



COLORADO
Department of Education

Colorado's Plan for Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

Submitted to:
United States Department of Education

December 2015

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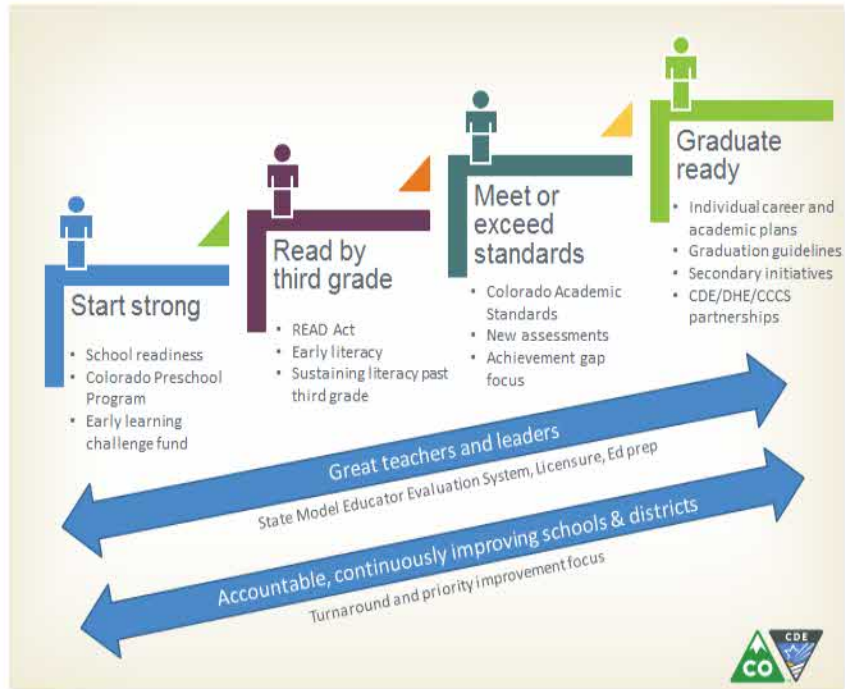
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Introduction

Overview and current state context

The Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) mission is to ensure that all students are prepared for success in society, work, and life by providing excellent leadership, service, and support to schools, districts, and communities across the state. In support of that mission, CDE has identified four overarching strategic goals that are focused on supporting students through every step of their schooling. Ensuring that all students have access to excellent educators is integral to Colorado's success in helping students meet our rigorous state academic standards.



Sec. 1111(b)(8) of the No Child Left Behind Act requires state education agencies to develop plans to help ensure "...that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers." To date, Colorado has relied heavily on teaching experience and credentials in assessing teacher quality and measuring equity gaps. Using these metrics, Colorado data reveal gaps in educator equity and many students have inconsistent access to effective educators throughout their education. In recent years, Colorado has focused on the implementation of integrated strategic improvements in standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and educator evaluation. Together, these reforms have the singular purpose of ensuring that all students are prepared for success in a globally competitive world. The implementation of Colorado's system of educator evaluation, in particular, affords CDE the opportunity to consider student outcomes in assessing teacher quality and gaps in access to high quality teachers. We know that classroom teaching and school leadership are among the strongest school-based factors impacting student achievement. We know we must focus on growth and development of our current teaching force by investing in them throughout the school year and their career. Building on that knowledge, and together with stakeholders across Colorado, CDE has developed the following plan to address educator equity gaps and ensure that all Colorado students have access to effective teachers.

CDE recognizes that improving the way equity gaps are measured, identified, and communicated to stakeholders is critical to closing these gaps. Therefore, this plan includes strategies that aim to improve measurement and public reporting of equity gaps in addition to the strategies aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders to meaningfully engage in the work of closing these gaps. Inherent in this focus on improving measurement and public reporting is recognition that the current methods and data sources for identifying equity gaps are



imperfect. Therefore, it may appear that there is not always a direct link between the identified gaps, root causes, and strategies throughout this plan. This is something that CDE has chosen to improve over time through meaningful efforts to improve how data is used to ensure that all students have equitable access to excellent educators.

By implementing this plan, we also aim to gain a deeper understanding of root causes and how they differ by region, size of district, capacity of district, proximity to prep provider, and other variable factors. This will lead to more effective differentiation of the strategies described in this plan, which will ultimately lead to attaining the following targets:

1. Statewide teacher turnover will decrease from 16.62 percent to 12 percent or less by 2017.
2. No student in Colorado will be taught by an ineffective teacher for more than two consecutive years.
3. Students catching up to proficiency will increase to 39 percent by 2017.
4. Number of districts with identified gaps will decrease from 31 to 25 by end of 2017-18 school year.

Key Terms

Inexperienced teacher

Colorado defines an inexperienced teacher as a teacher who has fewer than three years of experience. This includes teachers currently in their third year of teaching.

Unqualified teacher

Colorado defines an unqualified teacher as a core academic subject (SEC. 9101.11) teacher who has not met highly qualified requirements. This includes teachers who have not earned at least a bachelor's degree, obtained full State licensure, or demonstrated a high level of competency in the academic subjects in which they teach. Details regarding how teachers in Colorado obtain full state licensure and demonstrate a high level of subject area competency are available at http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tii/a_hqt.

Out-of-field teacher

Colorado defines an out-of-field teacher as a one who has obtained full state licensure but has not demonstrated a high level of competency in the academic subject to which they have been assigned to teach. Details regarding how teachers in Colorado obtain full state licensure and demonstrate a high level of subject area competency are available at http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/tii/a_hqt.

Non-highly qualified teacher

This term will be used throughout the remainder of this plan to refer to teachers who are either unqualified or out-of-field. Both of these groups constitute those that do not meet highly qualified requirements and the number of classrooms in Colorado taught by non-highly qualified teachers is too small to warrant an analysis that differentiates between the above two terms.

Poor Students

For the purposes of this plan, poor students are defined (and referred to throughout the rest of this document) as students from low-income families, specifically those receiving free or reduced cost lunch.

**Minority**

Minority is comprised of all non-white subgroups of students in Colorado.

Effective educator

An effective educator has received an annual evaluation based on Colorado's Educator Quality Standards that results in a rating of Effective or Highly Effective.

The effectiveness definitions and Quality Standards provide clear guidance about the professional practices associated with Quality Standards and the way to measure student learning/outcomes. Fifty percent of the final effectiveness rating is based on professional practices and 50 percent is based on measures of student learning/outcomes. The use of multiple measures ensures that these ratings are of high quality and will provide a more accurate and nuanced picture of professional practice and impact on student learning. The use of different rating levels to rate performance allows more precision about professional expectations, identifies educators in need of improvement and recognizes performance that is of exceptional quality. For more information, please see the User's Guide at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/usersguide>.

Ineffective educator

An ineffective educator has received an annual evaluation based on Colorado's Educator Quality Standards that results in a rating of Ineffective or Partially Effective.

The effectiveness definitions and Quality Standards provide clear guidance about the professional practices associated with Quality Standards and the way to measure student learning/outcomes. Fifty percent of the final effectiveness rating is based on professional practices and 50 percent is based on measures of student learning/outcomes. The use of multiple measures ensures that these ratings are of high quality and will provide a more accurate and nuanced picture of professional practice and impact on student learning. The use of different rating levels to rate performance allows more precision about professional expectations, identifies educators in need of improvement and recognizes performance that is of exceptional quality. For more information, please see the User's Guide at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/usersguide>.

Rural

A Colorado school district is determined to be rural based on the size of the district, the distance from the nearest large urban/urbanized area, and a student enrollment of 1,000 - 6,500 students.

Small Rural

Small rural districts meet these same criteria as rural districts and have a student population of fewer than 1,000 students.
