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Introduction: How to use this guide

These CDE strategic priorities messages:

- Provide clear, consistent, agreed upon messaging for the key education work happening in Colorado.
- Reinforce the approach of tying all messaging to CDE's overall mission and **connecting** the key reform efforts rather than talking about them in isolation.
- Guide conversations about the areas that are not your area of expertise

These messages are NOT meant to be read word-for-word. Instead, they are intended to help guide your conversations, presentations and written material and keep you focused on the most impactful messages. It is not recommended to use all of the messages together as they can be repetitive. Instead, pick and choose the best messages for your audience and purpose remembering that clear and consistent messages have a long-lasting impact.

Messages evolve as projects evolve so please refer back to the CDE intranet often for updated versions of this document: <http://cdenet.cde.state.co.us/cdematerial.asp>. This document is for internal use and updates or questions should be addressed to Amy Skinner at Skinner_a@cde.state.co.us.

CDE Foundational Messages

- As a *dynamic service agency*, CDE provides leadership, resources, support, and accountability to the state's 178 school districts, 1,780 schools, and over 130,000 educators to help them build capacity to meet the needs of the state's approximately 840,000 public school students.
- As the *administrative arm* of the State Board of Education, CDE is responsible for implementing state and federal education laws, disbursing state and federal funds, holding schools and districts accountable for performance, licensing all educators, and providing public transparency of performance and financial data.
- As a *learning organization*, CDE actively partners with districts, schools, educators, families, and community agencies to assess needs, foster innovation, identify promising practices, learn from each other, and disseminate successful strategies to increase student achievement and ensure college and career readiness.
- As a *change agent*, CDE seeks to continually advance and improve the state's education system to prepare all learners for success in a rapidly changing global workplace. CDE sets a clear vision for increasing student and overall system performance and holds itself and the state's schools and districts accountable for results.
- CDE has four overarching goals with specific objectives tied to each of them:
 - Prepare students to thrive in their education and in a globally competitive workforce.
 - Ensure effective educators for every student and effective leaders for every school and district.
 - Build the capacity of schools and districts to meet the needs of Colorado students and their families.
 - Build the best education system in the nation.
- CDE's goals and objectives aim to build an aligned education system (student, educator, schools/districts, state)
- The true potential of every student can be reached when we intentionally integrate and implement:
 - Coherent and rigorous academic standards
 - Innovative and engaging learning options
 - Aligned and meaningful assessments
 - Excellent teachers and school leaders
 - Statewide and district accountability
- The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all activities are supported, integrated and focused on increasing our capacity to support districts and schools in delivering high quality education to all students.

Educator Effectiveness Messages

Educator Effectiveness Foundational Messages

- The mission of CDE is to shape, support, and safeguard a statewide education system that prepares students for success in a globally competitive world.
- The power of Colorado's education improvement efforts lies in the integration and implementation of four key priorities: coherent and rigorous standards, aligned and meaningful assessments, excellent teachers and school leaders, and high-performing schools and districts all aimed at helping students succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.
- Implementing rigorous standards, meaningful assessments and quality educator evaluations will provide the data and feedback to ensure that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive world.
- The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all activities are supported, integrated and focused on increasing our capacity to support districts and schools in delivering high quality education to our students.
- Colorado's commitment to continually improving student growth requires that we regularly revisit the learning we seek for children AND support the growth of educators who dedicate themselves to student success.
- Effective educators are the single most important school based factor in moving the achievement needle – in closing achievement gaps and giving every student a chance to succeed.
- Colorado is supporting educators in their quest to continually improve and expand their impact on students.
- In collaboration with educators across the state, CDE is creating and piloting a State Model Evaluation System for teachers and principals that districts may choose to use to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 10-191.

Educator Effectiveness Specific Messages

Purpose of New Educator Evaluation System

- Every child in every community deserves excellent classroom teachers and building leaders.
- Every educator in every school deserves authentic feedback about how their teaching impacts student learning.
 - Colorado is improving teacher and principal evaluation systems to provide educators with more meaningful feedback and support so they can achieve their goal of maximum results with students.

Benefit to Students

- Students have the greatest chance to succeed when educators receive support to continuously improve their skills and knowledge.

- Ongoing feedback and targeted professional development helps educators meet the changing needs of their students.

Benefits to Teachers

- With ongoing feedback and support, the Colorado Model Evaluation System provides teachers with meaningful information about how their practice impacts student learning.
 - Teachers coach and mentor each other based on their identified strengths and growth opportunities, giving educators more control over their professional growth.
 - The new system acknowledges the central role of teachers and provides the opportunity to reflect and refine their practice in order to continually meet the needs of their students.

Benefits to Principals/Schools

- A more comprehensive evaluation system consisting of a multiple measures of performance data will help school leaders develop their teams and also help them make more informed decisions.
 - The new system encourages leaders and staff to work as a team to match teacher skills to classroom needs.

Continuous Improvement

- Colorado's educator effectiveness effort is designed to continuously improve and evolve based on field feedback and experience.
 - Key elements of the Colorado State Model Evaluation System are being pilot tested in districts to make improvements before it is offered to districts as an option for meeting the requirements of Senate Bill 10-191.
 - The Colorado Model Evaluation System has feedback loops from teacher to principal, school to district, and district to state to ensure continuous improvement.
 - Teachers are the experts in improving student learning. They have helped shape the new system, including new tools and evaluation instruments.

Fairness and Reliability

- Colorado is committed to designing and maintaining an evaluation system that is fair to all educators. Decisions about effective practices must be based on multiple types of data.
 - The goal is to improve the reliability of data with time and experience using the new system.
 - New evaluation systems are required to use multiple measures to determine student growth and assess professional practice.
 - Due process for educators, including the ability to appeal decisions, is included as a safeguard.

Colorado Academic Standards Messages

Colorado Academic Standards Foundational Messages

- The mission of CDE is to shape, support, and safeguard a statewide education system that prepares students for success in a globally competitive world.
- The power of Colorado's education improvement efforts lies in the integration and implementation of four key priorities: coherent and rigorous standards, aligned and meaningful assessments, excellent teachers and school leaders, and high-performing schools and districts all aimed at helping students succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.
- Implementing rigorous standards, meaningful assessments and quality educator evaluations will provide the data and feedback to ensure that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive world.
- The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all activities are supported, integrated and focused on increasing our capacity to support districts and schools in delivering high quality education to our students.
- Colorado's commitment to continually improving student growth requires that we regularly revisit the learning we seek for children AND support the growth of educators who dedicate themselves to student success.
- The Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) are the expectations of what students need to know and be able to do at the end of each grade. They embody the 21st century skills, content, and competencies that are the foundation of postsecondary and workforce readiness for Colorado students.
- The Colorado English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards are essential for English Language Learners to access all Colorado standards concepts and skills. Academic language is needed by all students to master the Colorado Academic Standards and prepare students for college and career.

Colorado Academic Standards Specific Messages

Benefit of the Colorado Academic Standards

- The Colorado Academic Standards are clear statements of what students are expected to learn at each grade level and they allow parents and teachers to work together to improve student outcomes and ensure that all students graduate from Colorado schools as postsecondary and workforce ready citizens.
- All of the Colorado Academic Standards' content area standards are nationally and internationally benchmarked to ensure that Colorado students are prepared to participate in our global society.
- The Colorado Academic Standards provide focus, coherence and rigor; they require instructional practices with real-world relevance that develop the 21st century skills our students will need for college and/or career success.
- Designed with the end in mind, the Colorado Academic Standards articulate the prepared graduate competencies and the points of mastery at each grade level that lead to postsecondary and workforce readiness.

Development of the Colorado Academic Standards

- The development process was research-based and fully inclusive of Colorado’s diverse communities. Participation from business leaders, teachers, parents, higher education representatives and others helped ensure that a wealth of experience informed the creation of our new standards.
- The Colorado Academic Standards exemplify the mantra “all students, all standards”; the development process created new standards for each of our ten content areas: Colorado Arts – Music, Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance; Comprehensive Health and Physical Education; Mathematics; Reading, Writing and Communicating; Science; Social Studies and World Languages.
- The Colorado Academic Standards for Mathematics and Reading, Writing and Communicating incorporate the entire Common Core State Standards while maintaining the unique aspects of the Colorado Academic Standards, including 21st century skills and prepared graduate competencies.

Implementation of the Colorado Academic Standards

- Colorado school districts are transitioning to the new Colorado Academic Standards with full implementation by the 2013-14 school year.
- The Colorado Department of Education is supporting districts by providing implementation support tools including the Transition Action Planning Guide, Standards Graphic Organizers, Vertical Progressions and others.
- The CDE Office of Standards and Instructional Support website contains support tools, content specific instructional resources and professional development opportunities to help educators successfully implement the new standards.
- There is still much work to be done to make sure that the promise of our new standards turns into a reality of success for our students. We must support educators at all levels as they work on implementation.
- In addition to these tools and the website, the Colorado Department of Education is currently working on the next phase of implementation support, including the development of voluntary curriculum samples based on the Colorado Academic Standards.
- Colorado’s District Sample Curriculum Project originated as a response to increasing requests from Colorado educators for voluntary curriculum samples based on the new Colorado Academic Standards. From its beginnings, educators across the state have been the driving force behind this project.
- Colorado educators will produce all the curriculum samples created over the course of the project. As the next step in standards support for the state, the project is oriented around three fundamental goals:
 - Facilitating successful implementation of the new Colorado Academic Standards
 - Helping build the capacity of Colorado educators to create curriculum materials based on the standards
 - Bringing together Colorado’s educators to create a variety of samples that reflect the diversity of our school districts

Assessment Messages

Assessment Foundational Messages

- The mission of CDE is to shape, support, and safeguard a statewide education system that prepares students for success in a globally competitive world.
- The power of Colorado's education improvement efforts lies in the integration and implementation of four key priorities: coherent and rigorous standards, aligned and meaningful assessments, excellent teachers and school leaders, and high-performing schools and districts all aimed at helping students succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.
- Implementing rigorous standards, meaningful assessments and quality educator evaluations will provide the data and feedback to ensure that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive world.
- The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all activities are supported, integrated and focused on increasing our capacity to support districts and schools in delivering high quality education to our students.
- Colorado's commitment to continually improve student growth requires frequently reexamining the learning we seek for children AND supporting the growth of educators who dedicate themselves to student success. To be successful, the Colorado education system requires meaningful, timely and precise measures of student learning as they work towards college and career readiness.
- In addition to implementing more focused, rigorous standards and providing educators with more feedback and support, assessing student learning is critical in determining whether educational goals are being met. State assessments provide essential data in some content areas to determine student achievement and to identify schools and districts that can serve as models for success, or that may need more support.
- Colorado is continually improving assessment feedback tools for educators, learners and parents. New assessment technologies will allow Colorado to assess not just the knowledge acquired in specific content areas, but also skills that are essential for college and career readiness, such as problem solving and critical thinking.

Assessment Specific Messages

- Colorado assessments are changing in order to accurately assess student mastery relative to the Colorado Academic Standards.
- In the future, state assessments will focus more on evidence-based reading and writing, mathematical modeling and application, scientific simulations and processes, and social studies concepts.
- Colorado is developing new science and social studies assessments that will be administered at one grade level in elementary, middle and high school. These assessments are currently scheduled for 2014. In August, Colorado joined the multi-state assessment consortium, Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), as a governing state. The English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments developed by the consortium will be ready for administration in grades 3 through 11 in the spring of 2015.

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- The Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) supports the transition to the Colorado Academic Standards during the development of the new assessments.
 - The Colorado Department of Education is researching new assessment platforms that could transform the power of assessment by identifying student misconceptions and giving students the opportunity to track their own progress towards subject mastery.

Colorado Content Collaboratives Messages

- Through the Colorado Content Collaboratives project, the Colorado Department of Education is supporting districts in identifying assessments that will provide more meaningful feedback about student progress throughout the school year.
- The Colorado Content Collaboratives consist of preschool through 12th grade educators from around the state coming together to identify high-quality assessments which are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards and may be used to measure student learning over time for purposes of educator evaluations (as required by Senate Bill 10-191).
- The goal of the first year of the Colorado Content Collaboratives' work is to review assessments in each content area to determine their degree of alignment to the Colorado Academic Standards and appropriateness for use in Colorado classrooms.
- Assessments identified will be available to Colorado districts piloting the State Model Evaluation System during the 2012-13 school year to determine their utility as measures of student learning over time.
- The intention is to have enough assessments in the Resource Bank to represent the full depth and breadth of the Colorado Academic Standards for all grade levels. The Colorado Content Collaboratives will continue to refine and build the assessment Resource Bank and will work to fill any content or grade-level gaps that may exist when the bank initially launches.
- Over time, the Colorado Content Collaboratives will focus on developing instructional resources, creating performance tasks and continuing to populate the bank with multiple measures that represent both student learning and educator effectiveness.
- The ongoing work of the Colorado Content Collaboratives will help to build statewide capacity and also ensures that Colorado educators continue to be highly involved in the state's reform efforts.

Accountability, Performance and Support Messages

Accountability Foundational Messages

- The mission of CDE is to shape, support, and safeguard a statewide education system that prepares students for success in a globally competitive world.
- The power of Colorado's education improvement efforts lies in the integration and implementation of four key priorities: coherent and rigorous standards, aligned and meaningful assessments, excellent teachers and school leaders, and high-performing schools and districts all aimed at helping students succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.
- The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all activities are supported, integrated and focused on increasing our capacity to support districts and schools in delivering high quality education to our students.
- The Colorado Department of Education supports districts and schools through an educational system focused on ensuring all students will exit Colorado's K-12 schools ready for college and career success.
- CDE's Accountability, Performance and Support Division provides a framework that establishes performance expectations for districts and schools, defines how performance will be measured and evaluated, and outlines the assistance the State will provide in support of local efforts to create and sustain high-performing schools.
- Federal program accountability measures also provide information on where and how to direct resources, specific to the federal program's purpose.

Accountability Specific Messages

School and District Performance

- The Performance Frameworks measure the performance of schools and districts in relation to our statewide goal of all students post-secondary and workforce ready. The Performance Frameworks measure performance with four indicators: academic achievement, academic growth, academic growth gaps and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Academic Growth and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness are valued most heavily in the frameworks to reflect our state values.
- The differentiated requirements, sanctions and supports for Performance and Improvement districts and schools versus those for Priority Improvement and Turnaround districts and schools reflect Colorado's differentiated approach to accountability, improvement, and support.
- The Colorado Department of Education bases its supports and interventions on performance and need, whereby demonstration of high performance results in greater autonomy and demonstration of high needs results in greater support and intervention. Those districts and schools that are identified as higher-performing (i.e., those on Performance or Improvement Plans on the DPF/SPF reports) receive the greatest autonomy from the state, whereas those districts and schools that are identified as lower-performing (i.e., those on Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans on the DPF/SPF reports) receive the most scrutiny and also the most support from the state.

- Driven by data, this differentiated approach is built on the theory that in a state of diverse districts and schools, different levels and types of support and intervention from the state will result in improved student outcomes.
- In order to meet our state goals for students, we need to provide the most support to those schools and districts identified with Priority Improvement or Turnaround plans.
- The CDE School and District Performance Unit provides targeted support for districts with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround rating. CDE Performance Managers lead the support for each of these districts and work directly with district staff to ensure effective planning and implementation for dramatic district improvement.
- General support for districts is provided through the work of Field Services Managers.
- Working with the CDE Improvement Planning unit, the District Performance Unit is beginning a Coordinate Support Team (CST) process which provides the opportunity to thoroughly analyze the current state and needs of each Priority Improvement and Turnaround district.
- The District Performance Unit works with the Federal Programs unit to ensure that School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds are used to target effective and prioritized improvement efforts in Turnaround schools.

Improvement Planning

- Colorado schools and districts can improve student learning and system effectiveness by engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement to manage their performance. As a part of the state's accountability system, all Colorado schools and districts are expected to create and maintain a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) that includes a data analysis, targets and action planning.
- Purpose: The UIP provides a consistent and stream-lined format for all schools and districts to meet state and federal accountability requirements. The UIP is based upon research and best practices in improvement planning to assist schools and district focus their efforts and resources on priority areas that will improve results for students.
- Continuous Improvement: The UIP is based upon a continuous improvement model. The plans cover at least a two year period and have been designed to be updated and adjusted on a regular basis.
- Support: CDE is committed to providing support to schools and districts in building strong improvement plans. A wide variety of supports have been made available, including trainings, resource and guidance materials, example plans, video case studies and online tutorials.

Innovation, Choice and Engagement Messages

- In collaboration with the Colorado Legacy Foundation, the Colorado Department of Education has launched the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Initiative. ELO is an innovative teaching and learning platform designed to ignite the unique potential of every student through the creation and delivery of dramatically personalized learning experience.
 - ELO identifies five elements that work together to service greater learning personalization for every student. Those elements include:
 - Give schools and educators the capacity to know each student well through regular diagnoses, customizable learning maps and data platforms.
 - Modularize content so it is more flexible and is able to be delivered via multiple modalities.
 - Differentiate time to maximize student learning and support “anytime, anywhere”. This will allow students opportunities to progress at their own pace.
 - Reimagine human capital to better leverage individual educator skills and interests with student needs.
 - Offer a variety of delivery methods to allow learning experiences to occur inside and outside the classroom
 - ELO enhances educator effectiveness and use of existing resources to improve student outcomes and create competent, confident learners who are more empowered, better supported and fully prepared for education, careers and life.
 - ELO does this by creatively and systematically integrating a vast range of new and existing teaching and learning tools, resources, modules and approaches into more personalized, engaging and relevant learning experiences that tap into each student’s passions, interests and learning styles inside and outside of the classroom.
- The Office of Online Learning & Blended Learning serves and supports Online & Blended Learning Schools, Programs, Students, Parents, Authorizers, other related entities, and individuals related to K-12 Online & Blended Learning in Colorado.
 - The office provides information to all interested parties, and supports the growth of quality Online & Blended Learning to expand students’ access to effective teachers, meaningful content, and learning options.
- The Schools of Choice Office encourages expansion of quality charter school choices by providing support to both new and existing charter schools through two primary strategies:

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- The Schools of Choice Office manages the federal charter start up grant which currently provides three years of start-up funding, totaling nearly \$600,000 per school to new charter schools that can demonstrate that they are prepared to open and sustain a quality program.
 - As part of that grant, CDE also offer nearly 50 days of training each year for new and existing schools in the areas of: school leadership, governing board roles and responsibilities, board president roles and responsibilities, business manager and finance policies and practice, charter school planning and grant writing.
 - The Division of Innovation, Choice, and Engagement supports the expansion of quality innovation schools as a means of incubating new ideas and systems and providing flexibility to schools and districts. Innovation applications are reviewed in accordance to the 2008 Innovation Act. The purpose of the Act is to provide a pathway for schools and districts to develop and implement innovative practices to improve student outcomes. Upon local and state approval of their application, schools and districts receive innovation status and receive autonomies that traditional schools and districts do not have.
 - Common autonomies sought include: personnel management, budget management, time and school calendar, and curriculum and instruction.