, and institutions of higher education. Best practices may include curriculum, methods of delivering the intervention/courses, diagnostic placement practices, use of modularized/shorter term courses, tutoring, online, etc.
- Review all state statutes, state board rules, and guidelines adopted by the Commission to assist school districts and schools in providing developmental education to help ensure students demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness no later than high school and to assist institutions of higher education in providing remedial education.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Based upon the work of the Education Success Task Force Sub-Committees the following agenda has been established for the 2nd year of the Task Force's work:

Successful Transition into High School and Completion of the 9th Grade

Overview: The evidence is strong, 9th grade success matters for high school graduation. According to experts, "The most powerful predictors of whether a student will complete high school include course performance and attendance during the first year of high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; 2007). In Chicago, the on-track indicator is a better predictor of graduation than students' background characteristics or middle school achievement test scores (Allensworth & Easton, 2007)."

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations: HB 12-1013, Interventions for Middle Grant Students, directs school districts in Colorado to consider adopting procedures and systems to identify early warning indicators when students may be off-track to graduation. This is a good start in elevating the idea that early warning systems can have in preventing and supporting students who fall off-track to graduation.

Ideas to Explore:
- Identify a stronger state role in providing early warning system capabilities and information to districts to support early prevention efforts.
- Evaluate options for remediation into the 8th and 9th grade so students pass college level courses early in their high school career.
- Study triggers/consequences (financial, operational, better/more choices), when a student is identified as being off-track to graduation after 6th, 9th, or 11th grade.

HS graduation and matriculation into postsecondary

Overview: The opportunity for students to enroll in college level coursework through AP, IB, Early College models, concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment, or other forms of postsecondary programming, provides an opportunity for students to gain postsecondary credit by saving time and money. This can be a very powerful motivator for students.

There is evidence that students who participate in these opportunities have higher high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and in many cases, postsecondary graduation rates.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations: The task force considered changes in the States assessment plan. Ideas included:

- Require Accuplacer and ACT by the elimination of all high school CSAP/TCAP assessments
- Institute college and career ready feedback reports for districts
- Examine the Ascent program (and concurrent enrollment generally) to identify ways of expanding options for high school students to receive college level credit

- Generate policy ideas for holding colleges responsible for moving students through remediation successfully and quickly.
- Evaluate higher education institutions' remediation and graduation rates
- Differentiate remedial needs for students and ensure that colleges provide an array of options and supports.

Ideas to Explore:
- Complete a longitudinal study of students who participated in postsecondary programs during high school to determine postsecondary completion success
- Continue to evaluate appropriate statewide evaluation systems

Competency-Based System as an Intervention to Social Promotion

Overview: Competency-based, also called standards-based systems, are being explored and have been implemented in various education reform movements in Colorado and nationally. To ensure Colorado's students continue on a path to high school and college graduation, the system must better identify and respond to individual student needs and interests along their paths. At least two districts in Colorado have shifted toward these systems. Characteristics of competency-based approaches identified as critical to drive systemic response to the deleterious practice of social promotion include:

- Learning meets students where they are: progress toward competencies varies for each student, so the amount of time, instructional strategy and type of support should be flexible and able to respond in targeted ways; students advance upon mastery.

- Learning objectives are explicit, measureable, and transferable: students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- Systemic emphasis is placed on student ownership and accountability: students and their parents are supported and held responsible for understanding the learning objectives and data that each student must demonstrate in order to progress, and in making decisions about options available to support their advancement.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations:
Colorado's new P-12 Model Content Standards, Grade-Level Expectations, and statewide assessment attributes go a long way to prioritize student mastery and demonstration of postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) as the ultimate outcome for all students. However, stronger guidance and support is needed to assist districts, schools, and institutions of higher education translate these opportunities into competency-based systems that reverse the trends of social promotion. Existing exemplars that can inform the use and effectiveness of competency-based approaches, as well as opportunities to advance competency-based values within Colorado policy include:

- Colorado's Adams County School District 50 has developed and implemented a plan to end social promotion and retention via a learner-centered, standards-based system. The systemic approach is focused on ensuring continuous rigorous learning and demonstrated performance (proficient or better) within and across all schools from preschool through graduation. The system is organized for students to engage in 21st century skills, work at their individual developmental levels and advance only when they have demonstrated mastery. Core beliefs driving this learning approach include: 1) learning is the constant; 2) time is the variable; 3) personalized delivery; and 4) systemic and systematic.

- Colorado's Roaring Fork District Re-1 is implementing a standards-based system called "Moving On," which emphasizes that students must demonstrate success before they move on to the next level of learning in reading and math, are placed at their demonstrated learning levels, rather than automatically advancing to the next grade level based on age, and chart their own progress and set goals to achieve the next level. Core components driving this learning approach include: 1) teachers use standards to guide instruction and assessments; 2) higher level of learning is emphasized; 3) students have multiple opportunities to learn; 4) students are given alternative ways to show proficiency; 5) accelerated pace and/or advanced level learning is available to students; and 6) teachers use rubrics to communicate proficiency levels and to evaluate assignments and assessment).

- The Iowa Department of Education has developed guidelines for PK-12 competency-based pathways focused on providing opportunities for students to advance through content or earn credit toward high school graduation regardless of age or amount of time in the classroom, online, or in a setting off campus. The guidelines emphasize flexibility for schools to engage students in learning that moves beyond the traditional constraints of seat time and divisions among content areas, connect learning to student interests, and provide personalized learning systems that promote student relevance, choice and ownership at all ages.

Studying these and other examples will inform any future efforts by Colorado's state and local education leaders regarding, for example, indicators of success, challenges, the use of data and data systems, professional development and support needs by staff and administrators, student and parent engagement, and the role of communications. The Colorado Department of Education has identified competency-based pathways as a goal for its Expanded Learning Opportunities initiative in partnership with the Colorado Legacy Foundation.

Policy efforts identified that provide either opportunities or limitations related to competency-based systems include:

- Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAPs), a requirement by 2009 legislation that all students starting by ninth grade must have a personalized plan that is informed by interests, goals, and progress, includes activities and accomplishments, is tracked in an online portfolio, and is reviewed and updated annually. ICAPs provide a mechanism for collecting, and a source of data pertaining to students' interests, skills, and experiences related to PWR and their progress toward competency. The Endorsed Diploma Task Force identified establishing and maintaining an ICAP as a key criteria for students to receive a PWR endorsed diploma.

- HB12-1072, Higher Education Prior Learning Assessment, recommended legislation passed this session that validates learning outside of the classroom, and awards academic credit for college-level knowledge acquired through work experience, military service, community involvement, or independent study.

- Colorado's current emphasis on Carnegie Units as the primary benchmark for secondary success and transition point into postsecondary education. The revisions of Colorado's Statewide Graduation Guidelines and Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR) are opportunities to align with PWR, consider the issues of seat time versus mastery and embed competency-based approaches within our P-20 system.

- Colorado's emphasis on seat time and grade level enrollment versus student outcomes and mastering competencies as the basis for school funding.

Ideas to Explore:

- Determine at what levels within the K-12 system is there evidence to support the change to a competency based education model.
- Establish the minimum amount of time required by school districts and higher education institutions necessary to verify impacts of a competency based education model.
- Evaluate the social, emotional, and development needs that impact multi-age classrooms.
- Study integration of competency-based post-secondary degree plans, such as the Degree Profile, into the Colorado gtPathways program.

Formative Assessments to Differentiate Instruction and Interventions

Overview: Formative assessments are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in a classroom. They are brief and administered frequently, provide immediate results, predict student performance, and allow teachers to regularly monitor students' progress toward proficiency. Teachers use formative assessment to improve instructional methods and student feedback throughout the teaching and learning process. The State of Colorado administers summative

assessments (CSAP/TCAP) to meet federal requirements. These assessments are administered once a year to determine student competency after an instructional phase is complete. The delay in getting results of these exams does little to inform teachers' instruction, or to identify and provide intervention supports based on students' learning gaps. The use of formative assessments within Colorado's assessment system would allow teachers and administrators to regularly monitor students' progress toward proficiency of the state standards.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations: In November 2010, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and the State Board of Education (SBE) identified mutually agreed-upon attributes that are now being used to drive the design and implementation of Colorado's new PWR Assessment System. Importantly, they stated that formative assessments are key components of effective instruction, should be an integral part of educator preparation programs, and will be part of the new assessment system. Additionally, they indicated that: 1) educator preparation programs will include formative assessment practices in their coursework in order to develop future educators competent in soliciting, understanding and utilizing student performance feedback; and 2) educators already in the classroom require ongoing professional development on formative assessment practices and results interpretation. Interim assessments, which similarly are used to measure a student's progress toward mastery over time and help prevent the chronic need for postsecondary remediation, were also identified within the mutual agreement).

While these agreements mark an important step in promoting the availability and use of timely and individualized data to inform instruction and interventions as critical functions of the State's assessment system, ongoing efforts to strengthen policy and practice in this area will be paramount. In order for formative assessments to improve educator effectiveness and promote targeted interventions that support PWR for all students:

- Best practices of formative assessment use must be integrated within other structures of Colorado's P-20 system. For example: educator preparation programs, ongoing professional development, induction and classroom practices must be aligned, and changes in expected teaching practice must be identified and supported.

- Exemplars that demonstrate the systemic use and impact of formative assessment should be evaluated and accessible to local education leaders. EdisonLearning's *eValuate* is one example of a formative assessment system explored by the subgroup that is available online, aligned with individual state standards, and provides professional development and on-site for analyzing data to drive instruction and increase student achievement **.**

Ideas to Explore:

- Determine the systemic support structures that must be in place for teachers to effectively implement formative assessments in a manner that impacts classroom practice and student learning
- Create a database of formative assessments being used within the existing competency-based efforts in Colorado and nationally.
- Evaluate inclusion of the effective use of formative assessments incorporated into and supported by educator and leader effectiveness rubrics and professional growth opportunities.

Early Literacy (all kids reading by 3rd grade)

Overview: A key transition point identified is early literacy. The research is clear, students who read on grade level by the third grade have much stronger outcomes in school, the workplace and in life (Annie E. Casey Foundation, "EARLY WARNING! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters"). In Colorado, a report by Colorado Succeeds, "Proving the Possible: A Case Study of Florida's K-12 Education Reforms and Lessons for Colorado," outlines the need for stronger early literacy policies.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations: Efforts in Colorado to revamp and strengthen early literacy efforts were in full swing during the 2012 Legislative session. HB 12-1238 – the Colorado Literacy Act – will place a greater emphasis on reading in the early grades. While this bill marks an important step in prioritizing literacy, ongoing efforts to strengthen policy and practice in this area are important.

Ideas to Explore:

- Ensure every elementary school teacher is a reading specialist – look at raising bar/qualifications for elementary teachers and requiring all new elementary teachers to pass a literacy specific exam.

- Continue to monitor 3rd grade literacy efforts to ensure that there is a focus on early intervention and supports for struggling students.

- Link teacher effectiveness data with students back to training institution and publish results. Also consider linking this information to how schools are funded.

- Require all districts to publicize scores for kindergarten readiness and grades 1-2 assessments.

- Design a plan to provide full day kindergarten in Colorado.

Developmental Education

Overview: One of the greatest challenges in increasing postsecondary graduation rates is improving the success of students in developmental, or remedial, education programs — the courses that students without adequate academic preparation must take before enrolling in courses for college credit. Much work has been done nationally to address the failure of developmental education.

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations: In the fall of 2011 a group of faculty and administrators from the 13 CCCS colleges, Colorado Mountain College, Aims Community College, and Western Colorado Community College began working as a Developmental Education Task Force (DETF). The charge of the DETF is to review developmental education policies and make recommendations about what steps the CCCS will take to be the premier purveyor of developmental education.

Starting with the defined problem, the more levels of developmental courses a student needs to go through, the less likely that student is to ever complete college English or math (Bailey, 2009). The group has a goal of determining how to move students as quickly and effectively through their first college level course. Some of the possibilities that are being explored include: compression models that combine existing levels of coursework, mechanisms for bypassing remedial levels, mainstreaming students into college-level courses, integrated reading and writing courses that replace multiple separate levels of reading and writing, pre-statistics courses that replace the traditional algebra sequence, contextualized instruction particularly in career and technical programs. Nationally known experts from California to Baltimore have come to Colorado to work with the group on redesign efforts. To support local innovation and experimentation around our developmental education initiatives Colorado was awarded two grants. The Complete College America grant, and the Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant are being leveraged to provide support for innovation, course redesign, and piloting of national success models with Colorado students in our colleges.

Ideas to Explore:
- Determine funding requirements to support remedial reform in Colorado.
- Conduct an inventory of policies adopted in other states related to developmental education reform.
- Track the CDHE developmental education policy reform decisions.

Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP)

Overview: The intent of the Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) legislation was to decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates by assisting students in developing and maintaining a personalized postsecondary plan that ensures readiness for postsecondary and workforce success. An ICAP is designed to assist a student and his or her parent or legal guardian in exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities available to the student, aligning course work and curriculum, applying to postsecondary education institutions, securing financial aid and ultimately entering the workforce. Additionally, the ICAP implementation has allowed the State to develop a Comprehensive School Counseling model benefitting all students, K-16. Each Colorado ICAP is required to have four components:
- Career Exploration
- Academic Progress

- Postsecondary Planning
- Financial Literacy

Promising Practices and Policy Recommendations:

- Color coding course guides by Career Cluster color to assist in facilitating relevance to courses and career aspirations
- Investing in creation of regional and district 8th grade career fairs
- Shared resources statewide; including ICAP curriculums, ICAP activities, Partnership connections and time
- Utilization of the CTE Plans of Study as a robust template for a transportable ICAP when internet is not prevalent
- Fostering the student ownership of their ICAP (the adults own the process, the students own their plan)
- District wide trainings on CollegeInColorado.org (including support staff, bus drivers, custodial staff, board members and parents) with team training provided to all Colorado school districts by CDE, CDHE, CCCS and CiC
- Collaborative intentions with pre-collegiate service providers, postsecondary counterparts and other 'career guiders'
- Modeled some components of ICAP from other states: Utah, Arizona, Kansas, Nebraska, Oregon, Virginia, North Carolina and South Dakota.

Ideas to Explore:

- Evaluate student engagement rates, including but not limited to, attendance, behavior, truancy & GPA
- Track and report job placement Rates/Employability rates of Colorado youth
- Compare Community College Year 1 Retention Rates
- Implement a student (lead, composed of and created) ICAP task force

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