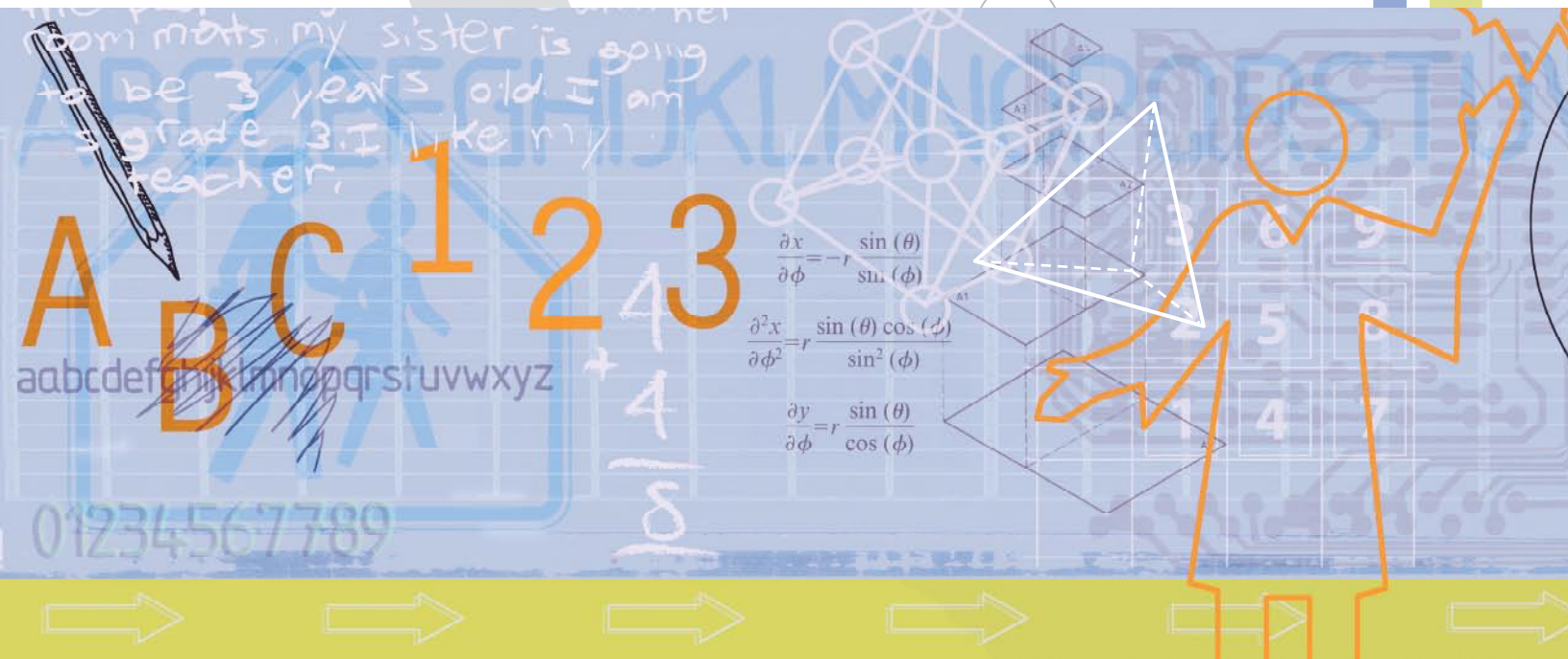


POLICY MAPPING: COLORADO AND TOUGH CHOICES OR TOUGH TIMES



PREPARED BY:

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August 2007

THE PITON FOUNDATION



THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT DIVISION OF
GARY-WILLIAMS ENERGY CORPORATION

D O N N E L L - K A Y F O U N D A T I O N



August 21, 2007

Dear Reader:

The report that accompanies this letter was commissioned by the Piton Foundation and the Donnell-Kay Foundation as a follow up to the spring 2007 visit by Marc Tucker who provided thought provoking ideas on how to overhaul the current education system. Ultimately, we hope that the analysis will be used to direct further discussion and to inform policy-makers about current Colorado statutes and what those changes recommended by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) mean for our state.

This is the first of several reports that Donnell-Kay and Piton will release this year that have been written to provide data and research based information to improve education in Colorado. Specifically, this report is intended to help inform the important work of the Governor's P-20 Council and the next legislative session.

Policy Mapping: Colorado and Tough Choices or Tough Times, was written by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates. It compares the NCEE recommendations to Colorado's current policy. While the conclusions readers will draw about the NCEE recommendations may vary, the report attempts to be objective and straightforward in its explanations. Piton and Donnell-Kay support the majority of the NCEE recommendations and consider this report to be a tool to communicate *what is* to what we find to be a thoughtful vision of *what could be*.

These series of reports are now being commissioned because it is becoming increasingly apparent to the general public, policy-makers, teachers, principals, administrators, students, business leaders and those of us whose mission it is to improve public education, that we must take radical steps to repair our state's education system. And we must do so now. It is clear that our current system – as a whole – is not equipping our children for jobs and careers of the future.

We urge you to use this report as a resource as you move forward in your important work.

Sincerely,

Tony Lewis
Executive Director, Donnell-Kay Foundation

Van Schoales
Program Officer, Education, Piton Foundation

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Objective

The recently released report—*Tough Choices or Tough Times*—by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), has been met with both excitement and skepticism in Colorado. Some of the questions raised by education, business and policy leaders have focused on ways in which the system proposed by NCEE compares to Colorado’s current education system. To address these questions, Augenblick, Palaich, & Associates (APA) has undertaken a policy-mapping exercise to compare the recommendations proposed by NCEE to Colorado’s current education statutes.

The purpose of this study was to examine how closely the NCEE recommendations align with existing Colorado statutes and to identify policy changes needed should Colorado choose to implement any recommendations proposed by NCEE. This document is intended to serve as a reference for policy-makers to gain a clearer understanding of the current education system compared to that which is articulated in *Tough Choices or Tough Times*.

Organization of the Analysis

Six central aspects of the NCEE recommendations are examined herein and compared to Colorado education statutes:

- I. Teacher Recruitment, Training, & Compensation;
- II. Funding, Governance, and Accountability;
- III. At-Risk & Special Needs Students;
- IV. High School to College Transitions;
- V. Preschool & Kindergarten; and
- VI. Enrollment & School Choice.

Each section discusses the NCEE recommendations and corresponding Colorado statutes in each category, and the alignment between the two. The paper concludes with a summary of changes that would need to occur if NCEE-type recommendations were pursued here in Colorado.

Section I: Teacher Recruitment, Training & Compensation

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
Teacher Recruitment	
<p>State agency recruits teachers and is responsible for licensing teachers, managing the applicant pool and ensuring that teachers pass a rigorous teacher performance assessment.</p>	<p>The Colorado State Board of Education (State Board) is responsible for issuing alternative, initial, and professional teacher licenses. Initial licensees must possess a satisfactory level of proficiency, the criteria for which are developed by the State Board. Applicants that do not demonstrate proficiency are denied licenses.</p> <p>State Board requires school districts to either use the teacher performance evaluation system designed by the state or develop their own systems that meet or exceed state requirements. If district-developed systems are found to be unsound, the State Board can revoke that district’s accreditation.</p> <p>Unless a state waiver is granted, teacher performance evaluations must be conducted by persons with principal or administrative license.</p> <p>The first three years that a teacher is employed by a school district is considered probationary—contract may not be subject to renewal. After three years this provision no longer applies.</p> <p>At the discretion of a district superintendent, a teacher may be transferred to another school with the district if transfer does not result in a salary reduction or placement in a position for which s/he is not qualified.</p>
Teacher Training	
<p>State agency contracts with schools of education to train teachers; teacher training focuses on building content expertise in all grades, including elementary; teacher education programs recruit top high school graduates to go into education.</p>	<p>The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) adopts policies establishing the requirements for teacher preparation programs.</p> <p>The State Board monitors the content of teacher preparation programs offered by institutions of higher education and can recommend to CCHE that a program not be approved to train teachers if the State Board feels that it does not properly train teachers.</p> <p>Local school districts are responsible for contracting with institutions of higher education to allow for student teaching/field experiences for teacher education students.</p>
Teacher Compensation	
<p>Statewide salary schedule for teachers developed and overseen by state (with regional cost of living adjustments); such a salary schedule reflects higher starting salaries, on average, than the current system and allows for longer contracts (11-12 months) for teachers. Collective bargaining done at state, not district, level.</p> <p>New teacher retirement system developed and overseen by state that is similar to that provided in the private sector (e.g., 401K type program as opposed to a pension type program as currently exists).</p>	<p>State department of education acts as a repository for all school district collective bargaining agreements.</p> <p>Local school boards must adopt a teacher salary schedule for teachers within their schools (charter schools can choose to use this schedule or adopt their own).</p> <p>Local school boards may establish a benefit retirement system and can choose to require participation in such system or make it voluntary.</p> <p>A state teachers’ emeritus fund exists and is overseen by the commissioner of education. Persons qualifying for retirement benefits receive a monthly payment of \$200 per month, less any pension or retirement benefit received from any other state entity.</p> <p>The public employees’ retirement association (PERA) is an instrument of the state and not subject to administrative direction by any department, commission, board, bureau, or agency of the state. Most teachers and school districts are members of PERA (DPS is the one exception).</p>

Alignment: Teacher Recruitment, Training & Compensation

Alignment with the NCEE recommendations would require the State Board of Education and Department of Education to assume a much larger role than they currently play in regard to teacher recruitment, hiring, and evaluation. Conversely, it would result in a diminished role for local boards of education and school districts.

The state would continue to license teachers and oversee/monitor teacher training programs, as it does now; however, it would need to build its capacity to fulfill new responsibilities: recruiting teachers, managing applicant pool, designing and managing teacher performance assessment, paying teachers, and managing their benefits (including handling collective bargaining).

Under Colorado’s current system, most of these proposed new state responsibilities fall on school districts to manage. In 2005, Colorado employed 45,165 teachers statewide. This does not include teacher candidates (in the pool) or any other staff that work in schools (e.g., administrators, counselors, aides, librarians, etc.). It is unclear from the NCEE report how other staff members in schools would be recruited, hired, compensated, and managed. Would this be the responsibility of the “helping organizations” that run the schools? And, would the state or the helping organizations be responsible for staff evaluations? Would the helping organizations or the state be responsible for firing teachers that are incompetent?

Section I: Teacher Recruitment, Training & Compensation, AT A GLANCE

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
State recruits and manages teachers.	State Board issues teacher licenses and districts manage the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of teachers.
State is responsible for training teachers to be experts in all grades.	CCHE establishes requirements for teacher prep programs. State Board monitors them.
State contracts with schools of education to recruit top high school grads to be teachers.	Local school districts contract with schools of education for student teachers.
Teacher retirement systems mimic those in private sector.	Local boards establish benefit retirement system. All districts except DPS are members of the public employees’ retirement system (not subject to administrative direction by the state).
Salary schedule developed and overseen by state. Allows for longer contracts (year-round) and higher starting salaries.	Local boards adopt teacher salary schedules.
Collective bargaining at state-level.	Collective-bargaining done at district-level.

Alignment with the NCEE recommendations would require the State Board of Education and Department of Education to assume a much larger role than they currently play in regard to teacher recruitment, hiring, and evaluation. Conversely, it would result in a diminished role for local boards of education and school districts.

“The effect of [most current] compensation structure[s] is to make it very attractive for teachers with years of service to stay longer and very unattractive for young people with good options to choose teaching.” (NCEE, 130)

Section II: Funding, Governance & Accountability

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
<p>State Responsibilities</p>	
<p>Approve “helping organizations”—entities that are allowed to operate and manage schools (e.g., CMOs, teacher coops, EMOs, schools of education), decide where those entities will operate schools.</p> <p>Hold schools and school districts accountable to meeting state and federal standards and requirements (e.g., special education, ELL, NCLB, state and federal testing, health & safety, civil rights, etc.).</p> <p>Fund schools directly—schools have discretion over use of resources, not bound by district rules/regulations.</p> <p>Manage relationship with the US DOE and oversee federal programs</p>	<p>State Board appoints state commissioner of education responsible, for overseeing all activities conducted within the state DOE.</p> <p>The Commissioner/State Board of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee public schools and promulgate policies, rules and regulations concerning the supervision of public schools and the state department of education; make policy recommendation to legislature. • Adopt goals and objectives for the public schools and hold local school districts accountable for meeting such goals via accreditation indicators and standards-based tests. Develop and approve the annual budget for the state DOE. • Manage relationship with US DOE; responsible for the implementation of federal education programs. • Collect and analyze student data; manage state accountability testing. • State Board of Education handles charter school appeals and resolves disputes between charter schools and authorizing school districts; the Charter Institute can grant and oversee charter schools except for those located in districts that have received “exclusive chartering authority.” • Run special state grant programs to encourage innovation in education. • Determine proportion of state and local funds to be used to finance the qualified capital construction projects using the state’s school construction and renovation fund. • Grant waivers to state rules and regulations to schools and districts that seek them. Unable to waive assessment requirements or requirements pertaining to the school finance system. • State can create and fund Boards of Cooperate Education Services (BOCES)— entities that operate across school districts and provide selected services to schools. • Determine the proportion of state and local funds to be used to finance the qualified capital construction projects using the state’s school construction and renovation fund. • Grant waivers to state rules and regulations to schools and districts that seek them (primarily charter schools). Unable to waive assessment requirements or requirements pertaining to the school finance system.

Section II: Funding, Governance & Accountability (continued)

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
Local Responsibilities	
<p>Create and manage performance agreements with individual schools, renew or close schools based on such agreements, create performance incentives for schools to improve student achievement.</p> <p>Collect and analyze student achievement data to monitor and evaluate success at meeting performance goals.</p> <p>Foster connections between schools and social services.</p> <p>Provide services to schools for a fee (e.g., payroll, facility maintenance, professional development, Special Education, ELL, etc.).</p>	<p>Determine the educational programs to be carried out in the schools and adopt content standards, decide on curriculum, textbooks, etc to be used. Charter schools and selected other schools (e.g., magnets) have the autonomy to develop their own educational programs and use curriculum that may differ from those of the district as a whole; however, all schools are required to adhere to state and local content standards and take state assessments.</p> <p>Determine school year length (cannot be less than 1,080 hours of teacher-pupil contact for high school and middle schools, or less than 990 hours for elementary full day programs and 450 for half-day Kindergartens).</p> <p>Responsible for providing professional development opportunities.</p> <p>Required by state to develop an accountability plan and appoint a school district accountability committee to advise and oversee the implementation of the plan. But, local board is ultimately responsible for the accountability program.</p> <p>Must adhere to state and federal accountability requirements (e.g., state standards and accreditation, federal NCLB, Title I, Special Ed., etc.). May adopt a resolution declining one or more of the federal funding sources of the NCLB which would alleviate the district from the responsibility of implementing that part of the Act.</p>

Alignment: Funding, Governance & Accountability

Several changes to Colorado’s statutes would need to be enacted in order to implement the NCEE reforms related to school funding, governance and accountability. A list of the key changes by topic area follows, along with emergent questions.

School Management

In Colorado presently, school districts are responsible for managing schools. An exception is charter schools, which are managed individually by a board of directors under a contract with the school district or the state charter institute. Adopting the NCEE recommendations would shift the primary responsibilities of school management away from school districts and toward helping organizations approved by the state to operate schools. A mechanism for the development of such a relationship could be the Charter School Act. Since districts would be responsible for managing the performance agreements with the helper organizations (see more on this below), using the charter law to approve and oversee such helper organizations might provide a relatively easy transition.

School districts in Colorado presently provide a broad range of service to their schools (e.g., professional development, special education and ELL services, transportation, payroll, facility operations and maintenance, etc.). The NCEE recommendations indicate that individual schools could choose to contract with school districts for such services if they chose to do so. This leads to the conclusion that school districts would no longer provide these services unless schools chose to pay them to do so. And, if schools chose not to use their district, they could contract with private providers, “helping organizations,” other school districts or BOCES.

Under the current system, Colorado school districts determine the educational programs to be carried out in the schools (e.g., decide on curriculum, textbooks, etc.) and provide materials and equipment to support those programs. Charter schools and some other special programs are granted significant leeway here but most schools are required to follow the district’s determinations. It is unclear how this would be handled in the system proposed by NCEE. An assumption is that the helping organizations would have the autonomy to determine the educational programs and would purchase

their own curriculum materials and equipment. However, would the curriculum need to be approved? If so, by whom? How would the state ensure that the helping organizations/ schools were teaching students what they needed to know to pass state and national benchmark exams?

Local school boards presently set the school calendar. Would this continue to be a function of school districts, the state, or individual schools under the NCEE system?

Accountability

With the NCEE recommendations, the State Board of Education in CO would continue to be responsible for overseeing public schools and ensuring their adherence to state policies, rules and regulations. Similar to how the current system works, the state would hold school districts accountable for the success of the schools in their jurisdiction. The difference in a new system modeled after the NCEE recommendations has to do with the performance agreements that districts would have with their schools. School districts would be responsible for contracting with helping organizations to manage schools and such contracts would be tied to specific performance standards (similar to a charter contract in the current system). Schools that failed to meet the standards could be closed and/or the helping organization running that school could be fired and another one brought in to run the school. As noted above, this aspect of the reform could be modeled after the Charter School Act. What is unclear is how the performance agreements would be crafted and negotiated with school districts. And finally, how will the state be held accountable under the proposal by NCEE (given the state's increasing role in school management, staffing, and funding)?

Under a system modeled after the NCEE recommendations, the state would continue to manage state accountability testing. What is unclear is who would manage and oversee the other types of testing proposed by NCEE (board examinations, diagnostic testing)—would this be a national, state consortium, state or district responsibility?

Funding

Schools in Colorado presently receive funding from state, local, and federal sources combined and such funding is managed and distributed by school districts (except for charter schools where the funding flows through the district to the school site). The NCEE recommendations propose funding school sites directly from the state and therefore removing the role of districts as the “middle man.” This type of new system would require building the state's capacity to distribute funds and manage this process, as well as building the capacity of schools to create and manage budgets. Such a system would also need to take into account how school districts would be funded for the work they continue to do under this new arrangement. And, questions surface about such things not addressed in the report like who would be responsible for paying for and managing school facilities (state or school districts) and what ongoing role would districts play in raising tax revenue to support public schools?

The NCEE recommendations call for a funding system that provides more funding on a per pupil basis for students at-risk of failure, students with disabilities, and students requiring English language instruction. However, it also emphasizes the need to provide such funding in a way that doesn't reduce the base of funding for schools not serving students with special needs. In other words, working to avoid the “Robin Hood Effect” where money is taken away from richer schools to pay for poorer schools. The richer schools would not get more than they do in the existing system but the poorer schools would get more given the need to provide services that the richer schools do not need to provide. This requires the establishment of an appropriate base cost for none special needs students.

Sections I-VI

Section II: Funding, Governance and Accountability, AT A GLANCE

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
State approves “helping organizations” to operate and manage schools.	State oversees public schools. School districts or the Charter Institute authorize charters. Districts determine curriculum, textbooks, educational program; negotiate teacher contracts; and mandate school year length.
State funds schools directly and gives them discretion over resources.	School board adopts annual budget, oversees operations and maintenance of facilities, and allocates money to schools.
Districts manage performance agreements with each school and evaluate schools based on achievement data.	State holds districts accountable for meeting standards. Districts develop and implement accountability plans.
Districts provide services like payroll, professional development, ELL to schools for a fee.	BOCES are entities that operate across districts (largely rural) to supplement what Districts can provide. Services may include: special education services, professional development, technology services).

Adopting the NCEE recommendations would shift the primary responsibilities of school management away from school districts and toward helping organizations approved by the state to operate schools.

Section III: Serving At-Risk & Special Needs Students

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
<p>Quality before and after school programs.</p> <p>Tutoring for students at-risk of or already falling behind.</p> <p>Diagnostic screening starting in Pre-K for all kids and continuing as needed each year with the expectation that by the time kids reach high school, they are at grade level because their needs will have been met along the way.</p> <p>Increase in the number of counselors and mentors working in schools with individual students.</p> <p>Financial incentives to attract the best teachers to high-need schools.</p> <p>Active recruitment by state of high quality teachers of color.</p> <p>Weighted student funding (schools with higher percentages of special needs students get more money).</p>	<p>State Responsibilities (Board of Education/DOE)</p> <p><u>Second Language Learners</u> Responsible for developing a single instrument for districts to use in identifying eligible English Language Learners (ELL); establishing statewide levels of proficiency on the instrument; identifying allowable assessment accommodations; providing assistance to districts, as needed, to identify students; evaluating districts for compliance; and analyzing testing data to track academic progress of ELL students.</p> <p><u>Exceptional Children (Special Education)</u> The State Board promulgates rules for the identification of exceptional children who may become eligible for special educational services. Such rules address topics like: criteria for determining disability and eligibility for special education and other services for exceptional children; requirements for parental consent; required IEP content and procedures for IEP development, review and revision; and procedures for special education dispute resolution.</p> <p><u>After School and Summer School</u> Selects school districts to operate summer school programs for migrant children. Funding is provided by the state for such programs. Local boards of education have the authority to determine if attendance is voluntary or mandatory.</p> <p><u>At-Risk Students</u> State operates a voluntary second chance program for high school dropouts. Student eligibility criteria and procedures for operating the program are governed by the state board.</p> <p>Local Responsibilities (school districts, charter institute)</p> <p><u>Students With Disabilities</u> Districts are required to educate students with disabilities in the “least restrictive environment to the maximum extent appropriate.” This means educating disabled children as much as possible in classes with children without disabilities. Districts must serve every child with a disability but may provide voluntary programs for gifted students.</p> <p>IEPs must specify whether or not a child is required to meet state or local content standards or whether the child must achieve individualized standards.</p>

Alignment: At-Risk & Special Needs Students

The previous section funding, accountability, and governance discussed a shift in funding required in the NCEE system—weighted funding or more funding per pupil for students with special needs. Such funding would cover the added costs associated with serving students with additional needs (e.g., before and after school programs, tutoring, diagnostic screening, mentoring, etc.). All schools would require some of these services but schools serving high populations of English language learners, special education students, and kids from high poverty homes would require more of these services on average than those schools with lower populations of special needs students.

Under the NCEE proposed system, the state is responsible for approving “helping organizations” and school districts are required to hold such organizations accountable via performance agreements. Based on the recommendations, it would be essential for the helping organizations to demonstrate how they would meet the needs of kids requiring additional support and services and then be held accountable

for results associated with serving those kids. Under Colorado’s present system, school districts are responsible for handling most of the services for students with special needs and the state is responsible for holding school districts accountable for results. Under the proposed NCEE system, the schools become responsible (or their helping organizations) for seeking and providing such services from either school districts or private providers.

Selected school districts have started to provide financial incentives for teachers choosing to work in hard to staff schools. The NCEE system proposed such incentives for schools across the state. As such, the state would want to learn about the pros and cons of the existing programs as it decides how to develop incentives statewide. Additionally, it would be a good idea to look at places that have been successful at recruiting and retaining teachers in hard to staff places and determine why these places have been successful (e.g., more money, greater flexibility, more say in decision-making, etc.).

Section III: Serving At-Risk and Special Needs Students, AT A GLANCE

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
Provide before and after-school programs, including tutoring.	State provides funds to some districts for summer school programs for migrant children. State provides grants for some before and after school arts-based and vocational programs for kids in 6-12th grades.
Provide diagnostic screening starting in Pre-K to ensure that students are at grade-level.	State develops instrument for districts to identify ELL, establish levels of proficiency. Districts submit plan to the state that explains plans for serving students with disabilities. States distribute federal special education funds to districts. Districts can opt to impose proficiency tests for all students in high school (9th, 12th grades).
Increase number of counselors and mentors. Distribute money using weighted student funding, wherein funds follow students. Higher-needs students are allocated more funds.	Current ratios of counselors to students vary greatly by district. School districts decide how funding for special needs students is allocated.

The NCEE system recommends providing more funding per pupil for students with special needs, students from high poverty homes, and English language learners. This funding would cover added costs associated with before and after school programs, tutoring, mentoring, etc.

Section IV: High School to College Transitions

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
<p>Board examinations required for all students to graduate from high school and enter an institute of higher education, including community colleges. Up to 10 curriculum areas can be covered in the board exams, of which 5 must be passed by each student.</p> <p>Higher standards for entering community colleges and more rigorous coursework at such colleges.</p> <p>Following passage of standard board exam, students can either go on to a community or technical college or stay in high school and prepare for a second board exam (e.g., AP/IB type programs/courses/exams).</p> <p>Pass 2nd board exam or receive Associates degree, next step is a four-year college.</p> <p>Support provided to students to help them prepare for exams and make decisions about appropriate next steps during the process.</p>	<p>State Responsibilities (Board of Education/DOE) State manages a high school fast track program which allows school districts to send students who have fulfilled high school graduation requirements to take one or more college-level courses during their senior year (12th grade, 21 yrs old or younger). Courses may be taught at the high school facility or on the college campus. For purposes of determining enrollment, the pupil shall be counted as a student of a state institution in accordance with the number of course hours in which he is enrolled.</p> <p>The school district of residence of a pupil taking courses at a state institution of higher education is entitled to state support for such pupil on the same basis as other pupils.</p> <p>All high school students are required to take the ACT test in the 11th grade.</p> <p>Local Responsibilities (school districts, charter institute) Any high school student taking college credit continues to be eligible to participate in all high school activities as if s/he was attending classes at the school until the time of graduation of the student's senior class. However, the high school student does not have the same rights as regularly enrolled higher education students.</p> <p>If a district opts to impose a proficiency test for graduation from 12th grade, such test must be given at least twice during each school year and initial testing must take place in the 9th grade. Any child who does not fulfill the requirements of a special proficiency test must be provided with remedial or tutoring services during the school day in the subject areas in which the test indicates deficiencies for graduation purposes until such time as the results of the test are satisfactory</p> <p>School districts must forward to institutions of higher education the amount of tuition to which the institution would be entitled on behalf of a regularly enrolled students taking such courses, up to 75% of the school district's per pupil operating revenues. School districts are not authorized to pay the costs of transportation, room and board, fees, books, equipment or other related costs. The student is still counted as being enrolled in his school district.</p> <p>School districts and institutes of higher education are required by the state to enter into a cooperative agreement regarding the enrollment of students and methods of funding such students.</p> <p>Students must pay the tuition costs associated with taking postsecondary courses, subject to reimbursement by the school district upon successful completion of the courses. In some instances, the district is allowed to pay for the student's tuition in advance of completion (e.g., students that qualify for free and reduced lunch).</p> <p>Institutes of higher education can limit the number of high school pupils eligible to take courses.</p>

Alignment: The Transition from High School to College

Presently, the state of CO is involved in the high school to college transition in two ways: (1) allows students to take college-level courses while in high school (under certain condition and with district approval); and (2) requires all 10th graders to take the ACT. Transitioning to the NCEE system would require a much greater role for the state and a diminished role for school districts, in the following ways:

States would design and manage new statewide graduation requirements, including the board examinations (e.g., design and score tests, determine eligibility, standards, and requirements for passing). Colorado does not have statewide graduation requirements presently. School districts develop these requirements (which can be influenced by the entrance requirements for students set by the state universities).

Working with community colleges and state 4-yr universities to draft new standards and entrance requirements. The existing requirements developed by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education would need to be modified to match the new graduation requirements.

Presently, students who take approved college-level courses while in high schools are reimbursed for the tuition by their school district. If the NCEE system was adopted, it is unclear how would this need to change? When students pass their board examination (say after 10th grade), and decide to move on to community college, are they responsible for 100% of their tuition or is there some type of support provided by the state?

Section IV: The Transition from High School to College, AT A GLANCE

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
Board examinations required for all students to graduate from high school.	Colorado does not have a standard high school graduation requirement. High school graduation requirements are measured in coursework/ carnegie units (and are determined by districts). All students take ACT in 11th grade but performance is not tied to graduation. Districts can opt to impose graduation exams, but must test initially in 9th grade.
Higher standards for entering community colleges and more rigorous coursework at such colleges.	K-12 education statutes do not address remedial education because it falls within the realm of higher education.
Following passage of standard board exam, students can either go on to a community or technical college, or stay in high school and prepare for a second board exam. (Passing 2nd exam earns student Associates Degree).	High school fast track program allows districts to allow 12th graders to take college-level courses. If classes are taken at the college, school districts must pay student tuition.
Support provided to students to help them prepare for exams and make decisions about appropriate next steps during process.	Districts decide how to best prepare students for college.

State would manage high school graduation requirements instead of districts. Entrance requirements into Community Colleges would be more closely matched with graduation requirements.

Section V: Preschool and Kindergarten

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
<p>Public (full day) preschool, paid for by the state, for all 4 year olds.</p> <p>Public (full day) preschool, paid for by the state, for all at-risk and special needs 3 year olds.</p> <p>Full-day kindergarten for all students.</p> <p>Establishment of quality standards and an enforcement strategy developed and monitored by state.</p>	<p>State Responsibilities (Board of Education/DOE) State preschool and kindergarten program began in 2006-07. Program serves children ages 3-5 who lack overall learning readiness due to “significant family risk factors,” who are in need of language development, or who are receiving services from the department of human services as neglected or dependent children. 14,360 students a year can participate in the program.</p> <p>The state board determines eligibility rules, including criteria for each school district to use in determining which children are eligible for the state preschool program. The state DOE evaluates each school district’s application, using the state board’s criteria.</p> <p>Local Responsibilities (school districts, charter institute) Districts that wish to participate in the state preschool program can count enrolled children as half-time students for purposes of determining school funding. A full-day program will also be available for selected school districts. For those participating, no more than 5% of preschoolers and 15% of kindergartners can be full-day. Districts with full-day programs can count students as full-day for purposes of determining school-funding.</p> <p>Institutes of higher education can limit the number of high school pupils eligible to take courses.</p>

Alignment: Preschool and Kindergarten

Colorado’s existing state preschool program could be expanded to include participation of all 4 year olds and at-risk 3 year olds, as proposed by NCEE; however, this would require a large influx of new or reallocated funding to support the effort.

Colorado’s system currently funds half-day kindergarten through the school finance formula. And, school districts and/or parents are required to pick up the cost of a full-day program if such a program is offered. As above, moving to a full-day Kindergarten for all kids would require a large influx of new or reallocated funding to support the effort.

Section V: Preschool & Kindergarten, AT A GLANCE

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
Public (full day) preschool for all 4-year olds.	Denver began to provide public pre-K for all 4 year-olds starting Fall 2007.
Public (full day) preschool for all at-risk and special needs 3-year olds.	State pre-k and Kindergarten program serves children 3-5 with risk factors. No more than 5% of preschoolers and 15% of kindergartners can be full-day. All slots are currently allocated.
Full-day kindergarten for all students.	Any district can offer full-day K, but funding is limited.
Establishment of quality standards and an enforcement strategy developed and monitored by the state.	Colorado has fairly high quality standards.

Colorado’s existing programs could be expanded to include participation of all 4-year olds and at-risk 3-year olds, but this would require new or reallocated funding.

Sections I-VI, Conclusion

Section VI: Enrollment and School Choice

NCEE Recommendations	Colorado Statutes
<p>Parents are free to choose any school for their child (not limited to district boundaries).</p> <p>School districts are responsible for ensuring that all students in their jurisdiction have a school to attend.</p> <p>Oversubscribed schools use a lottery for admission.</p>	<p>Intra and inter-district choice: All school districts are required by the state to allow students to apply to enroll in particular programs or schools within the district.</p> <p>District must also allow nonresident students from other school districts within the state to apply to enroll in particular programs or schools without charging tuition.</p> <p>Districts can deny any application to enroll if there is a lack of space or teaching staff, in which case, resident students have first priority. Districts can also deny applications if the school requested does not offer appropriate programs or is not structured with the necessary facilities to meet special pupil needs.</p>

Alignment: Enrollment and School Choice

All of the NCEE recommendations in this section are currently in place in Colorado as described in the intra and inter-district choice statutes above. The only remaining question has to do with transportation. Presently, those who choose to attend a school other than their assigned school are typically responsible for providing their own transportation to that school of choice. It is unclear how the NCEE recommendations propose to address transportation needs.

(e.g., teacher collective bargaining, compensation, and school oversight). Under a system reflective of the NCEE recommendations, the state would assume the responsibility of all aspects of teacher hiring, recruitment, and compensation. Districts would be responsible for holding schools accountable to performance agreements and the State would hold districts accountable. Schools could choose to contract with school districts for services or choose to use a private provider. A thorough examination of Colorado’s constitution and other rules and regulations would need to be undertaken to determine the feasibility of moving the responsibility for school oversight from local to state control.

Conclusion

Feasibility

Implementing a portion of the NCEE recommendations would be much easier than implementing others. For example, recommendations regarding school choice and preschool are more easily implemented because existing infrastructures and policies complement the recommendations. NCEE recommendations concerning school financing, governance and accountability; teacher recruitment and compensation; and the high school to college transition would require new policies that might significantly change Colorado’s existing education system.

Enrollment and School Choice - Increasing numbers of students and families are choosing schools other than their neighborhood schools, even outside of their home districts. A system modeled after the NCEE recommendations would require only a few modifications to ensure that district enrollment policies be more consistent and that schools not be assigned to students.

Preschool - Because Colorado already has a state preschool program to serve children with disabilities, current state programs could be expanded with additional resources.

Funding, governance and accountability - As a “local control” state, governance, operations, and oversight of public schools in Colorado currently is handled at the local district level

Teacher recruitment, hiring, & compensation - Presently, local collective bargaining agreements between school districts and teachers unions dictate teacher-related policies and activities. The NCEE recommendations suggest shifting this responsibility to the state-level. Without union support, which may be difficult to garner, the changes NCEE suggests would be difficult to implement.

High School to College Transition - While some efforts exist in Colorado to allow students to take college-level coursework while in high school, these efforts are piecemeal, at best, and inconsistent across schools and districts. Furthermore, inconsistencies exist between the entrance requirements to state universities instituted by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and graduation requirements of local school districts. Statewide graduation requirements are non-existent. The NCEE recommendations propose consistent, statewide requirements for graduation and college admission via passage of board examinations. Shifting to such a system would require a major collaboration between K-12 and higher education and a monumental shift in graduation and college enrollment practices and requirements.



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