

P-20 EDUCATION COUNCIL 2007 RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNOR RITTER

P-3 Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Expanding Full-Day Kindergarten

The P-3 subcommittee recommends that full-day kindergarten (FDK) becomes an integral part of the state's K-12 school system with the state funding FDK for all children whose parents choose to enroll them. To reach this long-term goal, the subcommittee proposes phasing in FDK incrementally, focusing first on the state's most at-risk children.

2. Expanding Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP)

The P-3 subcommittee recommends that the Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program (CPKP) be expanded until statewide waiting lists for 3- and 4-year old children are completely met. Current legislation intends to expand CPKP by 3,500 slots for the 2008-09 school year. The subcommittee recommends that, for each year thereafter, a minimum of 2,000 slots should be added until waiting lists are met.

3. Student Identifier for Children in Publicly Funded Early Care and Education Programs

The P-3 subcommittee recommends that the state assign a unique child identifier (akin to the SASID used by K-12 educational institutions in Colorado) to every 3- and 4-year old child who is enrolled in a publicly funded early care and education program, including, but not limited to, subsidized child care, family child care, Colorado Preschool and Kindergarten Program, early childhood early intervention and special education, and Head Start. This identifier will follow the child throughout his/her public education experience and be used to analyze and improve the educational experiences of students.

4. Best Practices in P-3 Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The P-3 subcommittee requests that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) take the lead on researching and writing a report on best practices for curriculum, instruction, and assessment across the P-3 (preschool through 3rd grade) continuum.

Dropout Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Analyses of Statutes Regarding Dropout

The Dropout subcommittee recommends that the Office of the Governor request that the Colorado Department of Education conduct a sunset review of current statutes that impact the number of students who drop out of the public K-12 system before graduation. This review would include analyses of the effectiveness of statutes related to dropout, truancy, and the support of at-risk students. The survey should include the date of adoption, the programs involved, the state agency or agencies charged with oversight of the program(s), and the funds that have been allocated to support the legislation.

2. Unified Data Systems

The Dropout subcommittee recommends that the Colorado Legislature direct the creation of a P-20 data system in which the data is accessible, within the limits of privacy laws, for the purpose of analyzing longitudinal data regarding factors known to increase the likelihood of dropout for students in the K-12 system. This data system would allow staff (counselors, principals and teachers), who already have access to students' information, expanded use and more ease in utilizing data regarding the attendance/truancy patterns for students, academic performance records, and interactions with services offered by other state agencies that have a direct impact on or inform analyses of a student's academic performance.

Educator Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Increase School Funding

The Educator subcommittee recommends that the state increase school funding to a level that fully funds state mandates and adequately meets the needs of districts to attract, retain, and support the high quality educators needed to reach the state's educational goals. The final amount needed for this funding has not been determined; however, some work towards determining this amount has been done by the Colorado School Finance Project.

2. Exploration of Alternative Compensation

The Educator subcommittee recommends that the state encourage school districts to explore alternative compensation systems, which may significantly change how educator quality is identified and rewarded, as a method of improving educator quality.

3. Provide Seed Funding and Technical Assistance

The Educator subcommittee recommends that the state create a pool of public and private money to be competitively allocated as seed funding and technical assistance to schools and districts for the design, development, planning, and evaluation of alternative educator compensation systems throughout the state. The initial state contribution to this pool should be \$10 million. The technical assistance to districts and schools should be based on lessons learned by practitioners implementing and researchers evaluating alternative compensation systems and could include information on compensation models, the level of compensation decisions, financial forecasting, and evaluation. Districts (or schools) should create plans to show how they will fund their alternative compensation plans in a sustainable manner.

Data and Accountability Subcommittee Recommendations

1. P-20 Data System

The Data and Accountability subcommittee recommends that the state create a P-20 data system. Such a data system should be accessible to a wide range of stakeholders and serve a variety of purposes, including improving teaching and learning, informing public policy, fostering a culture of evidence-based decision making, conducting research, evaluating system and program effectiveness, and providing reports to various stakeholder groups. The system should also facilitate the transfer of data across systems and among different entities and enable interested parties to address questions that cut across levels of the educational system and agencies. In addition, a new independent governance structure should be established for managing the data and be responsible for receiving and integrating data; facilitating data analysis, reporting and transfer; ensuring data quality and security; and providing access. An inclusive and representative group with appropriate technical expertise should be convened immediately to design a system within a reasonable time frame.

2. Streamlining K-12 Accountability

The Data and Accountability subcommittee recommends that each segment of the education system—early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary—must have its own accountability system that incorporates some vertically articulated (cross-system) elements. The overarching goals of accountability for each segment of the P-20 educational system are to provide information to citizens and stakeholders about the effectiveness of all components of the system, to ensure access to high quality educational opportunities for all students in Colorado, to provide citizens and stakeholders with relevant information for evaluating, and to ensure compliance with federal and state statutes and regulations. The accountability system for each segment must include clear expectations and accurate measures of progress, provide the public with the knowledge necessary to support continuous improvement, provide adequate support to educational service providers, accommodate the unique contexts of local communities, and establish shared responsibility for the educational success of individuals.

Preparation and Transition Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Creating Statewide Guidance Policy

The Preparation and Transitions subcommittee recommends that the state establish postsecondary preparation as a primary purpose of our PK-12 educational system. “Postsecondary preparation” means that all students are prepared for a full range of postsecondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential preparatory options. In order to accomplish this, the state must 1) articulate standards that guide and stimulate school planning and activity, 2) enhance counseling and guidance capacity, 3) support efforts to transform school culture into one that promotes postsecondary preparation, 4) support model partnerships that enlist the resources of educational institutions across sectors, and 5) create a coordinating council.

2. Concurrent Enrollment Programs

The Preparation and Transitions subcommittee recommends that the state modify the concurrent enrollment policies to ensure that access to such programs is expanded and that guidance and cost certainty are incorporated. Further, enacted programs should have consistency while maintaining flexibility, ensure that rigor and appropriate placement, and that current program offerings are enhanced, rather than reduced, by removing financial or administrative disincentives. Finally, In order to ensure optimum access and affordability, a coordinating council representative of all stakeholders should be created.

3. Diploma Endorsement

The Preparation and Transitions subcommittee recommends that the state 1) formally study a college readiness endorsement and 2) formally study the creation of statewide pathways such as those leading to distinctions for career readiness, and other demonstrations of proficiency.

4. Modification of Statewide Educational Assessments

The Preparations and Transitions subcommittee recommends that the state incorporates the EPAS system (EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT System) as an integral part of the state educational assessment package. The state should assist in funding this sequence of “pre-collegiate” tests that are administered on a voluntary basis by districts. These tests will complement the ACT administration in the 11th grade, and may be further enhanced by adding the writing component and Work Keys to the 11th grade assessment. The adoption of a sequence of tests such as the EPAS would be used as an indicator of students’ postsecondary readiness and preparation.