"FORWARD THINKING"

The Voice (and Future) of the
Colorado Department of Education

cde

Point of Departure

The past is no more all wrong than the future is all right.

J. Fairley

Caveat

Thinking that got us to this level will not get us to the next.

Approaches being used to bring about educational change are not working. [By themselves,] accountability-focused schemes fail to move the sticks forward.

We have a clearer sense of action that will be required, what I have called "capacity building with a focus on results."

This will require bold experiments that generate powerful new capacities.

M. Fullan

Colorado State Board of Education Strategic Plan

Mission: Provide all Colorado children equal access to quality, thorough, uniform, well-rounded educational opportunities in a safe, civil environment.

Vision: All children in Colorado will become educated and productive citizens.

Goals and Objectives

1. **Fulfill the role of the state's chief educational authority.**
   - Lead the conversation on evolution of the public education system
   - Positively and proactively impact state and federal legislation
   - Strengthen partnerships with and leadership in educational community
   - Optimize and responsibly exercise authority

2. **Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform/accreditation.**
   - Develop and advance a plan to close the achievement gap
   - Prioritize, increase and coordinate resources to support field services
   - Lead in implementing, connecting and coordinating state standards
   - Advance collection/use of relevant, objective data about public education
   - Encourage the integrated delivery of educational services

3. **Take lead in improving long-term financial stability of educational funding.**
   - Play a constructive role in creating comprehensive school finance plan
   - Participate in the prioritization and protection of budget (including libraries)
   - Continue to lead and educate public about the School Lands Trust issue

4. **Improve educator quality, recruitment, retention and placement.**
   - Improve quality and accountability of educator preparation programs
   - Support professional development to increase achievement (teacher quality)

5. **Improve choice opportunities for Colorado students.**
   - Increase access to online educational programs
   - Increase accountability of online programs through accreditation
   - Implement accountability measures that apply to all choice models
   - Adhere to position statement on Principles of School Choice

Developed by State Board of Education
(February 2005-2007)

Colorado Department of Education Concept Statement

To create a purpose-driven and dynamic system of educational leadership, service, and support that relentlessly focuses on the learning of ALL students

In a way that provides:

1. Guidance and support to meet district and school needs

2. Professional development in best practices

3. Tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all students

4. A seamless, collaborative leadership system with intentional intensity, urgency and impatience

5. Efficient and effective use of federal, state and private funds

6. A reliable source for research, data, and analysis envied by all professionals

7. A model for building expanded leadership capacity

So that the Colorado Department of Education is a desirable place to work, agile and proactive in responding to ever-changing conditions, and is recognized as the premiere source of educational leadership.

Developed by the CDE Leadership Team, July 2007

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Executive Summary

It's a phrase on everyone's lips: "It is a new day in Colorado."

"Forward Thinking" marks a transition in the life cycle of the Colorado Department of Education. With a change in leadership comes a chance to create context, present possibilities and envision new futures. What does it mean to be well-educated? What are the opportunities? How do we navigate the challenges? What will ensure high standards for all, not just a talented or privileged few? What kindles engagement and meaning in young people? How do we guarantee that school is a passport to a better life for students, a place where dreams become reality for *all* children? How can the department make its greatest contribution?

This plan begins to provide answers those questions and others like them. While safeguarding institutional knowledge, this plan seeks to enhance the positive effect the department has on public education through fresh ideas that will drive and shape new endeavors, priorities and partnerships.

The immediate objective of "Forward Thinking" is to stabilize the department during a transition in leadership. Yet its primary purpose is to challenge the department to grow in ways that advance K-12 education in the state and better serve the needs and interests of students.

Intended to complement P-20 efforts already underway, "Forward Thinking" strives to improve the education of young people by moving forward on a variety of fronts, including:
- Creating private-public partnerships that enhance the growth of K-12 education
- Establishing a Legacy Foundation (funded privately which serves K-12 interests
- Revising standards and assessments (initially funded without taxpayer dollars)
- Hosting a Summit for Colorado leaders to collaborate in addressing education issues
- Improving conditions that contribute to success (especially poor and minority)
- Setting quality standards for the provision of online education programs
- Enhancing the system of support for schools through model curriculum
- Introducing a Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship to see that critical industry skills are embedded in standards
- Establishing a Legacy Scholars program to provide scholarships that underwrite the tuition for 100 top seniors who agree to enroll in Colorado colleges in exchange for service after graduation in hard-to-staff teaching assignments
- Restoring CDE reputation by modeling self-improvement, i.e., publicizing the results of annual stakeholders surveys

- Creating a Futures Center to support development of a vision for public education
- Making budget processes transparent and understandable
- Applying discretionary dollars to areas of greatest academic need
- Improving the collection, reporting, and management of data

"Forward Thinking" builds on and is organized around a concept statement that the CDE staff developed in July 2007 (see page 5). Goals in this plan are linked to the strategic plan that the state board of education has adopted (see page 4 and Appendix A). They also align with priorities of the P-20 Council (see Appendix B).

The first section of this document, "Background," sets a foundation, anchoring what follows with a rationale for change and the need for improvement. "Analysis" provides a bridge to a call for action, while "Goals" identifies actions steps that set the direction for the department to accomplish objectives in the strategic plan. Lastly, "Focus on Organizational Alignment and Change" paves the way for the next generation strategic plan.

Background

What must the department of education do to ensure Colorado students are academically successful? How will the department of education focus efforts in the near future while long-range plans gain traction?

"Forward Thinking" answers these questions. Its purpose is to engage the imagination of CDE staff and enlist their commitment to goals and plans that are designed to yield greater student success. The desire among staff for personal excellence and organizational improvement creates the healthy tension needed to spark change.

The urgency is real. Of all the reasons to justify change, the most compelling is that it is our moral responsibility. Without improvement, children suffer. With change, the future brightens for both students and our society.

Since the inception of standards and assessments, K-12 education in Colorado has enjoyed modest success. Greater focus has been placed on the plight of children as standards have sharpened expectations about what it means to be well-educated. Greater attention to the topic has helped marshal more support for needed resources. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to rethink the assumptions that inform belief and guide action at the department of education.

At a very minimum, students must be able to read, write and compute at grade level. More is needed though, especially given the rapidly advancing pace of life and commerce. Educators must be able to equip young people for success in life, work or the next level of schooling. Students must be prepared to compete in an international marketplace.

The challenge of preparing all students for academic success on state assessments is daunting for many Colorado schools. Yet with a system of standards in place for 13 years (and assessments for 10), Colorado has had adequate time to show it can improve. Despite that, sustained success proves elusive.

Though the existing system addresses the current requirements of federal law, two questions remain. Is this enough? And, as one Coloradoan has observed, can anyone really claim we have adequately prepared young people even if they all were proficient on every CSAP test?

This much seems certain: "The organization we currently have is perfectly designed to deliver the results we currently get" (M. Fullan, public comments, Aug. 2, 2007). Achieving greater success requires re-evaluating how well all aspects of CDE operation provide benefit to students. In some cases, achieving greater success may require retooling and adopting new ways of doing business.

As CDE undertakes change in 2007and 2008, it is appropriate to recall that an organization which bases its culture on learning welcomes change and uses

reflection, inquiry and calculated risk-taking to improve its ability to achieve its mission.

Others echo the sentiment. "You have to have a learning organization where people thirst to do everything better every day. They draw on practices from everywhere and push them to ever-higher levels of effectiveness. Without a learning culture, sustainable competitive advantage will not last" (Welch, 2005).

The recommendations (drawn from Mintzberg) that follow arise from two assumptions:
- Meaningful, sustained change arises from a healthy dissatisfaction with status quo.
- Improvement is more about changing hearts and minds than policies and practices.

1. The wise exercise of CDE's ability to apply resources depends upon clarity with respect to roles and responsibilities:
- Taxpayers own our schools.
- Students and parents are our clients.
- Districts, universities, businesses and foundations are our partners.

2. Four beliefs guide action and provide a foundation for recommendations that follow:
- Openness and transparency create understanding and trust
- Coherence builds meaning and commitment
- Creativity, critical thinking and receptiveness to new ideas stimulate learning.
- Collaboration makes it possible to achieve more than individuals can achieve alone.

3. There is a frame for this conversation, and it involves educational accountability. Educational accountability is vital for a variety of reasons:
- It brings transparency.
- It helps ensure resources align with priorities.
- It answers basic questions, including who is responsible to whom and for what?

4. The common wisdom is that three factors drive the educational accountability discussion:
- *NCLB* (Adequate Yearly Progress, Highly Qualified Teachers and school choice)
- School Accountability Reports (SARs)
- Accreditation

At the same time, in the shadow of the Rockies educational accountability has taken on a distinctly Colorado flavor. While other states and locales have their own unique twist, educational accountability in Colorado must be viewed – for better or for worse – against the backdrop of a strong tradition of local control.

As it has unfolded in Colorado, the "theory of action" that guides and informs educational accountability in this state has come to rest on three pillars:

1. Individuals and systems thrive when:
   - Performance standards for students, staff and systems are defined.
   - Evidence of achievement is measurable.
   - A method for improvement exists.
   - Evaluation of the system takes place routinely.

2. Public disclosure of results helps improve instruction and learning by showing how accomplishment compares with expectation. It prompts educators, students and parents to focus energy and attention on the right work.

3. Learning improves when resources align with needs, when capacity is expanded through high-quality professional development, and when incentives reward creativity and support the pursuit of excellence.

Analysis

The June 2007 audit of CDE revealed a mismatch. "The primary function is related to compliance and monitoring" yet "the primary purpose of CDE is service and support." The implications are clear. "Function should follow purpose" and "the organizational structure should [be designed] to accomplish the primary purpose: service and support to schools."

As a result, CDE must focus on building capacity. Sustained improvement requires a shift from sorting and compliance to efforts aimed more at capacity-building. This is not an abandonment of the regulatory function. Nonetheless, service in the future must focus on supporting local efforts to build capacity in ways that better equip professionals in the field with the tools they need to enhance student success.

The overarching goals are the following:
- The K-12 system must not sort students according to their perceived probable destinies.
- The intent is to help students achieve their dreams, to ensure they become more than they initially thought they could be.
- The public education system in Colorado must promote high standards for all, not just a talented or privileged few.
- The purpose and effect of the K-12 education system in Colorado is to maximize talent, not reinforce advantage.

One yardstick must gauge system adequacy:
- Enhancing student performance and eliminating gaps is the measure of success.

The key to enhanced system performance is a laser-like focus on a few high leverage points:
- Because people are our greatest resource, success hinges on building staff capacity.
- School choice plays a healthy role because it gives parents a way to match programs to the needs of their students.
- Colorado's education system must be both well-adapted to current conditions and adaptable to changing conditions.

Improvements at CDE can translate into improvements in the performance of the statewide K-12 system if:
- The initiative is taken to prepare the way for the next generation of standards and assessments.
- More attention is focused on doing what works instructionally (CDE-sponsored research will help).
- CDE structures and processes that fail to add value are revised and streamlined (e.g., data management).
- CDE collaborates with the field to a greater degree than it has in the past.

This plan represents a shift in thinking. Collaboration and interdependence are necessary to create a strong system that supports and builds upon each school's improvement plan. While CDE's past association with the field was typically a "power over" relationship, more will be accomplished through a "power with" relationship.

To that end, this plan proposes to leverage scarce resources through:
- Closer partnership with various organizations
- A rank-ordering of priorities within the Colorado Department of Education
- Repair of the state reputation by making department and state board operations more transparent and open
- Sponsorship and publication of research that uses Colorado data to illuminate program strengths and weaknesses
- Tightened priorities so that emphasis is on the high-leverage points that match up well with the new vision and beliefs

The department of education will emphasize five non-negotiables:
- Narrowing and eliminating the achievement gap
- A continued and expanded focus on literacy
- Ensuring all children quality instruction
- Continued emphasis on high standards and rigor
- Graduating college- and/or workforce-ready high school students

Other areas requiring attention:
- Integrity of online schools
- School funding
- Early childhood education (i.e., elimination of preschool wait lists and provision of full day kindergarten)
- P-20 and a partnership between K-12 and higher education
- Adequate facilities

Taken all together, these set the stage for the seven goals on which the department will focus.

Goals

The seven goals that constitute the heart of "Forward Thinking" are organized around a concept statement that the CDE staff developed (see page 5). References are also included showing how these goals connect to and support the strategic plan that the state board developed and approved (see page 4).

1. **Provide guidance and support to meet district/school needs.**

    a. Develop a department mission that espouses service and support to the field.

    Context: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). Strategy follows vision. Tactics follow strategy. The first step is to develop a public commitment to service and support.

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

    Context: With the mantle of leadership comes a responsibility to model a commitment to ongoing improvement. The public disclosure of yearly survey results provides a metric of customer satisfaction that can be used to gauge progress.

2. **Enhance professional development involving best practices.**

    a. 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.

    Context: Before students can be more successful on more challenging material, greater attention must be directed to supporting than to sorting. Presently, the current system focuses inordinately on labeling schools that are challenged and that struggle to be successful. Department structures should be revised so greater attention and energy is devoted to preparing students for life, work, or the next level of schooling. To enhance the system's capacity to provide educators in the field with high-quality technical assistance and support, the department should: (1) attract, develop, and retain talented individuals with content area expertise; (2) partner with districts, foundations, universities, and professional organizations to develop technical aid; (3) step up outreach so practitioner needs are systematically assessed and services are provided in a more timely way; and (4) provide education-based tools to enhance student learning and information access.

b. 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.

    Context: Whether perceived or real, the department must courageously confront and manage a public image many view as compromised.

c. 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.

    Reference: This aligns with the state board's strategic plan:
        SBE Goal: Improve educator quality, recruitment, retention and placement
        SBE Objective: Support professional development that increases achievement through efforts to enhance teacher quality

d. 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, to include:
- Special Education and Response to Intervention (RtI is a particularly effective set of instructional strategies)
- Exceptional services (Gifted and Talented, SWAP, etc.)
- Professional development training programs, including induction and alternative teacher licensure
- Specialized programs, including migrant educational services, English language learning, career/technical education and programs for at-risk students
- Instructional support for improvement planning, research, assessment services, distance learning and curricula
- Technology support for the media, communication, data processing and digital library resources
- Business services to include assistance with grant proposal writing, management of funds, regional transportation and shared purchases
- Recruitment and support

    Context: The mission of providing more and better service to the field can be an enormous undertaking. While CDE may not be prepared to do it all, the department can help bring it all together through more effective partnering with entities that already have the necessary infrastructure. More specifically, the department envisions supporting: (1) the expansion of BOCES operations from 8 to 12 providers; (2) the provision of professional

development especially that which is geared to preparing teachers for hard-to-staff positions; and (3) the training that is needed to help Response to Intervention (RtI) gain traction.

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

   a. Support districts and schools in ways that eliminate and narrow the race and income gap.

   Context: This plan is meant to provide guidance with respect to identifying factors to close the achievement gap in Colorado. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:
   - Achievement gap managers
   - Addressing gaps early
   - Understanding data
   - High expectations
   - Quality teachers
   - Professional development
   - Leadership
   - Race, poverty and cultural competencies training
   - More time for learning
   - Literacy focus
   - Research–based best practices
   - Family and community involvement
   - After-school programs
   - Increased and aligned resources
   - Health and nutrition
   - Technology
   - Collaborative library services

   For the purpose of this plan, the achievement gap is defined in two ways – the racial gap and the income gap. Some have offered explanation (Richard Rothstein, WestEd). "How much money a family has, or a child's skin color, should not influence how well that child learns. If teachers know how to teach and if schools permit no distractions, then children should be able to learn, [regardless of] their family income or skin color." Many if not most observers conclude that the achievement gap is the fault of poor schools because it is uncharacteristic to think otherwise. Yet a family's income or a child's race should not influence how well that child learns.

   Without question, there are other ways to define "achievement gap." Certainly for the purpose of calculating AYP, the federal government finds it useful to make distinctions based on a child's status with respect to English language learning (ELL) and with regard to whether a child has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Others might argue that the gap that matters most is the

one separating a student from the expected learning target (and hence is criterion-based). Nonetheless, for the purposes of this work, CDE has determined that narrowing the gaps attributable to income and race is a praiseworthy venture. It should not be interpreted as diluting the commitment of the department to the gaps that separate the achievement of other subgroups, including but not limited to gender, Special Education, ELL and others. Further, the department recognizes that there is significant overlap between poverty and some subgroups, such as those served by migrant educational services (more specifically, approximately 72 percent of migrant students in Colorado also qualify for free or reduced lunch).

Research has shown that there are a number of external factors that correlate with student achievement; some can be addressed through the educational environment, and others, for the most part, cannot. Factors affecting student achievement that stem from poverty include low birth weight, lead poisoning, hunger and poor nutrition (Barton, 2004). Parent availability as a role model or as an active participant in a child's education is frequently limited in low-income families. Student mobility – moving from school to school, as parents seek work or affordable housing – occurs more frequently with children from low-income families. Students who change schools frequently also do poorly on tests and are more likely to be below grade level in reading and math than their counterparts who do not change schools (Barton, 2004).

Policymakers almost universally conclude that persistent achievement gaps must result from wrongly designed school policies – low expectations, teachers who are insufficiently qualified, curricula that are badly designed, classes that are too large, school climates that are too undisciplined, leadership that is too unfocused or any combination thereof.

This exclusive focus on schooling is wrong. Without complementary investments in early childhood preparation, health care, housing, after-school and summer programs, and other social and economic supports, the achievement gap will never be closed (WestEd, 2006).

The intent of the department is to establish an achievement advisor who can provide on-site consultation to locations that struggle. The desire is to offer local districts some flexibility regarding who the advisor may be (CDE would pre-qualify the candidates for this role). Once selected, the advisor would work with district leadership to identify three or four high-leverage points that would constitute the heart of an improvement plan.

The advisor's primary role would be to help the local superintendent ensure that improvement plans are well-conceived, focused, coherent and capable of delivering desired results.

A **no excuses approach** in tandem with research-based best practices does matter, as do well-designed, well-staffed schools. But reform must also take place in the world outside of schools so that children are supported and prepared to learn. It will take courage and it will cost.

b. 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.

c. 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.

Context: The key is to sustain our commitment to the things we know work. As Fenwick English is fond of saying, "Avoid the tyranny of half measures." From Doug Reeves we know that systematic implementation of a few things beats superficial implementation of many things. Effective approaches include:
- Developing a close alignment between standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Deep content analysis including big ideas and essential questions
- Monitoring that is frequent and visible
- Writing and note-taking
- Use of questioning strategies, cues, and advance organizers
- Tools that help students build meaning (metaphors, analogies, etc.)
- Interdisciplinary assessment
- Instructional strategies that include comparisons and questions
- Practices that build student engagement (recognition of achievement)

d. Support to creative, innovative and high-quality choice solutions that are capable of efficiently delivering results.

Context: In order for students to acquire a quality education, the system must include a variety of opportunities and methods for learners of all ages. Empowering families to choose among schools has several benefits:

- Increased choice can have a positive effect on student achievement and closing the learning gap.
- Increased choice can help engage families in the education of their children.
- Increased choice can result in additional educational opportunities for innovation.

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

a. 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.

Context: Within the boundaries set by law and rule, alter the labeling process so it has a salutary effect on schools and districts. Provide alternatives to "watch" that promote partnership between districts and the department and which invite educators to help others learn from their experiences. Accomplish this by developing an "early warning system" that identifies and funnels resources to schools that are thriving at present, but which may soon begin to struggle. Take steps that better align rules concerning NCLB with accreditation, which will result in more consistent signaling and communication. For instance, consistent with federal discussions that call for differentiating the approach to AYP labeling, use percentages to describe how well schools and districts achieve accountability targets.

b. 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.

Context: With the growth of international markets, global expectations often trump state and national standards. At the same time, there is a growing mismatch. Workplace requirements are not well aligned to the skills schools teach. Content proficiency is necessary but not sufficient. Skills matter. Critical thinking, creativity and international mindedness are important. World languages grow in importance. It is said that "the top 10 jobs that will be in demand in 2010 didn't exist in 2004. We are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist using technologies that have not been invented in order to solve problems we do not yet know are problems" (R. Riley). To prepare students for such a future, it is vital to lay the foundation for the next generation of standards and assessments.

In the course of developing these standards and assessments, attention should also be paid to expectations we want our youngest learners to meet.

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

a. Make budgeting transparent and understandable so that beginning-of-the-year budget allocations and monthly reports budget managers receive heads at the 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. We need 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.

Context: Without tools that make it possible to see across all accounts within a span of control, it is extremely difficult for senior staff to know whether scarce resources are being leveraged in the most sensible fashion. Without tools that provide an accurate view of the ebb and flow of revenue and expenditure, managers are hindered.

b. 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. The system will meet these criteria:
- Conform to rules and laws regarding chart of accounts
- Address vacancies as well as new positions (both exempt and non-exempt)
- Guarantee accurate tracking of costs for any given position despite turnover that results in different personnel holding the same position
- Include a mechanism for adapting to new laws that impact position control and management
- Generate an auditable paper trail backed by source documents
- Include internal monitoring that provides checks and balances between and among Human Resources, Finance and Payroll
- Prevent conversion of salary and benefit funds for other purposes and bar commingling of general funds with capital funds, reserved funds and the like
- Ensure a balanced budget with respect to human costs insofar as personnel expenditures for a given fiscal year are always less than revenues for the same fiscal year (i.e., fund accrued salaries)
- Make provision for employment of employees who may be funded via grant or "soft" money
- Produce on-demand and in real time an accurate and comprehensive list of staff within each division at the department by name, position and funding source

- Produce a list of mismatches between "what should be" according to FTE by funding source and "what is" according to FTE by actual payroll figures
- Be usable

> Context: With the great majority of department funds (aside from those funds that flow directly to schools under the Public School Finance Act) flowing into compensation and benefits for salaried employees and into compensation for contracted service providers (i.e., purchased services), it is essential to know who is where. While the task of gaining position control can be considerable, it is vital to the health of the organization.

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

> Context: In part, this involves increasing the freedom which exists to reallocate fiscal resources. As some other state departments of education have done, this creates opportunities for blended state and federal funding. This also concerns a needs-based resource allocation model where funds follow academic need. Two key understandings provide a foundation. First, not all academic needs are equal. The first commitment is to help students who are not proficient to catch up. The second commitment is to help others keep up and continue to move to even higher levels of performance. In defining need, attention shifts (within limits of law and rule) from at-risk categories like SES and ELL to academic categories like unsatisfactory, partially proficient and proficient. Students struggling to catch up to attain proficiency will have a greater claim to resources than those students who are already proficient. Similarly, those who are proficient but do not keep up have a greater claim to resources than those who keep up.

d. 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.

> Context: The demand for choice intersects with new technologies to challenge old notions of how education is delivered. The proliferation of online learning raises questions about how to ensure both excellence and equity in a virtual education environment. Pursuant to S.B. 07-215, this effort will culminate in a uniform template for the implementation of multi-district online undertakings.

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

   a. Revise the data management, tool development and research request process in ways the field finds useful.

      Context: The aim of this goal is to:
- Eliminate redundancies in reporting and documentation
- Make it easier for educators to access and manipulate instructionally-meaningful data
- Enable practitioners to use data to inform decision making at school level and instructional level
- Make data more accessible to researchers so they can determine what works or not, for which students, under which conditions, how much, and why
- Move the department into an enterprise data model that brings the many databases at CDE under a single umbrella and removes the need for "digital ditchdigging" that seeks to lay pipes so information can flow between different databases

   b. Increase the reliance on longitudinal data within the state system of educational accountability.

      Context: There is widespread agreement about the importance of achieving universal proficiency and year-to-year growth of students. To this end, the first concern is to help those who are not proficient to catch up. Then it is to help those who are proficient to keep up. Finally, it is to ensure all students move up to the advanced end of the achievement range.

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

   a. 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."

      Context: **The Principal Center** – An entry-level training program for practicing principals designed to help them earn their professional certification

                    The Superintendent and School Board Center – A support service offered to district superintendents, assistant superintendents and school boards

The Futures Center – Support for veteran school and district leaders with more advanced, data-focused and individually tailored training

The Coaching Center – A consultation service offered to individual principals and superintendents working on professional growth and school reform efforts

b. In concert with business and non-profit interests, launch a "21st Century Strategic Partnership" that establishes a network of activities designed to promote and enhance statewide capacity in a way that accelerates the most promising teaching and learning efforts. This includes a "Colorado Legacy Foundation," a "Commissioner's Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship," a "CDE Best Practices Guide," a "Commissioner's Cup," a "Commissioner's Breakfast," a "Commissioner's Summit" and a "Colorado Legacy Scholars" program.

Context: This undertaking uses outside funding to create a new position at the department of education. The Associate Commissioner for Strategic Partnerships will engage and mobilize key stakeholders, both public and private, to assist the Commissioner in tackling the complex educational issues before Colorado. In addition, this individual will identify, develop and maintain statewide community partnerships with key public and private stakeholders, including but not limited to private sector employers, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, workforce development groups, community and civic leaders, and non-profit organizations. Further, this person will coordinate planning, partnerships, marketing, community education and new special projects, which will be known as the Commissioner's Initiatives.

The person in this position will coordinate the following:

Colorado Legacy Foundation
This non-partisan 501(c)(3) non-profit organization will support innovation, entrepreneurship, 21st century teaching and learning, and the dissemination of best practices across the state.

Commissioner's Council on Innovation & Entrepreneurship
This effort complements the work of the governor's P-20 Council by identifying and integrating critical industry skill sets into Colorado content standards and by infusing the reform effort with private sector tools and strategies that can help accelerate the transformation of public education.

CDE Best Practices Guide
This guide will help promote statewide innovation and build entrepreneurial capacity through the annual publication of leading

practices in teaching and learning, as well as the development of instructional leadership, community partnerships and 21st century school facilities.

Commissioner's Cup
An award to honor districts undertaking successful, systemic school reform

Commissioner's Breakfast
An event to honor leaders reshaping the way we prepare Colorado students for the 21st century

Commissioner's Summit
A retreat designed to bring together P-20 leaders from across Colorado for the purpose of sharing innovative ideas. The intent is to build the capacity of districts to partner with stakeholders toward the aim of system innovation.

Colorado Legacy Scholars
A program designed to provide scholarships that underwrite the tuition for 100 top high school seniors who agree to enroll in Colorado colleges or universities in exchange for service (after graduation) in hard-to-staff teaching assignments. This effort is about building a bench of high-quality teachers as veteran teachers retire.

Focus on Organizational Alignment and Change

As a result of our efforts in the next three years:

- Department leaders will have regular contact with each other through networks that reduce isolation, increase collegial consulting and successfully implement policies and practices.

- CDE staff will engage in effective organizational development – understanding who they are, what their work is, ways of working together, and how to obtain information to verify the effectiveness of their work.

- CDE staff, through regular contact with individuals in similar positions, will have increased access to knowledge and skills.

- Department leadership will use research-based practices to be more effective in their roles.

- CDE staff will participate in regular networking meetings to engage in sharing emergent thinking on common problems and experiencing the value of networking.

Appendix A

Linking "Forward Thinking" Goals With the Goals and Objectives of the State Board of Education's Strategic Plan

1. Provide guidance and support to meet district and school needs

    a. Develop a department mission that espouses service and support to the field.

        SBE Goal: Fulfill the board's role as the state's chief educational authority.
        SBE Objective: Optimize and responsibly exercise authority.

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

        SBE Goal: Fulfill the board's role as the state's chief educational authority.
        SBE Objective: Optimize and responsibly exercise authority.

2. Enhance professional development involving best practices

    a. 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.

        SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.
        SBE Objective: Prioritize, increase and coordinate resources to support field services.

    b. 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.

        SBE Goal: Fulfill the board's role as the state's chief educational authority.
        SBE Objective: Strengthen partnerships with and leadership within the educational community.

c. Provide 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.

SBE Goal: Improve educator quality, recruitment, retention and placement.

SBE Objective: Support professional development that increases achievement through efforts to enhance teacher quality.

d. 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.

SBE Goal: Improve educator quality, recruitment, retention and placement.

SBE Objective: Improve the quality and accountability of educator preparation programs.

3. **Develop tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all**

a. Support districts and schools in ways that eliminate and narrow the race and income gap.

SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.

SBE Objective: Develop and advance a plan to close the achievement gap.

b. 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 competent providers of technical support.

SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.

SBE Objective: Advance the collection and use of relevant and objective data about public education.

c. Identify and implement incentives that make it easy for districts to adopt and use model curricula and related assessment tools, which the department has developed and offered.

SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.

SBE Objective: Advance the collection and use of relevant and objective data about public education.

d. Support to creative, innovative and high-quality choice solutions that are capable of efficiently delivering results.

Reference: This aligns with the state board's strategic plan and principles of school choice.

> SBE Goal: Improve choice opportunities for Colorado students.
> SBE Objective: Improve accountability measures that apply to all choice models.

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

a. Revise how schools and districts are labeled via accreditation so the label stigma is removed. The exercise provides information that is more informative, helpful and fair to struggling schools, and the results are more likely to funnel resources toward schools and programs with the greatest need.

> SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.
> SBE Objective: Encourage the integrated delivery of educational services.

b. 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.

> SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.
> SBE Objective: Lead in implementing, connecting, and coordinating state standards.

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

a. Make budgeting transparent and understandable so that beginning-of-the-year budget allocations and monthly reports budget managers receive heads at the 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. We need 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.

> SBE Goal: Take the lead in improving the long-term financial stability of educational funding.
> SBE Objective: Participate in prioritization and protection of the budget (including libraries).

b. 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.

SBE Goal: Take the lead in improving the long-term financial stability of educational funding.
SBE Objective: Participate in prioritization and protection of the budget (including libraries).

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

SBE Goal: Take the lead in improving the long-term financial stability of educational funding.
SBE Objective: Participate in prioritization and protection of the budget (including libraries).

d. Implement quality standards for the operation and administration of multidistrict online educational enterprises and develop the infrastructure (policies, procedures, curriculum, practices and management tools) needed to support this effort.

SBE Goal: Improve choice opportunities for Colorado students.
SBE Objective: Increase accountability of online programs through accreditation.

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

a. Revise the data management, tool development and research request process in ways the field finds useful.

SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.
SBE Objective: Advance collection and use of relevant and objective data about public education.

b. Increase the reliance on longitudinal data within the state system of educational accountability.

SBE Goal: Maintain commitment to and support of accountability reform and accreditation.
SBE Objective: Advance collection and use of relevant and objective data about public education.

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

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

        SBE Goal: Fulfill the role as the state's chief educational authority.
        SBE Objective: Lead the conversation on evolution of the public education system.

    b. In concert with business and non-profit interests, launch a "21st Century Strategic Partnership" that establishes a network of activities designed to promote and enhance statewide capacity in a way that accelerates the most promising teaching and learning efforts. This includes a "Colorado Legacy Foundation," a "Commissioner's Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship," a "CDE Best Practices Guide," a "Commissioner's Cup," a "Commissioner's Breakfast," a "Commissioner's Summit" and a "Colorado Legacy Scholars" program.

        SBE Goal: Fulfill the role as the state's chief educational authority.
        SBE Objective: Lead the conversation on evolution of the public education system.

Appendix B

Linking "Forward Thinking" Goals With the Goals of the P-20 Council

The P-20 Education Coordinating Council has five subcommittees, including:
- P-3
- Dropout Prevention and Recovery
- Data and Accountability
- Education Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention
- Preparation and Transition

This appendix highlights ways in which P-20 activities and interests intersect with CDE's "Forward Thinking" plan. In some cases, no obvious or clear connection may exist between "Forward Thinking" and the P-20 Council.

1. **Provide guidance and support to meet district and school needs**

   a. Develop a department mission that espouses service and support to the field.

   P-20 Link: A CDE mission that places greater focus and attention on service and support will enable schools and districts to enjoy greater success with our youngest learners (P-3), with students at risk of dropout (Dropout) and with students who are gearing up for college, work or the next level of schooling (Transition). Further, it is intended that a service-oriented mission for CDE will contribute to better teacher preparation (Preparation). Greater focus at CDE on making data available for research links well with P-20 efforts as well (Data).

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

   P-20 Link: This goal provides a way for CDE to ensure that it is moving in the right direction with respect to support and service. As a result, benefit should accrue to all five areas within the P-20 Council.

2. **Enhance professional development involving best practices**

   a. 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.

P-20 Link: Benefit from this goal from "Forward Thinking" should apply across the board to all five aspects of the P-20 Council's focus.

b. 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.

P-20 Link: The clearest benefit between this goal from "Forward Thinking" and P-20 can be traced to the subcommittee on Education Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention. In this arena, CDE and higher education share the responsibility for the preparing educators.

c. 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.

P-20 Link: Direct connections exist between the work of CDE and the P-20 subcommittees on P-3, Dropout Prevention and Recovery and Education Recruitment/Preparation/Retention.

d. 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.

P-20 Link: Presumably, this goal from "Forward Thinking" will be intricately aligned to and will feed into each of the P-20 subcommittees.

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

a. 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 competent providers of technical support.

P-20 Link: Benefit from this "Forward Thinking" goal will apply across the board to all aspects of P-20 operation. It has the potential to provide students with access to content and material that makes their school experience more rewarding and valuable. By building greater engagement and student success, the attachment students feel to school should grow (affecting the Dropout subcommittee's work). As well, materials that align with early childhood should provide

similar benefits to our youngest learners (thus connecting to the P-3 subcommittee's work). Clearly, teacher preparation will also be affected by the dissemination of these tools and model curricula (thus making sensible connections to the Educator Preparation subcommittee).

b. Identify and implement incentives that make it easy for districts to adopt and use model curricula and related assessment tools, which the department has developed and offered.

P-20 Link: For the reasons mentioned above, this goal from "Forward Thinking" will connect to and support all of the subcommittees of the P-20 Council.

c. Support districts and schools in ways that eliminate and narrow the race and income gap.

P2-0 Link: The clearest connections here are with Dropout Prevention and with two other P-20 groups (namely, Preparation and Transition on one hand and Teacher Preparation on the other).

d. Support to creative, innovative and high-quality choice solutions that are capable of efficiently delivering better-than-expected results.

P20 Linkage: The clearest connection here is with Dropout Prevention.

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

a. Revise how schools and districts are labeled via accreditation so the label stigma is removed. The exercise provides information that is more informative, helpful and fair to struggling schools, and the results are more likely to funnel resources toward schools and programs with the greatest need.

P-20 Link: From the standpoint of Data and Accountability, this goal from "Forward Thinking" will connect with work of the P20 Council.

b. 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.

P20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" aligns closely with the work of the P-3 subcommittee of the P-20 Council and also

with the P-20 subcommittee that is focused on Education Recruitment, Preparation and Retention, as well as the P-20 subcommittee on Preparation and Transition.

5. **Make efficient, effective use of federal, state and private funds**

   a. Make budgeting transparent and understandable so that beginning-of-the-year budget allocations and monthly reports budget managers receive heads at the 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. We need 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.

   P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability.

   b. 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.

   P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability.

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

   P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability. This goal also will presumably support the efforts being led by the Dropout subcommittee.

   d. Implement quality standards for the operation and administration of multidistrict online educational enterprises and develop the infrastructure (policies, procedures, curriculum, practices and management tools) needed to support this effort.

   P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability.

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

   a. Revise the data management, tool development and research request process in ways the field finds useful.

P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability.

b. Increase the reliance on longitudinal data within the state system of educational accountability.

P-20 Link: This goal from "Forward Thinking" is linked to the P-20 Council subcommittee on Data and Accountability.

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

a. 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."

P-20 Link: For the reasons mentioned above, this goal from "Forward Thinking" will connect to and support all of the subcommittees of the P-20 Council.

b. In concert with business and non-profit interests, launch a "21st Century Strategic Partnership" that establishes a network of activities designed to promote and enhance statewide capacity in a way that accelerates the most promising teaching and learning efforts. This includes a "Colorado Legacy Foundation," a "Commissioner's Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship," a "CDE Best Practices Guide," a "Commissioner's Cup," a "Commissioner's Breakfast," a "Commissioner's Summit" and a "Colorado Legacy Scholars" program.

P-20 Link: For the reasons mentioned above, this goal from "Forward Thinking" will connect to and support all of the subcommittees of the P-20 Council.