



COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment



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State Emergency
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Practical Guide for Operationalizing CDC's School Guidance

For Coloradans



For businesses and communities



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Updated September 10, 2021.

Effective August 1, 2021.

Summary of Recent Changes

- Updated to recommend universal indoor masking for all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status and at all levels of community transmission.

- Updated “Table: Criteria for Reduced Quarantine” to remove the community vaccination metric for shifting to use of reduced quarantine for typical classroom exposures.
- Updated “Table: Criteria for Reduced Quarantine” to increase the threshold for high rates of school community COVID-19 vaccination from 70% to 80%.
- Added new language emphasizing the importance of improving ventilation and air filtration in reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Clarified recommendations for quarantine determinations based on distance and masking in typical classroom and non-classroom settings in both the body of the guidance and in the updated Who Needs to Quarantine tool.

Colorado is following CDC's recommendations for [schools](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>). This guide is designed to help schools operationalize and clarify CDC's recommendations.

Executive Summary

Colorado has made tremendous strides in decreasing transmission and deaths from COVID-19, including reaching more than a 70% vaccination rate among adults 18 and older statewide. In addition, Governor Polis ended the disaster emergency, signaling our transition as a state from crisis to recovery. Yet unvaccinated Coloradans remain vulnerable to new variants, especially the Delta variant, which is far more contagious than previous variants and may have more severe health outcomes for younger people.

Because many students have yet to be vaccinated and students under 12 are not yet eligible, we must continue to remain vigilant, take important mitigation steps that can reduce transmission of COVID-19, and address outbreaks in a safe and thoughtful manner. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) will adopt and elaborate upon CDC school guidance, which was released on July 9, 2021. This includes an updated August 4, 2021, recommendation for universal indoor masking in schools regardless of vaccination status at all levels of community transmission. CDPHE is providing this practical guide for schools, parents, and students on how to operationalize CDC guidance in our education settings.

This guide to operationalizing CDC guidance is aimed at disease control and minimizing the risk of exposure in education settings. But, we know students' wellness extends well beyond just disease control. Schools, educators, parents, and students must balance all of the needs of our students in order to achieve wellness and create a productive learning environment. With this in mind, the state has let all statewide school-based health orders and mandates expire and instead has adopted a guidance model designed to empower local public health and local leaders to protect their communities using the mitigation strategies most appropriate to local conditions. The guidance provides practical tools to assess the risks of COVID-19 and minimize those risks. The guidance does not constitute statewide requirements, but instead outlines evidence-based best practices for local governments and schools to implement together to manage the next stage of the pandemic.

The state continues to recommend a layered approach of best practices to COVID-19 prevention. This outline of best practices is described in detail in the Back to School Roadmap, including ventilation, maximization of outdoor activities, mask-wearing, testing, spacing, cohorting, symptom screening, cleaning and disinfecting, and handwashing. It also includes information for local public health agencies, schools, and parents about community transmission and layered precautions.

This guidance strongly recommends local leaders and school leaders take a layered approach to prevention as described above. Communities with higher rates of transmission and low vaccination rates should continue to take heightened COVID-19 precautions. Local public health still has the authority to enforce local public health orders, which may include quarantine requirements.

When schools have low vaccination rates (defined as a vaccination rate under 80% among staff and students age 12 and older) and their communities are experiencing high rates of community transmission (defined as 35 cases per 100,000 people over seven days), the local public health agency should work with schools and school districts to institute higher precautionary measures, such as:

- Universal masking (if not already implemented as recommended at all transmission levels).
- Increased physical distancing.
- Serial COVID-19 testing and screening programs.
- Contact tracing.
- Targeted quarantining.
- Limiting high risk activities.

In addition to communities facing higher risk factors, certain student groups may be at greater risk of COVID-19 due to the nature of their activities. Riskier activities include indoor sports, contact sports, and other activities involving forced exhalation such as band or orchestra. In these higher risk settings, local public health and school districts should consider precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as universal masking, serial testing and screening programs, contact tracing, targeted quarantining, vaccine outreach, and educational efforts. During the spring 2021 semester, outbreaks of COVID-19 often originated with these groups of students and then spread to the larger school community, disrupting learning.

Similar to adults, students with underlying health conditions (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>), such as obesity, diabetes, asthma, down syndrome, and heart disease are more likely to experience severe health impacts, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Students and staff with these underlying health conditions are strongly advised to get vaccinated. If they cannot get vaccinated, they should continue practicing a layered approach to prevent COVID-19.

Regardless of transmission and vaccination rates, all education settings should create the safest environment possible for their students through tried-and-true disease prevention measures. These include promoting hand washing, ensuring good ventilation, encouraging activities outside, social distancing, and asking sick students to stay home following CDPHE's Return to Learn tool (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nhgGlbakyAJY3XJ2TW44sw7btXXqISBR/view?usp=sharing>). In addition, CDC and CDPHE recommend

universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Universal masking is an especially critical strategy when a community is at higher risk of transmission, such as when vaccination rates are low and in schools where students are not yet eligible for vaccination. Schools should create an accepting environment for parents and students who choose to use masks even when they are not required.

Not only is COVID-19 vaccination Colorado's best defense against the pandemic, vaccination also prevents disruptions to in-person learning. Fully vaccinated staff and students never have to miss school due to quarantine. The COVID-19 vaccines have been highly successful at reducing transmission, infections, and deaths. As we look towards the fall, CDPHE looks forward to partnering with schools and districts to host vaccination clinics and increase our defense against this virus. Vaccines are essential for students and caretakers alike. Children's risk of contracting COVID-19 is greatly reduced when they live in a household where all eligible individuals are fully vaccinated, even if the children are not yet eligible for vaccination. Any school or school district interested in hosting a vaccination clinic can complete the online [Vaccination Event Request Form \(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSenFjOwkTOz6uzXVA-DlbG3tsZPo9nKFvuhOLXW1OqGYxEcJA/viewform\)](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSenFjOwkTOz6uzXVA-DlbG3tsZPo9nKFvuhOLXW1OqGYxEcJA/viewform). Throughout the school year, CDPHE will monitor disease transmission, severity, and vaccine effectiveness trends as well as community feedback. We will update our guidance and disease control strategies as the COVID-19 landscape changes with a continued focus on the essential nature of in-person learning.

Both local and state public health have statutory, legal and regulatory authority to investigate and control disease transmission, including isolation of cases and quarantine of close contacts, closing public places and prohibiting gathering to control the spread of disease. Statutory citations include but are not limited to 25-1.5-102(1), 25-1-506(3)(b)(V), 25-1-122(2), 25-1.5-101(1)(a),(h),(k) and (l), C.R.S.. Regulatory authority includes, 6 CCR 1009-1, 6 CCR 1010-6 and 6 CCR 1010-7.

Applicability

This guidance applies to all circumstances where a teacher or caregiver cares for multiple children outside the usual home of the children. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- K-12 schools, both public and private.
- Licensed child care settings.
- Home-based family child care settings.
- License-exempt child care programs such as single skill building and 72-hour camps.
- Guest child care facilities at ski resorts and courthouses.
- "Pods" and other home learning/homeschooling groups.

This guide also applies to extracurricular activities, including sports, where the participants are in grades P-12. Additional guidance for sports can be found on the [Organized sports \(https://covid19.colorado.gov/organized-sports\)](https://covid19.colorado.gov/organized-sports) page.

Special considerations for ECE

Child care and pre-K settings are different from K-12 settings in important ways. The particular facilities, curriculum, and modes of supervision in child care facilities require modifications to guidance developed for K-12 settings. Please take note of special recommendations for pre-K and child care settings throughout this guidance. In the guidance and tools, the term “schools” includes K-12 schools and child care providers, including in-home providers.

Residential settings, including overnight camps and group homes, have different transmission characteristics and abilities to isolate and quarantine compared to K-12 schools and other child care settings. These settings should follow the outbreak guidance relevant to their particular circumstances.

Definitions

School outbreak-associated case: a case among students, teachers, or staff that meets the [outbreak definition](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e-IWLtzJNCgl2gzPONGvEASGgse85WuBmcToc9ev-74/edit) (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e-IWLtzJNCgl2gzPONGvEASGgse85WuBmcToc9ev-74/edit>). Family members or others outside the school who get sick should not be classified as outbreak-associated.

Outbreak: Outbreaks are defined in Colorado's COVID-19 [case and outbreak definitions](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e-IWLtzJNCgl2gzPONGvEASGgse85WuBmcToc9ev-74/edit) (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e-IWLtzJNCgl2gzPONGvEASGgse85WuBmcToc9ev-74/edit>).

COVID-like symptoms: loss of taste or smell, fever (100.4°F or higher), chills, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, headache, sore throat, muscle or body aches, congestion or runny nose, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. A person is assumed to be contagious two days before they start having symptoms and for 10 days after symptoms start. In children too young or unable to reliably report their symptoms, caregivers and teachers should monitor for symptoms and other age-appropriate signs of disease, including decreased appetite or activity. All symptomatic individuals should seek clinical evaluation, including testing, as soon as possible after symptoms develop.

Isolation: staying home from work, school, and activities when a person is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19. Isolation lasts for at least 10 days (specifically ten 24-hour periods) after the onset of symptoms — and for 24 hours after being fever-free without the aid of fever-reducing medication and if the person shows an improvement of symptoms. For people who have not had symptoms, isolation lasts 10 days from the day they had their first positive test. In rare instances (for example, if a person was very sick or has certain medical problems), isolation may last 20 days. Public health experts do not recommend repeat testing to decide when to end the period of isolation except in rare circumstances in consultation with a medical provider. Find information about [how to isolate](https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate) (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate>).

Quarantine: staying home from work, school, and activities after a person was in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Find [guidance on how to quarantine and how long quarantine lasts](https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-quarantine) (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-quarantine>). A person should not attend work, school, or out of school activities if they are under quarantine following an exposure in school. If a person develops symptoms of COVID-19 during their quarantine period, they should begin [isolation](https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate) (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate>).

Close contact: a person who was close enough to a person with COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 to be at risk of becoming ill.

Diagnostic COVID-19 test: a test that detects a current COVID-19 infection. These tests include PCR, rapid molecular, and antigen tests. Serology tests can check for evidence of past infection or vaccination, but cannot reliably tell if a person currently has COVID-19 so are not considered diagnostic tests. Testing types are explained further on the [FDA's website](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/coronavirus-disease-2019-testing-basics) (<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/coronavirus-disease-2019-testing-basics>).

Prioritizing in-person learning

We must support and prioritize uninterrupted, full-time, in-person learning in all communities. While we must remain vigilant, particularly when it comes to deadly COVID-19 variants, we recognize there are fewer cases of COVID-19 than earlier in the pandemic, and children under the age of 12 are less likely to experience severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. We also know that vaccinations are our best defense against COVID-19. Therefore, Colorado will move from an individual case-based response strategy to a transmission mitigation strategy, where instead of quarantining students and staff after individual exposures, the risk of the whole school community, including the risk of interruptions to learning, is considered. Because in-person learning is essential for communities and students to thrive, CDPHE is recommending reduced incidents of quarantine in schools and child care specifically. Reduced quarantine is not recommended in other settings at this time.

Preventive measures

The state continues to recommend a layered approach of best practices to COVID-19 prevention. These best practices are described in detail in the [Back to School Roadmap](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WTHW8gcsIFPQwGQC6mU5Up_1hGi1zvSX/view) (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WTHW8gcsIFPQwGQC6mU5Up_1hGi1zvSX/view), and include ventilation, maximization of outdoor activities, sick leave policies, mask-wearing, testing, spacing, cohorting, symptom screening, cleaning and disinfecting, and handwashing. These policies will continue to be important for preventing transmission of all diseases in schools.

Mask wearing

CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status and at all transmission levels. CDPHE recommends local public health agencies and school districts implement universal mask requirements for all individuals entering K-12 schools in Colorado. This is especially important in settings where vaccination rates are low and where many students are not yet eligible for vaccination. Those who cannot medically tolerate a mask should work with their school administration to assess the need for a reasonable accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additional information regarding reasonable accommodations can also be found in the State's [Civil Rights Guidance](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DSJuV-) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DSJuV->

[9finS1_NBnQ8i_02PHQDDIWXRn/view](#)). Both state and local public health have the authority to issue public health orders requiring masks, and include within those orders any allowable exceptions to the mask requirement. For settings in which masks are required by the State, exceptions include temporary removal of a mask to participate in a life rite or religious service where such temporary removal is necessary for participation; there is no broader general exemption from wearing a mask for religious or personal belief in the state public health orders. In addition, even when not required by local public health or a school district, staff and students may choose to wear masks. Schools and school districts should ensure that every classroom is a welcome environment for students and staff who choose to protect themselves in this manner.

Improving ventilation

COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses are spread through respiratory droplets that are produced when we breathe, talk, sneeze, or cough. Improving ventilation by increasing air exchanges and filtration assists with the dilution of contaminants that might be present, including respiratory droplets. Schools can improve ventilation in a number of ways.

Existing HVAC systems should be maintained in good working order, and should run for at least 30 minutes before and after the building is occupied.

Schools without existing HVAC systems or inadequate systems can open windows during the school day to increase ventilation and air flow.

Additionally HEPA filters can be added to an existing HVAC system and portable HEPA filters can be added to areas to filter out contaminants from the air.

Outdoor activities are strongly encouraged, especially for higher risk activities and meal times.

Additional resources on improving ventilation can be found on the [Colorado Department of Education's website](http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolguidance21-22/bestpractices#ventilation) (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolguidance21-22/bestpractices#ventilation>).

Isolation of positive cases

Ensuring sick people stay home (and people diagnosed with COVID-19 follow [isolation requirements](https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate) (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate>)) is critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Under state law, isolation of positive cases is required and must be enforced by local public health and school districts.

Monitoring and communication

While fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine if they are exposed to someone with COVID-19, all individuals who are exposed should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and get tested if symptoms develop.

We continue to recommend alerting students, staff, and parents of known classroom exposures so all individuals are appropriately informed, will monitor closely for symptoms, and may choose to increase personal mitigation measures as necessary when living or working with vulnerable individuals (e.g. a high school student who volunteers in a nursing home or who lives with an immunosuppressed relative).

Quarantine for routine classroom exposures

The state recommends counties, schools, and individuals that meet any of the below metrics shift to a transmission control strategy, with quarantine not required following routine classroom exposures. Large outbreaks or important circulating variants may necessitate more stringent disease control strategies at the discretion of the local public health agency (LPHA).

Table: Criteria for Reduced Quarantine

County population protections	School community protections	Individual protections
Low community transmission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counties with <35 cases per 100K per 7 days Find county-level transmission data (https://covid19.colorado.gov/data/covid-19-dial-dashboard). 	High rates of school community COVID-19 vaccination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥80% of staff and students 12 and older with at least one COVID-19 vaccination OR High rates of weekly school screening testing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥70% of unvaccinated staff and students participating in weekly testing 	Fully vaccinated (two weeks after last recommended vaccine dose) OR Previously positive in the past 90 days OR Participating in weekly screening testing OR Both parties wearing a mask at the time of exposure*
Quarantine of close contacts does not need to be required by local public health authorities following routine classroom exposures if any of the above are met by the county, school, or individual considered a close contact (*and the ill individual for mask use).		

Quarantine in counties with low vaccination and high case rates

Even in schools with low vaccination rates or in counties with high case rates, the state recommends multiple ways schools can avoid quarantine for lower risk, typical classroom exposures, at the discretion of the local public health authority. Schools must work with their local public health agency when cases of COVID-19 are identified to determine quarantine requirements.

- **Vaccinated Individuals**
 - Anyone who is fully vaccinated (at least two weeks after their last dose of COVID-19 vaccine), even in a low vaccination, high case setting, is not required to quarantine if exposed to a case. In the school setting, fully vaccinated individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 during a higher risk exposure should monitor for symptoms and seek testing if symptoms develop.
- **School-Level Vaccination Rate**
 - If at least 80% of individuals age 12 and older within a school community have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, no one, including unvaccinated individuals, needs to quarantine following a typical classroom exposure to a case.
- **Weekly Serial Testing**
 - Schools can also implement weekly serial testing in their schools. Additionally, students of all ages who are actively participating in at least weekly serial testing should not be required to quarantine following typical classroom exposures to a positive case of COVID-19. School districts may opt into a free and voluntary statewide serial testing program. If a school or school district is interested in enrolling in this program, please contact cdphe_schooltesting@state.co.us (mailto:cdphe_schooltesting@state.co.us).
 - If schools have at least 70% of their unvaccinated students and staff actively participating in serial testing, students and staff should not be required to quarantine following a typical classroom exposure to a case of COVID-19.
- **Masking**
 - CDPHE recommends that unvaccinated students not be required to quarantine following a typical classroom exposure if both the infected individual and the exposed student(s) were wearing well-fitting masks correctly and consistently over the mouth and nose during the exposure.
 - In classroom settings, CDPHE recommends quarantine for unvaccinated close contacts that were within six feet for 15 minutes or more of an infected individual if either the infected individual or the contact were unmasked during the exposure. Note that this guidance differs slightly from current CDC guidance. CDC's definition of a close contact and need for quarantine in a typical classroom only excludes students who were within three to six feet of an infected individual if both parties were wearing masks. CDPHE does not specify a minimum of three feet when excluding exposed students from quarantine, if both the infected individual and the exposed student(s) were wearing masks and no direct physical contact occurred. CDPHE's "Who Needs to Quarantine?" tool is updated to provide additional clarification.

Higher risk exposures

Several close contact situations would be considered higher risk exposures to COVID-19. The state recommends local public health take a heightened risk approach to these higher risk exposures, which should include quarantine of unvaccinated, exposed individuals. These exposures are significantly higher risk than typical activities within a classroom. Examples include:

- Indoor or high contact athletic competitions.
- Evaluating or assessing ill students or staff.
- Performing an [aerosol-generating procedure](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/faq.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control-faq.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/faq.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control-faq.html).
- Caring for a young child (feeding, holding, or diapering).

- Interactions between young children where it is not age appropriate to remain seated or physically distanced.
- Indoor forced exhalation activities such as singing, exercising, or playing a wind or brass instrument.

This is not an exhaustive list, and public health authorities can assist with determining whether or not quarantine is necessary after a particular exposure. Schools should discuss these more complex cases with their local public health agency.

Staff and students who are exposed to a case of COVID-19 outside of the school classroom, including social settings, athletics, workplaces, and household exposures, will likely be required to quarantine, pursuant to statutory and regulatory public health authority. Students participating in high-risk activities (such as unmasked indoor athletic competitions) and individuals who are at higher risk for severe infection will be strongly encouraged to get vaccinated for their own protection.

Individuals at higher risk for severe disease

Individuals should discuss their personal risk factors with their health care providers. Individuals determined to be at higher risk for severe disease should get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible in consultation with their health care provider. If these individuals are not eligible for vaccination, or vaccination is not medically advised, serial testing and masking indoors is strongly recommended. Schools may consider universal masking requirements, ventilation improvements, and other protective measures when they serve or employ large numbers of high-risk or vulnerable individuals.

Positive cases and outbreaks

As described above, all positive cases will be required to isolate and stay home to protect others, pursuant to statutory and regulatory public health authority. Once a school has an outbreak that impacts multiple classrooms, school leadership should work with their local public health authority to determine what additional mitigation strategies may be necessary. Additional mitigation strategies may include: universal masking indoors, distancing, testing and contact tracing, and quarantine of close contacts.

Caveat: Variants of Concern circulating in communities could impact population-based strategies.

Variants of COVID-19

CDC and CDPHE are actively monitoring the impact that variants of the COVID-19 virus may have on communities and individuals. The state is closely evaluating variants that may cause more severe disease, could be more contagious, or may have a greater potential to infect those who are vaccinated or who have recently been infected with COVID-19.

All variants of COVID-19 spread through exhaled viral particles generated by sick people, and the same protective measures that have helped keep students safe in schools throughout the past year will continue to be effective. These key strategies also help protect students and staff from other diseases, such as influenza and RSV, and include:

- Getting a vaccine as soon as possible.
- Encouraging students and staff to stay home when sick or potentially contagious.

- Universal masking indoors.
- Improving indoor ventilation.
- Practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Appropriate cleaning of shared spaces and objects.

More information about COVID-19 variants is available from CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant.html>).

Encouraging vaccinations in schools

Vaccines are our best defense against COVID-19. Schools are encouraged to educate their communities about the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and why they are so important for us to return to the Colorado we love.

Resources for schools to educate their communities about the COVID-19 vaccine

CDPHE has developed many vaccination resources to support this effort and added information about COVID-19 vaccines to our online vaccine education module (<https://www.dcpheapps.dphe.state.co.us/storyline360/story.html>).

CDPHE is prepared to support schools who wish to host a vaccination event for their students, faculty, and staff. For more information or to request event support, see the Event Based Vaccination Request Form (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSenFjOwkTOz6uzXVA-DlBG3tsZPo9nKFvuhoLXW1OqGYxEcJA/viewform>).

Additional resources are available, including testimonials, talking points, social media graphics, and more, to help schools communicate effectively with their communities about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines:

- Vaccine campaign and educational toolkits (https://drive.google.com/file/d/16qspjO-eA-PJ55_hCt6H1Jp7xQih7ZKU/view).
- CDPHE Adolescent COVID-19 Vaccination toolkit (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vqeH8N1T9rncbmP1H6dHRMyn_hFVgCEv?usp=sharing).
- COVID-19 vaccine FAQs (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine-faq>).
- Vaccine equity strategy talking points (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q7qBPwzd9HEoOmlzX-h8vFERFjV_qKJb/view).

The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have additional resources about the COVID-19 vaccines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/school-located-clinics/how-schools-can-support.html> (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/school-located-clinics/how-schools-can-support.html>).

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-systems-communication-toolkit.html#posters> (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-systems-communication-toolkit.html#posters>).

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/campaigns-and-toolkits/covid-19-vaccine-toolkit/> (<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/campaigns-and-toolkits/covid-19-vaccine-toolkit/>).

Verifying vaccination status

Schools can verify the vaccination status of their students using the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) without written consent. Per FERPA, written consent must be obtained if a school wants to enter vaccination data for a student into CIIS. Statute does not permit schools to use CIIS to verify the vaccination status of employees or staff.

Acceptable proof of COVID-19 vaccination

Acceptable proof of COVID-19 vaccination will be the same as all other school-required vaccines. A student may provide the vaccination card that includes the name of the provider, name of the patient, date, type of vaccine, and lot number. For students who received their vaccine in Colorado, the school may verify proof of vaccination with CIIS. Schools do not need written consent to look up vaccination records in CIIS. Students who receive their vaccination outside of Colorado may provide both their vaccination cards and/or IIS records from the state where they received their shots.

Additionally, CDPHE has added COVID-19 vaccines to the “recommended vaccines” section of the official [Colorado Certificate of Immunization](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vQwP2sOF_4javJNM0LHydbjZZA9HtOeB/view?usp=sharing) (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vQwP2sOF_4javJNM0LHydbjZZA9HtOeB/view?usp=sharing) to better enable incoming students to share records of their immunizations with their school.

Reporting

Per 6 CCR 1009-1 (<https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=8099&fileName=6%20CCR%201009-1>) and [Public Health Order 20-33](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SdXSLNxlfdGjQF7HDkmlxcB_YXYrDE3/view) (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SdXSLNxlfdGjQF7HDkmlxcB_YXYrDE3/view), clinical labs and/or health care providers are required to report all COVID-19 test results, both positive and negative, to public health. If school personnel perform and interpret rapid testing on-site, they are functioning as a clinical lab and are required to report all results. Per 6 CCR 1009-1 (<https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=8099&fileName=6%20CCR%201009-1>), schools and child care facilities are also required to report single cases of which they become aware to public health, even if testing was performed elsewhere. Schools are able to disclose this information to public health without prior written consent under FERPA's health or safety emergency exception, because a person with COVID-19 represents a potential threat to the health and safety of others at the school. This is true even if there is not an outbreak.

Public health then interviews the people who have COVID-19 and conducts contact tracing to determine who might be close contacts of the case, and makes recommendations about isolation and quarantine.

Schools and child care providers are required to report all outbreaks to their local public health agency or CDPHE within four hours per 6 CCR 1009-1.

Schools and child care providers must report both suspected and confirmed outbreaks.

Schools and child care providers can report outbreaks by:

- Fill out the CDPHE COVID-19 outbreak report form and send it to the local public health agency (go [here](https://cdphe.redcap.state.co.us/surveys/?s=FF87YHELDW) (<https://cdphe.redcap.state.co.us/surveys/?s=FF87YHELDW>) or email the [PDF form](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XedRlgn7JmeJD9gVhRgnPmpVlXsVm4hd/view) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XedRlgn7JmeJD9gVhRgnPmpVlXsVm4hd/view>)).
- Calling their [local public health agency](https://covid19.colorado.gov/lpha-providers) (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/lpha-providers>).
- Calling CDPHE at 303-692-2700.

Other respiratory infections

COVID-19 spreads via the same mechanisms as influenza, RSV, and other important respiratory illnesses. Therefore, the same strategies that schools have used to protect students and staff from COVID-19 also slow the spread of these other diseases. These include:

- Getting a vaccine as soon as possible.
- Encouraging students and staff to stay home when sick or potentially contagious.
- Improving indoor ventilation through increased air exchanges and filtration.
- Wearing a mask indoors.
- Practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Cleaning shared spaces and objects appropriately.

Additionally, these diseases share many symptoms and it is not always possible to distinguish these illnesses from one another based on symptoms alone, even for experienced medical providers. Therefore, testing is important for anyone with symptoms of a respiratory infection to help guide an appropriate disease response.

Consideration for travel and school breaks

Travel may put individuals at increased risk of contracting COVID-19, especially those that are not fully vaccinated. Travel may involve crowded public vehicles and spaces, where close contact with a high number of unique contacts with unknown vaccination status may occur.

The same layered mitigation strategies used in schools are recommended when traveling, especially those who are not yet fully vaccinated. Masking is recommended for anyone two years old and older in crowded indoor spaces, and is required on public transportation and in transportation hubs by federal order.

Families and staff should be encouraged to get vaccinated before traveling and to use layered mitigation strategies to stay safe. After returning, students and staff should monitor for symptoms and get tested if symptoms develop.

Helpful links

Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>).

School and Childcare FAQs July 2021 (https://drive.google.com/file/d/178k4FO_-iJilaTp7fw0aVCvanbzGuemb/view?usp=sharing).

CDE reopening toolkit (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolguidance21-22>).

Critical Worker FAQ (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mo8ThFri69P1Y4XEDGYoPjJTvvxrAILL/view>).

Federal Laws and Regulations Pertaining to COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcresponse/laws-regulations.html>).

Tools

At-home symptom screening tool (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rM77eLlnivcOuoqv0zy0pXXtjnY-fREN/view>) | Español (https://drive.google.com/file/d/18pGmQWR3_-Pc7Lp6V0kKvQ-Z6k7fgJPi/view?usp=sharing) | Русский (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n4Sj-oev8T1RDKOSdtcDkOlz2zOI6auK/view?usp=sharing>).

NEW! Addressing Symptoms as School (https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-qAUd4g8tYDZ4KKIlbCc_yG0wkEHjiXV/view?usp=sharing) | Español (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W5x7ybly0NT--SfcOVrTn0eC0-VXffCI/view?usp=sharing>).

Updated Return to Learn (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nhgGlbakyAJY3XJ2TW44sw7btXXqISBR/view?usp=sharing>) | Español (https://drive.google.com/file/d/15_2Z672Bm3eRz1xvTTHuaMCd6_AAxPV/view?usp=sharing).

NEW! Who Needs to Quarantine (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S-bXk2yFdFAjBPUMfT-KvNMvz6EA2A9r/view?usp=sharing>). (*Updated to align with CDPHE brand standards*)

For more information or questions regarding school guidance, please contact CDPHE_COVID_School_Childcare@state.co.us (mailto:CDPHE_COVID_School_Childcare@state.co.us) or scan the QR code below.



(mailto:CDPHE_COVID_School_Childcare@state.co.us)

Contact

Media line (for media only): 303-900-2849

CO-HELP (<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/co-help>) - Colorado's call line for general questions about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), providing answers in many languages including English, Spanish (Español), Mandarin (普通话) and more.

☎ Call 303-389-1687 or (877) 462-2911.

COVID-19 related issues and concerns (<https://covid19.colorado.gov/CovidConcerns>).

Request a website change (<https://forms.gle/PLiDz5cQ4tjA3Q2R9>).

IMPORTANT: If you have symptoms and think you have been exposed, call a health care provider.

Resources

CDPHE main website (<https://colorado.gov/cdphe>).

Colorado Emergency Management (<http://www.coemergency.com/>).

Stay at home Colorado guide (<https://stayathomeco.colorado.gov/>).

State resource for COVID-19 information (<https://covid.colorado.gov/>).

OnwardCO.org (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A-onwardco.org&d=DwMFaQ&c=sdnEM9SRGFuMt5z5w3AhsPNahmNicq64TgF1JwNR0cs&r=tKhU0U_L2xbjslo_eJnBsllU8HnLQ6GQZw39EuQXQSA&m=dXFns-1XqmnyYaKrsVZJ2pb30IHqibGVNQgDMdDn4kQ&s=LHbqsUuqwFec-ngL7MhT1soU14t2zdketeXX6EflmtU&e=) - One-stop resource for Coloradans impacted by job loss to connect with life essentials, training, and jobs.

Colorado Crisis Services (<https://coloradocrisisservices.org/>) - Free, confidential, professional, and immediate support for any mental health, substance use, or emotional concern, 24/7/365.

☎️ Call 1-844-493-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 38255 to speak to a trained professional.

211 Colorado (<https://www.211colorado.org/>) - Confidential and multilingual service connecting people to vital resources across the state.

☎️ Call 2-11 or (866) 760-6489 📠 Text your ZIP CODE to 898-211.

Follow us

CDPHE: Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/CDPHE/>) | Twitter (<https://twitter.com/CDPHE>) | Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/cdphe>).

Colorado Emergency Management: Facebook ([https://www.facebook.com/COEmergency/?_xts__\[0\]=68.ARAHzlPINUNeZ27ayQDMfbLehNYVIMrg7xfT8j_-8aN98mdPRoBbPnmktcLmtTkL-wokLnQaemEUD3PdU-0DQcGtcfOugK42ccAs0yv41mGs59OoCAVg0S9C98Ausn-4USITeJddgl5K-ipewsdTqb3XlAv4xK7yjZnv4r7A8AG4dzw5rz_0eDuZ4_hf1ncWlyM50sLjBs8HDQLXZaGTioqMC58gY1_CEPaK-zEzKzQmU-zAMRHdUk7QegLVllNZey-pgfkBba5UFDKWE6BJ7x4PFxqHb-LZZlI20VTjyd7FGnKKgnHJjwfhZ7HDmhMiqJBQU-Ji_sodLedjkigg4HFK8es8](https://www.facebook.com/COEmergency/?_xts__[0]=68.ARAHzlPINUNeZ27ayQDMfbLehNYVIMrg7xfT8j_-8aN98mdPRoBbPnmktcLmtTkL-wokLnQaemEUD3PdU-0DQcGtcfOugK42ccAs0yv41mGs59OoCAVg0S9C98Ausn-4USITeJddgl5K-ipewsdTqb3XlAv4xK7yjZnv4r7A8AG4dzw5rz_0eDuZ4_hf1ncWlyM50sLjBs8HDQLXZaGTioqMC58gY1_CEPaK-zEzKzQmU-zAMRHdUk7QegLVllNZey-pgfkBba5UFDKWE6BJ7x4PFxqHb-LZZlI20VTjyd7FGnKKgnHJjwfhZ7HDmhMiqJBQU-Ji_sodLedjkigg4HFK8es8)) | Twitter (<https://twitter.com/COEmergency>).

Governor's Office: Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/jaredpolis>) | Twitter (<https://twitter.com/GovofCO>) | Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/govofco/?hl=en>).

Additional languages

Español (https://drive.google.com/open?id=1wvUvHmRb1EgsjT0_tMebKjbJAryWs3ol) (Spanish) | Tiếng Việt (<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kuJOG5xvziW8QnGlatjYXXKg946kWSkr>) (Vietnamese) |

[Soomaali \(https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uDHaqlqq5o8TqXXsesEkpqyfZGMpD-G8\)](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1uDHaqlqq5o8TqXXsesEkpqyfZGMpD-G8) (Somali) | [中文 \(https://drive.google.com/open?id=11zakkcFDevz2ieTO31SvQSeY9C2_4vop\)](https://drive.google.com/open?id=11zakkcFDevz2ieTO31SvQSeY9C2_4vop) (Simplified Chinese) |

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COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ESSER FUNDS LISTENING TOUR

Listening & Learning to Inform CDE Strategy

In July of 2021, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and Colorado's State Board of Education convened a series of meetings to hear directly from educators, families, students and stakeholders about their experiences during the COVID-19 interruption of our public education system.

CDE leaders had a simple yet ambitious goal:
Listen to and learn from those most directly impacted and who will be

*August 1, 2021 Report from the ESSER Stakeholder
Listening Tour held July of 2021 and the
accompanying online survey.*

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Introduction & Report Overview

In the summer of 2021, as Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and State Board of Education (SBOE) leaders continued their work of supporting local system leaders and educators preparing for the 2021- 22 school year and to leverage every resource available to maximize the recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, a third round of funds and associated uses was being rolled out from the federal government as part of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief fund (ESSER).

As CDE's leadership prepared to craft and submit the state's plan to the federal government for the ESSER III funds and districts developed their own strategies for funds they received directly under ESSER, a straight forward but complex question existed: How could CDE, the SBOE and the State of Colorado maximize the impact of the state education agency (SEA) set-aside of these funds? To help answer that question, CDE convened a series of meetings to hear directly from educators, families, students and stakeholders about their experiences during the COVID-19 interruption of our public education system. CDE leaders had a simple yet ambitious goal: Listen to and learn from those most directly impacted and who will be directly involved in the recovery to inform how Colorado maximizes the use of state Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funds.

The ESSER Stakeholder Listening Tour was designed to gather this input and to help CDE leaders prioritize spending of the approximately \$111 million in ESSER III funds and the remaining \$21 million of ESSER I and ESSER II funds. ESSER Stakeholder listening sessions were scheduled across a variety of stakeholder groups who would all offer a unique perspective from their experiences and who would represent the diversity of Colorado's communities.

This listening tour was designed to provide input across a continuum of stakeholders that could each help inform later sessions in the listening tour and ultimately inform CDE's application for and use of these federal funds.

The first half of the listening tour focused on hearing from those stakeholders most directly experiencing the in-school and out-of-school impacts of changes brought to K-12 education as a result of the COVID-19 system interruption.

The first four meetings consisted of listening sessions with:

1. **Parents** who overnight took on the role of being the primary adults engaging with students in-person, trying to create spaces conducive to learning for their children and adjusting their own schedules to respond to most children being at home every day;
2. **Teachers** who made one of the most tectonic shifts in education, going from in-person to nearly exclusively remote instruction overnight as they also made parallel adjustments to their own family life or personal living conditions;
3. **Community Organizations** who stepped in across the state to fill voids and needs in communities ranging from food insecurity to providing safe places for students to spend time, supporting students academically and social-emotionally and supporting parents and teachers;
4. **Students** while listed last here, on the front of every conversation and the most directly impacted as their lives were turned upside down as they had to shift overnight to learning in an entirely different way, found themselves with little if any social interaction at ages where social-emotional development is critical and were expected to manage these changes amid what were often challenging times for their own families dealing with all of the challenges brought about by

the pandemic from economic instability to the mental and psychological pressures on their parents, guardians and siblings.

Spanish interpretation was available for the parent, community organization and student sessions.

To build on the input received during the first four listening sessions, five additional listening sessions were scheduled. During these meetings, stakeholders heard the high-level themes surfaced during initial meetings to both gather their input on what it would take to effectively respond to the ideas generated and to offer their own ideas given their unique perspectives. Phase two listening sessions included:

1. **Principals** who in many cases took on the large lift of the initial shifts caused by the pandemic, are the ones closest to educators and often have the closest connection to the community assets, people and dynamics around their schools and will be responsible for any day-to-day changes in the future;
2. **Superintendents** who are ultimately responsible (in partnership with their local Boards) for overseeing the implementation of any systemic changes at the district level, identifying needed system or structural changes and have a close eye on fiscal needs;
3. **Educator Preparation Programs** who are continuing to recruit, train and support the next generation of teachers including those entering a mid or post-pandemic dynamic and are often partners with school districts in developing or providing professional development for educators, school leaders and system leaders;
4. **Advocacy Organizations** who play unique roles in local communities and statewide engaging parents, students, families, employers among others and often play an important role both advancing and as importantly, supporting implementation of change;
5. **CDE Staff** who bring both the perspective of engaging with and supporting a diversity of professionals in the education workforce and being the professionals responsible for managing state programs.

The listening tour sought to gain the input of these stakeholders on three key areas of inquiry:

- Innovations & Practices to Build Upon
- Supporting Students
- Supporting Educators

To ground the conversations in the intended and allowable uses of ESSER funds, each session began with a presentation by CDE on ESSER followed by an opportunity for clarifying questions (See Addendum A: CDE Presentation).

After this opening session, participants broke out into smaller groups to share their thoughts on the following:

- Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward? What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?
- How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?
- How do you believe individual educators have been affected by the shifts and their experience during the pandemic? What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

In addition to the listening sessions, CDE directed the creation and launch of an online survey to allow all stakeholders to provide input on these topics and other related areas. To expand access and participation, the survey was offered in both English and Spanish. Over 1,000 Coloradans completed the survey to share their ideas.

These questions were selected and designed to help CDE and the SBOE understand, from each participant's and each group's perspectives, how the pandemic's effects on schools were experienced by each group within that system – students and families, educators, school and system leaders, community organizations and advocates and the institutions that support all of them including educator preparation programs and the wide array of staff within CDE.

The Report

This report is a synthesis and summary of the ideas generated during the ESSER listening sessions and a collection of ideas submitted. The report does not attempt to make recommendations, to score or conduct any type of assessment of any individual idea. To the extent possible, this report does offer the perspective of the independent team who facilitated the breakout sessions on the dominant themes, specific ideas offered and hopes for Colorado's students, educators and education system(s). To the extent possible, an overview of themes and ideas is offered for each listening session and for the tour as a whole.

Meeting Notes

To provide maximum transparency, the notes from each listening session are included in Addendum B. While the notes have been subject to an abbreviated proofread, they are otherwise raw and unedited to maintain integrity of the accuracy and completeness of information being shared directly with state leaders and all Coloradans. To respect privacy, personally identifying information is not included.

Addenda

In addition to the opportunity to participate in the ESSER listening sessions, participants and members of the public were invited to provide input via a 20 question online survey or via email. More than 1,000 individuals and organizations submitted ideas that ranged from completing sections or all parts of the survey to short emails with ideas or questions to formal organizational letters and reports. Letters and reports received are included with this report as Addendum C. The full results of the survey encompass nearly 500 pages of individual answers. Those responses have all been reviewed by Keystone's team to include key themes, ideas and suggested investments for this report. Because a large number address individual situations or contain personally identifiable information from parents or teachers, they have not been included in this report.

Stakeholder Engagement & Survey Themes

During both the listening tour and throughout the survey, participants and respondents identified opportunities for investments of three types:

People

At the heart of every conversation were people and the need to make both direct and indirect investments in our people. Ideas ranged from professional development and training opportunities to providing mental health or other counseling and financial incentives to help recruit, retain and support professionals across the education systems.

Things

From building improvements and creating outdoor learning spaces to high-tech classrooms or remote instructional delivery facilities and the hardware and software to support all types of learners and learning environments, listening session participants saw the one-time ESSER funds as an opportunity to make investments for which we rarely have the funds needed.

Systems

Participants recognized that many of the issues needing investment or transformation require addressing underlying systems. Discussions ranged from how instruction is delivered and how educators connect with one another across their district or across the state to the roles different adults play and the important role local community organizations play.

Throughout the ESSER Listening Tour and in survey responses, there were topics, ideas and aspirations for the future that were raised so frequently and with such similarity that it is appropriate to identify them as themes. Similarly, there were specific ideas that emerged in multiple if not most sessions in various forms that it is appropriate to highlight in this report.

In the listening tour sessions, while the conversations were informal and participants were not asked to label or categorize their ideas, the facilitators found that the ideas and recommendations in those sessions and in the survey responses fell into five general categories:

Student Academic Recovery

A number of ideas and needs were identified specifically aimed at student academic recovery and remediation. These ideas ranged from targeting funds to provide in-school tutoring to expanded use of online resources and partnering with third party organizations to provide additional learning supports. In discussing student experience, it was noted that certain groups of students faced even greater challenges. This included English Language Learners, Special Education students, students who were academically behind and a wide variety of students from varying social, economic and geographic backgrounds whose home environments compounded the challenges of learning remotely.

Student Well Being

In every session, the physical, emotional and mental well-being of students was identified as an area of concern. Students spoke of the benefits they saw first-hand in the access to healthy breakfast and lunch for students, particularly as many families were hurting financially. The trauma of families dealing with challenges as a result of the pandemic was noted as having a direct effect on students and students' own experiences from the challenges of online or hybrid learning, loss of social interaction and the

abrupt changes were all noted as areas of need. Every stakeholder session included ideas to provide direct supports to students and a variety of strategies from a roaming corps of counselors to stipends, trainings and incentives to recruit and retain the needed professionals.

Educator Support & Development

Participants in each session remarked on the incredible job educators did in shifting so quickly to the changed instructional environment and also to the resources, training and professional development that will be needed to help them continue adapting to changing circumstances. From the use of different technologies to the skills for delivering instruction remotely and the different approaches to supporting the social-emotional needs of students, participants – and teachers themselves – spoke of the support needed that could be provided by CDE or through CDE’s targeting of ESSER funds. Participants in multiple groups also emphasized the importance of the broadest definition of educators being used to include teachers and all adults in the building who are part of students’ lives in school.

Educator Well Being

Just as with students, stakeholders spoke of the heavy toll the pandemic exacted on teachers, principals, counselors and other school staff. Helping educators deal with their own mental health struggles, the trauma effects from the pandemic and from students’ challenges were identified as an important issue going forward. While many struggled to identify specific uses of the funds, many spoke of the need to ensure access to mental health resources and to provide space, time and room for educators to both step away when needed and to have time with other educators in their building, school district or across the state as a means of support.

Technical Resources

In many conversations, the need for both equitable access to technology (broadband, devices etc.) and to the variety of technical tools that empower technology’s use for delivering instruction, fostering collaboration and connecting individuals was raised. Participants spoke of the challenges accessing high-speed internet in different communities that included the infrastructure limitations in some rural communities and the financial constraints in some families or communities. A number of participants highlighted the need for direct technical support for families who are not as tech-savvy as others and for the power of state or community supported online hubs to help bring resources and local organizations together.

What We Heard

Themes from Listening Tour

The dominant themes and ideas heard in the listening tour sessions are captured below and all ideas raised are captured in the notes contained in Addendum B and submitted comments and letters in Addendum C.

Social and emotional learning/assistance

- Very helpful if resources are specific to disciplines and grade levels
- Counselors in every school
- Continue mental health services for students and families
- Increase access to employee assistance programs (for district employees) – for counseling/therapy
- Trauma informed supports
- Rethink the term “learning loss” which can have different interpretations;
- Suicide awareness programs – examples Safe Talk, ASSIST, CASEL 5 competencies (social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills)
 - Provide release time for teachers to complete/access these programs

Health, Well-Being and Safety

- Student health is primary
 - continue environmental interventions/cleaning – ie filters, increased cleaning, access to increase physical activity/time outdoors
- Access to Food
 - Continue to support distribution of food and basic needs/services
 - Provided students with a place/time to gather/community

Facilities/space

- Smaller class size, breaking students up, more interventionists
- Capitalize on the use of outdoor spaces and outdoor learning experiences for providing learning and social emotional supports

Disproportionately impacted groups

- Supports for special education/homebound students
 - Some students/families could not afford to take the risk of someone coming into the home because medically fragile family member or student
 - Support for additional access for these students for occupational, speech, physical therapy
 - Support for students with disabilities who missed an in-person transition year; extend eligibility for students over 21 for another year
 - Provide compensatory services for students with disabilities who do not receive services last year
 - Outreach to create better awareness for families with students with disabilities about their rights/access
- Supports for behavioral issues as students transition back into the classrooms
- Help districts understand the true percentage of students with disabilities and special education that have dropped out and help to re-engage these students

- Needs assessment survey to be conducted for special education educators and their education needs then target training and supports
- Expand notion and model of MTSS = multi-tiered system of support.
- Increased support for migrant students and families
 - One on one tutoring - example Empower program

Instruction

- More paraprofessionals and others to assist in classrooms for remediation and new content
- Fund tutors for students who have fallen behind/reimburse parents for tutor costs
- Ensure educators are all trained in same program/way (science of learning – Orton Gillingham) so that all are “speaking” the same language and that curriculum aligns with the training
-
- More interventions, smaller groups/class sizes to target learning needs more effectively
- Increased time for specials that were unable to operate in the same way this past year – music, dance and drama – additional after school time offered as well
- In-person learning was more effective for most students

Technology

- Access is not equal – continue to invest in 1:1 computers/chrome books for every student and hot spots throughout communities are a huge need still.
 - Additional funding will be needed for new students and replacement devices
- Broadband access – there is still work to be done to expand access across the state
- Online meetings/ zoom meetings were more efficient and allowed for educators to spend more plan time (Not just in meetings all the time)! Keep online meetings.

Parent education

- Additional supports/access for students, parents and community on how to best/better support students and how to best support kids in their learning goals, how to navigate community programs students use, how to support/navigate the technology students use for learning.
- Language of education can be abstract – having time to slow down to take the time to explain concepts and answer questions could be VERY helpful to parents/support systems
- Community liaisons can be helpful link for families
-

Recruitment and retention

- Need for more Commercial Drivers License (CDL) drivers
- Stipends to support hard to fill positions (ESL, science, math)
- Shortage of professionally licensed school counselors
 - Need to help bring down barriers into the profession – examples: student loan forgiveness, alternative licensure and education opportunities
- Incentives (additional) for mentor teachers
- Incentives - Housing support, signing bonuses, etc.
- Supports to help students in teacher prep programs whose experiences (student teaching, access to mentors, financial strain) because of COVID were disadvantaged. Help students finish their program through additional financial supports/incentives.
- Ability for districts to support and grow teachers into and throughout their career, including growing paras into teacher positions.
- Use of virtual mentors

- Teacher prep – should include experience in ALL kind of classrooms with a variety of student populations
 - Working closely at district partnerships – collaboration and partnerships
- Professional organizations – support/funding to help support educators to join those organizations and access trainings including National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and others.

Partnerships and collaboration

- What are the community supports and services that we need to partner with that are not on our radar that could help us better support/connect with families?
 - Example – refugee families may be more connected to a community group
- Statewide information and sharing of data across communities and organizations
- Increase community schools where community partnerships and supports are built into the system
- Afterschool (at school or community partner) and summer school programs provide tutoring and community and support to students as well as opportunities for older students to provide tutoring, earn \$, leadership skills
 - Transportation to before and after school programs
- Consider funds for community based organizations directly, as well as families

Values/overarching guidance/advice:

- Direct funding to where the needs are greatest
- We need inclusive practices for all of our students – not just the ones who can catch up quickly but also the kids who do need the extra help.
- Avoid dumping funds into things that you can't sustain, become relied upon & then are unfunded mandates
- Invest in what currently is working vs. new programs/efforts
- Assure that resources are provided state-wide, all sizes or organizations, rural in particular
- Must take action while continuously working to know more about the specific and true impact of pandemic through data
- Flexibility in funding (who it goes to, how it is allocated) - make it easier to get funds

Suggested Investments

While most ideas identified the challenge and offered generally high-level solutions, participants did also offer specific areas in need of investment and some specific program ideas. Below are some of the specific ideas offered in the group discussions:

State

- Creating processes/protocols/supports for districts on how to do local evaluations to look at the impact they're having using strategies they have been implementing so far and fine tuning those when they're not achieving the outcomes they'd like to see
- Purchase new curriculum and assessments through a grant program (this could free up funding to be used for other needs at the district level.
 - Scientific or evidenced based – allow districts to pick from a list
- Funds to create grant programs with community orgs – example - Utah and Washington have done this.

- Re-instate national accreditation certification pay
- Allocations to districts and schools to improve communication (websites, other tools to communicate with parents and community);
- \$\$ for Recruiting and Prof Development;
- \$ for Mental Health training, recruitment of mental health professionals, \$ to build out mental health offices - especially in areas that can remain open after school and on weekends
- Student loan forgiveness to retain educators or attract new educators/support staff into the field
- One-time funds to help LEAs get online tools, systems and resources as option for kids.
- Statewide resources that LEAs can tap into for support in more languages than Spanish & the few that are available – GED, career pathways, CTE
- Structure dollars for compensatory services for students with special needs, dyslexia for learning experiences lost (multi-sensory)
- State-wide structure for building connections between organizations and schools/districts
- Support for rural district collaboration
 - State to provide capacity building through staff coordination (thought partnership, build momentum) and funding to support human capital.
- Teacher recruitment
 - Expand the existing state General Fund Rural Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development line item in the Dept. of Higher Ed
 - Stipends/scholarships and need for alternative licensure.
 - Incentives
 - Bringing in out of state teachers and paying moving expenses.
 - Housing supports, signing bonuses, raising base pay for teachers in rural areas
- Statewide investment in charter authorizer relationship. How to integrate district and charters more effectively

District

- Give back pay raises or offer bonuses for educators
- Need a plan for retaining and hiring high quality teachers and incentivizing teachers to teach outside of the school day and year
- Pipeline programs to help paras stay in program, become teachers, new programs to recruit paras
- Early childhood investments – ROI is great. Increase awareness in districts how funds can be used in preschools or community-based Head Starts, etc.

School & Community

- Getting more assistance/people in the classrooms working with students in smaller groups
- Look at funding non-profits that serve at-risk, most vulnerable populations
- Fund community hubs (tech support, vaccination centers)
- Opportunity for mini-grants, block grants to these organizations in partnership with schools below the poverty level

Meeting Summaries

The following provides a high-level summary of the conversations and ideas from each of the ESSER Listening Tour meetings. As noted earlier, the intention of the listening sessions and this report are not to score or identify consensus but rather to capture as many ideas as possible and, to the extent practical and accurate, highlight where there were common themes across meetings or even across the multiple breakout groups in each meeting. Where ideas are highlighted below does not imply unanimity of support or even consensus but rather that the idea(s) were surfaced by multiple participants in multiple groups.

Teacher Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across groups included:

- Teachers were stretched thin with many non-instructional tasks;
- Providing additional P.D. on technology use would be helpful;
- Teachers appreciated the smaller class sizes and ability to individualize for student needs;
- Teachers want more supports for their students; Teacher mental health is critical and many will need extra support & time;
- There is a pipeline & a retention issue that both must be addressed;
- There are different and additional social/emotional skills needed.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Parent education and supports;
- P.D. for educators;
- Additional paraprofessionals and tutors for working with smaller groups of students to target instruction;
- Compensation, stipends, bonuses.

Parent Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across groups included:

- Tutoring will be critical for many students to get back on grade level;
- Important to be equitable and address needs of all students from those who catch up quickly to those who will need additional help (ensure those that need the most help are prioritized);
- Mental health for students, particularly for students in transition years or periods;
- Resources need to be in multiple languages;
- Special education needs should be addressed through compensatory services or additional eligibility for transition students (21 years+);

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Expanding pool of tutors and other additional instruction to catch-up;
- Fund community hubs that provide wraparound services;
- Fund compensatory services;

- Invest in mental health resources and direct interventions.

Student Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across group included:

- Benefits of access to meals – breakfast and lunch;
- Advantages of outdoor learning spaces for mental well-being;
- Student interest and benefits for some remote and hybrid learning;
- Support for exploring careers, college pathways and financial aid;
- Mental health of students and both access to support and de-stigmatizing it;
- Wi-Fi, broadband and device access is not equal;
- Examining the intersection of pandemic, other national events and their impacts on students.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Outdoor learning spaces;
- Tutoring and after school resources;
- Mental health counseling and supports;
- No-cost breakfast and lunch;
- Dedicated, trained staff to support remote and hybrid learners.

Community Organizations Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across groups included:

- Family & student needs do not go away with return to school;
- Community organizations are often more nimble, closer to issues on ground;
- Community orgs stepped into breach to provide critical supports to families, students;
- Additional training, supports, partnerships needed to maximize impact;
- Community organizations saw the disproportionate impact on certain communities.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Support community organizations convening networks of family, student & educator support;
- Grants to community organizations to provide after school spaces and resources;
- Invest in tutors and training to community organizations and partner with them;
- Funds for compensatory services and supports;
- Invest in providing social workers, therapists and counselors to students in and out of school.

Principals Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes across group included:

- Not all schools went remote but all families experienced pandemic;
- Losses were not only in learning but also in social-emotional;
- Teacher pipeline concern exacerbated by lack of student teaching opportunities;
- Substitute pipeline a concern;

- Educator fatigue from in-person + remote and need for educator support staff.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Fund training and staff for after-school tutoring;
- Resources for hiring paras and other support staff;
- Support from state to help recruit, retain teachers;
- Expanded P.D. on social-emotional learning needs and trauma-informed practices.

Superintendents Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes across group included:

- Need funds to hire social/emotional support staff with right training;
- Need better partnerships between secondary and post-secondary to help recruit teachers and support graduates as they progress;
- Students with IEPs and English Language Learners will all need additional support which requires additional training and resources;
- Broadband and device access is not equal, particularly in rural and higher poverty communities;

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Stipends, bonuses, back-pay for educators, building leaders and school staff;
- Invest in social-emotional learning and trauma-informed professional development for all educators and building staff;
- Invest in direct remediation and supports for students.

Advocacy Organizations Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across groups included:

- Losses at key times for high school students including career training/awareness, college preparation and social development;
- Pandemic highlighted need for expanded curriculum and instructional tools and options;
- High concern about student mental, social well-being;
- Absence of school performance, student test and growth data risks gaps growing larger;
- Broad need for high quality professional development;
- Important not just to spend but to learn from so resources should go into tracking, analyzing.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Data systems to understand nature of extent of problems;
- Providing and/or providing funds for relevant, high priority professional development;
- Invest in tutoring and social-emotional learning supports beyond the school building;
- Get funds to those working closest to families & students which includes community organizations;

Educator Preparation Providers (EPP) Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes across group included:

- Concern about perception of profession compounded by pandemic era demands on teachers;
- Reduced student teaching opportunities or high quality opportunities during pandemic has set some candidates back in their preparedness;
- Student teachers did and can play vital roles in academic recovery and providing targeted support to students;
- Opportunity for EPPs to expand collaboration with districts, CDE and others to ensure high quality and relevant professional development is available.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Stipends or bonuses to recruit talent into pipeline;
- Stipends or raises to support mentor teachers;
- Funds for specific, relevant and high quality professional development ;
- Invest in expanding access to courses beyond geographic confines of educator location.

CDE Staff Meeting

Dominant Themes

Themes common across groups included:

- Important role and results from community partners providing resources to support physical, social and emotional well-being;
- Pockets of targeted support for English learners, academically challenged students and others showed its possible to mitigate losses and should be built upon, scaled;
- Access to broadband was a real and significant issue in some communities;
- Important to not leave early childhood education out of equation and role it plays in ensuring students are prepared for K-12;
- We risk a lot of “lost students” particularly in immigrant and lower-income communities where families were particularly hard hit and students have pulled back or dropped out;
- LEAs and charter management organizations played a crucial role supporting one another.

Ideas for ESSER Funds

In discussing specific potential uses of ESSER funds, some of the ideas included:

- Invest in helping districts collaborate in communities of practice. CDE could provide direct supports and trainings;
- Invest in helping districts use their own data to understand the extent of learning loss in the absence of state or growth data;
- Invest in school counselors and their skills for using data;
- Direct investment in resources to support students with disabilities accessing curriculum.

What We Read

To complement the listening tour and to encourage more Coloradans to offer their thoughts and allow additional input from tour attendees, an online survey was created and links shared via the CDE website, social media and press releases. Over the 3+ weeks the survey was open, hundreds of teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders offered their thoughts on the following questions:

1. Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward? What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?
2. What do you think our students gained during the pandemic or learned to do as a result of the system interruption caused by COVID-19?
3. From an academic or learning standpoint, what do you think our students are missing or behind on as a result of the pandemic?
4. Are there certain groups of students that you believe were disproportionately negatively impacted by the pandemic? If so, who are those students and how/why do you believe they were impacted?
5. Are there certain groups of students that you believe had fewer negative effects from the shifts during the pandemic? If so, who are those students and how/why do you believe they were less impacted?
6. How should CDE use funds to support evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning)?
7. How should CDE use funds to support summer learning and enrichment programs?
8. How should CDE use funds to support comprehensive afterschool programs?
9. How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?
10. How might CDE use these funds to help districts identify and support students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years?
11. How might CDE use these funds to help districts identify and support students who did not consistently participate in remote instruction when offered during school building closures?
12. How do you believe individual educators have been affected by the shifts and their experience during the pandemic?
13. What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?
14. What activities could CDE do and what funding could CDE provide to support and stabilize the educator workforce?
15. What other priorities do you believe the federal funding should be used to support?
16. What problems or challenges have we faced in our education system that we previously have not had the resources to address?
17. Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share with us?

The online survey, available in both English and Spanish, received 1,062 responses. This included 694 Teachers, 193 Students, 174 Parents, 51 School Leaders, 34 Administrators and 48 Community or Advocacy Organizations among others. Respondents represented a diversity of grade levels with 25% representing grades 9-12, 19% grades 6-8, 26% grades 3-5, 22% Kindergarten- 2nd grade and 2.6% preschool. Of respondents, 33% identified as being involved with English Language Learner (ELL) programs, 37% with Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), 31% with Gifted and Talented, 6.5% with the Colorado Preschool Program and 28% said they were associated with a Title I school.

Themes from Survey

As is to be expected in a survey with such diverse respondents, there were a broad diversity of opinions though some themes and values emerged as common threads through a majority of open ended answers. Among the overarching values found in the survey, were:

- Flexibility
- Autonomy - Local solutions for local challenges
- Equity
- Engagement

Ideas and suggestions offered as areas for focus included:

Technology

- Increased opportunity to engage with students, parents, and outside experts to enhance coordination on students learning needs and exposure to new opportunities
- Online meetings created ability for teachers to attend conferences and meetings they would otherwise not have been able to attend.
- Created opportunities for team planning across school, district and throughout the state
- Online school board meetings created increased community engagement
- Educators and parents need more training on use of technology/on tech tools
- Greater awareness of and action to decrease “digital divide” between school, students and families
- Remote school days offered flexibility for teachers to connect with students who needed extra assistance, conference with parents and additional much needed planning time
- Flexibility for students who were traveling or sick to still attend online learning
- Equitable access to technology
- Need to increase broadband connectivity across the state to decrease barriers for student and families in some areas of the state
- 1:1 devices
- Ongoing tools and training to continue to integrate technology and teaching.

Quotes:

- *Gaps are exacerbated by the lack of infrastructure across our state to support online education – Policy Maker*
- *During the pandemic teachers put aside an hour after school where students could have one on one time with them and ask questions. I think this was a really good idea because it helped the students and also didn't waste any class time. – Student*

- *The use of technology to make the classroom more interactive, modern, and equitable access for all students. – Teacher*
- *We saw one positive result, and that was a greater inclusion of students through captioning and note-taking if on remote learning benefitting English language learners, deaf/hard of hearing students, and those with learning disabilities. We also saw some teachers use more experiential learning vs. workbooks/pencil/paper, which added to the learning environment. – Community Organization*
- *I thought connecting with students in their home environment was valuable. I was able to get to know my students in new ways and see their home environment, which helped inform my instruction to better tailor learning to meet challenges at home or build on what I saw at home and use this background knowledge to be a more effective teacher. – Teacher*
- *A four-day school week with the 5th day dedicated to teacher planning, collaboration, and learning — this was the single most impactful thing as it allows us to be prepared to present the very best instruction for students. This is the ONLY time in my career I felt I had enough time to plan for high quality instruction. – Teacher*
- *An emphasis was placed on teachers having more time to prepare and collaborate during the pandemic which I would love to see continue! We have always and will continue to need adequate time in our schedules to prepare and collaborate around our students' needs. – Teacher*
- *Efforts made to make online learning more accessible to students with an IEP should be a priority. This group had a disproportionate negative impact from using online learning techniques, particularly for those students requiring one to one assistance from teachers and para-educators in order to make reasonable academic progress. Assuring the availability of more one to one sessions from teachers and para-educators would help reduce this disparity. – Advocacy Organization*
- *There was additional focus on family engagement and remote learning options in our district, especially for our CLD population. I would like to see the state support and incentivize deeper engagement with this population, as well as making online learning platforms more CLD friendly. – District Leader*

Social and emotional learning/wellness

- Supports for educators and district staff to receive training for social and emotional wellness, trauma informed care and mental health first aid
- Supports for educator/district staff to access wellness (social and emotional supports)
- Support mental health days for educators
- Need for additional school counselors (one at every school) and psychologists and expansion of counseling services for students and staff
- Utilize telehealth teams for after hours needs

Quotes:

- *Adding social emotional learning content to core subjects is one practice that emerged as needed. – Community Organization*
- *Increased social and emotional support to help students and families process and strengthen skills to move through the stress and trauma during this time – Teacher*

- I implemented instruction in mindfulness and social emotional wellness. Students and staff need more support in mental health. Overall wellness, mindfulness, and access to affordable or free counseling/other mental health resources should be a focus. – *Teacher*
- What emerged the most was how much social emotional supports certain students need to be successful. There appeared a direct correlation between those students with high ACEs, tumultuous homes, and low performance. – *Teacher*
- We saw great success with continuing our work with consistent morning meeting, restorative justice and strong mental help supports- we also infused mindfulness and outdoor movement breaks. I would like to incorporate more mindfulness and wellness for my staff and students next year. I know they will be returning with trauma and social emotional needs. would also like to have funding to increase my school psych and social worker time. We need mentors for kids to connect with and have space to share, decompress and feel safe, valued and appreciated. – *School Leader*
- Currently our ratio of students to counselors is extremely high. We need more funding/support for additional mental health professionals that students can access on a regular basis to process trauma and other difficulties they are experiencing/have experienced from the pandemic. It would be good for broader implementation to take place of helping teachers develop a personal mindfulness practice, eventually teach students this practice, and also alleviate many of the extra burdens/responsibilities placed on teachers' plates this past year that have caused many to leave the profession. – *Teacher*
- Supporting systematic school wide initiatives to improve climate and conditions of schools to make them more positive, safe, supportive, and equitable. It is also important to continue to serve the needs of students' social, behavioral, and mental health as a viable way to accelerate learning. – *CDE Staff*

Health and safety

- Continue free meal programs for all students
- Helped break down stigma of free and reduced lunch programs
- Hygiene and environmental practices created less illness within classrooms and schools. Continue these practices (hand washing, sanitizing, ventilation, etc.)
- School nurses in every building

Quotes:

- Providing free meals to all students across the board removes any stigma students may feel, including personal embarrassment and/or wondering if anyone knows their meals are subsidized. Making it free for everyone takes that out of the equation completely. – *Parent*
- Hygiene practices improved greatly. Students adapted well to hand washing and sanitizing. As a result, there were no illnesses spreading through my classroom. – *Teacher*

Facilities/Space

- Look for opportunities to integrate outdoor space into learning
- Helps support learning as well as social/emotional needs
- Increase transportation options for students to access before and after school supports
- Capital improvement for schools to be more welcoming, modern spaces to accommodate the needs of today's learners, especially in low income districts – including space for specials (music, sports, etc.)

Quotes:

- Environmental and outdoor learning supports students' social emotional learning, including more differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and providing more space for student voice and choice--all key to helping students develop a sense of agency and confidence. – *Community Organization*
- Across the nation, we saw tremendous success among schools that did what might appear to be one of the most obvious things they could do--they took learning outdoors. From coast to coast, stories of individual classes, schools and even entire school districts relying on outdoor classrooms for all or part of the school day are popping up everywhere. These solutions are not just a way to facilitate learning when school can't be in session, it is a way to grow and strengthen our education system to nurture a range of skills and interests, help realize every student's unique potential, and prepare for whatever the future brings. Environmental education, with its focus on hands-on learning and authentic problem solving can transform education. Using the outdoors as a context for learning across the curriculum is proven to promote not just academic success, but enhance critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership skills. These findings are not new--and proponents of environmental and outdoor education have been touting them for decades--but the negative impacts of school closures and remote learning, combined with the pockets of success in using outdoor learning to overcome those impacts have thrust the facts into a new light. – *Community Organization*
- I would love to see us be able to build upon our outdoor education which was utilized during Covid to mitigate germ spread. The students excelled in the outdoor setting, and it created many opportunities for learning. – *School Leader*

Content/Curriculum

- Aligned, targeted small group math and literacy interventions should continue and are effective
 - Support for districts to invest in quality literacy programs and trainings for educators
 - Orton Gillingham training
 - Resources that support the Science of Reading like decodable books
 - Research based phonics/ phonics awareness curriculum
- Blended learning/flipped classrooms
- Access to before, afterschool and summer school tutoring programs for all students
- Important for students to see a clear path from education to viable career options through higher education and/or career pathways
 - Increase access to college and career readiness programs, internships, concurrent enrollment, etc.
- Continue paid subscriptions to apps and online resources for students, teachers and families
- Increase ST/OT/PT available to high needs students, homebound and those on IEPs
- Increased professional development
 - Use of technology and effective instructional practices in the classroom and virtual
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) equitable classroom management practices, and how to improve school climate and conditions.
- Add additional special education teachers, licensed school librarians, instructional coaches
 - Increased need for assessing students, writing reports, writing IEPs, observing students, writing IEPs and running IEP meetings, small group pull-out instruction
- Classroom materials for students and educators
- Increased access to specials – art, music, languages, physical activity
- Allow students use of technology (tablets and chrome books) over the summer to access summer learning activities.

- Anti-racism and social justice curriculum for students and training for educators
- Increased professional learning supports around culturally responsive teaching and closing the gaps in learner access between different cultures

Quotes:

- The freedom given to teachers to make daily curricular adjustments was good – *Teacher*
- I would like to see text sets that are grade level appropriate and represent diverse perspectives. – *Parent*
- Freedom to develop curriculum that responds to students needs and curiosities . . . encouraging students to raise their voices and advocate for themselves at the school, district, state and national level. – *Teacher*
- We need to invest more in the Science of Reading resources to help bridge the gap for our youngest readers . . . most of the curriculum our district is looking at may have outdated methods. – *District Leader*
- Reading and Math interventionists and tutors would help all students get additional targeted instruction in small groups. Resources that support the Science of Reading like decodable books would also be helpful. – *Teacher*

Recruitment and retention

- Increase substitute teacher pool and bus drivers
- Decrease pay disparities across the state
- Investments in human capital, such as long-term teacher pipeline development strategies.
- Incentives into the profession
- Student loan forgiveness
- High need subjects and hard to serve geographic areas
- Scholarships for minority students to enter graduate school in school social work and school psychology
- Supports and incentives to retain staff
- Bonuses to support teacher retention
- Compensate qualified teachers to get additional endorsements in critical areas such as teaching reading, science, math and special education.
- Reach out to retired teachers to help fill gaps in short term
- Compensate teachers for time spent at in person or virtual trainings
- Target professional development aligned with new license requirements so that educators can access what they need for free
- Minimizing some of the requirements for endorsements
- Expensive and time consuming to access
- Robust and continuous mentoring programs throughout career
- Use of domestic and international teacher exchange programs

Quotes:

- The money spent on providing support for the teacher and staff will be repaid by the loyalty of teachers that stay in the profession. – *Advocacy Organization*
- Given that the pandemic has exposed the glaring inadequacies in the public education system which in turn prompted some educators to rethink their career decisions, it is crucial that educators be given some incentive to stay in the profession. – *Teacher*
- Pay and train your teachers. Make this about rewarding educators extensive training and treat us as professionals. – *Teacher*
- Use an Exchange program for teachers with highly reflected cultures in certain districts or schools to learn more about each other and be more sensitive to students and families who are different from us but still must meet the same standards established by the state. – *Community Organization*
- Gather feedback from the field about how to best provide initial teacher preparation—higher institutes of learning MUST adapt to the ever-changing landscape and improve teacher training. – *Teacher*

Partnerships and collaboration

- Increased time for collaboration among colleagues in school, district and state to share practices, innovations and learnings
- Continue to strengthen relationships with local nonprofits, human services and public health

Quotes:

- Effective collaboration requires more time, especially when we are advocating adjusting our teaching styles to make sure that we are helping students gain more than a year's growth to compensate for the lost time. Anytime cross-curricular collaboration can occur will increase student engagement and learning as well – *Teacher*
- The food and technology distribution at schools may be a good starting point for developing community schools in some places. I think that a different kind of relationship between families, communities, and schools are going to be needed as we recover from this pandemic and respond to future unforeseen events. – *Teacher*
- Strengthening partnerships with community organizations to support not only our students but our staff. – *School Board Member*
- Culturally responsive outreach must include family events, home visits and 1:1 outreach events to build positive and healthy relationships. People of color who are most impacted by COVID-19 respond best to those who have developed mutually trusting relationships. This is foundational to district personnel being positioned to identify and support students who did not participate in remote learning opportunities. – *Policy Maker*
- After school programs and schools did a good job coordinating to fill gaps - would love to see even more after school program access for kids – *Community Organization*
- Learning happens everywhere and exists in an ecosystem. This is an opportunity to look for new ways to partner with non-profits, community organizations, and other partners to amplify learning and reduce the burden on teachers. Many nonformal education providers worked tirelessly to create new resources and support for both teachers, students, and families during the pandemic. It is critical that we think about ways to build a stronger infrastructure of partners for schools to support student learning. – *Community Organization*

Suggested Investments

As with the listening sessions, many ideas identified the challenge, offered general solutions or called for the state to develop effective solutions but respondents did offer some specific ideas. Below are some of the specific ideas offered:

State

- Data
 - Additional data on how students aligned to grade level before assessment
 - Develop or implement assessments to diagnose student needs and make widely and easily available to all districts and schools.
 - Develop survey to ALL parents to understand needs, help identify why students missed instruction during building closures and address the content gaps and provide support moving forward.
- Reengagement
 - Media campaigns to target specific demographics of students to return to the classroom
- Increase 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantee allocations to include supplies, materials, staffing costs, training, etc.
- Provide regular professional development opportunities free of charge to educators that would include graduate credit opportunities from local universities.
- Reduce licensure fees
- Create a grant program to support the creation of outdoor classrooms at every school in Colorado
- Create a position within the Department of Education to serve as an Outdoor and Environmental Learning Coordinator to support districts who allocate ESSER funds to Outdoor Learning in successfully implementing these innovative practices through 2024
- Create Guidance for School Districts on how to use ESSER funds for Outdoor and environmental learning
- Create regional science implementation communities using the six targeted tools by the Colorado science community
- Develop the capacity to support school districts in the selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials for K-12 science instruction that support district learning outcomes.
- Coordinate around networked professional development models for educators lacking communities of practice and onsite coaching for districts engaging in standards implementation.
- CDE could conduct interviews or surveys directly with families
- Membership organizations to continue to provide on-line and in-person trainings for educators.

District

- District Wellness Coordinator supporting teacher and student well being
- Provide time for teachers to assess students one-on-one with benchmark assessments, and to help identify students who need to be screened with diagnostic tools to help pinpoint learning deficiencies.
 - Additional staff and classroom support will be needed to help address these areas.
- Funding for interventionist to complete assessments and progress monitoring for teachers and collaborate with teachers to implement supports
- Add preschool space to each of our existing elementary school buildings

- Low to no cost afterschool enrichment programs for all students
- Increase school day or year to make up for lost time and learning loss during pandemic closures

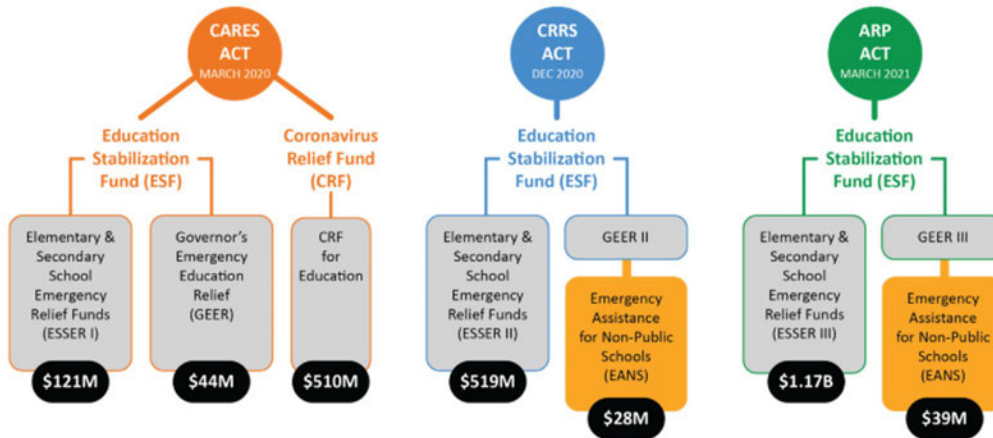
School/Community

- Specific building schedules for 2021-22 allowing for cross grade level collaboration daily to support accelerated learning
- Consideration of beginning a District Equity Team.
- Diverse stakeholder representation (admin, BOE, teachers, parents, etc) at decision making meetings informed through survey and other community input about specific topics beyond SAC and DAC.

Quotes:

- *I would like to see more public information on school performance and districts using data systems that provide information on what kids know aligned to grade level before the state assessment. MAP/adaptive tests are not helpful for grade level aligned standards. – Parent*
- *The pandemic has shown a lack of available preschool space. The ESSER money would be nice to use to add preschool space to each of our existing elementary buildings to be able to help students come to school prepared. – Teacher*

Overview of Federal COVID Relief for K -12 Education



Intent of ESSER Funds

The overall purpose of all ESSER Funds is to address the educational impact of COVID-19. The priority for each funding source include:

ESSER I Crisis Response

To provide schools, staff and students with the **technology and infrastructure to accommodate remote learning environments** caused by COVID-19.

ESSER II Resuming/Sustaining In Person Learning

To provide schools, staff and students with the **resources and equipment to safely return to and/or maintain in-person learning environments** for students.

ESSER III Recovery

To support schools, educators and students with resources and programming that **address learning loss** caused by COVID-19 and remote learning environments.



Total ESSER Funding

	ESSER I	ESSER II	ESSER III
Total State Allocation	\$120,993,782	\$519,324,311	\$1,166,328,632
Allocation to Districts	90% of total funding through Title I formula \$108,894,404 \$120.81 per pupil	90% of total funding through Title I formula \$467,391,880 \$518.70 per pupil	90% of total funding through Title I formula \$1,049,695,769 \$1,164.93 per pupil
State Set Aside	9.5% of total funding \$11,494,409	9.5% of total funding \$49,335,810	9.5% of total funding \$110,801,220
State Administrative Funds	0.5% of total funding \$604,969	0.5% of total funding \$2,596,622	0.5% of total funding \$5,831,643
Funding Period	Through September 30, 2022	Through September 30, 2023	Through September 30, 2024



Allowable Uses of ESSER Funding

ESSER I

Addressing the impact of COVID -19 on schools, such as:

- Coordination with public health departments
- Purchasing educational technology
- Planning for long term closures
- Training and supplies for sanitation
- Mental health support
- Summer school and afterschool programs
- Funds for principals to address local needs
- Other activities to continue school operations and employment of existing staff

ESSER II

Same as ESSER I with emphasis on:

- Addressing learning loss
- School facility repairs and improvements
- Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of schools

ESSER III

Same as ESSER I with a requirement to direct at least 20% of funding to address the learning impacts of COVID-19 through interventions

All ESSER funds may be used for activities allowable under ESEA, IDEA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Perkins CTE Act, or the McKinney -Vento Homeless Assistance Act, **in response to COVID -19.**



Initial ESSER Fund Usage by District

Purchasing educational technology for students and staff, including both software and hardware	Remote learning supports including electronic media curriculum	Preparedness and response activities and supplies, including PPE and sanitation
Repairing/improving school facilities to reduce health hazards including air - filtration and ventilation	Mental health supports for students including counselors	Instructional support to counter learning loss, including curriculum purchases and intervention, e.g. tutoring and intervention staff
Summer learning and supplemental after-school programs	Augmenting staff salaries including extra duty pay or stipends for supplemental instructional time	Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation and continuity of services including hazard pay for teaching in -person and salaries to maintain staff



ESSER I State Set Aside Funds

ESSER I: \$11.5 Million

Funding Gap Support (~\$3.2 M)	Provide Broadband (~\$1.3 M)	Statewide Capacity Building (~\$5 M)	Expand Learning Opportunities (~\$2 M)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to districts that received little or no funding in 90% distribution • Support for special education • Funding to BOCES and facility schools • Support to districts for Native American students and Tribes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for connectivity for districts, BOCES and Tribes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for workforce recruitment, including additional teachers and substitutes • Additional year of funding for online courses that districts can use to supplement learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers



ESSER II State Set Aside Funds

ESSER II: \$49.3 Million

Funding Gap Support (~\$16.8 M)

- Funding to districts that received little or no funding in 90% distribution
- Funding to Administrative Units for special education
- Funding to BOCES
- Support to districts for Native American students and Tribes

Expand Learning Opportunities (~\$10.5 M)

- Support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Statewide Capacity Building (~\$650K)

- Funding for workforce recruitment, including additional teachers and substitutes, planning for next year

Unallocated (~\$21.4 M)



ESSER III State Set Aside Funds

ESSER III: \$110.8 Million

Evidence-Based Interventions for Learning Loss (~\$58.3 M)

- Includes extended day, extended school year, summer learning, summer enrichment, comprehensive after school programs, etc.

Summer Programming (~\$11.7 M)

After School Programming (~\$11.7 M)

Other Allowable Activities (~\$29.2 M)



Stakeholder Engagement

Individual school districts are making local decisions on how to invest the \$1.63 billion from the 90% required formula allocations.

During today's meeting, we are seeking your input the educational impact of COVID- 19, and how we can use the ESSER state set aside funding to address that impact and catalyze our education system.

This equates to approximately \$132 million:

\$58.3 M
for evidenced based
interventions to
address learning loss

\$11.7 M
for summer
programming

\$11.7 M
for after school
programming

\$50.5 M
for other allowable
activities in response
to COVID19



Stakeholder Engagement

The federal stimulus funds provide Colorado a remarkable, once in a generation opportunity for investing in education.

- We want to ensure we stop, think big and creatively, gather input, and use this funding to truly make a difference for our students in Colorado.
- Our top priority is to close the opportunity and achievement gaps that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The Colorado Department of Education and the State Board of Education wants to gather input from stakeholders to ensure the most impactful use of federal funds.



Addendum B: Meeting Notes

The following pages contain the unedited notes from each meeting including:

Teacher Listening Session

Parent Listening Session

Student Listening Session

Community Organization Listening Session

Principal Listening Session

Superintendent Listening Session

Advocacy Organizations Listening Session

Educator Preparation Provider Listening Session

CDE Staff Listening Session

ESSER TEACHER Engagement Meeting Notes – Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward? What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?

- Ensure teachers get quality training; leters, gilliam, some districts spend \$ on pet projects (waste), COVID revealed deficits that were there before, shouldn't be blaming COVID for systematic problems uncovered, accountability for purchases and use of these funds
- teachers know what works, being there for the kids, tough world even without COVID, kids need to feel safe, need more mental health services – consistently offered
- kids pretty well supported at home, kids who came to school did better when they attended school, SEL skill development needed, rebuild social emotional supports, more remediation from adults and interventions, gap in life skill development, para support, instructional coaches, small group breakouts for students
- improvement status, small classes of 20 – can see better achievement results, even one year catch up for the remote learning gaps
- smaller class sizes, small groups, helps with reading instruction, below 20 even just for one year to help kids catch up
- professional development, wellness, class size matters, include all staff and support staff and substitutes in PD, attract paras and support staff – pay for benefits and their supports/training
- How to build the workforce to accomplish these supports, build the workforce of highly skilled professionals???
- Prioritize what is most important for teachers (they can't do it all!)
- Reach consensus among districts about evidence-based materials, curriculum (confusing to professionals)
- Social and emotional learning is important and helpful
 - very helpful if resources are specific to disciplines
 - counselors in every school
 - mental health services for students and families – continue this
- Smaller class size, breaking students up, more interventionist
- Student health is primary
- continue environmental interventions/cleaning – ie filters
- access to increase physical activity
- Adding time for kids to make connections – breaks, lunch
- Give teachers more time to plan
- Support for whole child
- Suicide awareness programs – Safe Talk and ASSIST
 - Provide release time for teachers to complete these programs
- Increase in access to employee assistance programs – for counseling/therapy
- Outdoor learning. Moving to different learning opps. Got plastic tray tables so kids had ability to work/learn outdoors in a flexible arrangement. We were able to use nature

- if kid was out due to quarantine or other – we had technology to support them learning out of the classroom. Ensure (fund) access to broadband. We need more time for Ts to plan well for remote or hybrid which is different than just planning for in class.
- Still a discrepancy in access to broadband. Even when they had devices, reliability depended on age of device & connectivity was always an issue. Can be a particular challenge for kids who moved frequently. Some kids had to use hot spots
- Title I & ELD instructor: Staffing demand to just get equipment ready, serviced, support families.
- Would have been great to have resources, time, capacity to do more home visits to help kids, families et up
- Training for educators on how to use different platforms and systems. Also PD was offered on tech but not as much on how to teach remotely
- I'm just joining, wanted to suggest additional in-school counseling services for students (Consider ELs) and teachers.

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- close this gap; previous mental health issues, quality teacher training LETRs, etc.; trauma-based
 - responses, before/after school groups/interventions for social/academic, break the failure cycle at the causal level, trauma informed counselors
- More kids F and R have experienced trauma, more resources to the neediest schools (huge PTA budgets for example), not funded equally, they just need more, look at schools – don't distribute equally
- Free lunch entire year during COVID, food for the weekend, look at demographics – neediest should they get more
- Older kid supports (not just K-3), tutoring opportunities with highly trained professionals
 - READ Act needs to expand to K-5.
- Funds to support special education/homebound students
- students who were in the gap because could not afford to take the risk of someone coming into the home because medically fragile
- Support for additional access for occupational, speech, physical therapy
- Continued remote education for medically fragile students
- Supports for behavioral issues as students transition back into the classrooms
- More PERA educators to assist
- Access to technology is not equal – continue to invest in computers/chrome books for every student and hot spots throughout communities
- Increased time for specials that were unable to operate in the same way this past year – music, dance and drama – additional after school time offered as well
- Parent education
 - For students, parents and community on how to best/better support students
 - How to support kids in their learning goals
 - Language of education can be abstract – having time to slow down to take the time to explain concepts and answer questions
 - Community liaisons
 - How to navigate community programs students use

- Mask wearing impact early reader skills in phonics (kinder and first grade) – learning loss will be huge. Provide additional help to these students, smaller groups, targeted assistance
- More interventionist, smaller groups/class sizes to target learning needs more effectively
- Some of the students need more of an opportunity for connections, social interactions
- Provide mentoring to targeted students particularly around college/career readiness
- Culturally & linguistically aligned technology support. Some system all Ts and Families across state could access.
- More guidance on how to teach culturally responsively, particularly in different learning environments. Maybe a dedicated person at CDE
- Teachers were allowed to do what they needed to do... worked together, collaborated. Ts seem to have more trust from admin and it both felt good and was more productive.
- 4 day school weeks gave us time to plan on 5th day

How do you believe individual educators have been affected by the shifts and their experience during the pandemic? What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

- Substitutes into districts to take tough positions, invest in this group, train them, give them smaller groups
- give back pay raises
- re-instate national accreditation certification pay
- bonus for teachers
- getting more assistance/people in the classrooms working with students in smaller groups
- online meetings/ zoom meetings were more efficient and allowed for educators to spend more plan time (Not just in meetings all the time)! Keep online meetings.
- Student loan forgiveness to retain educators or attract new educators/support staff into the field

What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

- Teachers dealing w/anxiety, depression, concern about what was going on. The mental, emotional health is biggest concern. Ts saw a lot of elevated behaviors, Ss dealing w/trauma. Encountering all of this, Ss not able to stay as focused, Ts were so consumed by all of the outside factors & don't have the space to look after their own. Could we send mobile or roaming mental, behavioral health experts travel
- Lines between work & home got blurred. Ts kept working even when sick
- We had a lot of Ts who didn't take days off even when sick. Sub pool was diminished so tougher than ever. Even when Ts needed a health or mental health day, they wouldn't take it off. If we can find a way to make it more attractive to be a substitute, that could help.
- we were negotiating around subs
- Teachers need to be paid more. Don't throw this \$\$ away on other positions or new shiny things – spend it on investing in our Ts

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share with us?

- We know that reducing cortisol levels increases the potential to learn. Experiencing trauma limits the brain's working memory and ability to receive and use new information. Ways to do this??? We need to fully fund our art/music, PE classes. We could add exploratory classes with outdoor classroom programs and stress reduction and regulation courses that focus on strategies like meditation, good nutrition, activity, etc. We could also fund a social narrative digital compendium that is culturally and linguistically aligned with district communities to offer social narratives addressing anxiety, depression and more. We could also offer more training for educators targeting their own stress reduction

ESSER PARENTS Stakeholder Meeting Notes – Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that worked for your child that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward? What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?

- chose full-time or on-line, they chose on-line, Florida curriculum, IEPs, symmetric learning/asymmetric, couldn't sit through it, flexibility in how to teach kids was a positive, reading tutor (at their own cost), continued flexibility and tutoring supplied. Who's accountable for not meeting IEP goals? More time and more people.
- Getting them back in the classroom is what worked. Were not progressing online. Lost a lot of teachers to early retirement/COVID burnout – they were exceptional, what more can provide to teachers? More aides? Lift the load off. More clear guidance how to replace exodus of teachers with high quality teachers, retention
- didn't see anything that worked for his kids, didn't interact with other kids on-line, schools failed, interrupted/unfinished learning, what is evidence-based, focus on special needs and 504, minority students, Broadband investment, training to families on how to use hubs and wireless connections, underestimating the loss families have faced. . . offer community vaccination centers, incentivize teachers to teach summer school
- new category of innovation education – get \$ directly to families and non-profits, raised \$300,000 address needs not being met. Create something new and different. Reimburse parents paying for tutoring. Find ways to fund non-profits that are serving these populations.
- hard push to CDE to intervene when district/schools are going through loopholes. Charter School waivers for instructional time. St Vrain and Adams 12 seemed to respond better. Summer programs to catch up – Charter Schools don't have to do it but they still get all the money.
- Teachers and parents communicate more than ever before. On-line meetings engaged more parents. Neighborhood-based services for vaccinations, school supplies. . .help fund school-based mental health resources, health services, training and recruitment, PD for teachers to develop mental health strategies, hire more paras – but can't fill

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- I've noticed – I have 4 kids who have gone through DPS – people talk about rural areas who yes, need funds but here in the metro area where we need targeted funds. We need inclusive practices for all of our students – not just the ones who can catch up quickly but also the kids who do need the extra help. Funds should be distributed equally to all students who need the support.
- We encountered schools not able to provide the technology
- Mental health services that were done virtually were not effective
- For kids who aged out during a program that wasn't run well, they should be welcomed back. Make program more robust for things like job training and life skills
- Tutoring in a 1:1 or small groups would be critically helpful
- Mental health supports, esp kids in transition years & periods
- Compensatory services particularly for those at end of school career

- Avoid dumping funds into things that you can't sustain, become relied upon & then are unfunded mandates
- We are in danger of losing a lot of teachers, esp those who work w/our most vulnerable students.
- Pipeline programs to help paras stay in program, become Ts, new programs to recruit paras
- One time funds to help LEAs get online tools, systems and resources as option for kids.
- This is where school choice & public schools merge
- When pandemic started & (immigrant) parents complained about access, APS created our own learning pods to provide targeted tutoring. CDE could work w/local non-profits and community orgs doing this work.
- Statewide resources that LEAs can tap into for support in more languages than Spanish & the few that are available – GED,, career pathways, CTE
- Support and resources for all kids in transitions. Funds should go to compensatory services

Other ideas:

- Mental health crisis – build relationships before school starts to address kids with depression, anxiety so they can focus on learning, develop program for every teacher to have games, food, relationships in every classroom
- Other possible uses of ESSER \$: allocations to districts and schools to improve communication (websites, other tools to communicate with parents and community); \$\$ for Recruiting and Prof Development; \$ for Mental Health training, recruitment of MH professionals, \$ to build out MH offices - especially in areas that can remain open after school and on weekends
- Trauma informed supports – not funded before, need it more now for teachers and students

ESSER STUDENTS Stakeholder Meeting Notes – Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward?

- afterschool programs. Really important to have somewhere to go, find people to guide you and a community. Developing skills in afterschool programs.
 - Boys and girls club, Fort Carson youth center
 - In school after school programs were held virtually were helpful to connecting with people
- Wednesdays off which was mentally helpful and to catch up on work. Lots of pressure to get work done. Really nice to have time off, maybe a mental health day. Teachers had the opportunity to help students and had more time to plan.
- 1. Use of more gamified learning (like kahoot and more traditional programs like google docs) – engaging students in nontraditional way. 2. Back into in person learning – free lunch and breakfast 3. Having a hybrid schedule – some students used the time for a job or internship – use for opportunity that they wouldn't have previously
- Took advantage of free breakfast and lunch. Could access breakfast when I would not have had. The most effective teachers were the most empathetic. Recognition of trauma of pandemic was helpful.
 - Example -Teacher open up class by asking students how they are. Or acknowledging happenings of Jan 6th. Teachers being honest about how they are feeling.
- more big projects with art, building robots and coding
 - Example – DI – solving challenges, coding and field trips
- free lunch!
 - Elementary school summer school. How far behind students are, those kids that struggle that may not have supports at home – summer school helps to close gaps.
 - Summer school – to take every kid rather than the lowest 10%
 - Over the pandemic the higher-level classes, the accessibility to those classes was reduced. One of the things my district did – offered teachers opportunity through funding to access higher education in order to be able to teach different or high level classes
- outdoor classrooms at more schools, older schools. Or relaxation space – outdoor space. Make students feel more at home and relax.
- free lunch! One thing that I see is that we need more resources for students looking into higher education (college or workplace) – how to look for colleges, write essays. Many of my peers are thinking of going to college but don't know where to start. Need guidance. More funds for after school activities (I am part of boys and girls club) – tutoring offered helps me and also gives me opportunity to tutor other students.
- agree with what has been said. More direct support for students. Responsiveness to trauma and learning loss. Summer school can be a place for workforce development for older students that help. Gives students ability to make money, mentoring other students and skills. Good social emotional support – mixed age peer support.
- we have a court yard – It is a lovely environment

- agree there should be more support for career centers. Need more support for career and college guidance counselors.
- Last year we had outdoor lunches when it warmed up in the spring. Really enjoyed having lunch outside.
- Wi-Fi access is not great! It takes me a long time to get onto school affiliated websites.
- More field trips online or in person.
- works with student leaders
 - Question – thoughts on history and civics curriculum? What is your experience like – are you getting out of it what you want to? Is your own personal experience embraced?
- I think its absolutely that students across Colorado learn about systems of oppression and what their role in their community is to break those down. What is facing students in the classrooms and outside of the classroom – we need to learn more about that and the inequalities. Covid brought some of those to light
- I felt like my experience with history, I was really impressed. Sometimes we can think it is static. My school provided a history program that was up to date.
 - 5th grade history was the last history we had to take.
 - US history in my high school was not a required class. In order to be informed we all should be taking this.
- there are all these standards around what the students learn in history but need to integrate examining the role of oppressed people into these standards/history/civics.
 - “Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria” – book
 - White student enrollment up in GT and IB – need to restructure how we look at students and make the system more equitable, give more opportunity.

ESSER PRICIPAL Engagement Meeting Notes – Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward?

- After hours tutor funding by ESSER funding. Would like to continue this program. All on-line.
- ESSER funds were used to improve buildings and air quality as they were in-person throughout COVID. Didn't have any learning loss so is worried that they will be punished by not receiving funds for learning loss. *Per CDE they can still use these ESSER funds to address achievement gaps.*
- Were in person most of the year and was appreciative of all the support they received during COVID. Had a great summer school program with 151 students. Hopes to see continued support for everybody – including staff. Hope to focus on continued engagement with families. Staff supports included mindfulness activities, teachers meeting each other, website included information on supports provided, tracking wellness activities. Getting more parent liaisons was also helpful.
- Would like to see the funds distributed on a per pupil basis so each school could do what is best for them.
- Would like to see dollars spread on a per pupil basis so that districts can address their individual needs.
- Concern that "learning loss" is more attached to academics. Should consider the social emotional needs too when looking at how dollars are distributed.
- Some kids need to be reengaged in school as they have experienced loss (unable to attend school) based on what their families experienced during COVID.

What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?

- worried about hiring teachers. Example Student Teachers who were not able to teach last year. CDE should look at licensure program and consider changing/reevaluating requirements around teaching with a license. *CDE: Last year supported alternative licensure candidates and substitute teacher outreach. There are 34 pathways into teaching.*

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- The people working in the schools really know what happened to students and what they need. Not sure what exactly the need is but we should ask the question of those in the schools and ask the right questions on what programs make a real difference letting people be innovative.
- Important to support the Title I schools. Teachers and time – putting highly effective teachers in front of students.

What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

- Teachers were exhausted teaching both in-person and supporting students at home. There will be some residual coming into this fall. Are there any funds for special recognition for what they experiences last year?
- Everyone was significantly impacted by COVID. Each Principal would know best how to support staff and students with additional funding.
- Any good teacher is exhausted! Both from teaching and dealing with what happened in their own home. We do need to celebrate and honor our teachers. Training teachers on how to respond to trauma would be beneficial.

Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share with us?

- Licensing is difficult - loosen the requirements for SPED teachers and ESL teachers, and more support. Also, give more districts/schools more freedom on how to spend the funds.

ESSER ADMINISTRATOR Engagement Meeting Notes – Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in your classroom/school/district that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward? What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above? What state-wide efforts would you recommend be supported or started?

- Got BEST grants to update HVAC.
- CDL drivers statewide initiative.
- For scale: The existing state General Fund Rural Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development line item in the Dept. of Higher Ed is \$1,209,357. This covers the alt. licensure subsidy among other programs. It would be interesting to know the potential scope for expansion if we wanted to fully cover demand.
- Recruit teachers. Stipends/scholarships. Demand has quickly outpaced demand. Great need for alt. licensure. Bringing in out of state teachers and paying moving expenses.
- Recruitment of teachers and counselors. Retention in rural communities. Can't compete with higher paying districts. Recruitment into college and choosing education.
- Mental health professionals – can't fill them. Deadline on spending \$ - give them more time to be more thoughtful (pool it over a period of years). More impactful programs. More flexibility, widen the scope.
- Less strings attached. State job search platform.
- *what do they think about AmeriCorps Program. . . pipeline systems to build for mental health.* Rural – no relationship to date with it! Grants to support Grow Your Own – CU Denver/Otero; grow paras. Build on those programs. Housing units needed! Can we use funds to partner with agencies about housing.
- help districts cover these costs?
- I have needs outside of computers, electronic devices, or air filtration. I agree with most on teacher/staff difficulties in the hiring process. Being able to use funds with less strings attached would be huge. CDL certified people is a need. I would like to see a state job search platform such as WECAN from my previous state in Wisconsin. This allows a central area for districts to look for certified staff and also for teachers and other professionals to search for job openings in a Colorado or a specific location the state they would like to work and live in. I'm listening to what others are saying and agree with them as well.
- A few years ago, the department covered the cost to post vacancies on Teachers-Teachers. Any chance a similar relationship could happen to take advantage of the recruiting services from Frontline?
- Mental health and social emotional support is very important. Need to have the right staff to implement effective programs.
- Staff to support students with IEPs and English language learners - they are struggling with filling these positions. Maybe stipends or bonuses to help fill these positions?
- Should consider building some connection between secondary and post secondary institutions to help support graduates. We need to do a better job of getting people into education careers – strategies and marketing.
- Evidence based interventions are effective and expensive. May want to look at funding them to help support these expensive programs.

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- attendance issues; engagement. New grad requirements – provide opportunities and options with alternative students. Expand vocational programs, hands-on training, graduate with diploma and certificates
- Internet/broadband continue these efforts.
- Low-income students can bounce from district to district; one problem, run from it. Open enrollment issue. Local control – state requirements easier in another district; inequity; some regulation needed.
- Districts on improvement higher focused on reading and math – some danger here. Encourage well rounded, Title IV. Music programs suffered – give them some financial support.
- Like the idea students offered about expanding/developing outdoor learning spaces.
- Anything with student mental health support. Being in a rural area and asking them not to socialize outside of their cohorts during the school day really took a toll. This past year we lost our School Health Professional grant that funded our school psychologist.
- Teachers are critical for tutoring or intervention time. Unfortunately, this is hard due to lack of teachers so will have to look to on-line options. Programs with a live tutor are fine.
- consider funding transportation for before or after school programs
- in very rural areas families do not have great access to the internet. What they have is expensive so can we support paying for internet for families?
- Looking for funding as they have not received any (?). How do we level out pay for teachers so the rural districts can compete against other districts?
- Provide certain resources for certain groups especially people of poverty. Students that did not have access to technology or caregivers to support them have shown the greatest gaps in learning. Give access to the resources to address these gaps.
- agrees that it is a struggle for small rural schools, internet, teachers, etc.
- Lack of on-line access for families was difficult at first. How do we address this with funding? Small rural schools. Two teacher families - if both had to take off due to exposure it had a great impact/snowball effect.

How do you believe individual educators have been affected by the shifts and their experience during the pandemic? What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

- Mental health for teachers – they work in isolation, collaboration. Encourage them to talk to each other. Connect them with mental health.
- Carve out healthy lifestyle school culture; weekly bike ride; build community; proactive initiative vs responding.
- Teacher salaries and benefits is the biggest issue we have. Impressed with staff who were always ready to go from in-person to remote learning quickly. They deserve more!
- Agrees with salaries. When staff or our families are quarantined childcare was difficult to find. Any funds to create a new childcare centers, afterschool centers, to better support staff would be helpful.

Technology

- Increase in 1:1 device use this year

- Additional funding will be needed for new students and replacement devices
- Technology enhancement – opportunities to have resources that get students the programming they need in person or virtually.
- Chrome books cannot run assessments

Allocation of Funding

- One size does not fit all – solutions are not the same
- Local control/decision making is vital
- Distributed per pupil basis. Administrators determining the highest and best needs for their programs
- Rural communities need support
- Depending on district authorizations – challenges with accessing funding, some are ineligible
- Allocation method/competitive grant process does not work well. All districts do not have the same resources to respond to requests.

Social Emotional Wellness

- Important to address climate, culture and wellness for students and staff
- CDPHE has a lot of resources and competitive grants
 - Gatekeep training is good
- Universal screening for social and emotional wellness and mental health
- Hire mental health supports and resources
 - Especially challenging in rural areas where pay is not competitive and systems are not in place to support needs
- Mental health should not end at identification, it should end at implementation!

Environmental

- Environmental interventions (air handling overhauls, etc) helped decrease/reduce covid and other illness. Fewer sick kids is always good
 - Invest in thermal cameras that could detect kids with fevers.

Higher Education/Transition

- Blur the lines between k12 and higher ed – need more resources and support
- Transition counselors

Recruitment and Retention

- Need to find ways to recruit effective professionals into the field and KEEP THEM THERE
 - Raise base salaries in rural communities

Other

- CDE waivers for licensure and academic requirements were VERY helpful this year – make some of these permanent
- Working with smaller groups of students is REALLY helpful for learning loss
- DPS had all central administrators in schools once a week to help with capacity – getting into schools AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE is a good thing!
- Keep BOCES in mind – can coordinate across districts and get resources out quickly across districts
 - Remote learning mapped to assessments
 - Build capacity – focused on professional development

- Literacy interventions – purchase materials that can be used now and, in the future
- Professional development investments would be a GREAT use of funding

ESSER ADVOCACY Engagement Meeting Notes – Combined

- More engagement and relevancy. High school mental health and reengagement with learning needs. We would love to see more of an engagement strategy – more partnerships to create concurrent enrollment, internships, partnerships – strong connection to college and career partnerships.
- It is incredibly important that a chief recovery officer is being hired at CDE.
- Research and analysis is really important – what are the innovations that are happening?
- Quality data systems to understand what is working really well. Build upon what is working – turn around support, literacy (READ ACT)
- how do we differentiate this funding – make this as high impact as possible. Continue to look into the connect for success program – what are other investments that can go into successful programs like that.
- Once in a generation opportunity – incentivizing uses of this funding for better curriculum (in Louisiana doing this) – drive people into a certain direction that we know will help students.
- One thing we have been thinking about is student statewide information systems. We have been scrambling to track if students are hybrid or remote. Reducing administrative burden. Data sharing among agencies is difficult. Statewide free and reduced lunch online application/system would have been helpful.
- professional development on how to work with students who have experienced trauma. Also education for school board on trauma informed practices and policy/regulation. The children are looking at the adults “am I ok or am I not”
- support new evolving ways for charter schools to integrate with district. Statewide investment in charter authorizer relationship. How to integrate district and charters more effectively
- data system is very important as well as reengagement. CDE setting up best practices.
- We have a lot of school leaders not training in discipline practices that keep kids in schools.
- Make sure all districts are using literacy based in the science of reading – ensuring schools are all trained in this.
- how can we leverage funding to support high quality PD. Ways we can connect educators across systems (connect with kindred spirits)
- Encourage bold ideas – encourage innovation/incentivize innovation.
 - way to invest in our community orgs that really stepped up when schools were closed. These orgs can be nimbler and more innovative.
 - Examples from other states that have used ESSER funds to create grant programs with community orgs - Utah and Washington have done this. Thinking about statewide orgs.
 - Love to see investments for SEL outside of school – trauma doesn’t end kids leave the classroom. Clubs have invested in therapists and counselors. Professional development for community orgs as well.
 - Data system would be great and sharing information (now we are relaying on student self reported data)
 - Evidence based curriculum (especially with literacy)
- CDE to take their online training modules from K-12. Open those up to the public – let parents have access, community groups that are offering tutoring. Lots of volunteers that are helping in the nonprofit space, they could really benefit from this training.

- As a teacher I am really advocating for outreach for community orgs that are smaller, used some of those orgs to provide art, reading support – there is something missing when we are not using those orgs. Short term interventions for long term impacts.
- Collaboration is key!
- Students with disabilities because of federal policy. What I am concerned about is that many of our students COULD not access zoom. It did not work for many students with special needs. Have a right to compulsory education.
- Most of these families won't know about what their rights are – CDE to put out information for kids with IEPs or 504s about what they are entitled to. I will help translate that for families!
- Want to see these funds go to community-based organizations.
- Incentivize/teaching to schools on how to partner with community-based orgs – no need to recreate the wheel. Create community schools.
- Needs assessment with after school programs – to understand where they gaps exist
- What orgs had to shut down due to covid? Can we get them started again?
- Investments in afterschool and summer workforces
- Data sharing
- High school engagement, stronger engagement from college and career
- Creating an environment that is more agile – not afraid to fail
- Challenges that are getting in way of innovation – seat time
- Blended learning
 - Waivers for Community college areas and seat time
 - Actual or perceived barriers
- Create key measures/metrics to track this funding
 - In order for electorate to understand the impact of this funding
- Students with disabilities that were unable to access transition
 - Parents of kids with disabilities need more information
 - “your child is entitled to more” message/outreach needs to happen
- Two and Thru programs – charter management orgs
- Incentivizing excellent teachers to schools that need help – when those teachers are recognized, and we can ask them how to help in the district
- English Language Learning – language centers could be funding better (translations can be more effective for students and parents)
- Statewide data system and sharing

ESSER EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS Stakeholder Meeting – Combined

Comments:

- The stronger the teacher in the classroom, the better the outcomes for students. Once in a generation funding – how as a state, investment into teachers and teacher education.
 - Ability for district to support and grow teachers throughout their career.
 - Want to make sure there is strategy behind this – we want to make sure we are all working together.
- Because of COVID a lot of teacher candidates were disadvantaged. Teacher prep programs to support financial negative impact – some may not be able to continue. Cannot continue their student teaching or
 - A pocket of funding to help support students while student teaching, content assessments, housing stipends
 - Also support funds to support testing

What innovations did you see over the last year – how could this be scaled by the state?

- How can we support in-service and pre-service
 - Grow your own programs
- We could not put most of student teachers in classrooms. We recruited virtual mentors for stage 1 and 2 students.
- Virtual mentorship could be helpful moving forward – look for opportunities there
- Had more contact with parents this year – continue to think about additional ways to connect with parents and families
- Parent communication was immediate – continue this
- Teaching labs was a virtual mentorships
- Science of Reading training – send them all to Orton Gillingham training
 - Important that educators have literacy training that is the same so that folks have the same language

What is most needed to support educators (new and those in the field)?

- Experience in a wide variety of classrooms – what are the required number of hours? But future teachers should see a spectrum of classrooms. That is a BIG gap.
 - Teachers are placed in classrooms very different from where/how they were trained
 - Working closely at district partnerships – collaboration and partnerships
 - Leadership needs to be committed to understanding the needs
- We do alternative licensure and a lot of special education licensure
 - Things were coming down from the district – contingency plans
 - Greater need for modeling and collaborative sessions for special educators
 - More support, more examples is needed
 - State can step in to help share ideas, work together, modeling
- Support for the mentor teachers – we really need a lot of mentor candidates.
- Compensation for mentor teachers from the state
- Support and encourage mentor teachers
- Professional organizations – support/funding to help support educators to join those organizations and access trainings

- NCTM, NCTE, ETC.
- Pathways to credentialing teachers – PARA and new teachers gathered more experience during the pandemic
- Compensation inequities should be addressed
- Aware of those middle ground folks – adjunct folks
- We are working looking at apprenticeship programs
- SB185 – alternative prep pathways
- Were teachers really prepared to support students “outside” the classroom
 - Social justice issues, other topics that
 - Support teachers who experienced trauma and may be retraumatized going into the classroom
 - Common language could be helpful – learning loss? Do we have a common understanding of what we are talking about? What is the root of the issue we are trying to solve?
- Impacts of covid pandemic on teachers, students and parents
 - There is a lot of research being done in Asian countries on this – not as much here
 - Support university studies on the impact of the pandemic on parent, teacher, student perspectives
 - Support teachers, administrators – compensate time to participate, focus groups

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- English language learning and special education
 - Teachers/students in the pipeline who have been impacted greatest
- Thinking about students – how do we develop and support teachers to support kids
 - Building relationships for social and emotional
 - Teacher disposition is important – intentional
 - Counselor prep – what is done within this training that can be integrated into teacher prep
- IEG and district partnerships – grants
 - We need some professional development – can partner with a prep provider for that support
- Financial impact on families will be greater once families are back to school
 - How can we support families?
 - Financial literacy for teachers – training
 - Increase teacher pay for all they have done, all they will do
- What are the community supports and services that we need to partner with that are not on our radar that could help us better support/connect with families
 - Example – refugee families may be more connected to a community group

ESSER INTERNAL CDE Stakeholder Meeting Notes - Combined

Thinking specifically about the period affected by the pandemic, what practices or innovations emerged in classrooms/schools/districts that you'd like to see built upon as we move forward?

- some districts I work with and office hours held during pandemic, some innovations I'd want to highlight are around supporting students physical/social/emotional/mental health. Working with outside community partners to bring in specific services so schools don't feel pressure to be all things to all people. Community partners have stepped up, reaching out to schools with specific ways they can support districts. Also community health centers and other orgs have done that. Is there an opportunity – while this funding is great an influx of funds can also cause stress and create overwhelming sense. Ensure those supports needed by our students can come from somebody else and let our teachers focus on supporting students academically.
- I don't know if there are models per se. One org is Communities In Schools. They are not as active in Colorado but the idea of a community schools model would be what I'd emphasize. What that entails mostly is outside communities coming in to provide wraparound supports for students and families. There's a lot that's aligned with 21st Century model in having additional orgs provide those supports, but it can happen during school. Community schools model is what I'd reference.
- I'd second everything said around social/emotional supports but keep in mind the MTSS model. Also thinking about kids with disabilities since they are the hardest hit. How are we truly meeting *all* kids needs in that layered way, universal targeted all kids getting what they need. Not necessarily carving out something different for kids with disabilities but ensuring appropriate access to those levels of support needed to all students.
- I agree let's expand our notion of MTSS so it's just the way we do school. Peered system of support for academic, behavioral, social/emotional/mental wellness. If there's a way to fund that support system in the MTSS model especially an expanded model, I agree. MTSS = multi tiered system of support.
- Thinking of some examples hearing from our program-- 1/ Tutoring esp One on one tutors and partnerships with the migrant education program. 2/ Supporting parent engagement in terms of helping parents understand how school management systems work, so they understand what's happening in the school. Migrant program is partnering to see how the schools can help the parents be more involved in their children's academics. 3/ Mental health support has been very important for migrant families. 4/ the early math support is an area because of COVID we know language and math has been – migrant families really have had a hard time and are behind in math. They have established tutoring service but also technology support starting developmentally where the students are and giving them a way to move forward, wherever they are starting from. We had a program called Empower, some migrant programs are using that and sharing the information with school districts. I also agree with what everyone has said already.
- I believe broadband is really significant in that it provides equitable access to instruction and I think that's still an area of need across our state because 70% of our community is rural. Not all of those communities have access to broadband technology. 2/ I would second the piece around social/emotional learning, I think that's critical. Our state ranks within the top 10 states for the last 5-10 years for suicides. We've seen a spike in that across our state, which elevates that again to a higher level in my mind. I think due to the acuity of that need, we really do need to support social/emotional learning, whether through a multitiered system of supports or behavioral supports like positive behavioral interventions and supports. I know there are

programs such as CASEL the social emotional learning organization, they use their 5 competencies social awareness, self awareness, self management, responsible decision making, relationship skills – to focus a variety of needs including DEI. We know our LGBTQ community is highly impacted with high numbers of suicide. Focusing on some of these DEI issues is also very important.

- I know there are funding opportunities coming on board through our state personnel development grant. I think certainly supporting that with some of the ESSER funds, but I think it requires a collaborative effort across the department, not just for the office of learning supports, let's not just throw it all on that office but let's collaborate and support them in strategically using these dollars. I think that would involve our federal programs across a variety of sections across the department. I think there's a lot of areas for us to collaborate and work cohesively on.
- I agree and professional development would be key. I'm trying to coordinate some of us to be more coherent around professional development, esp in the realm of social/emotional/behavioral/mental health. In a coordinated way, reach out to the field about how you best implement and teach social/emotional skills, how you can support students mental health by being trauma responsive, etc. There's a deep bench within the department that are able to provide those trainings to our district and school folks. Part of that requires a thumbs up and go ahead from leadership around that. I agree it would require some additional support from ESSER dollars. There would be a lot to do and a lot to provide.
- Keep those partners in mind when talking about that. When I think about content gen ed school teachers, its not fair to put all the social/emotional learning on them. They can be partners but school psychologists, counselors, our mental health community partners can come together to really make it a systems issue. We know that kids won't learn until they're safe and until some of those basic needs are taken care of. We must address those systemically and all kids every single kid regardless of level of need or disability or anything, we must meet those needs first before they can learn math. Culture and equity comes into that, I don't think we can do it systemically without those partners and without those experts.
- Support everything already mentioned. I think it would behoove us to spend some of our funds creating processes/protocols/supports for districts on how to do local evaluations to look at the impact they're having using strategies they have been implementing so far and finetuning those when they're not achieving the outcomes they'd like to see. Supports around progress monitoring, ROI, all those evaluation work. Learning to use data to inform practices and identifying student needs is a critical piece of this. We'll be looking back in 5-6 years asking ourselves for that evidence of what we saw had an impact, and that means our districts have to be able to provide that evidence as well. Make sure we're thinking about 5-6 years when Congress, USDE come calling and ask what impact we had.
- We serve children on IEPs and CPP. I want to raise awareness of using funds on early childhood, we know the ROI when dollars are used in early childhood programs is great. I don't know many districts are aware of how to use funds in preschools or community based Head Starts, etc.
- Agree with all comments. Elevating the leaders that we have in the field, not only educators but our mental health professionals working directly with students and families. And looking at the impacts these funds are having, diving into building capacity of that in evaluation. We have a pretty local, robust evaluation system set up in our supplemental funding that we've gotten. That might be something we can tap into, both evaluation and financial reporting. And we've been really grateful to have some ESSER funds already, all our out of school time grantees have risen to the occasion and re engaging students and families. Special needs, migrant families,

English learners. Practices we saw: addressing basic needs including technology and food. Expanding community partnerships, 21st century is a unique grant program across the department because we also fund community based orgs. From a COVID19 impact survey we gave to current grantees, we saw where they really added value to what schools were already doing and filled in a lot of gaps where schools were not able to provide services/supports. Cost sharing for mental health professionals was a big thing, school psychologists and counselors. And supporting additional learning opportunities through small groups of students, that begs the need for additional staff which I know has been an issue in terms of talent but with the existing staff in out of school time programs they were able to provide more pay for existing staff and incentives for new staff to come on and expand hours of services, not just for academics but social/emotional learning and keep staying engaged. We saw a huge need, especially in our recent grant application process. We've laid the foundation of work we can do to leverage existing funding and some ESSER but there's a lot more work to be done. I'd like to see proliferation of out of school time programs across the state. There's a lot in Denver Metro but expanding these programs and opportunities across other areas of the state.

- post secondary workforce readiness: I do a lot of technical assistance with secondary schools helping students to figure out what's next. The system was already broken for a lot of students, there was a view of "what's the point". We lost a lot of kids who didn't see the point of school any more because they didn't know what was coming next month, or students whose parents lost their job or had high risk of COVID so they had to take on jobs. For juniors and seniors, it's almost figuring out how to give them hope for the future and hope for what's next to get them back in our buildings. Part of that is breaking the system and seeing some innovative ways to engage students so they can see their future more clearly. Some students interested in mental health field said I can't go to school for 8 years before I'm earning a living. Career college planning, how do we make that relevant now, such as a paid internship. WE often look to counselors to do that work, but they're spread so thin right now.
- Thinking about outdoor classroom/dining areas. Unisex toilet rooms. Alternative and soft furniture for after-school areas. Extended days should be a different setting, different environment.
- Beneficial to districts to offer online trainings and tech support.
 - Broadband support is still needed in some parts of the state.
- Successful in rural districts has been increased collaboration. Funding and support can help these districts. There is a strong sense that supporting co-action/collaboration would be VERY helpful. Hiring challenges – working with neighbors and BOCES to help hire. There are regions that are developing pathways, concurrent enrollment, internships, etc. Foster more collaboration in the field. In some rural districts there is one person serving as principal and superintendent.
 - RISE grants and other foundation support has been helpful
 - Support could look like – capacity building (internal coordination of staff going out to help). Support and thought partner, help them build momentum at the beginning. On the ground will need funding support to build human capital.
- directors in special ed have struggled. They need support for professional development. Continue trainings for them. Conduct a needs assessment survey for these teachers to better understand what they need. Be the support they need through training.

What is most needed to support educators/school leaders?

- think a lot about the challenges that preceded the pandemic that are financial. These funds will go away, I worry we build these things and then they go away. What type of material things can be purchased that can free up funding for other things? READ Act – a lot of districts will need to purchase new curriculum and assessments. This is an opportunity to use these funds.
 - Scientific or evidence based curriculum – a grant program to support this
 - Pick from this list
- shortage of professionally licensed school counselors, is there some work CDE can do to help bring down barriers – increase people getting into the profession
 - Student loan forgiveness, make more accessible, alternative licensure and education opportunities
- the true impact of the pandemic is unknown in some ways because of assessments/measurements
 - If there are local measure folks feel comfortable with, use these to find strategies to remedy this.
- Challenges with data and assessments and making decisions
- are data will not be perfect this year, because we need more data and need to dig deeper
- tools that school counselors use to develop needs assessments (community engagement, other activities) can be helpful tools to inform districts
- We all need to know what each other does at CDE – identify what every unit does to meets the needs of districts – work smarter.
 - Identify gaps and redundancies
 - Cross unit collaboration – get out of our silos
- accommodations for students – in classroom but not on state test. Challenges with assistive technology
- Not being able to see the true impact of students with disabilities and special needs – graduation and drop out rates – how can we assist districts at the % of students not engaged and help to re-engage those students at a timely manner.

What resources, training or supports would be needed to effectively continue and scale the practices or innovations described above?

- I heard from a lot of teachers about needing help with support for teachers on using tech
- Increased collaboration among rurals who may have lacked resources and what they've missed is the funding, supports to empower that continued collaboration. Co-action for LEAs partnering on 2 fronts: we may talk innovation but it's so much more – they are dealing with shortages, some haven't been able to hire English or math teachers for years. There are regions of work developing pathways, getting kids college credits, apprenticeships, internships. Oppty for us at state level to support that even more. Foster the collaboration out in the field. We have 38 dual-role Supes/Principals who need add'l supports to collab with neighboring LEAs. Instead of trying to add something new
- CDE can provide technical support. They also need capacity, somebody to come along side AND in the field, once they get going but they need capacity that maybe starts in CDE w/staff who are dedicated to supporting like field staff and then they need funding
- Special Ed – some real need to provide PD where some PD Directors just are stretched too thin

How might CDE use set aside funds to specifically address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain groups of students?

- To start, we need to understand what the impact has truly been and where. There has been this reflexive avoidance of assessment. The well intentioned result is a lack of data. And as a result, we don't know who has been hurt. If there are local measures, maybe we can access those. We instinctively know but not empirically.
- Are there ways to help districts use their own data
- For counselors, the first year is a needs assessment and look deeply at the data for developing a school counseling program. Some iteration of that could help schools find out where the needs are
- Within CDE, we could do better on even knowing who is doing what to avoid duplication. We need to do some more collaboration and breaking down silos
- A number of schools and districts struggle with providing accommodations that allow students with disabilities to access the curriculum. Providing accommodations and assistive technology can go a long way to facilitating access. This would be very targeted toward one of our most at risk groups. It likely is also be an EDI issue. We can find where the issues are by looking at past testing data and accommodation use by students with disabilities across districts. If accommodation use is similar to TCAP data, you will find that students in different racial groups receive different accommodations.

What do you believe is most needed to support educators and school leaders as a result of their experiences during the pandemic?

- Maybe conduct a needs assessment of what Ts need?
- When I think about challenges that preceded pandemic that are in alignment w/it, my thoughts go to the one-time nature. I worry about making an investment and then going off the cliff financially. I think then about the material things that can be used on an ongoing basis and that their local funds for those ongoing needs.
- With READ Act being priority, a lot of LEAs will need to purchase books, curriculum and those cost a lot. This could be a way to take some fin'l pressure off of them
- Shortage of licensed counselors available. Expect that's true in other roles. Is there work we can do to get folks into the pipeline, minimizing barriers
- Identify what support have we already provided to districts and determine where further coaching is needed to continue the work for sustainability.
- Another idea might be to identify what support have we already provided to districts and determine where further coaching is needed to continue the work for sustainability.
- Also the School Counselor Corps. I think there is one around behavioral health too. All require specialized training

Addendum C: Submitted Letters & Reports

The following pages contain letters, proposals and reports received in response to the CDE ESSER Listening Tour.

Ideas Submitted to CDE via email or discussion

\$300,000 for Principal Supports through PLCs - Provide support for principal learning, and engagement by Extended learning opportunity group – This need has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Possible support for principal affinity groups aligned to extended learning opportunities (unfinished learning, summer learning, extended learning, eLearning) – Led by principal coaches (allow for pay for stipends). Intentional PLC's via remote gatherings to provide support to principals across Colorado. This is something we have learned from the Principal Leadership Institute. Our principals need coordinated time and support to engage with each other in many topics around extended learning opportunities. These would be multi-year opportunities where folks could stay in the PLC cohorts or self select into other cohorts over time - 21/22, 22/23, 23/24. The principal coaches leading the PLC would be stipended at \$5000 per year. Estimated 6 affinity group PLCs, staffed with 1 principal coach to lead the group, meet minimum 1 time per month for 10 months of the year.

\$375,000: Equity development coordinator. Due to the significant inequities found during the pandemic, the need for addressing this has been elevated. 1.0 FTE beginning in July 1, 2021- September 30, 2024 to review, coordinate, support, and facilitate equity initiatives within CDE and outside with districts. The idea for this came from the DLRT as we have been supporting district equity work through a cohort learning model with Gemini. We have just launched our 2nd cohort. The DLRT team has expressed that CDE would be best off by elevating the equity work by dedicating a team of people, starting with an equity development coordinator (or, they also suggested a chief equity officer). The ESSER funds could be used through the COVID equity lens to possibly hire a 1.0 FTE for 3 years to establish a system of equity change/initiatives in Colorado, with the goal of continuing and developing the unit over time and transitioning to state monies (or fee funded monies, which is where the DLRT started the conversations). Estimated salary/benefits fully loaded \$111,000/year with \$15,000 travel/operations each year.

Set aside funds to develop and implement PD for school improvement and recovery from student learning impacts

Provide part-time FTE for administrative support to project manage the events/logistics of the PD events, and build an updated PD webpage.

Adapt the EASI approach to smaller, more bite sized learning opportunities in addition to our stable menu. EASI would be the vehicle interested districts learn about these opportunities but they're managed outside of EASI.

Leadership use of data to track student learning needs/catch up

Operations and strategic budgeting

Develop and communicate new PD opportunities: secondary math support (scheduling, credit recovery, avoiding remediation), SEL (trauma informed practices for principals and/or teachers), Online and

Blended Learning Best Practices, AEC PD specific to their populations, District Leadership (new superintendents) PD, and other PD sessions that are relevant to school improvement.

A centralized webpage would “collect” these PD opportunities that are already on different unit’s webpages.

EASI could spotlight the current menu and link to these related, shorter term PD opportunities that connect explicitly to the toolkit/high leverage areas but have the specialized focus on identified schools.

Est \$6-7mm Customer Relations Management System Project - Consider funds for system improvements, e.g., upgraded Data Pipeline (not limited to statewide SIS but could be a part of it) that could also improve CDE operations. This would help to provide improved data quality from and to districts, allowing us to better measure status of all the above ideas. Would require focused strategic planning on what we'd like to accomplish moving forward. This can tie in to Rhonda's suggestion above about EASI, but apply it more broadly

Consider using funds to assist school nutrition departments - backfill lost funding due to lower revenues. Would be helpful for districts as they are having to use General Funds to backfill shortfalls. However, not as strategic use of funds.

\$100-\$200K: Blended Learning Initiative: Research and evaluate the impact of remote learning on Colorado students, identify successful remote learning strategies, and use this knowledge to inform a discussion and planning process for reimagining how instructional time is measured and used for funding.

I wanted to make you aware of the CAP Map - it could be useful in identifying areas of need.

Regarding the concept of incentives – allow me to plant the seed of an incentive for districts/schools to partner with community based afterschool and summer providers. There’s no reason for districts to spend money creating new programs when there are quality evidenced based programs already available in many Colorado communities. Happy to provide you data and research that supports school/community based partnerships if you’d like.

Create an RFP that allows funds to flow directly to Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

We want the state to give specific guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that requires them to partner with CBOs.

Support youth workers with training and professional development to address youth mental health and SEL needs.

Create Scholarships for families that don't qualify for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Support innovative youth work.

Transportation for summer reengagement.

Extra funds for staff working on front lines.

Out of the box project materials for students to use.

ESSER III - AmeriCorp Educator Support and Recruitment Program (\$1 million)

• **CSU AmeriCorp Program (\$500,000):** Current IA about \$400,000 have a taker for that and short on second half of the year; CSU AmeriCorp partnered with Masters level program and given proposal for 20 spots in Weld County and would start this fall. Will work with schools up north and will serve as substitutes and tutors in the school. Total program costs are about \$900,000 but we have under \$400,000 left. Would request funding to "finish" the year next year with this program.
- ESSER II or ESSER III - Need about \$500,000

Teacher Support and Recruitment Program (\$500,000)

- PEBC - Connect with Alt Program
- How do we recruit more intentionally for the teacher pipeline
- Make information available about different pipelines and programs
- TEACH CO and Workforce Center Recruitment
- How do we encourage them to match up with certification programs
- AmeriCorp for 3/4 of a year will give them \$4500/\$4700 -

ESSER III monies, \$500,000 to pay for full alternative educator preparation programs for all eligible AmeriCorp members

Tool to help students and parents identify students' preferred mode of learning, best fit school environment.. And then, even match with schools in the area. (But with heavy focus on remote/synch/asynch learning options)

\$500k - \$1mm for a "small" pot of money for really local community organizations-- like churches who are supporting students this summer? If we keep the amount relatively small-- it wouldn't be as big a deal. I think this would go a long way toward supporting deep community engagement.

\$8 - \$10mm: Rural Innovation Zones-- Create shared services across districts related to career connected learning, specialty programs in districts (like a specialization in hospitality or STEM or Ag). Could also support job sharing, expand internships and ways to keep kids in your community. I am too and think it could be great in the long run. Could be connect to student reengagement and expanding learning opportunities across districts.

Est \$2 - \$3mm: State purchased curriculum to incentivize districts to use it: Math/Science and ELA. All about combatting learning loss.

Stand-up money to universities for shortage programs like speech language pathologists ((from Rural council)

\$2.5MM: SyncUp Colorado-- Essentially, we would build a Colorado Health Careers Academy in partnership with DPS, LPS, Cherry Creek, Englewood, Sheridan, and Elizabeth school district (rural) and then that builds off of what we did for contact tracers throughout the state but would focus on industry job shadows (virtual) and student incentives for scholarships and industry partners could determine how they wanted to coordinate touch points with the most promising students who progress through the

curriculum (and part of the goal is to help create a bullpen of diverse talent). The virtual component would involve lots of filming and original video and design.

As a follow-up to our conversation about education, training, and professional development for school districts on a package of policy opportunities for them to access and employ locally, we've put together a short concept paper. It includes the work we've done to date with districts statewide and some ideas for how we might be able to expand this work together. We have experienced tremendous interest and positive feedback from the policy self-assessment we created and would love to work with you to figure out how we can support more districts (particularly those not currently in the mix) in gaining access to the innovative pilots and programs the state currently offers. The work begins with awareness, but also includes training on how districts can integrate innovative competency-based and experiential learning opportunities into their strategic plan; define their work and tell their story to local stakeholders; build partnerships with employers; and support their application and grant-writing efforts to the state and

I am submitting a request to be considered for federal or state funding for the expansion of Tech/vocational curricular offerings in the four public school districts in the Arkansas Valley. Considerable communication and planning in the development of this expansion was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. At present with the known and unknown impact of the virus, efforts to offer students an option relative to college and/or career seems logical, needed, and applicable. The expansion and option of preparation for careers and post high school employment would seem to address the difficult decision students and parents are facing. Due to an uncertain economy with inflation more parents are comforted with investing and borrowing for college. The option of a marketable and employable skill set is an appropriate choice and decision for many families. Buena Vista and the Arkansas Valley area (Fairplay, Leadville, and Salida) would like to explore the potential for funding to develop appropriate programs for the youth. The development of a co-op will increase the opportunity for "quality" and meeting current "needs assessment" curricular offerings. Obviously, co-ops and/or centers are cost effective programs.

Offering students, the option of career and job potential would improve motivation in the Core courses, resulting in increased achievement for ALL students, allowing for raising the achievement bar and expectations. Colorado communities would experience an increase in a much-needed skill sets labor pool.

Legislator Input:

The following ideas were submitted or shared by members of the Colorado House or Senate via email or conversations during but outside of the formal listening sessions covered in this report:

Increase efficiency of current systems, especially with many small districts.

Are there ways to incentivize efficiencies (including consolidation) with small districts?

Build capacity to offer adaptive physical education in Colorado.

Suggested exemplar of Asset, in Mesa and DPS, program that addresses mental health in ten minutes lessons run by classroom teachers or social workers or students. Been in 46 schools since 2016. May be a good use of funds for getting our social emotional feet under our ground.

Look at mental health and workforce, and the lack of behavior specialist.

Educator mental health needs, offered on-site. All of these themes were on the list pre-COVID. Since we can't do teacher salary right now, how can we make the environment better for teachers in the meantime? Reference to the TIF grant in JeffCO and how that did so much for teachers in terms of real

Stipends to teachers should be a gift and not an experiment.

Importance of educator recruitment and suggestion to explore apprenticeship programs in HS

Mental health services for students

Start-up costs for creating connections with community based organizations

Emphasis on evidence based interventions. Are we evaluating district strategies?

If we are doing stipends for teachers can we evaluate the impact of that?

Literacy concerns- seeing community groups coming together to address in community.

Focus on the environment for teachers. Would prioritize interventions in reading and behavior (RTI programs, individualized supports for students).

Plan for the worst case scenarios about next school year, with case counts, and have a Plan B.

Background

Over the past few years, CDE has responded to district feedback to refine our menu of support for districts and schools identified for improvement. Feedback from districts indicated a need for the following structures to streamline support for identified schools:

- A 'one-stop shop' for school improvement grants
- A diverse menu of support options to meet the wide range of district needs and contexts
- Vetted potential partners for a range of school improvement activities
- Dedicated staff (e.g. Support Coordinator) to support the district through the matching process

As a result of this feedback, CDE implemented the EASI grant process. Fall 2021 will be the fifth cohort of EASI. The accountability pause presents some unique opportunities for CDE's supports to the field, and we are eager to hear feedback from the field on what supports would be most relevant and timely.

Impacts of Accountability on the EASI grant process

HB21-1161 pauses state accountability in 2021. Districts and schools will continue to implement their 2019 plan type. This has the following implications for EASI:

- No new schools will be identified as eligible for support through EASI. This means the eligibility list will remain the same for a third year.
- HB21-1161 does allow for a Request to Reconsider process for Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools and districts. However, even after a successful reconsideration of their plan type, they will still be eligible for EASI funds.
- The typical EASI application window is early fall (Sept.) through December, but this window may change based on district feedback.

Options for EASI Funding

Below are a few recommendations on possible approaches to leveraging ESSER and EASI funds. During the past two weeks of March, we have sought district input through the Accountability Work Group (AWG) and phone calls with districts.

Overall Feedback

- **Maintain EASI 'window.'** Districts indicated a preference to keep the EASI window the same. They referenced the predictable cycle of identifying schools in need of additional support and the process of matching supports is beneficial and they want to keep the annual "routine." They did not express concern about another grant application, though did appreciate any effort to streamline the application.

Options for use of stimulus funds aligned to EASI

- **Open participation to non-identified schools (no ESSER funds allocated):** Encourage and allow districts to apply on behalf of schools not previously on the EASI eligibility list to participate in CDE supports (e.g., the Turnaround Network, Connect for Success, Diagnostic Reviews). In this scenario, districts would use their ESSER allocation to support participation in these activities. Districts expressed an interest in this, particularly in adding schools to activities such as Network, CfS, and UVA. The EASI team appreciated this approach and supported it, though will need to be mindful of capacity in any program for each of the options. The team also suggested we expand eligibility to some services (e.g., DR and STLD) but not all.
- **Allocate ESSER funds but do not expand eligibility.** Interestingly, districts expressed less interest in this option, which would allocate some ESSER funding (approximately \$2 million?) to EASI without expanding the eligibility list. In a typical year, demand for EASI has exceeded funds available to eligible schools by approximately \$3 million. ESSER funding could enable CDE to serve more eligible schools. Some districts referenced allocating funds this year to support any schools we were unable to serve this year, but did not overwhelmingly support directing more resources to the current eligibility list.
- **Allocate ESSER funds and expand eligibility:** Districts expressed an interest in this option. They expressed an interest in being able to serve all schools (e.g. not running out of funding next year) and highlighted they knew of schools who would be good fits for some EASI eligible services but aren't eligible. In particular, districts referenced schools that have had leadership transitions or are experiencing high levels of enrollment changes or disengaged students. This option would allocate ESSER funding (amount TBD but rough current estimate is less than \$5 million for the three years) to EASI and expand eligibility. Similar to Option 1, CDE would make supports available to interested, not just currently eligible schools and would need to determine a prioritization. This is where we received feedback on increasing the amount of funding available so that all or most schools that apply will receive funds. This does not have to be a huge investment if we prioritize a few services, namely DRs, continuation of current participants, planning support.

District opinion on current 'menu' of supports available through EASI

CDE's menu of supports for schools identified for improvement range from initial exploration of school needs to comprehensive school turnaround support. We asked for opinions on the current menu and types of support. The following are a few key highlights:

- **Exploration Supports.** Expressed interest in having a diagnostic review in the 21-22 school year to pinpoint strengths and gaps. Districts expressed an interest in some follow-up site visits for ongoing feedback throughout the year either from CDE or partners.

- **Continuation for Currently Participating Schools.** Districts were supportive of creating a 'route' for currently participating schools (e.g. current Turnaround Network, CfS, or UVA) would typically be 'exiting' support or continuing to more rigorous support but are in limbo with the accountability pause. This might look like a 'continuation' grant for existing participating schools.
- **Strategic Planning.** A few districts expressed an interest in diagnostic and strategic planning, particularly at the district level.
- **School Design.** Districts agreed having a route that would allow them to partner with organizations with expertise in school design in areas such as scheduling, staffing, or school model would be helpful in capitalizing on innovations started during the pandemic. There was an emerging feeling that the coming year would be a good planning/reflection year for implementing school design changes in fall 22.
- **School Leaders on Special Assignments/Stipends for Partners.**
 - **Temporary team members.** Some ideas were floated to hire recently retired school leaders to join DRs and provide follow-up visits. These educators on special assignment would help extend our capacity to provide on-site support and increase credibility. Other states (NM comes to mind) regularly uses contracted supports like this that could potentially serve as a partner
 - **Convene.** Partner with some existing school leaders to host promising practices/convenings for schools working on similar issues.

Conclusion

Overall districts expressed appreciation in our approach to matching school needs to a diverse menu. They expressed interest in using funds to meet unmet grants and expand who is able to participate in CDE's support. Some of the suggestions for new services/supports could be really meaningful and having some additional funding for this year to support execution of those ideas would be beneficial.

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Jared Polis
Colorado Governor's Office
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

CC: The Colorado General Assembly Executive Leadership and Joint Budget

Committee Dear Governor Polis:

Introduction

The undersigned organizations write to you in order to provide recommendations for critical investments in Colorado's emergency food and agricultural systems with state flexible dollars received from H.R.1319, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. An estimated 38 percent of all Coloradans are currently experiencing hunger with the crisis exacerbated among 52 percent of households that are Black or Latinx and 64 percent of households with a person with disabilities. The crisis we are facing demands an investment in resources focused on: 1. Addressing immediate hunger needs through emergency food providers and programming; and 2. Promoting long-term food security and infrastructural stability especially in communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recession so that emergency inputs into our already strained charitable food system are less urgent and ubiquitous in future economic downturns. It is our hope that with these investments we can ameliorate the long-term impacts of COVID-19 by focusing both on immediate needs as well as sustainable investments that will create positive longitudinal changes in our food systems.

We must support our communities and families most impacted by hunger, and also be mindful of the needs of our essential workers. It is farmworkers, school cafeteria employees, food processors, restaurant staff, and food bank workers and volunteers who put their wellbeing at risk to ensure that the rest of the state may continue to receive the nourishment needed through the crisis. Colorado's agricultural sector employs approximately 100,000 annual workers, with another 300,000 Coloradans in food services. These Coloradans are on the front lines serving their communities and we are obliged to provide them with the necessary support for them to continue to achieve their full human potential during these difficult times.

Therefore, we ask the Colorado Governor's Office and General Assembly to **invest \$123.1 million of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 into our food and farm system this upcoming year in order to support our families and communities in accessing healthful food, and to support the farmers and farm workers who produce it.**

These investments, partnered with federal nutrition programs like Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), will help support Colorado's recovery while also boosting our state economy, as research continually indicates that these types of stimulus during economic recession help promote a robust recovery statewide.

Funding Summary

Invest in Our Children

1. Support our school districts' nutrition services staff by providing them with direct payments as they continue to address the impact of COVID-19 and provide universal meals to all Colorado students
 - **Recommended: \$5 million**
 - Contact: Colorado School Nutrition Association; Danielle Bock (dbock@greeleyschools.org)
2. Encourage healthy food access for mothers and our youngest children through the WIC Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) local produce box program
 - **Recommended: \$1 million**
 - Contact: Nourish Colorado; Terri Livermore (terri@nourishcolorado.org)

Strengthen Our Emergency Food Systems Today and Tomorrow

1. Invest in expanded infrastructure for Colorado's emergency food systems in order to support large-scale storage and transportation of food throughout the state during the COVID-19 pandemic's economic fallout, as well as into the future
 - **Recommended: \$15 million**
 - Contact: Feeding Colorado; Effie Rorke (erorke@feedingcolorado.org)
2. Support Colorado families in accessing healthful food via our food banks and food pantries by promoting increased distribution of Colorado produced food in the Food Pantry Assistance Grant program
 - **Recommended: \$10 million**
 - Contact: Hunger Free Colorado; Ashley Wheeland (ashley@hungerfreecolorado.org)
3. Ensure Colorado's five food banks can continue to meet increased demand and provide healthy, locally sourced, and culturally appropriate food through the next year. ○
Recommended: \$10 million
 - Contact: Feeding Colorado; Effie Rorke (erorke@feedingcolorado.org)

Build More Resilient and Equitable Food Systems

1. Provide additional funding for grants supporting sustainable community-based anti-hunger work through collective impacts entities such as the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger
 - a. **Recommended: \$5 million**
 - b. Contact: The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger; Erin Ulric (eulric@endhungerco.org)
2. Invest in a grant program to increase the capacity of regional food hubs
 - a. **Recommended: \$3 Million**
 - b. Contact: Nourish Colorado; Wendy Moschetti (wendy@nourishcolorado.org)

Support Our Most Vulnerable Families

1. Provide direct cash assistance for immigrant families to purchase basic necessities
 - **Recommended: \$20 million** through the Left Behind Workers' Fund
 - Contact: Hunger Free Colorado; Ashley Wheeland (ashley@hungerfreecolorado.org)
2. Encourage healthy food access for our most isolated and food insecure Older Adult Congregate Meal Program participants living in rural and mountain communities through the local produce box program.
 - **Recommended: \$300,000** through the Colorado Nutrition Incentive Program
 - Contact: Nourish Colorado; Terri Livermore (terri@nourishcolorado.org)
3. Allow Colorado ID vouchers to be used online
 - **Recommended: \$300,000**
 - Contact: Metro Caring; Sheena Kadi (skadi@metrocaring.org)
4. Support a robust outreach and engagement plan for Double Up Food Bucks at farmers' markets to reach the increasing number of SNAP recipients
 - **Recommended: \$200,000**
 - Contact: Nourish Colorado; Terri Livermore (terri@nourishcolorado.org)

Provide Administrative Aid to the Colorado Department of Human Services

1. Provide additional state funding for county administration of SNAP
 - **Recommended: \$12 million**
 - Contact: Hunger Free Colorado; Ashley Wheeland (ashley@hungerfreecolorado.org)
2. Support the Colorado Department of Human Services with upfront administrative funding as they respond to increased SNAP caseloads and implement the expanded Pandemic EBT program
 - **Recommended: \$2 million**

- Contact: Hunger Free Colorado; Ashley Wheeland
(ashley@hungerfreecolorado.org)

Help Colorado Farms and Farm Laborers

1. Create a technical assistance grant program focused on farms and associated food system infrastructure businesses such as manufacturers, distributors, retailers and specialty crop producers.
 - **Recommended: \$32 million**
 - Contact: Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council; Blake Angelo
(blake@cofoodsystemsCouncil.org)
2. Provide direct relief to Colorado farmers, food processes, and intermediaries so that local communities continue to prosper
 - **Recommended: \$4 million**
 - Contact: National Young Farmers Coalition; Erin Foster West
(erin@youngfarmers.org)
3. Expand the promotora network that assists essential farmworkers in under resourced Colorado communities
 - **Recommended: \$3 million**
 - Contact: Project Protect Food Systems; Fatuma Emmad
(fatuma@frontlinefarming.org)
4. Bolster farm and ranch internships and develop a meat processing apprenticeship grant program
 - **Recommended: \$300,000**
 - Contact: Rocky Mountain Farmers Union; Daniel Waldvogle
(daniel.waldvogle@rmfu.org)

Descriptions

Invest in Our Children

1. **Support our school districts' nutrition services staff by providing them with direct payments as they continue to address the impact of COVID-19 and provide universal meals to all Colorado students (\$5 million):** The state should provide \$5 million in direct payments to ensure that our school nutrition staff have the support they need to continue to administer school nutrition services, whether meals are served within or outside of school. School Nutrition employees have been on the front lines feeding Colorado's students since the pandemic began in March 2020. These same staff continue to show up day after day, month after month, to ensure that the pandemic does not become a barrier for students' access to education and nourishment. Proper nutrition is essential for young minds to develop, which is why school nutrition professionals have

taken to buses, set up drive-thrus, and partnered with other nonprofits in our communities to ensure consistent access to nutritious meals for Colorado kids wherever they are learning.

With \$5 million dollars, each full-time (40 hr/week) employee would receive close to \$1,000 as a one-time stimulus payment, and a part-time (20 hr/week) employee would receive half that. These cafeteria workers generally earn minimum wage and are struggling to support their own families while they feed children across Colorado. Most staff only work 170 days of the year and have to find summer employment and part-time work to survive, and a one-time stimulus payment for these individuals could be a life line to them during these times.

It is important to keep nutrition teams whole and staff employed so that once the pandemic ends we can resume pre-COVID-19 operations. Many school food authorities in Colorado are suffering from massive budget shortfalls due to a decline in participation in CNP, and cannot afford to provide raises or even additional hours to our staff and ask them to do more with less resources. This stimulus payment would be an extraordinary symbol of the state's gratitude in how these frontline staff have risen to these trying circumstances.

2. **Encourage healthy food access for mothers and our youngest children through the WIC Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) local produce box program (\$1 million):** Studies indicate that pregnant women and children under 5 are extremely vulnerable to short- and long-term negative health impacts from inequitable access to nutritious food. WIC provides critical support for this population, but community member interviews and focus groups indicate that the current WIC fruit and vegetable allowances for pregnant women and children aged 1-5 are inadequate to meet current need, which averages just over \$15 per month for most families.

\$1 million would support the existing Healthy Food Incentive Fund as weekly local produce box programs for WIC families to allow for weekly summer produce CSA box shares in order to support wider participation in the program in 2021, and to expand the program into fall and winter. A survey of 2020 participants in this program indicated that 91 percent saw an increase in food security because of the program, 84 percent increased their produce consumption a moderate or great amount, and 85 percent reported that all members of the households were consuming the produce received. A recent fall and winter pilot program demonstrated the ability to continue to work with Colorado growers into the winter to provide produce necessary to sustain the program.

These investments will ensure the pandemic response actively advances the health and well-being of the next generation of Coloradans, while making sure the dollars to purchase these foods stay in Colorado communities and directly benefit local growers who have experienced unprecedented market disruptions due to the pandemic.

Strengthen Our Emergency Food Systems Today and Tomorrow

1. **Invest in expanded infrastructure for Colorado's emergency food systems in order to support large-scale storage and transportation of food throughout the state during the COVID-19 pandemic's economic fallout, as well as into the future (\$15 million):** In order to support food banks and food pantries who are distributing more food than ever before, Colorado's charitable food assistance network needs significant infusions of funding for vehicles, refrigeration and freezing equipment, technology, and related capital to receive and distribute millions of pounds of fresh produce and protein items each month. Investments in coolers and freezers would make it possible for the charitable food system to continue distributing perishable foods like produce, dairy, and meats. Investments in technology will make it possible for community groups to pivot programs and engage target audiences even when they are not in the same physical space. Vehicle and delivery expenses have increased by over \$1M over the same time period last year for Colorado food banks, and Food Bank of the Rockies alone has spent or allocated roughly \$6M in capital improvements during the pandemic thus far, some of which was allocated through previous federal COVID-19 relief.

Food banks and food pantries are bracing for long-term and sustained heightened food insecurity, necessitating deep investments now for infrastructure, equipment, and food to position these critically important organizations to meet Colorado communities' ongoing needs as long as the recession persists. Infrastructure and capacity are critical areas of need and provide ripe opportunity for the state to turn one-time COVID-19 relief funds into long-term investments to fight hunger.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped illuminate the importance and necessity of investing in the capacity of emergency food assistance groups that serve the common good. Strategic investment in capacity should remain a top priority for all organizations and leaders who wish to see our Colorado community flourish and thrive. Thoughtful investments in charitable food infrastructure can and will pay long-term dividends.

2. **Support Colorado families in accessing healthful food via our food banks and food pantries by promoting increased distribution of Colorado sourced food in the Food Pantry Assistance Grant program (\$10 million):** In order to meet increased need, an additional \$10 million for next year as the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately impact lower-income families would support ongoing implementation of the Food Pantry Assistance Grant. This unique program that only Colorado has created and implemented supports the food needs of Coloradans, local agricultural producers, and our state's food systems. Food pantries and food banks are on the front lines of this pandemic, and if funded, this program will continue to help food pantries and food banks with food resources, support for their delivery systems, storage needs, and include grant language that will prioritize the purchasing of the healthy foods produced by Colorado's local farmers.
3. **Ensure Colorado's five Feeding America food banks can continue to meet increased demand and provide healthy, locally sourced, and culturally appropriate food through**

the next year of the crisis (\$10 million): Providing Colorado's five food banks with additional funding for food purchasing would allow for additional produce, meat and dairy, and culturally appropriate products to support struggling community members while also providing a major boost for Colorado's agricultural sector. Food bank spending for purchased food has more than tripled this year compared to before COVID-19, which has cost Colorado food banks more than \$15M above and beyond what they were spending before. Colorado's five food banks are currently spending more than \$2M statewide on culturally-relevant food and outreach. An additional investment of \$10 million would support these organizations who have stepped up to distribute record amounts of food in a time of crisis for so many families in our state.

Build More Resilient and Equitable Food Systems

1. **Provide additional funding for grants supporting sustainable community-based anti-hunger work through collective impacts entities such as the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger (\$5 million):** There are innovative projects throughout the state that have the potential to build up community food systems for people from all communities and of all incomes. Federal COVID-19 relief could provide Colorado the opportunity to distribute grants to organizations working on long-term solutions to end hunger across the state in manners that are focused on sustainable programs and solutions.
2. **Invest in a grant program to increase the capacity of regional food hubs (\$3 million):** Additional support for organizations and individuals who connect our producers to those who provide food to those who distribute food, both in emergency food systems and those who participate in markets, would improve their capacity to bring the items they produce to consumers.

Support Our Most Vulnerable Families

1. **Provide direct cash assistance for immigrant families to purchase basic necessities (\$20 million):** While the federal government has been able to help many throughout the country via direct relief, this has not been the case for many families composed of immigrants. The legislature can continue their support for immigrant families utilizing the Left Behind Workers' Fund, which provides grants to families who do not qualify for federal relief.

Immigrant families are overrepresented in the number of Coloradans facing hunger. To begin resolving deeply embedded racial inequities, we must respond to these disparities immediately and directly by surmounting the gaps left behind following federal relief.

2. **Encourage healthy food access for our most isolated and food insecure Older Adult Congregate Meal Program participants living in rural and mountain communities through the local produce box program (\$300,000):** The pandemic has impacted older adults particularly hard as they are more susceptible to COVID-19, while at the same time facing unique challenges including limited transportation, fear of shopping in public,

and strict budgets to access enough healthy, immune-boosting foods. Colorado has extensive rural, frontier, and mountain communities where fresh foods are particularly hard to access. \$300,000 into the existing Healthy Food Incentive Fund for the weekly local produce box program for participants in the Older Adult Congregate Meal Program to allow for weekly summer produce box shares would support wider participation in the program in 2021, and expand the program into fall and winter.

A survey of older adult participants in the 2020 program indicated that 81 percent saw an increase in food security because of the program and 56 percent increased their daily produce consumption a moderate or great amount, as a result.

3. **Allow Colorado ID vouchers to be used online (\$300,000):** Colorado ID vouchers can only be used in-person to cover the costs of obtaining necessary Colorado identity documents. With the closure of in-person DMVs and agencies, parity is missing for those who require an ID to get into housing or start a new job. \$300,000 would the technical fiscal note to accept these documents online.
4. **Support a robust outreach and engagement plan for Double Up Food Bucks to reach the increasing number of SNAP recipients (\$200,000):** Due to increased SNAP caseloads, Double Up Community Food Advocates have the opportunity to coordinate local outreach and to send direct mailers at least once to 100% of current SNAP and P-EBT recipients living near a Double Up location. With the increasing number of SNAP recipients and continued implementation of P-EBT (which qualifies recipients for Double Up Food Bucks), it is imperative that the Double Up program is well-equipped to reach all potential participants. The program has a number of locally based, trusted community members who are equipped to lead outreach and engagement about the program in order to reach new participants.

These community members are typically SNAP recipients who receive a stipend for their work. Additionally, the only guaranteed means of reaching all those who are eligible directly is through a direct mailer, which has shown to drastically increase engagement in Double Up Food Bucks. In June 2020, the week after mailers were sent, texts to the Double Up Locator service went from on average 1-6 texts per day to 500-1200 per day for the month.

Provide Administrative Aid to the Colorado Department of Human Services

1. **Provide additional state funding for county administration of SNAP (\$12 million):** The increased caseload of households and individuals participating in SNAP has stressed existing county resources to their breaking points. An additional \$12 million for county administration would not only allow counties to hire additional staff as needed in order to respond to and relieve the workload they have been coping with for nearly a year, but this funding has the opportunity to also leverage federal dollars. This would be in addition to the current request for county administration currently being proposed by

the Colorado Department of Human Services, and would allow local offices to weather the current pandemic and create smooth off-ramps from the additional flexibilities and waivers currently being provided to them during this national emergency.

2. **Support the Colorado Department of Human Services with upfront administrative funding as they respond to increased SNAP caseloads and implement the expanded Pandemic EBT program (\$2 million):** Our State Department of Human Services Office of Economic Security has seen an abrupt increase in not only caseloads for programs supporting people with low incomes, but has had to suddenly administer new, massive programs such as the Pandemic EBT program with very little preparation and no additional new staff. It is recommended that we support our state human services staff standing up these new programs by providing additional, upfront, administrative funding so that they have the financial foundation necessary to properly implement and execute this program.

Help Colorado Farms and Farm Laborers

1. **Create a technical assistance grant program focused on farms and associated food businesses such as retailers and restaurants (\$32 million):** A technical assistance grant program (similar to the Department's current value added development grant program) would directly assist farms and farm-supporting food business (including small and mid scale meat processors) assess new markets, pivot business models, and maintain or grow the sales of Colorado-produced food.
2. **Provide direct relief to Colorado farmers and farmers markets so that local communities continue to prosper (\$4 million):** Across key local and regional markets in Colorado alone, economists have projected a minimum \$3.9 million decline in sales from March to May 2020. Nearly 400 producers, food hubs, farmers markets, and food processors applied for a total of \$8.5 million in small grants to the Colorado Farm & Food Systems Response Fund. The fund was developed in 2020 to provide direct relief to producers and regional food distributors that were not receiving federal relief. However, the fund only had \$2 million to distribute over three rounds of funding in 2020.

Many Colorado growers have been left out of relief, including produce growers (only 84 specialty crop producers received funds through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program), young and female farmers and ranchers, and farmers and ranchers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. According to the Farmers Market Coalition, farmers markets are reporting lower income and higher costs in 2020, which puts the viability of farmers markets, upon which many farmers depend, at risk. The Colorado Farmers Market Association reported increased volatility and additional expenses for farmers markets which led to financial losses in 2020; this volatility and the additional costs are expected again in the 2021 season. With a state investment of \$5 million in direct payments to farmers and in local and regional markets, particularly farmers markets, farmer-run co-ops, and food processors, the state could secure the livelihoods of our growers and begin to build a more just and resilient food system.

3. **Expand the promotora network that assists essential farmworkers in under resourced Colorado communities (\$3 million):** To mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, it is essential to empower members of vulnerable communities who traditionally serve as connectors in order to provide information and advocacy with regards to healthcare access and other community defined needs. Systemic racism and discrimination related to healthcare and informational access have directly contributed to the severe impact of the COVID-19 crisis on farmworker communities across the state and across the landscape of food systems workers. Community leaders are currently partnering with Colorado government agencies to pilot a Promotora Network of skilled and respected Latinx community members who work within their community to bring resources, advocacy and essential services.

The model uses full-time promotoras, along with a network of neighborhood organizers and community response team members, to provide culturally competent healthcare information and support to communities historically neglected by the healthcare establishment. The Promotora Network can help mitigate the spread of disease in farmworker communities in a low-cost, flexible manner that meets the needs of the COVID-19 crisis. \$3 million would serve to expand the Promotora Network through December 2021 based on the success of the program during 2020.

4. **Bolster farm and ranch internships and develop a meat processing apprenticeship grant program (\$300,000):** Garnering technical and business skills in a real-time on-site environment can be a barrier for beginning farmers and ranchers. At the same time, investing time and resources in entry-level workers for them to gain skills beyond basic production practices can be a challenge for farm owners. The Ag Workforce Development program reimburses 50 percent of an intern's wages with the intent that interns gain skills for a successful career in agriculture. Current applications for the CO Ag Workforce Development program far outpace available funding with \$194,248 in applications with \$48,000 budgeted for awards. \$50,000 would provide up to 10 additional internships for the 2021 farming season.

In addition, sourcing skilled employees in meat processing is a significant challenge for small and very small meat packing plants. Results from interviews conducted by the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union with members from the CO Association of Meat Processors cited a lack of qualified workers as the largest barrier to expanding capacity for these plants in 2020. A recent CSU survey conducted with custom-exempt processors also found similar results. \$250,000 for the Colorado Department of Agriculture would support the promulgation of rules for an additional grant program to assist in apprenticeship training for meat cutters and cover 50 percent of an apprentice's wages.

Endorsements

The undersigned organizations respectfully submit the aforementioned recommendations for consideration by both the Governor's Office and the Colorado General Assembly in order to support Colorado's emergency food and farm system response during the ongoing pandemic so

that every Coloradan may flourish and achieve their full human potential, regardless of our public health and economic crisis.

Sincerely,

Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado
Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger
Colorado School Nutrition Association
Community Food Share
Feeding Colorado
Food Bank for Larimer County
Food Bank of the Rockies
Frontline Farming
Hunger Free Colorado
National Young Farmers Coalition
Nourish Colorado
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Weld Food Bank

**Colorado "I Have A Dream" Foundation – Colorado Health Foundation - Communities In
Schools
Student Re-engagement Pilot Initiative
June 2021**

[Overview](#)

Colorado "I Have A Dream" Foundation (CIHAD) and Communities in Schools (CIS) are working with the Colorado Health Foundation (CHF) on a three-year proposal to implement an initiative focused on addressing whole child, whole family, whole community needs in the wake of the pandemic. We know that, more than ever before, it is critical that student reengagement starts with understanding a child's life both from the perspective of their living situation as well as their interactions with school. This kind of integrated support necessitates innovative collaboration between districts, community-based organizations, and families. It also requires the mobilization of new staffing to ensure students return to school and have their social, emotional, and academic needs met.

CIHAD has been working with Colorado's youth to support social-emotional skill-building, mental health wellness, academic enrichment, and leadership skills for over 30 years. CIS currently offers an integrated student supports model to 1.7 million students across the country to keep students in school and graduating with post-secondary options. With the support of CHF, these organizations are uniquely positioned to have a powerful impact on helping students return to school, stay engaged at school, and be on track to graduate. Since the pandemic, both organizations have pivoted to innovate and incorporate best practices into reengaging the most vulnerable, most impacted students, including individualized out of school visits in a home-based setting.

At the core of this initiative is a commitment to community-led decision making and the understanding that each community is unique and that communities themselves know their specific needs the best. Work in each community will be led by CIHAD's leadership team and as regional sites or schools/districts request individualized support, a CIHAD site manager will be assigned. The site manager receives support and training from CIHAD's program team and CIS' technical assistance professionals.

[Proposal Details](#)

Planned Award: \$3 million

Planned Pilot Length of Time: 3 years

Communities Served:

- One regional center in Denver Public Schools - 75 youth served in the first year; youth will come from approximately 15 different elementary and middle schools in Far Northeast Denver. The goal is to identify three specific school partners for years two and three of the CHF grant.

- There is also a desire to start work in a rural area but the specific district/community has yet to be confirmed. We are currently exploring partnerships with districts in the Roaring Fork Valley and Garfield County areas with the goal to serve a similar number of youth in the first year and identifying three specific school partners in year three of the grant.

How Communities Were Identified:

- New site conversations initiated by stakeholders in the new community
- Youth, families, and other community stakeholders participate in exploratory meetings to determine mutual commitment to program implementation
- Facility space is made available at a minimal cost or provided as in-kind donation
- Facility is available for extended period of time (long-term lease option)

Anticipated Approach to Sustaining Work:

- Ongoing funding commitment from partners benefitting from the program we are offering. Because our commitment is to support our youth from elementary through high school, a district would need to commit to supporting a portion of programming costs through this entire educational pathway.
- Collective impact foundation funding and any applicable braided governmental funding (federal/state/local) for out-of-school time programming will also be critical in sustaining the work.

Sample Initiative Activities:

- Community/district/school needs assessment
- Community/district/school asset mapping
- Family relationship-building through home visits, engagement events, etc.
- One-on-one support through weekly family/youth/support person in-person or virtual meetings, phone calls, text messages, emails, etc.
- Mentoring and tutoring
- Out-of-school time programming (after-school, weekend, summer)
- Streamlined access to health and wellness resources
- Collaboration across agencies, community organizations, and district departments to ensure coordination, no duplicative efforts, and efficiency

Costs

In the proposal, the significant costs associated with running this pilot will for the most part be covered by Colorado Health Foundation's anticipated generous support. Funding of \$3M from Colorado Health Foundation will be distributed over a three-year period. Over the course of this three-year grant, funding will help to support the following:

- Staffing costs (6.0 FTE Site Managers by Year 3, 0.7 FTE Senior Director of Programs & Partnerships, 0.5 FTE Senior Director of Clinical Services, 0.5 FTE Clinical Coordinator, 2.0 FTE Program Managers plus all applicable taxes and benefits for each of these roles) - \$1,525,886.71

- Programming costs (CIS implementation fees, stipends for capacity building, marketing and communications, travel, meeting costs, professional development, volunteer expenses) - \$634,113.29
- Administrative costs (rent, telephone/technology, office expenses, transportation expenses, subscription and dues, program administration and insurance) - \$150,000
- Consultants (grant writer, communications consultant, Advisory Council development, DEI consultant, community organization development consultant) - \$690,000

The full cost of the program over the course of three years is \$4,286,936.89. While the majority of staffing costs and consultant costs are covered by the Colorado Health Foundation funding, programming and administrative costs are being covered through other fundraising efforts. The full cost for programming and administration of the program are as follows:

- Programming costs - \$1,342,500 (\$634,113.29 covered by CHF)
- Administrative costs - \$717,000 (\$150,000 covered by CHF)

If there were additional sites added to the model being proposed to the Colorado Health Foundation, there would be a need to cover the staffing costs specifically for site managers (\$64,000 for salary and benefits for each site manager added) as well as costs for programming and administration that occur outside of existing sites.

Information on Initiative Organizations

Colorado "I Have A Dream" Foundation: <https://colorado.ihdf.org/>

Communities In Schools: <https://www.communitiesinschools.org/>

Colorado Health Foundation: <https://coloradohealth.org/>

[Blended Learning Initiative](#) - Research and evaluate the impact of remote learning on Colorado students, identify successful remote learning strategies, and use this knowledge to inform a discussion and planning process for reimagining how instructional time is measured and used for funding.

Proposal Name: Blended Learning Initiative

Submitted by: Kate Bartlett, Jennifer Okes, Rhonda Haniford, Bill Kottenstette, Renee Martinez

Unit: School Finance and Schools of Choice

Overview: This proposal is to allocate ESSER III set aside dollars to research and evaluate the impact of remote learning on Colorado students, identify successful remote learning strategies, and use this knowledge to inform a discussion and planning process for reimagining how instructional time is measured and used for funding.

What is “blue sky” about this proposal? COVID caused many schools in Colorado to completely shift their instructional models from traditional in person to remote learning and instruction. This shift has in many ways upended what schools thought of as “normal” instruction. Rather than going back to business as usual, it is an important moment to step back and reassess what we know, or thought we knew, about “what works” in terms of instruction, seat time/funding requirements and--fundamentally--achieving strong student outcomes. Such a reassessment requires courage, creativity and intention to look hard at what we’ve learned, how it has impacted students, and where we go from here.

Key Activities: What are the key activities being proposed and what are the timelines?

- **Sept - post 1.0 FTE Blended Learning Initiative Project Manager**
- **Sept/Oct - hire**
- **July - August 2021 - Understand the impacts of remote learning on student outcomes: Engage a research partner** to assist CDE with the following: [BLI Research Questions](#)
 - Literature / Research review: What does the research tell us about remote / online learning best practices and long-term impacts on student learning?
 - National landscape: What is the range of how other states fund students and approach instructional hours / seat time?
 - Qualitative research: What have the specific impacts of remote learning been in Colorado districts since March 2020?
 - Interviews with districts
 - Analysis of local and state student outcome data between March 2020-June 2022
 - Outlier outcomes analysis
 - Descriptive analysis of the different models districts used
- **Sept 2021 - Convene a [task force](#) to lead the work of re-evaluating seat time and remote learning, and working with stakeholders and (via appropriate channels) informing elected officials of any conclusions or recommendations**
 - Co-led by Teaching & Learning, School Quality & Support, and School Finance (CEI may assist)
 - Need instructional expertise for both traditional and online
 - Need school finance and funding expertise
 - Participants from other units necessary, as well
 - Key responsibilities:
 - Become deep subject matter experts in the area of existing statute and practice as related to instructional hours and its relation to funding, including traditional, charter and online schools, as well as models such as competency based
 - Serve as contact for research partner identified above
 - Develop and manage project plan and timeline

- Make a plan to engage internal and external stakeholders
 - Convene a Community of Practice (districts/schools) with innovative remote learning or instructional practices
- **April 2021** - Through research project and stakeholder input process, **make recommendations** for potential next steps
 - Via appropriate channels, work with the Commissioner, State Board, and others to **inform the state board rule and/or legislative process** if/as needed to implement recommendations
 - **April 2021** - Recommendations prepared for Commissioner
 - _____ **2021** - Rule change - Recommendations Noticed to SB for rule change (sits for 60 days)
 - _____ **2022** - SB rule change vote
 - _____ **2021** - Legislative change - share with board and seek bill sponsor
- _____ **2022** - Provide **technical assistance** to the field on any changes to rules or statute that result from the process

Budget: What will this cost?

- Engage a research partner - \$60,000-\$100,000 for a partner such as CADRE - or use REL (free)
- Convene an internal task force - \$0 if this is considered part of existing duties; could also charge a percentage of staff time to ESSER III admin - \$25,000
- Convene stakeholders - a consultant to assist, \$25,000
- TOTAL BUDGET = \$50,000 - \$125,000

Or -

- Engage a research partner such as CADRE = \$60,000 - \$100,000 - or use REL (free)
- Temporary Project Manager/Facilitator - 1.0 FTE = \$80,000 salary, and benefits (30%) = \$105,000
 - This person convenes the stakeholders and is point for the initiative

Total = \$105,000 - \$200,000

Research

[NEPC - virtual learning](#)

[The NY Times](#) - Many parents want to continue remote learning. It may not be so good for their children.

[How States are Rethinking Instructional Time and Attendance Policies in the COVID-19 Era](#)

Blended Learning Initiative Team

1. Bill Kottenstette
2. Renee Martinez
3. Kate Bartlett
4. Jennifer Okes
5. Rhonda Haniford
6. Rebecca McRee
7. Andy Tucker (Misti confirmed him -- part of ILOP)

District Members

- 1.

Student Engagement Proposal

Purpose

The purpose of this proposed initiative is to engage/re-engage students and families through multiple ways including individualized out of school time connection opportunities for students and their families. . Using data collected at the Colorado Department of Education (e.g. attendance/chronic absenteeism, percentage of time spent in remote learning, free and reduced lunch), CDE staff would identify districts in need of additional student engagement supports. These districts would select students and families in most need of targeted/intensive re-engagement strategies, which would include an out-of-school visit.

Initial out of school connection opportunities would involve community partners (to be identified) meeting with families to discuss their hopes and dreams for their children. A second connection opportunity would specifically address engagement strategies and would be conducted jointly between a community partner and a school staff member. Additional engagement/re-engagement strategies might include community organizations providing wrap-around supports for students/families in need, connecting students to other resources including mental health supports, and supporting individualized education paths for students.

Rationale

Proactive out of school connection opportunities are a proven high-impact strategy linked to positive student outcomes. Schools that conduct out of school connection opportunities see an increase in attendance and higher ELA test scores, not just for students who receive these connection opportunities, but schoolwide ([Sheldon & Jung, 2018](#)). Teachers also report shifts in mindset about students and their families upon completing out of school connection opportunities ([McKnight et al., 2017](#)). Building relationships and improved engagement through out of school connection opportunities also supports CDE's Family, School, and Community Partnership Framework ([CDE, 2020](#)), CDE's Dropout Prevention Framework ([CDE](#)) as well as CDE's Theory of Action on Improving School Climate ([CDE, 2021](#)).

Implementation Ideas

Through the use of ESSER State-set-aside dollars, fund and partner with existing programs/initiatives/community-based organizations that implement student engagement and re-engagement strategies that also include out of school connection opportunities in a community or home-based setting. Potential partners may include: 1) [Communities in Schools](#) and [The Colorado I Have a Dream Foundation](#) (see accompanying one pager for more information on the work already underway in Colorado); 2) [Colorado Youth for a Change](#); and/or 3) Other Local Community-Based Organizations. Could include expansion of AmeriCorps programs.

Potential Outcomes for Schools:

- Increased Attendance
- Decreased Chronic Absenteeism
- Increased Graduation Rates
- Decreased Drop-Out Rates
- Improvements in School Climate
- Increased student engagement (multiple measures)

Offices Currently Involved:

- Family School and Community Partnering
- Student Engagement and Dropout Prevention
- Office of Student Supports
- School Climate Transformation

Offices to Reach Out to:

- School Improvement Office
- Federal Programs
- Other

Colorado Succeeds has piloted a series of trainings, tools, and resources with a diverse set of districts across the state to better understand the existing policy conditions that districts can leverage to better support career-connected learning and multiple pathways to postsecondary success.

In partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Community College System, and the Department of Higher Education, Colorado Succeeds proposes packaging a set of aligned policies through technical assistance and common training to enhance and expand the utilization of these policy conditions.

Shared Goals:

1. Increase student access and opportunities to career-connected learning experiences that support increased high-quality credential attainment.
2. Streamline supports and resources to build more efficiencies and coordination amongst aligned programs, pilots, policies, and practices.
3. Enhanced awareness, understanding, and utilization of policy opportunities by local school and district leaders across the state.

The Why:

Boost test scores and GPA amongst high school students:

- CTE and WBL participation is associated with [higher standardized testing scores¹](#) and a [greater likelihood of passing milestone exams²](#)
- Completion of applied STEM coursework is associated with [greater math achievement scores³](#) among students with learning disabilities
- Students who complete CTE-focused programs have [higher overall GPAs⁴](#) relative to students who do not

Increase high school graduation rates and reduce dropout:

- Colorado students who participate in CTE have a [higher high school graduation rate](#) compared to all students in Colorado⁵
- CTE participation is associated with a [higher probability of graduating from high school on time and remaining enrolled in high school through grade 11²](#), an effect that is particularly strong for students from low-income families
- Students who earn two or more credits within a single CTE program of study [more likely to graduate high school in 4 years⁶](#)

Promote postsecondary education and career readiness:

- The overwhelming majority (98%) of Colorado students who participate in CTE [enroll in postsecondary education, enlist in the military, or enter the workforce](#) within one year after high school graduation⁵
- Students who earn two or more credits within a single CTE program of study are [more likely to be employed full-time eight years post-graduation⁶](#) compared to those who do not
- Students with learning disabilities who complete applied STEM coursework have a [greater likelihood of college enrollment³](#) relative to students with learning disabilities who do not complete applied STEM coursework

The How:

There are four key supports CS has provided to districts to support developing their policy and advocacy literacy, as well as increase their understanding of opportunities to leverage:

1. *Trainings (in-person, webinars, small group/large group):*

Each training has a set of engagement activities including worksheets, breakout discussion, and a policy self-assessment tool – all have seen traction with attendees in understanding the concepts and then diving in through hands-on learning. To date, CS has presented to over 50 unique organizations representing school districts, workforce center/regional leaders, and higher ed partners across the state to better prepare them to leverage policy conditions.

2. *Individual Support:*

Direct coaching sessions with partner districts to understand local barriers and needs and opportunities to tailor support to individual communities or regions.

3. *Policymaker Outreach:*

Connect local policymakers and state board of education members to their local district leaders to create shared understanding of goals, outcomes and opportunities for future collaboration or sustainability of investments.

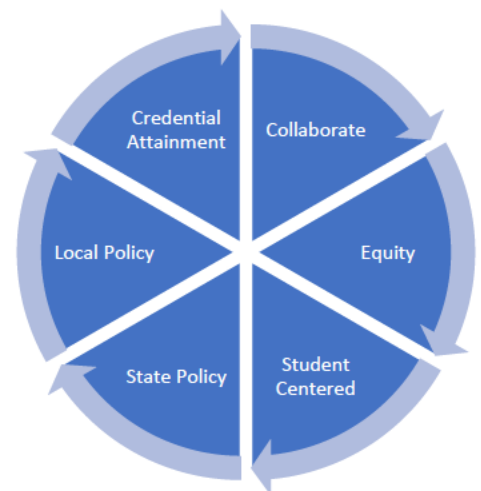
4. *Communications:*

Supporting the dissemination of state policy opportunities through marketing materials, social media campaigns, outreach to intermediary organizations (CEA, CASE, CASBE, CTE), direct emails offering more information on opportunities, how to apply, and technical assistance in ensuring districts are setup for success. Additionally, using storytelling to share of best practices and what's possible to help districts market themselves, their programs, and create awareness among policymakers, educators and other community members to what this work looks like in practice.

Colorado Succeeds believes there are a set of current local and state policy and practice conditions that make career connected learning a successful – briefly outlined below.

COLLABORATE

- K-12, higher education and local industry establish shared goals and participate in ongoing discussion around a common vision for successful high school graduates
- Structures to ensure ongoing input from students, families and business on what opportunities offered
- Partnerships and pathways informed by labor market data
- Locally elected officials understand and support career-connected learning strategies and ongoing opportunities



EQUITY & STUDENT-CENTERED:

- Practices and evidence that career continuum opportunities are available for all students
- Equity policies and practices to ensure a focus on the marginalized students and families and increase access and participation in high quality work-based learning experiences
- Course access, concurrent enrollment and industry partnerships based on student interest

STATE POLICY:

- Alignment of [graduation guidelines](#), including capstones, concurrent enrollment, industry certificates
- Innovation school, zone, or district status (School models: P-TECH, Early College, ASCENT)
- ICAP coaching support to develop a college-and-career mindset with postsecondary pathway options, leveraging tools such as My Colorado Journey
- [Innovative Learning Opportunities Pilot](#) (ILOP) seat time
- [Career Development Incentive Program](#) (CDIP) for students' industry credential attainment
- [Successful High School Transitions](#) to increase student access to high quality pathways
- [Prior Credit for Work Experience](#) to support academic credit for prior learning
- A school/district accountability report that reflects successes in learning along the Career-Connected Learning Continuum
- Blended or hybrid instructional delivery model approval ([variance process](#))

LOCAL POLICY:

- Competency-based courses and scheduling
- Data collection and analysis for post-secondary access, remediation and completion
- Experiential learning/work-based learning opportunities with course credit
- Flexible schedules and school calendars
- Blended/hybrid teaching and learning schedules
- Subject matter experts, in partnership with licensed teachers
- Coordination role and support for industry partner development
- Career and technical education programming design and implementation
- Concurrent enrollment and community college service agreements
- Aligned funding priorities and outcomes regionally for K12, CTE, postsecondary
- Expanded (in and out of the classroom) identity development and career exploration & exposure in the early grades
- Expanded essential skill and technical skill development experiences, such as internships, industry aligned CTE courses for high school students

Additional Concepts to Consider:

Common Application:

Colorado Department of Education could develop a common application outlining flexibilities sought to build out career connected learning. For districts and schools offered this status, they would receive following flexibilities:

- Seat time waivers (automatically put into ILOP)
- Automatic approval into CDIP if district industry credentials meet state requirements
- School calendar and daily schedule flexibility (allowing multiple districts to be on the same schedule would help employers working across districts)
- Flexibility from community college and workforce development service areas
- Streamlined application for ECHS, ASCENT, P-TECH, or 3-year HS degrees
- Ensuring greater flexibility in teacher credentialing rules for schools and concurrent enrollment instructors so that more industry professionals can inform curriculum and teach in the classroom

To: Colorado Department of Education

Date: 4/13/21

From: Kelly Caufield, Colorado Succeeds

Subject: Expanding Learning Opportunities Program, Recommendations for the COVID Impacts Toolkit

As you continue to build out the COVID impacts toolkit that will help districts in how they spend stimulus funding, we wanted to provide three recommendations for your consideration. I understand this project will be updated on a rolling basis but wanted to share some initial thinking now. Three recommendations are outlined below:

Require districts to work with their community, parents, and students in the development of the grant application. For example, districts could be encouraged to:

- Look for ways to use summer programming to learn more about what students and families want and need.
 - Host week-long summer camp-like events for small groups of children, and make learning about what they feel they have both lost and gained this year part of the plan.
 - Ask families to choose one day of camp to stay for 20 minutes after drop off, or come early before pick up so they can share with you stories of the hardest and best days from the last school year, and share their biggest hope for the fall.
- Form a collaborative group to advise the district/school about use of recovery funds. Include families, teachers, high school students, local business partners and some number of local school board members.
- Form a collaborative group to learn about the different academic assessment tools at your disposal and determine together how to create a balanced plan for assessment and how to communicate with families about that assessment over the first semester. Include families, teachers, high school students, and some number of local school board members.
- With professional development time that remains this spring, invite interested teachers, students and family members to think with you about the school schedule. Questions to ask include:
 - What have we learned this year about synchronous, a-synchronous, in-person, remote, independent and collaborative learning?
 - Are some modes better suited to some kinds of learning than others?
 - Could we imagine structures of time and place that allowed for different approaches to learning for different kinds of learning?

Encourage school districts to facilitate summer school and boot camp programming in collaboration with the Colorado Digital Learning Solutions platform:

Encourage school districts to use extended learning funding to cover the personnel costs of site coordinators/liaisons that could act as district intermediaries and mentors to students while they are

completing online coursework through Colorado Digital Learning Solutions this summer and fall. It could be a teacher, paraprofessional, SEL coordinator, a teacher in training, etc.

Districts should also consider partnering with community-based providers and non-profits like Boys Club, Girls Club or YMCA, in extending the ability to reach students where they are. These community-based providers often have computers at their facilities where learning recovery courses (via CDLS) could be offered in coordination with a district. Students might be more likely to participate in recovery coursework if it was occurring in a place being sought out for community reconnection, other enrichment opportunities, and time with peers. Districts could also help fund transportation to ensure students are able to travel to these community-based providers.

Leverage the Fifth Day of the School Week by Expanding Career Connected Learning Opportunities

To ensure students are getting full-time enrichment opportunities, Peyton School District has adopted a unique use of the “5th Day” in a four-day school district by creating dedicating career connected learning time. Peyton and Widefield School Districts have partnered on a comprehensive career technical education (CTE) center known as the MiLL, where they share programs with several districts, some private schools and even a community college. There is a payoff for kids in Peyton who spend their off-day learning anything from how to fashion wood furniture to using computer design to construction skills. Students receive certifications valuable to in an industry looking to invest in, further develop and retain students as members of their future workforce.

Students at the MiLL engage in project-based learning that empowers them to pursue industry certifications and helps them to develop transferable skills needed for the real-world. Students who complete the construction course receive a Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate based on the Home Builders Institute construction skill standards. This program is largely based on the partnership with the Housing and Building Association of Colorado Springs. The programs offered at the MiLL were created in partnership with industry leaders at the local, state, national and international level because both districts recognized the need for jobs in the trades industry. We listened to the needs of employers to shape our curriculum. The skill building goes beyond learning to create, design, construct, and build. Students learn communication, critical thinking, and other soft skills needed to be successful in the community.

The Impact of Career-Connected Learning on High School Student Success

The COVID-19 pandemic has created [urgency](#) around re-engaging high school students who have fallen behind on graduation requirements and college and career readiness. Investing in career-connected learning programs (e.g., **work-based learning** and **career and technical education**) represents a crucial re-engagement opportunity.

There are untold numbers of high school students who, as a result of poor engagement during COVID, failed or nearly failed courses this year. Students needing to recover credit, and who may be working in unskilled positions to contribute to their family's well-being need good reasons to re-engage and do the hard work of recovering lost credits and getting back on track to graduation. Unaddressed, this situation will exacerbate Colorado's existing leaky pipeline problem, leaving more young people out of the strong middle and high skill economy Colorado offers

Work-Based Learning (WBL) provides students with opportunities to learn foundational skills used in the workforce through participation in applied programs such as internships or apprenticeships. **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** is career-oriented coursework, or the ability to earn credit through industry partnerships, that provide students with the opportunity to obtain skills-based certifications or credentials.

Scientific evidence shows that **WBL** and **CTE** are associated with gains in 1) high school standardized testing scores and GPAs, 2) high school graduation rates, and 3) several metrics of college and career readiness.

1) Boost test scores and GPA amongst high school students

- CTE and WBL participation is associated with [higher standardized testing scores](#)¹ and a [greater likelihood of passing milestone exams](#)²
- Completion of applied STEM coursework is associated with [greater math achievement scores](#)³ among students with learning disabilities
- Students who complete CTE-focused programs have [higher overall GPAs](#)⁴ relative to students who do not

2) Increase high school graduation rates and reduce dropout

- Colorado students who participate in CTE have a [higher high school graduation rate](#) compared to all students in Colorado⁵
- CTE participation is associated with a [higher probability of graduating from high school on time and remaining enrolled in high school through grade 11](#)², an effect that is particularly strong for students from low-income families
- Students who earn two or more credits within a single CTE program of study [more likely to graduate high school in 4 years](#)⁶

3). Promote postsecondary education and career readiness

- The overwhelming majority (98%) of Colorado students who participate in CTE [enroll in postsecondary education, enlist in the military, or enter the workforce](#) within one year after high school graduation⁵
- Students who earn two or more credits within a single CTE program of study are [more likely to be employed full-time eight years post-graduation](#)⁶ compared to those who do not
- Students with learning disabilities who complete applied STEM coursework have a [greater likelihood of college enrollment](#)³ relative to students with learning disabilities who do not complete applied STEM coursework

Additional global benefits of WBL and CTE include:

- Preparation for the [transition from high school](#) to postsecondary education/workforce
- Opportunity to build professional relationships and networks and develop [transferrable, foundational skills](#) needed for the workforce
- Increased [school engagement](#) and reduction in absenteeism and dropout
- Provides students from underserved backgrounds with [opportunities for workforce development](#) they might not otherwise receive

See additional resources ([1](#), [2](#)) for how states can support CTE and WBL in high schools. Additionally, please see this [Talent Pipeline Report](#) by the Colorado Workforce Development Council (2020) on the importance of credentials and certifications to be successful in Colorado's modern workforce.

1. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2019/09/20/the-promise-of-career-and-technical-education/>

2. <https://direct.mit.edu/edfp/article/13/2/119/10291/The-Effect-of-Career-and-Technical-Education-on>

3. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0895904816673738>

4. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0161956X.2017.1302220?needAccess=true>

5. http://coloradostateplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CTE_Fact_Sheet_2021_final.pdf

6. <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/cte/index.html#WHOGRAUATESFINDSAJOB>

Bill Concept Overview: Student Support Corps

An opportunity for student and educator mentoring to 1) accelerate the learning of students through individualized, small group intervention and/or enrichment with instructors representing their diversity and 2) to grow a more diverse educator workforce

Date: March 14, 2021

Advocates: Keystone Policy Center, PEBC

Potential Legislative Leadership: Representatives McCluskie and McLachlan, Senators Buckner and Rankin

Other Potential Interested Parties: CDE, CEI

Description of the Issue and Problem to Solve:

Background: In light of the opportunities for improvement within the state's education system brought to light through the COVID-19 pandemic, Keystone and PEBC's Education System Resiliency and Innovation Initiative (ESRII) effort brought state-wide education leaders and practitioners together to develop ideas for reimagining and strengthening our education system. The resultant report, "Rebuilding Stronger, Learning from the COVID interruption to Build an Educator Workforce and Education System for the Future of Colorado", February, 2021 identified recommendations for addressing:

- a) the current workforce challenges within the teaching profession, specifically the scarcity of teachers of color within the pipeline and within the profession
- b) improvements within the teaching and learning process needed to increase teacher autonomy and student engagement
- c) supports for teachers particularly through professional development and district partnerships with institutions of higher education

In addition, the Colorado Education Initiative and Early Milestones convened early childhood and K-12 practitioners to discuss ways to advance summer opportunities to stem PreK-5 learning loss and accelerate high school engagement in an effort that is referred to as "Recovery Summer."

Assumptions Guiding the Proposal:

- a) Students need customized and expanded learning opportunities to address learning loss and gaps in their learning and to be motivated to achieve their potential
- b) Students benefit by being taught by adults who reflect their diversity and culture
- c) Teachers of color are in high demand within the profession and need to be encouraged to enter the profession

Summary of the Student Support Corps: Beginning during the Spring/Summer of 2021, districts will have access to funds needed to hire the staff they need to implement an in and/or out-of-school support structure for identified students. Districts will hire community college

students or other adults in the community who reflect the diversity of the students selected to work under the supervision of a higher education partner and district-identified licensed professional. Small groups of students will work with this staff member in learning teams with individually crafted learning plans customized for each student. The higher education partner will work individually with each adult to develop a course-work plan for attaining a credential or credits for their service that would assist them in their career development. Students will benefit through the individualized attention and mentoring of their Corps team member and Corps team members will develop workforce skills and/or credits through the mentoring of their district/higher education team member.

Advancement Academies: Supporting Student Academic Recovery through Teacher Leadership

A Plan for States to Facilitate District Innovation

Executive Summary

Empower Schools seeks to partner with a select group of innovative State Education Agencies to create opportunities for Local Education Agencies to adopt a research-tested, innovative, and positive intervention program that helps fight pandemic learning loss.[1] This learning loss, combined with the staggering emotional and health effects of the pandemic, have left school districts across the country struggling to address unprecedented challenges.

An Advancement Academies program is a research-validated, cost-efficient way to support rapid remediation in math and ELA. In addition to the many academic and social-emotional benefits such a program has for students, Advancement Academies can provide opportunities for educator leadership development, financial and other recognition of teachers, and positive community interactions – all without the need for district restructuring, rethinking of collective bargaining agreements, or other meaningful disruption. Most important, though, Advancement Academies are effective. According to research done by University of Virginia professor Beth E. Schueler using the gold-standard technique of a randomized control trial, implementation of Advancement Academies provides “rare evidence of an effective, relatively affordable, and minimally disruptive intervention to help struggling students make notable academic progress through small group instruction.”[2]

State Education Agencies, using both the money that is set aside under ESSA to support struggling schools and the money controlled by SEAs as part of the recent COVID relief act, CRSSA, and potential future Federal relief packages, can support and incentivize these programs. As Advancement Academies are politically popular and impactful programs, states can issue competitive grants to districts who are committed to implementing high-quality Advancement Academies programs. They may even seek innovative structures (such as matching grants to districts who are interested in devoting some of their COVID relief funding to such a program) that can extend the impact of their resources.

The Problem

Districts must figure out how to address the significant learning loss facing students, particularly low-income students, Black students, and Latino students, while also tackling multiple additional interlocking challenges. Educator morale is low, districts are stretched thin emotionally and practically because of the unforeseen and all-consuming adjustments they have had to make and continually refine since March 2020, and families have had significant difficulty supporting schooling and childcare during the pandemics.

The Opportunity

While they cannot address all these challenges, Advancement Academies are uniquely well suited to supporting student academic progress while also creating opportunities for teacher leadership in logistically feasible and cost-efficient ways.

Advancement Academies programs typically last a week during school vacation. There is an opportunity to create programs in Spring 2022 as well as in Summer 2021 prior to the start of the 2021-22 school year.

During Advancement Academies, students voluntarily attend a week of small-group instruction under the supervision of top teachers. The experience is suffused with positivity and is enjoyable for students while also being academically rigorous. Advancement Academies can focus on math, English Language Arts, or instruction for English Language Learners, with targeted lessons helping students catch up where they may be behind.

Advancement Academies teachers are well-compensated for the week and are chosen because of their excellence. Teaching at Advancement Academies is an honor and a recognition of educators' past performance, and is an effective way to recognize and motivate educators. Examples of positive writing about Academies include this [Ed Next article](#), this article from [Waco](#), and this informative [EdWeek article](#).

The Program

Key Features. There are five key design features of Advancement Academies:

1. **Extended Learning Time:** During a week-long academy, students receive the equivalent of an extra month of rigorous instruction and focused learning -- states may encourage districts to run multi-week or multi-session academies.
2. **Small Group, Focused Instruction:** Content teachers are paired with a small group of students (8-10) for the entire week who deliver lessons based on students' specific needs. Math academies have been studied more, but there have been promising results for English Language Arts academies as well.
3. **Outstanding Teachers:** Advancement Academy teachers go through a highly selective, rigorous application process. Only teachers with a proven track record of success teach at Academies, and they are well-compensated for their time.
4. **Celebration and Joy:** Teaching in Academies is a competitive process and selected teachers are celebrated. Academy design makes students feel special to be selected and includes programming and celebrations to make the week fun and engaging. In addition to focused academic time, the day includes other activities (such as art, drama, athletics, and music) taught either by teachers or through partnerships with community-based organizations. There may also be opportunities to add supplementary programs in the afternoon following the academic day.
5. **Opt-in for Targeted Students:** Students are carefully selected, based on performance data, to participate in Academies. However, Academies are not mandatory.

Cost. The cost for Advancement Academies differs based on design decisions, but generally is about \$500-\$600 per student for 30+ hours of intensive high-quality instruction. This compares favorably to other effective interventions. In her study of Advancement Academies, Schueler estimates that: “Taking the average of the low and high bound estimates for the tutoring program ... suggests that Advancement Academies produced roughly 28 percent of the effect of high-dosage tutoring at 16 percent of the cost and over a shorter period of time.”[3]

How Empower Could Help

Empower Schools has experience implementing Advancement Academies in multiple districts and could assist a state-facilitated program in two main ways:

1. *Design implementation support structure and provide coordination.* Empower could provide resources, training, and guidance to district personnel who will be leading Advancement Academies programming, and also connect districts to other districts across the country engaged in similar efforts. Empower could facilitate a community of practice and help create quality guidelines.
2. *District support.* Empower could also provide more substantial direct support to individual districts to help them as they work to implement their programs. This partnership would likely be in addition to the statewide design work listed as option (1).

The Benefits

Advancement Academies programs help districts in many ways:

- *Improved student outcomes.* As the research cited above demonstrates, Academies can have powerful impacts for students. For example, one study of math academies found:
 - “[I]n the context of a low-performing Massachusetts school district ... [there are] substantial positive effects of Academy attendance on student performance.”[4]
 - The program also led to improved social-emotional results for students: the “program decreased participants’ exposure to exclusionary discipline.”[5]
 - Finally, even though the program studied directly targeted math instruction, it may even have had spill-over effects on English Language Arts performance.[6]
- *Recognition for educators.* In a time of flagging morale for teachers, when some surveys suggest large numbers of educators are thinking of leaving the profession [citation], Academies provides an opportunity to recognize top-performing teachers.
 - By acknowledging and celebrating effective teachers, districts will motivate and encourage their most indispensable teachers and may present attrition and improve morale.

- The pay that comes from working for the week of Advancement Academies – typically \$2,500 or more – is also a positive incentive for teachers and a way to recognize the hard work they put into creating a high-intensity positive learning experience for students.
- *Development of educator capacity.* Advancement Academies also provide an opportunity for educators to take on new leadership roles. Teachers get to work in an innovative and intense setting, and often receive aligned professional development that will inform their teaching beyond Academies. Organizing a school's program is also a powerful and practical opportunity for a junior or prospective administrator to gain practical experience in a familiar setting.
- *Stronger home-school connectivity.* The Advancement Academies experience has traditionally been a positive one for students, and a sign that the school is extending itself to support student needs in a proactive and positive way. In addition, the pandemic has only further exposed the challenges that working families can have with childcare during time when students are not in school; many families will likely welcome the opportunity to have students participating in an enriching experience and will also be glad that they do not have to make childcare arrangements during Advancement Academies.
- *Community positivity.* Communities have embraced the idea of students voluntarily “giving up” their behavior for intensive academic study, and have also been enthusiastic about the teacher recognition aspect of the program. Advancement Academies programs have drawn positive stories in the local news media, and communities have generally been quite enthusiastic about the effort. There are also opportunities to include community-based organizations to provide aligned programming, either during the day or in the afternoons.
- *Feasibility.* Implementing any high-quality new program is challenging, and in order to succeed Advancement Academies programs need to have effective teacher selection, student selection and investment, and logistical planning. Yet Academies do not require wholesale, sometimes-wrenching changes for school districts – and, crucially, can coexist with existing district initiatives and priorities. They can be implemented by district personnel and generally either with no changes to collective bargaining agreements, if any exist, or with small tweaks that unions will agree to (for example, the pay rate is likely to be higher than any agreed-upon hourly extra-service rate).

Possible Pathways

With the need to accelerate student progress even more pressing than usual, and with SEAs in control of resources that can target innovative and effective efforts from districts, now is a unique window of opportunity for innovative state agencies to incentivize the development of robust Advancement Academies programs.

A State Education Agency can:

- Offer competitive grants that support programs in districts that are eager to pilot Advancement Academies programming in the summer or during school breaks.
- Set the rules of the grant competition to make high-quality implementation more likely.

- Require districts to get initial implementation support from an organization with experience in implementing such programs.
- Ask districts to match contributions to help direct additional money toward a program the state believes is likely to work.

The Right Initiative at the Right Time

Advancement Academies create a positive, energized atmosphere in which top teachers work with small groups of students to support rapid academic progress, and are a research-tested way to rapidly improve student academic skills. Advancement Academies programs also can improve social-emotional outcomes for students, recognize and help retain effective educators, support families during school vacation, and build positive communities ties.

In this uniquely challenging time, where states and districts are looking for practical yet ambitious ways to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, Advancement Academies are a promising opportunity. We aim to find State Education Agencies who want to partner with districts to support innovative, research-tested programming to support students, teachers, families, and communities.

[1] Katie Reilly, “The Learning Gap Is Getting Worse as Schools Rely on Remote Classes, Especially for Students of Color,” TIME, December 8, 2020, *available at* <https://time.com/5918769/coronavirus-schools-learning-loss/>.

[2] Beth E. Schueler, *Making the Most of School Vacation: A Field Experiment of Small Group Math Instruction, Education Finance and Policy*, 2018, p. 26, *available at* https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00269. There is additional evidence in support of both Advancement Academy-style programs specifically and individualized instruction generally, but Schueler’s work uses the strongest possible methodology and found encouraging results.

[3] Schueler, 23.

[4] Schueler 3.

[5] Id.

[6] Id.



COLORADO

Department of Education

Field Services Unit
201 E Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

Rural Coaction Funding

Purpose: Increase collaboration and action amongst rural Colorado school districts, community partners, and IHE's in a two-tier framework. Coaction allows districts to work as partners to increase opportunities for students and leverage existing strengths in school districts. Through the use of these funds, districts will build capacity and resources, be able to incentive hard to fill positions, be more adequately positioned to attract quality staff, and increase opportunities for success, growth, and achievement for students, in addition to strengthening and/or maintaining relationships with industry partners and IHE's.

Total Allocation Requested: \$12m

Track 1: Inter-district Collaboration Agreement/Resource Sharing

Total Allocation: \$2m

Criteria: 2+ Districts and/or BOCES may request funding to develop inter-district resource sharing. This would include resource sharing to better serve larger student populations in core content areas, electives, clubs, activities, etc. to the greatest extent possible among and between districts sharing agreements. Building capacity, meeting staffing requirements, and providing incentives are expected uses of this funding.

Track 2: Inter-district Pathway/Zone Development

Total Allocation: \$10m

Criteria: 2+ districts and/or BOCES may request funds to develop and implement pathways for students to receive industry certificates, dual credit, complete internships and apprenticeships, and other innovative opportunities.

Reporting/Accountability

Reporting might consist of development of and determination of targets that align with the pathway(s), school/district UIP, and/or regional goals. Reporting would need to be a simple, straightforward process as capacity-building and efficiency is a priority of this initiative.

*We would need to determine Department set-aside to coordinate and develop support systems such as technical assistance, coordinator facilitation and training, framework development, and other support as needed.



COLORADO
Department of Education

Field Services Unit
201 E Colfax
Denver, CO 80203

July 23, 2021

Dear Commissioner Anthes and ESSER Team,

It is with great excitement that I submit a proposal requesting a portion of the state's ESSER set-aside funds for ***Rural Coaction***. As you know, over eighty percent of the districts we serve in Colorado are designated as rural or small rural, educating approximately 20% of the state's students. Each of our districts face their own unique challenges and opportunities with capacity, access, resources, and more. We also know that all rural educators and leaders share many strengths, including resiliency, grit, and determination – all with an unwavering and unified desire to serve students, families, and communities with a quality, world-class education.

Amidst the pandemic, we have seen districts come together in ways we haven't before. The challenges resulting from COVID-19 have increased existing capacity limitations and the need for both solutions and innovation. Districts are working collaboratively in ways they haven't in the past. The work around providing strong foundations and developing meaningful programs and pathways for students in partnership with IHE's and partner organizations has been accelerated. However, this work doesn't come without a price.

The need for support with coordination, along with a need for more human capital and a lack of funding have been obstacles in planning and implementation, especially during the pandemic. These sentiments and more were heard recently at the Commissioner's Rural Education Council and recent Colorado Rural Schools Alliance meetings. Hearing this feedback and understanding the need for increased support around solutions, I would like to expand opportunities for districts to work collaboratively to leverage resources and build capacity, increase opportunities for students both foundationally and innovatively, and increase the potential for strong recruitment and retention by providing incentives for staff utilizing a portion of the state's ESSER set-aside for ***Rural Coaction*** as we continue to recover from the effects of COVID-19.

Recently, I traveled to the south Texas Rural Schools Innovation Zone (RSIZ) along with my colleagues and partners Michelle Murphy, Executive Director of the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance and CASB Board President and Vilas School Board Member John Wittler. We were able to learn directly from the leadership of the RSIZ, how it is structured, and the opportunities it has presented for its districts in terms of increased student engagement, growth, and achievement, and staying power for all districts involved.

In the RSIZ, three districts in the "zone" have worked to develop eight student pathways focused on college and career readiness. In these "academies", students have the potential to earn college credit, industry certificates, attend classes on college campuses, and gain experiences they otherwise would not be able to access. The work of the RSIZ is proof that working together has far more benefit than

working in isolation, especially for rural school districts that struggle with the same challenges that we face here in Colorado.

Currently, throughout the state, many districts and BOCES are involved in this work regionally - though it may look slightly different. The Homegrown Talent Initiative, the Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative, and BOCES and districts that are simply engaging in developing student pathways are all examples of work that is focused on providing these programs to their communities and students as a way to engage students, increase opportunity, and help rural communities thrive.

At the state level, I believe we can further support this work by providing funds for districts to develop partnerships and pathways both foundationally and innovatively. One thing we know for certain is that without funding, districts and BOCES cannot engage in this work in a meaningful or sustainable way. I also believe that this work presents more opportunities to expand the work of Rural Services at the CDE.

Attached is a high-level draft framework that outlines the funding request and proposed criteria for funding. I believe we can support this work through a two year process – one year of planning and one year of implementation to build momentum and plan for sustainability. By engaging in discussion with our partners at the CO Rural Schools Alliance, CASE, CASB, and the CBA, I know there is great support for this work on a statewide level. In the field, there is a need and interest in the funding and support this type of initiative would provide. Please consider this request as it is a very meaningful initiative for Rural Services, but also clearly supported and needed in the field.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Denille LePlatt

Director, Rural Services



Education System Resilience & Innovation Initiative

REBUILDING STRONGER

Learning from the COVID Interruption to Build an Educator
Workforce & Education System for the Future of Colorado

February 9, 2021

Interim Report of the Education System Resilience & Innovation Initiative

From June 2020 – January 2021, more than 80 stakeholders from across Colorado’s education ecosystem and private sector met to identify opportunities to learn from the challenges presented by COVID and the innovations developed by leaders across the state responding to their local communities’ needs. This report includes the interim recommendations for state and local leaders.

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This report and the work of the Education System Resilience & Innovation Initiative (ESRII) were made possible through the generous support of The Morgridge Family Foundation, the selfless giving of time and passionate engagement of more than 80 stakeholders who participated in the ESRII and the encouragement, counsel and guidance of educators, education leaders, private sector leaders and dozens of local and state officials who provided input formally and informally throughout the process. This report and its vision of a stronger, better education system is dedicated to the thousands of teachers who work tirelessly for our state’s students each day, who adapted in remarkable ways to an unimaginable situation and to the students who have endured a year like few others before them, adapting and overcoming the many challenges it continues to present.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 system interruption was felt in every aspect of Coloradans lives from how we shop and gather with friends to how business is conducted and how we take in entertainment. Perhaps the impact felt most suddenly and with potentially the most long-term implications was in our education system. In the span of a few days, our early childhood education (ECE), K-12 and higher education systems underwent one of the most tectonic shifts in how teachers delivered instruction, how students learned and how parents were required to engage in their children's education. The interruption has highlighted and exacerbated multiple layers of existing inequities at all levels of education. As educators, community leaders, families and the private sector all stepped up to address the challenge, there have been remarkable examples of innovative approaches, bold thinking and, through it all, opportunities to learn from what has gone well and what is clearly in need of change.

What educators, school leaders and system leaders are continuing to experience and learn as a result of the interruption may provide additional lessons for general improvements to all aspects of our education system from how we structure and support the teaching workforce to how instruction is delivered. Through six months of regular meetings, discussing challenges and successes being experienced across the state, a diverse coalition of stakeholders has identified a series of system-level changes at the state and local level to seize on the lessons learned, to strengthen our education system for the future, to improve outcomes for our students to and better support our educators.

BACKGROUND

As state and local education leaders appropriately continue to focus on immediate needs of students and educators during the abrupt shift to remote instruction as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, a number of educators and leaders expressed the belief that it was critical to begin a parallel effort looking at the future of education in Colorado. That's why Keystone Policy Center (Keystone) and the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) worked with many of these leaders to form the **Education System Resiliency and Innovation Initiative (ESRII)**, a broad coalition and research initiative focused on strengthening the teacher workforce, improving educator supports for teacher practice and instructional delivery, and identifying additional systemic shifts that could build off of learning from the current disruption. The explicit aim in this initiative is to strengthen educator practice, to capture long-term improvements, to propel the profession forward and to improve the delivery of instruction to all students in the state's diverse communities, contexts and conditions.

To advance these conversations effectively, with a focus on actionable outcomes and recommendations, we engaged and convened a diverse group of stakeholders from within and outside of education systems. Keystone and PEBC partnered to undertake this initiative with a focus on three primary streams of inquiry with associated recommendations as an outcome of the project:

1. **Educator Workforce:** Exploration of opportunities for reimagining the educator workforce and the role of teacher to reduce non-instructional burdens on teachers, strengthen and diversify

the educator workforce, provide additional pathways into the profession and roles and pathways within the profession.

2. **Teaching & Learning:** Exploration of best practices, innovations and emerging approaches to instructional delivery including models for other than full-time in-person instruction, use of technology, competency based progression and examining the strengths, challenges and innovations surfaced through the statewide shift to remote delivery of instruction.
3. **Training & Supporting Great Teachers:** Discussion and examination of changes, improvements or shifts in how we train and support new and veteran teachers through lens of lessons learned during the COVID-19 system interruption and in light of other recommendations developed for shifts in the educator workforce and in teaching and learning.

Throughout each of these streams of inquiry, education system leaders, educators and officials also explored innovations developed out of necessity or opportunity during the system interruption and those that have promise but have stalled or had limited support or adoption. The result is a comprehensive set of recommendations for system level changes at the state and local levels.

A BOLD & HOPEFUL VISION FOR THE FUTURE

From the first meeting of the ESRII, the word “hopeful” dominated conversation when members were asked their thoughts about the future of education in Colorado. Many spoke of the need to “be bold” and, recognizing how many students, educators and families found themselves in a much different, often uncomfortable new reality, called this the moment to seize the opportunity to chart a path forward that did not seek to return to what was but rather sought to rebuild a better, stronger, more personalized education system for students and a prestigious, rewarding profession for educators.

To stay true to the vision laid out by members, participants were not asked initially “What should we change?” Instead, participants focused their initial conversations on the hopeful, aspirational question “What would this look like if we - as a state - re-imagined this boldly, focused on students and the educators who support them?” Having articulated the desired end state, members then explored what barriers exist to achieving the ideal state of education, examples of such a system or approach and how we might be able to field test different approaches in ways that built upon past work where possible, charted bold new directions where necessary and remained rooted in strategies designed to address persistent inequities in the system(s) while recognizing and respecting the unique local factors that must inform approaches to education. ESRII supported a variety of micro-pilots and field studies in the fall of 2020 to explore some of the ideas raised which are described in Attachment B.

The outcome from over six months of conversations among more than 80 stakeholders is found on the following pages. These recommendations are offered as a starting point not an end point. Members of ESRII are excited to share these with state and local leaders and are equally excited to act on these at the local level and to support a continuous cycle of learning to strengthen the work going forward.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The ESRII members identified opportunities for system-level change in each category of the coalition's areas of focus. Contained in this report are the recommendations for each including the goal of the proposed action as well as the role of the state, the local role (district/CMO, school, community) and potential pilots or learning opportunities associated with each recommendation. The recommendations developed and further detailed in this report are:

Educator Workforce

Recommendation #1: Expand pathways into the profession.

Goal: Bring additional expertise; Expand pool of new teachers; Diversify workforce

Recommendation #2: Expand pathways and roles within the profession

Goal: Elevate profession; Improve retention; Reduce burden on teachers.

Recommendation #3: Enable Alternative Staffing Structures

Goal: Empower local leaders to develop staffing models that reflect local needs and context

Teaching & Learning

Recommendation #1: Support Individualized Student Progression

Goal: Shift focus to support different learning styles & competency based progression

Recommendation #2: Support Differentiated Student Assessment

Goal: Emphasis on student learning, culturally responsive education and assessment to inform instructional decisions

Recommendation #3: Expand Teacher Empowerment for Instruction

Goal: Empower teachers to teach what, how & in ways that meets student needs.

Recommendation #4: Rethink School Day, Week & Calendar

Goal: Flexibility to meet needs of students & maximize time use

Recommendation #5: Expand use of Learning Pods

Goal: Provide equitable access to additional learning time & opportunities

Recommendation #6: Expand Course Offerings & Access

Goal: Expand courses available to students and increase equity of access

Teacher Training & Supports

Recommendation #1: Strengthen Ed Prep Program <-> District/CMO Partnerships

Goal: Ensure every school system has a higher ed / ed prep partner

Recommendation #2: Establish Online/Virtual Communities of Practice (LEAs, IHEs, EPPs)

Goal: Provide opportunities for teams of teachers to collaborate with a focus on peer feedback for learning and growth of practice.

Recommendation #3: Strengthen Connection between EPP/PD & Evolving Economy/Workforce

Goal: Help teachers better understand the world they are preparing students to enter

Recommendation #4: Invest in Mentoring as PD for Teachers & Leaders

Goal: Strengthen Educator Practice & Expand Career Pathway Opportunities

Recommendation #5: Invest in Mental Health Supports for Educators & Students

Goal: Improve educator retention & practice; Support students' mental health needs

Other System Changes**Recommendation #1: Support Locally Developed Transparency & Performance Systems**

Goal: Empower families, communities & school systems to establish locally developed frameworks of school performance

Recommendation #2: Utilize Federal Funds including COVID Relief to Drive Innovation

Goal: Support innovations in approaches to teaching/learning, structure of the educator workforce & training/support of educators.

SYSTEM CHANGES

The recommendations contained in this report focus on changes at both the state and local system level. This focus is based on the belief that system-level changes are necessary to create the conditions for bold action at the local level and that the transformational changes sought will be far more sustainable if they are part of system level changes in policies, regulations and practices than if they exist only through waivers, exemptions or pilot programs. In making recommendations for state action, there was broad consensus that the appropriate role of the state in most cases is to create the conditions for success at the local level, to provide support and resources needed at the local level and to facilitate collaboration and learning among educators and system leaders from across the state. While an appropriate role for oversight was identified for most recommendations, ESRII members emphasized oversight only insofar as it can be a mechanism of support and broadly discouraged the adoption of significant new compliance and enforcement regimes.

In many cases, members identified specific actions to be taken by state or local leaders to create the conditions necessary to allow and empower local leaders – whether at the school system or building level – to take actions that move the vision and goals identified forward. The actions range from policy changes through legislation, regulation or local school board action to expansion of supports and reallocation of resources at the state agency or local system level to facilitation of collaborative opportunities, convening of groups for deep-dives into topics and development of partnerships across education and private sector leaders and organizations.

A number of the recommendations do carry fiscal implications. Members were conservative in making recommendations that call for additional funding or shifts in funding uses. Accordingly, where included in this report, ESRII members felt the funds are both necessary and bring with them the potential for significant, sustainable impact for students and teachers.

EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

The Problems We are Working To Solve

The current structure of the educator workforce leads to challenges both recruiting diverse candidates into the workforce and retaining educators. Colorado is a national leader in pathways to teaching with 22 traditional and 24 alternative programs. While Colorado has this wide variety of pathways into the profession as well as recruiting programs, there remain challenges attracting candidates from diverse personal and professional backgrounds as well as some barriers to entry for those with established careers or expertise in other fields. The scope of responsibility for many teachers places a wide array of non-instructional burdens on teachers which can negatively impact retention, lead to burn-out and limit the amount of time teachers are able to focus on student interaction, instructional planning, collaboration with peers and their own professional development.

As currently structured, the teaching profession is one of the few professions in which we ask the newest teacher to take on the same responsibilities as the most experienced teacher and with few exceptions, there are limited opportunities to “work and learn into” that level of responsibility and rarely any support staff. Within the profession, pathways to advancement that allow teachers to continue engaging with students are limited as most opportunities for advancement lead to administrative positions outside of the classroom. Finally, despite the increasing use of technology and remote instruction, there are few if any opportunities for exceptional teachers or those with specific expertise to extend their reach to students outside of their school building.

Why do we think a single role of “Teacher” is the only role that should exist? What if we created new roles and new pathways that would let a local artist, scientist or computer programmer come in and teach part-time to share their specific expertise? Or created pathways to help paraprofessionals – who are often deeply connected to the community – to become teachers? What if we deconstructed “Teacher” into multiple roles that could either draw on discrete skills and knowledge or serve as a progression to the ultimate role of Teacher? What if a great teacher in one corner of the state could provide instruction to students across the state? Are there things we can learn from the university professor structure or other professions?

In what other profession do you enter with the maximum level of responsibility in your job or with being handed some of the toughest assignments in your first year? There is no apples-to-apples comparison, but let’s consider a few other professions in which the consumer has limited say in their service provider: Aviators don’t start their career as the Pilot of a 777 making trans-Atlantic runs. If they’re lucky – after advancing from a single prop to twin-prop and ultimately a jet – they’ll serve as First Officer in a commuter jet. As their skills advance and they spend more time in the cockpit, they may move up to Pilot or they may move to a more challenging aircraft. Firefighters don’t start as the Captain who is responsible for a multi-unit response to a high-rise structure fire. They start as part of a team and as they master their profession they can advance or they can choose to specialize – paramedic, training officer – or to continue in their role as a firefighter with additional expertise like haz- mat or swift water rescue. All of these professional positions also include multiple support roles with specific roles, trainings & responsibilities from the firefighter and driver/engineer on a firetruck to the purser, flight attendant & first officer in aviation. All of these professionals collaborate to provide the needed service for the public consumer or customer.

Desired End State

The teacher workforce should be re-imagined. The future workforce should be diverse and knowledgeable enough for schools to be able to build instructional teams that, collectively and individually, ably meet the needs of the students in the school. It must allow for school leaders to utilize adults in the community who can contribute toward a child's education, including policies that provide for greater diversity in both pathways into the profession and roles within it. The future of the Colorado educator workforce should be as diverse as the students it serves, reduce non-instructional burdens on teachers, draw on the expertise of adults throughout the community and across the state and provide meaningful opportunities for advancement for educators.

To accomplish this, we should reimagine the role of teacher and the workforce itself to:

1. Expand "Teacher Support" positions that allow certain non-instructional burdens to be taken on by others including those working toward becoming a teacher or specific support positions;
2. Expand and strengthen the pathways and positions that allow adults with subject matter expertise to teach on a limited basis under specific circumstances and conditions while also raising awareness of these options among school system leaders and communities;
3. Expand pathways for exploring and developing skills to become a teacher including opportunities for high school students, college students not enrolled in ed prep programs and those in other careers;
4. Develop career pathways designed at local level with support from the state that allow teachers to grow within profession without having to go into administration or school leadership roles;
5. Establish a system for exceptional teachers to extend their reach to both students and other teachers beyond their own school, district or CMO.

Colorado's leaders have already taken important steps in updating our educator licensure system and that work should continue with renewed commitment and openness to bold changes. With the benefit of the lessons we have learned over the past nine months and with the additional challenges we now see in the profession, we also should step back and consider whether the existing structure of the educator workforce makes sense, is the best structure and whether a one-size fits-all approach is right for every school and every community.

Some districts have recently acted to advance these types of innovations. And the truth is, a lot of this may be possible within existing policies and the authorities granted to local leaders if they are willing to think and act boldly and if they have the support of state officials.

Educator Workforce Recommendation #1

Expand pathways *into* the profession

Goal: Bring additional expertise; Expand pool of new Teachers; Diversify workforce

State Role or Action

- A. Establish mechanism (fund) through legislative action and in partnership with private sector and philanthropic community for covering living costs for incoming teachers in exchange for filling high-needs positions. *A model for this can be seen in CMC's program and partnership(s).*
- B. Revise statutes authorizing Adjunct Instructor to expand subject matters covered, reduce restrictions on adjunct authorizations and expand opportunities for schools to employ "Adjunct Teachers" under a license that allows adults with subject matter expertise to teach on a limited basis under specific circumstances. Legislative action may be necessary to revise adjunct instructor requirements, such as SB 19-216 which allows computer science teachers or through a roll-up of these and other related statutes into a single revision to licensure or other statutes and should consider adjunct teaching as both a stand-alone role and as a pathway to a professional teaching license;
- C. Support the creation of a private sector partnership network and pool of private sector experts credentialed as post-secondary instructors and approved under standards for Higher Learning Standards and CTE instruction;
- D. Leverage state and state secured federal workforce development funds/programs to create programs for professionals to explore opportunities in education and, particularly, newly created non-teacher roles including those developed during system interruption such as those in learning pods as well as paraprofessionals, and other non-instructional roles with and without pathways to becoming teachers.
- E. Provide resources including trainings, exemplars, facilitated communities of practice and roadmaps for local implementation of above;
- F. Provide resources to CDE to raise awareness of standards for professional development and direct supports for micro-certifications and other opportunities for educators to "upskill" and develop the knowledge or instructional skills needed for shifting structures and content-bases necessary;
- G. Develop standards for IHE courses for new roles including Adjunct Teacher and Teacher Support positions (see Recommendation 2) through 4yr and 2yr institutions;
- H. Establish program through legislative action to utilize public funds for pathways to teaching programs for concurrent enrollment in year four of high-school and as years 5-6 (e.g. early college) including designation of agency for oversight of program;
- I. Authorize year-round, increased financial aid for non EPP students to become teachers.

Local Role or Action

- A. Partner with EPPs to provide opportunities for student teachers from State Role A above and commit to priority hiring
- B. Design roles that reflect expanded opportunities and work with building leaders, community leaders, families and private sector to identify subject needs, experts and the future local landscape;

- C. Identify, recruit and maintain relationships with private sector partners and create teaching opportunities as discussed in State Role D above.
- D. Engage with CDE, CDHE and other officials to provide input on the roles, pathways and programs discussed above;
- E. Engage with district/CMO staff to develop roles, pathways and programs that reflect local needs and context for new positions and pathways;
- F. Work with CDE, CDHE, SBOE and IHEs to establish programs discussed in State Role H & I above.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Adjunct Teacher: Program to recruit adults from community with specific expertise to teach under a licensed teacher. Could include focus areas (STEM, CTE) including a program developed with a multi-member cohort of adjuncts. Pilot could be for individual school or school system or could be a collaboration of multiple schools across different districts and/or CMOs.

Guest Lecturers: Regional (single or multi-LEA/CMO) initiative to create a database of guest lecturers by topic, availability & expertise. Recruit & inform community of opportunity (and address substitute/non-HQT status)

HS Concurrent: LEA partnership w/IHE to provide HS Juniors/Seniors opportunity to begin exploring pathways into ECE & K-12 education via concurrent enrollment.

Educator Workforce Recommendation #2

Expand pathways and roles *within* the profession

Goal: Elevate profession; Improve retention; Reduce burden on teachers.

State Role or Action

- A. Working with stakeholders, develop the standards, requirements, trainings and operational framework for a statewide corps of teachers.
- B. Provide resources to CDE to support development of model Career Pathways for Educators and direct support to BOCES, LEAs, CMOs or individual schools designing and implementing such career pathways that expand opportunities for career advancement;
- C. Through legislative action, identify funds to support the previous efforts and those recommended above to create an incentive program for establishing local career pathways for educators and financial incentives for participating educators;
- D. Examine licensure rules to identify strategies for streamlining opportunities for candidates to earn a dual-endorsement in high-demand subject areas (e.g. STEM and Computer Science) with goal of removing barriers and providing incentives for candidates to earn endorsements in high-need subject areas;

- E. Remove any unnecessary barriers to employing additional adults in classrooms providing support to teachers or providing supports and services other than instruction to reduce non-instructional burdens on teachers;
- F. Appropriate funds for advancing a Guest Lecturer program and database that is supported at state level and managed at local level and provide resources for CDE to utilize the licensing system to oversee and manage development of the Guest Lecturer program and database, including providing access and instruction to local leaders to use at their local level.
- G. Minimize any statutory, regulatory or systems of practice that restrict teachers from concurrently providing instruction to students in more than one district;
- H. Explore with local system leaders the need for a statewide corps of teachers or an independent body to employ the growing number of substitute teachers who often do not qualify for benefits.

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage with CDE, CDHE and other officials to provide input on the roles, pathways and programs discussed above;
- B. Engage with district/CMO staff to develop roles, pathways and programs that reflect local needs and context for each;
- C. Conduct outreach to local community to identify potential Guest Lecturers to be included in database and to raise awareness of new roles created (Adjunct, Teacher Support).

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Jr. Teacher Role for IHE Students: LEA/CMO + IHE partnership w/non-instructional roles for college students to support teachers, families and/or students. Could be students in EPP tool for recruiting non EPP students or to bring other expertise.

Non-Instructional Roles: Pilot to create non-instructional roles that focus on: a) reducing non-instructional burdens on teachers and/or b) bring specific complementary expertise (e.g. technology, family support etc.). Roles may or may not be intended as pathway to becoming a teacher.

Advanced Teaching Roles & Pathways: Staffing structures or roles that allow highly skilled teachers to advance into classroom, instructional or other teacher-supporting roles other than administration.

Also see Invest in Mentoring in Teacher Supports

District/CMO-Wide, Regional or Statewide Opportunities: Creation of roles for exceptional teachers and/or teachers with specific expertise to expand their reach to students beyond their own school via remote instruction, rotating schedule or other concepts. Could include a cohort from multiple buildings, LEAs or CMOs.

Hybrid Teacher Roles/Schedules: Creation of role for educators in parallel with hybrid learning models and/or alternative staffing structures that would allow educators to work three days in classroom and remaining days in a leadership role within their school or district supporting other educators.

Educator Workforce Recommendation #3

Enable Alternative Staffing Structures

Goal: Empower local leaders to staff in ways reflective of local needs and context

State Role or Action

- A. Remove unnecessary barriers to non-teachers providing support to teachers to reduce burdens;
- B. Support, participate in or convene a statewide workgroup to explore Reimagining the Role of Teacher to identify non-instructional roles that could be developed at local level. Outcome would be to provide guidance and state support to LEAs/CMOs designing such roles;
- C. Support, engage and leverage existing programs including but not limited to TEACH CO, Troops to Teachers and others.

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage with CDE, CDHE and other officials to provide input on the roles, pathways and programs discussed above;
- B. Engage with district/CMO staff to develop roles, pathways and programs that reflect local needs and context for each;
- C. Conduct outreach to local community to identify potential Guest Lecturers to be included in database and to raise awareness of new roles created (Adjunct, Teacher Support)

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

None identified at this point. Multiple pilots could be developed by local leaders and stakeholders that are based on the unique local context and needs.

TEACHING & LEARNING

The Problems We are Working To Solve

Colorado has difficulty attracting and retaining teachers. As we know, retention will solve for recruitment when we are able to develop a systemic solution to retaining and developing educators. Colorado's educators report the following variables impact their willingness and ability to retain in the profession: a rigidity of academic structure, including curriculum driven decision-making and "one size fits all" Professional Development; an overemphasis on standardized testing and unintended, correlated consequences; a lack of time for teachers to collaborate on planning, differentiation and assessment, including a lack of opportunity to team teach; and a system that is based on inputs rather than competencies.

An additional problem that negatively impacts Colorado's teacher workforce is the current lack of diversity in the profession, and in the pipeline. We know many of the variables that lead to this dearth of diversity: many teachers report low job satisfaction, the low status of the profession, the low compensation and the lack of community of teachers of color. The ripple effect in the system is that many students of color, who don't see themselves represented in their teachers, are not currently interested in exploring teaching as a profession.

Additionally, we know that many teachers of color who enter into educator preparation programs do not graduate from the programs or enter the profession. As we know, COVID has exacerbated these negative attributes in the environment. Teachers are now asked to put their lives on the line for the profession. This is an increasingly difficult request for professionals who, even in pre-COVID times, experienced low job satisfaction, low status and low compensation. Additionally, the cost and time necessary to achieve credentials are reported to be a barrier for many teachers, and especially teachers of color.

Desired End State

The teaching and learning experience should be driven by the needs and interests of students, facilitated by teachers who reflect the diversity of their students, who are empowered with the autonomy they need to be viewed as the professional decision-maker for what transpires in the classroom. Students should be able to move fluidly through their educational experience in a competency-based system that allows them to progress when they are able to demonstrate proficiency. Teams of teachers collaborating together with diverse groups of students that stay together in learning pods/communities over periods of years will have the ability to design and structure the daily and year-round learning experiences for their students based upon student needs and interests. Hands-on, experiential and community-based projects will provide relevant and authentic learning experiences through which students will demonstrate their learning. Formative assessment for learning will dominate the assessment environment with appropriate standardized assessments at regular intervals to hold learners and teachers accountable for the mastery of the Colorado State Standards. Teachers working in this setting would earn compensation commensurate with the heightened responsibility and the year-round nature of the work. Working in this innovative environment will provide the autonomy, accountability, and responsibility correlated with high levels

of achievement and satisfaction among teachers and learners. Given our current system disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parents are seeking new and exciting opportunities for their children that they may not have been as open to prior to the disruption. Now is the time to think differently about our teaching and learning systems to support public education in new and exciting ways.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #1

Support Individualized Student Progression *Student Autonomy: Place, Pace, Time*

Goal: Shift focus to support different learning styles & competency based progression

State Role or Action

- A. Conduct a comprehensive review, with the goal of identifying any gaps, needs for funding and exemplars to elevate, of competency based education including the extensive body of resources developed by CDE and CEI and the assessments in use or developed through innovation zones, district efforts and CEI supported actions. Review should include available assessments, process for approving models for competency based progression through courses and grades, and supports or training resources for school leaders and educators in best practices for competency based, differentiated instruction and advancement;
- B. Through legislative action, revisit seat-time and course hour requirements to provide mastery based advancement;
- C. Through legislative action, revise ties between “count day” and school funding to shift to a “students served” model that considers other than full-time students, competency based progression, and locally developed models that impact students counted through current models;
- D. Work with IHEs, PD providers, professional associations and system leaders to develop guidelines and best practices for culturally responsive practices & those that address implicit or unconscious bias in differentiated instruction;
- E. Formalize and expand opportunities for high school students to test out of courses via IHE partnerships;
- F. Incentivize partnerships between LEAs/CMOs and IHEs to enable students to earn transferrable credits even if their school does not offer concurrent enrollment (generally or in specific course);
- G. Ensure there are no unnecessary limitations or unintended consequences for schools or students when students seek to enroll in a variety of courses across different schools and learning providers;
- H. Expand authorized uses of early college / HS year 5-6 funds and concurrent enrollment offerings for pathways to high skill careers including certificates and credentials.
- I. Expand the Innovative High School Opportunities Pilot (“seat time pilot”) so that more than the current five districts can have the same level of flexibility and freedom from tracking hours;
- J. Provide support to CDE and CDHE to ensure the continued collaboration between ECE, K-12 and Higher Ed to create seamless transitions across competency levels throughout the P-20 system(s).

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage community leaders and families to identify needs, goals and aspirations for individualized student progressions;
- B. Develop culturally responsive approaches that reflect local context in individualized progression programs;
- C. Establish partnerships to support student learning experience and interests including culturally diverse and relevant opportunities;
- D. Conduct robust outreach and engagement to solicit input, establish long-term buy-in and among stakeholders and program sustainability;

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Competency based progression: Design & offer opt-in for a program providing competency based progression through a set of courses. Could include a full “horizontal” of multiple courses in one or more grade levels or specific verticals of course sequence (e.g. language, STEM, CTE etc.).

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #2

Support Differentiated Student Assessment

Goal: Emphasis on student learning, culturally responsive education and assessment to inform instructional decisions

State Role or Action

- A. Provide support to local leaders in conducting review of assessment regimen to minimize duplicative or unnecessary legacy assessments and to incorporate local assessments of student growth and achievement;
- B. Support local officials & collaborations in the development & use of formative assessments;
- C. Expand support for CDE’s assessment unit to continue their internal work, expand support of local leaders and to convene a statewide work-group to develop best practices relating to locally developed assessments and assessment strategies including incorporation of culturally responsive elements and approaches.

Local Role or Action

- A. Support educator collaboration in the design and development of measures of student learning including formative assessments, capstone grading and other assessment strategies focused on individual learning & knowledge demonstration;
- B. Engage students, families and communities in developing best practices for the implementation and use of diverse measures of student learning;
- C. Provide professional development focused on differentiated student assessment, culturally responsive education and the use of multiple assessment approaches to inform instruction.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Formative assessments: Use of formative assessments for differentiated instruction, course pace & grading within a cohort in one or more classes or schools with possible use of capstone grading. Would be best if included significant PD + opportunities for teacher collaboration.

Fall Micro-Pilot Feature: *Dillon Valley Elementary*

ESRII supported a team of educators at Dillon Valley Elementary School in Summit County, a dual language school, who are identifying best practices in delivering culturally responsive instruction across learning environments (in-person, hybrid, and virtual), specifically focusing on how they are providing instruction to English Language Learners.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #3

Expand Teacher Empowerment for Instruction

Goal: Empower teachers to teach what, how & in ways that meets student needs.

State Role or Action

- A. Expand the support maintenance of statewide resources bank including video exemplars, coursework and other materials that teachers can draw upon and learn from for use in their classrooms including The Lab at CEI, resources for CDE to provide such supports and other statewide or regional aligned efforts;
- B. Convene a statewide task-force of educators to identify unnecessarily burdensome state (and federal) requirements or programs that limit educators' ability to tailor instruction to local, individual and classroom needs.

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage educators to identify and understand local policies, practices and systems that limit teacher autonomy or empowerment in delivering instruction that meets student needs and school context.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Resource Development Think Tank: Cohort of educators and other expert stakeholders developing and aggregating resources to support State Role Item A above.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #4

Rethink School Day, Week & Calendar

Goal: Flexibility to meet needs of students, maximize time use and address exacerbated inequities

State Role or Action

- A. Revise the single count day and full-time student standard and measure for funding based on students served;
- B. Ensure that systems allow hybrid school weeks, such as those that include in-person and remote instruction, are considered in revisions, waivers or pilots of alternative approaches to count-day.

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage families and communities to identify needs, interest and goals relating to alternative school year, week or day options to mitigate learning loss and inequities;
- B. Work with educators and professional associations to develop staffing structures, models and where appropriate, salary structures, to support alternative school year, week or days;
- C. Build on recommendations in Educator Workforce section above to create roles necessary to support alternative school year, week or day.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Adjusted Week: Build on hybrid instructional models with alternatives to Mon-Fri instruction. Could be shortened week, alternate days etc. with designated days for teacher collaboration or other activities on off days. Could also be combined w/competency based to provide targeted support to students at differing levels.

Learning Blocks: Program to allow students to go “in depth” on limited number of courses for shorter periods vs. all courses for a full semester.

Non-Agrarian Calendar: Opt-in track developed with community to offer school calendar that replaces extended summer break with shorter breaks throughout the year.

Summer School or Other Out of School Programs: Incorporate summer school, winter break or afternoon blocks after regular school day as options or part of reconfigured school year.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #5

Expand use of Learning Pods

Goal: Provide equitable access to additional learning time & opportunities

State Role or Action

- A. Through legislative action, establish standards, agency authority for oversight and guidelines including for equitable access and staffing requirements (e.g. licensure) of Learning Pods when provided by or using any district funds or resources;
- B. Share best practices, exemplars and provide support to districts, CMOs or communities providing or exploring the use of learning pods to supplement in-school and/or remote instruction;
- C. Explore and determine in partnership with involved stakeholders, the need for licensing or other professional standards for adult roles in managing, hosting or providing instruction through learning pods.

Local Role or Action

- A. Engage community to identify needs, goals and interest in learning pods;
- B. Collaborate with community partners to develop programs with emphasis on equitable access and responsiveness to community needs;
- C. Work with educators to establish opportunities for support or leadership of learning pods.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Existing learning pods and variations of the approach all present learning opportunities including Edgewater, Adams 12 and others. There may be additional opportunities to learn from graduating high school students to gather their perspectives.

Comprehensive Teaching & Learning Pilot

Combined Strategy Pilot: Establish a multi-age, competency-based cohort of students and teachers that would extend over time. Team teaching would include collaboration, student and teacher designed learning experiences, formative assessments. The pod could be led by a diverse workforce and would allow teachers the flexibility to make decisions.

Fall Micro-Pilot Feature: *Edgewater Collective*

Edgewater Collective, a community nonprofit in Jefferson County, established “pathway pods” as an inclusive, equitable way for students in their community to receive tutoring and after-school enrichment opportunities during the COVID disruption. Edgewater has a long-term vision of developing a pathway into education careers for high-school students who are employed at EC as tutors, and we provided funding to support capacity-building and supports to ensure tutors have a meaningful experience and opportunities to learn more about careers in education.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #6

Expand Course Offerings & Access by Removing Geographic/Institution Limitations

Goal: Expand courses available to students and increase equity of access

State Role or Action

- A. Establish, through legislative action, a funding mechanism to ensure that student home districts are not penalized and other providers of courses are appropriately compensated or funded.

Local Role or Action

- A. Identify courses that could be offered to students enrolled in other school systems and the process for enabling their participation;
- B. Conduct a gap analysis to identify courses that may be of interest to students that are not currently offered by the district or CMO;
- C. Establish partnerships with other districts based on mapping of courses and gaps in offerings to ensure maximum access for all students.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Regional and Cross Region Collaboratives: Collaboration among districts, IHEs and non-profits to conduct course offering and gap analysis, map complementary offerings and establish partnerships to provide additional course access to students.

TEACHER TRAINING & SUPPORTS

The Problems We are Working To Solve

As we re-envision both how Colorado's educator workforce is structured, and propose shifts in teaching and learning aimed at injecting a new urgency around equity, we need to think through the implications for how we:

- Bring individuals into the teaching profession, and
- Continuously provide authentic professional development that improves teaching practice and focuses on the following buckets of need:
 - Strong supports for teacher wellness and mental health in both prep and ongoing PD/induction
 - Competency-based opportunities for growth,
 - Peer-led and supported
 - Incentives for roles such as mentoring that align with differentiated pathways into leadership roles in classrooms, schools, and districts that move beyond "administration only"
 - Partnerships/collaborations focused on improving school performance through teacher efficacy.

Desired End State

Closing the connection gaps between teacher preparation programs and districts: We envision an ecosystem/end state where each of Colorado's 178 school districts has an intentional, collaborative partnership with a CO institute of higher education, and an alternative licensure provider, that includes multiple avenues into teacher licensure that are driven by community needs, education workforce goals, and aligned to local priorities/strategic goals around building a strong bench for local ed. workforce needs.

Strengthening Teacher Professional Development Supports: Broadly speaking, we want to construct a more holistically supported system of PD for educators - including self-directed, job-embedded, competency-based learning opportunities that are meaningful for educators (ie, not just a piece of paper) - and that provides flexibility of delivery for individual growth, to ensure that educators are getting the proper exposure/training/connections to the world that they are preparing students for, in ways that make sense for who they are as individuals, where they are in their careers, and what their future goals are. These could be higher-ed based opportunities; district-based/embedded PD; include an increased focus on micro-credentials delivered in partnership with industries; and in additional creative ways.

We envision a statewide network of PD focused on the different regions of the that includes opportunities for both local and statewide learning networks, PLCs, and the like to support continued professional growth, increase connections between educator affinity groups, and support best practice sharing both within and across systems.

We believe that the arc of development for teacher prep is a shared responsibility between prep providers and districts - a continuum from preparation through teacher induction that can be strengthened through a renewed focus on growth vs. compliance when designing an integrated and symbiotic “handoff” of supports for emerging educators from their prep program to their district-based induction.

Last, we believe that these newly imagined and diverse supports for educators will help to better sustain them within the profession so that they can focus on what’s most important - teaching students and leading classrooms in order to provide every student with high-quality educational experiences that are meaningful to them and set them up for success once they graduate from the system.

Teacher Training & Supports Recommendation #1

Strengthen Ed Prep Program <-> District/CMO Partnerships

Goal: Ensure every school system has a higher ed / ed prep partner

State Role or Action

- A. Through legislative action, provide funding to support induction including support for local efforts and to CDE to provide and disseminate recommendations for what makes a high-quality induction program for all participating teachers including guidance/resources to support induction plans with a growth orientation (vs. compliance driven).
- B. Expand efforts to connect and foster collaborative partnerships between educator preparation programs and districts.

Local Role or Action

- A. Identify and publicize any and all teacher preparation pathways active within each district - including both higher ed and alternative licensure – in order to provide clarity and transparency into teacher pipeline development efforts, identify any potential gaps/needs, and ultimately to adequately and sustainably build a bench of new educators to meet community needs;
- B. Re-think Teacher Induction to ensure quality control of what’s offered and the ability to help new teachers and support them with wraparound services.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Learning Opportunities

There are several existing programs in the state that effectively bring new talent into the teaching profession We should, as a coalition and eco-system, continue to learn from the these (and others statewide and national examples).

Potential Pilots

Expanded State Supported Induction PLCs: In addition to the formal review and approval of local induction programs, CDE supports local program staff through regional professional learning communities (PLCs) and resources based on current research. CDE hosted one virtual PLC meeting and two in-person PLC meetings in spring 2020. More than 100 individuals attended these PLC meetings combined, representing 48 districts, 4

BOCES and 13 charter schools. Professional learning communities' participants engage in collaborative problem-solving and sharing of best practices.

Workgroup on Clinical Experience Pay: Convening a statewide group encompassing EPPs/LEAs to address ways that they can partner to find creative ways to ensure that candidates are paid for clinical field experiences in order to 1) Identify efficiencies that new models can surface so that programs are less expensive and candidates can receive funding for their clinical experiences and 2) identify the gap that needs to be met.

Pathways into Teaching Profession: Convening a statewide group encompassing EPPs/LEAs, and local/state workforce entities to a) identify creative partnerships to ensure teacher candidates have equitable access to paid clinical field experiences; b) identify ways prep models can efficiently transition to models that are less costly for candidates (cost savings = funding for clinical experiences); and c) identify the gap that needs to be met and design process for meeting existing needs.

Prep to Induction Continuum: Design an updated and tightly integrated handoff from a EPP to district induction to a) identify outcomes from prep program that align/overlap with district induction plans for Y1; b) identify clear role(s) for both EPP/district in both final year of prep/1st year of induction aligned toward how to best support graduating students in making the transition to the teaching profession.

Build upon existing supports for rural educators: Design a program that builds on the support of Rural Teaching Fellowship stipend as outlined in HB18-1002 or the incentives and opportunities of SB18-085 which provides financial incentives for educators in rural districts. The Rural Teaching Fellows program) provides \$10,000 scholarships for teacher candidates, with 50% of the funding coming from CDHE and 50% matched by the candidate's IHE or rural district *and a number of districts have utilized aspects of SB18-085 to support "grow your own" programs.*

Incentives for EPP/LEA Partnerships: Develop an incentive-based mechanism to drive deeper partnerships and collaboration between LEAs/EPPs (ex: providing seed funding to LEAs with specific/entrenched teacher shortage challenges to develop partnerships with EPPs)

Creative Partnerships: Look to identify ways EPPs/industry can partner to foster opportunities for partnerships to drive increased participation in teacher prep programs for candidates to teach specific and in-demand endorsement areas.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #2

Establish Online/Virtual Communities of Practice (LEAs, IHEs, EPPs)

Goal: Provide opportunities for teams of teachers to collaborate with a focus on peer feedback for learning and growth of practice.

State Role or Action

- A. Work with IHEs and other EPPs to expand statewide online communities of practice (COPs) including an advisory committee to identify COP topic interests among educators, future educators, school leaders and other school support personnel;

- B. Provide resources for CDE and CDHE to actively engage with and support COPs including participation of Department personnel, PD resources and national best practices and exemplars.

Local Role or Action

- A. Promote COPs discussed above and encourage participation by staff including identifying on-the-clock time for engaging with COPs as part of professional development;
- B. Collaborate across LEA/CMO, BOCES and other networks to create virtual COPs/PLCs to supplement those discussed above and/or until their establishment.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Statewide, online PLCs: Groups composed of early career teachers, alt. teachers, induction participants, SSPs, mentors. To strengthen and encourage participation, explore opportunities to provide mini-grants or stipends to participating educators.

Fall Micro-Pilot Feature: *Periscope Project*

ESRII provided funding to support a partnership between La Veta and Aguilar School Districts - adjacent, rural school districts in Southern Colorado - intended to improve both districts by providing educators opportunities to work together and learn with and from one another.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #3

Strengthen Connection between EPP/PD & Evolving Economy/Workforce

Goal: Help teachers better understand the world they are preparing students to enter

State Role or Action

- A. Establish, in collaboration with the Governor, CDE, CDHE, DOLA, OEDIT, other state leaders, early colleges and organizations such as CareerWise, a “Preparing Students for Jobs of the Future” advisory council (or sub-group of existing council(s)) to advise PD providers and EPPs and to foster partnerships between school systems and employers;
- B. Create a statewide database, accessible by local system leaders, of private sector, non-profit and government employers who are willing to partner with local educators to provide “externships” for educators, to visit schools or otherwise partner with schools and school systems to help new and veteran educators better understand the world in which they are preparing students to succeed.

Local Role or Action

- A. Create opportunities for educators to network with and spend time with local or regional employers and other leaders to better understand future workforce dynamics;
- B. Designate a district staff person to establish and maintain employer relationships both for career partnerships for students *and* for educator-employer partnerships.
- C. Identify opportunities for educator and school leader participation in community workforce conversations;
- D. Actively invite and engage local and regional employers to participate in school system conversations beyond career pathways to foster close partnerships and feedback systems.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Upskilling Educator Workforce Workgroup. Pilot and/or working group to establish best practices for creating partnerships in co-design between K-12, Higher Ed, and industry including examination of:

- i) What are building blocks of programs/partnerships that sets everyone up for success?
- ii) How do you identify all players to get them all to the table?
- iii) What does it take to have a teacher "ready" to be a part of this work (*student-->career pathways that do not include teachers have a gap that we need to understand better*)
- iv) How to embed *mentorship* (for students/teachers/industry?) as we know mentoring is a key component

Learn from Existing Partnership Models: Identify skill attainment and industry awareness programs outside of education that could be built upon to develop opportunities for educators. Partnerships such as the Space Round Table, which includes opportunities for educators to participate in externships could be a model for additional public-private partnerships to provide teachers experience in the state's primary workforce sectors.

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #4

Invest in Mentoring as PD for Teachers & Leaders

Goal: Strengthen Educator Practice & Expand Career Pathway Opportunities

State Role or Action

- A. Invest and expand upon successful programs such as [Principal Leadership Institute](#), and invest in developing teacher mentors via [Mentor Teacher Endorsement](#) throughout the state;
- B. Establish incentives within the teaching profession for educators to gain peer mentoring skills, earn mentoring endorsement, move up on career ladder based on developing these competencies (unrelated to an admin. license) and provide support to CDE's ongoing efforts to maintain and support CDE's Mentor Resource Bank;
- C. Work with IHEs and other stakeholders to ensure access for all educators to Mentor Teacher courses and professional development.

Local Role or Action

- A. Explore ways to provide stipends for mentor teachers and other incentives through local budget, ballot measures, philanthropic or other grants;
- B. Establish partnerships between districts/BOCES and IHEs/nonprofits to leverage growth of mentor teacher development to meet local and regional needs. Consider opportunities for all educators within and across systems – from novice teachers to master teachers – to collaborate and engage in reflective practice, have productive conversations focused on solving problems and improving outcomes for all students.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Teacher Mentor Role: Pathway within profession for experienced educators, or recently retired teachers/leaders, to serve as a mentor to alternative and early career teachers. Intent should be

providing a pathway for skills development/career advancement separate from administration. Would ideally include financial incentives embedded (stipends, pathway to mentor endorsement for teachers; matching funds for districts)

Virtual PLCs for Mentor Skills development: Paired with above, development of regional/statewide PLCs for mentor capacity development and connection

Principal Learning Institute (PLC structure): Facilitated, virtual PLC for new and emerging school leaders; individual mentorship and support for principals; inter-regional collaborations and expansion for sustainability; aligned w/ and major component of Principal Induction Program

Partnerships between LEAs/BOCES, IHEs, and nonprofits to leverage growth of mentor teacher development: Developing mentor teacher capacity, especially in rural areas with critical workforce needs, is essential both for increasing teacher retention and for providing practicing educators with skills and leadership opportunities beyond pathways into administration. Pilots/partnerships with an emphasis on mentor skills development provide a wide latitude of benefits across school systems and foster greater collaboration between districts, universities, and nonprofits/workforce centers.

Online, local/statewide PLCs: For mentor teachers and school leaders, particularly those in rural/isolated communities where opportunities to connect/grow alongside peers need strengthening/additional supports

Teaching & Learning Recommendation #5

Invest in Mental Health Supports for Educators & Students

Goal: Improve educator retention & practice; Support students' mental health needs

State Role or Action

- A. Elevate awareness of CDE's [SEL Remote Learning Resources](#) and provide resources for CDE to support local efforts to adapt, adopt and implement based on local needs and context;
- B. Convene statewide workgroup on best practices and resources for supporting both educator and student mental health;
- C. Maintain a resource bank of mental health related professional development courses, resources for educators (and other employees) and trainings for local leaders including [The Hub](#), [Colorado Crisis Services](#) and others and increase awareness of these among local leaders and educators.

Local Role or Action

- A. Prioritize and emphasize improved mental health supports for teachers, students, and families;
- B. Provide professional development for teachers, district/school leaders around SEL and trauma-informed practices for educators and students;
- C. Ensure access to no-cost and accessible mental health support services for educators (in-building or otherwise);
- D. Explore ways to include self-awareness and advocacy into coursework in educator preparation to support emerging educators developing skills such as boundary setting, self-advocacy, creating work/life balance, understanding group dynamics, and tools for navigating difficult conversations.

As part, explore overlap or possible amendment to include in Behavioral Health Requirements under SB 20-1312.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

Expanding Partnerships and Opportunities to Address Wellness for Teachers and Students: Invest in and/or develop additional programs such as DU’s Center for Rural School Health and Education and other rural peer-assisted network models that focus on comprehensive health and wellness planning and implementation in schools.

Fall Micro-Pilot Feature: *Mental Health*

ESRII partnered with the Colorado Education Association on a series of focus groups with practicing teachers to understand both the effect of the COVID-19 disruption on their mental health, and produced a report with our findings.

OTHER SYSTEM CHANGES

In the course of the ESRII coalition's work, members identified a variety of needs for system-level change or opportunities to broadly support the vision of the ESRII work that fell outside the current three focus areas of the initiative. A number of those may become areas of exploration in 2021. Two specific ideas are timely and sufficiently relevant that we include them here and urge state and local leaders to consider taking action on them along with the recommendations in each focus area.

Other System Changes Recommendation #1

Support Locally Developed Transparency & Performance Systems

Goal: Empower families, communities & school systems to establish locally developed frameworks of school performance

State Role or Action

- A. Revisit, amend as needed and fully fund the intent of SB10-204 to support a local accountability system grant program to supplement the state accountability system that may include additional indicators of student success other than those in the state performance framework. Programs or efforts should build upon and springboard from existing programs rather than duplicate them;
- B. Provide support to local officials & community leaders in convening groups of educators, families and other stakeholders to develop a local accountability or performance system that provides transparency to families while reflecting local context;
- C. Provide resources, best practices and instruments or tools for assessing various measures of student success as identified and measured at the local level.

Local Role or Action

- A. Convene a broad, diverse group of stakeholders including educators, school leaders, parents and other members of the community to develop measures of student success framework;
- B. Identify needs, resources and tools for measuring the items identified in A above.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

LEA Developed Performance Framework: District development of alternative performance framework through convening of stakeholder group to identify community priorities for data collection, measures of success and school performance;

Multi-System Cohort Framework: Build on the S-CAP approach of six rural districts who are using school review processes to provide feedback based on the interests and needs of communities. Cohorts could include geographically contiguous cohorts or cohorts based on district and student population profiles;

Statewide Cohort & Workgroup: Statewide cohort that could leverage S-CAP, the consortium of alternative education campuses (AEC) doing aligned work and national efforts to identify, explore efficacy, challenges and strengths of various measures. Outcome could be a report on the various measures and a statewide resource-bank of measures and tools for their use.

Other System Changes Recommendation #2

Explore Non-State Budget Funds including Federal COVID Relief Funds, Private Sector & Philanthropic Collaboration to Drive Innovation

Goal: Support innovations in approaches to teaching/learning, structure of the educator workforce & training/support of educators.

State Role or Action

- A. Utilize federal COVID-19 relief funds including the RISE Fund to support innovations in competency based progression, alternative school week or year approaches and other individualized, community driven approaches to K-12 education;
- B. Convene private sector and philanthropic leaders to discuss establishing an incentive grant program to the innovations discussed above;
- C. Direct grant officers in the Executive Branch, in CDE and other state offices to explore all federal grant programs in and outside of education that could be used to support the innovations discussed in A above and elsewhere in this report.

Local Role or Action

- A. Support state efforts to secure federal, private sector and philanthropic funds.

Potential Pilots, Field Studies, Learning Opportunities

N/A

NEXT STEPS

ESRII members are excited to share this report and the recommendations contained in it with state and local leaders. The group is optimistic about the potential for sustainable change, to improve student outcomes, address many of the inequities that have been exacerbated by the COVID system interruption and to elevate the teaching profession through changes that can improve teacher retention while also contributing to reducing the teacher shortage in Colorado.

Although the changes recommended in this report are at the system level, how individuals act on them will be critical to success in achieving the goals and end-state identified by ESRII members. For this reason, members have unanimously expressed their desire to continue working as a group.

In the months ahead, ESRII intends to:

- Develop guidance and best practices for implementing the recommendations in this report;
- Provide technical support to members and others implementing the recommendations;
- Support a second cohort of pilots and field studies to test and learn from different strategies, structures and approaches to acting on the recommendations;
- Continue and expand engagement with state and local leaders and organizations studying, supporting and advancing system-level changes in education;
- Explore local and state progress in the group's areas of focus to engage in a continuous cycle of learning and of informing actions by state and local leaders.

ABOUT US

Keystone & PEBC's History of Success

Keystone and PEBC have a proven track-record of partnering to tackle significant policy issues and areas of practice in education. Most recently the two organizations collaborated to lead the Colorado Educator Preparation Innovation Coalition (CO EduPIC). CO EduPIC convened key stakeholders involved with the training, employment and support of new teachers together with educators, experts in the field, government leaders and business leaders in a multi-phase initiative. These stakeholders began meeting in the fall of 2015 in an effort to improve classroom readiness of new teachers and strengthen the teacher pipeline through innovation, autonomy & accountability. CO EduPIC's work led to multiple pilots of new partnerships between education preparation providers (EPPs) and school systems focused on improving the classroom readiness of new teachers and strengthening the relationship between EPPs and schools. Funded by local philanthropic organizations including The Denver Foundation and Rose Foundation, the \$250,000 supported CO EduPIC's work that led to the passage of HB 1189 which provided \$600,000 in funding to expand residency pilots and CO EduPIC members developed pilots received more than \$500,000 from federal and other grants, a return on investment of more than **5x the support received from the philanthropic community**. As importantly, the work of CO EduPIC led directly to legislation to expand and improve teacher pathways while creating an ongoing form of collaboration among EPPs statewide for the first time in state history. CO EduPIC continues to convene stakeholders and has now expanded its scope to explore early career supports and induction.

About Keystone

The [Keystone Policy Center](#) and the [Center for Education Policy](#) (Keystone and the CFEP) have been at the forefront of efforts to expand access to quality education, improve student outcomes, and plan for the challenges of an evolving global economy. [For the past 15 years, Keystone has partnered](#) with government agencies, communities, and stakeholders to develop planning and response strategies for disruptive events like natural disasters and pandemics.

The Keystone Policy Center was founded in 1975 by Robert W. Craig — a visionary, scholar, and mountaineering legend — to independently facilitate the resolution of national policy conflicts. Today, the Keystone Policy Center leads the ascent as a trusted guide in surmounting policy obstacles. An independent, not-for-profit organization, we bring together public, private, and civic sector leaders who have diverse perspectives but share a common desire to find lasting solutions to significant policy problems. Keystone does not advocate for any single position; rather, we help groups unearth a line of sight from contention to collective action. In this age of polarized debate on nearly every major topic in public policy, we offer a refreshing yet proven blueprint for progress. Over the past 40 years, Keystone has built a portfolio of substantive work in energy, environment, education, health, and agriculture. Keystone has accomplished this work with a series of complementary approaches that reflect the diverse strategies utilized in leadership and successful issue resolution.

About PEBC

PEBC strives to create schools and systems worthy of our children. Forged in Denver nearly four decades ago, the Public Education & Business Coalition represents a convergence of stakeholders keen to uplift learning opportunities for each and every student. Today, PEBC collaborates with teachers, schools and districts nationwide catalyzing high quality instruction. PEBC's origins date back to 1983 and the release of the Nation At Risk report by The National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Commission believed that the public education system was failing to meet the national need for a competitive workforce. With funding from the Ford Foundation, several communities created local education funds to concentrate efforts on quality teaching initiatives.

Initially PEBC's focus was on supporting teachers with literacy and reading comprehension instructional practices. In 1997 PEBC staff published the ground-breaking book *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop* which drew thousands of teachers to Denver wanting to work with and observe PEBC staff applying literacy best practices in their own classrooms. The organization expanded its efforts to coach teachers nationally, and created its highly-respected PEBC Lab Classrooms. In 2004 PEBC expanded its focus to include professional learning in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) instructional best practices and launched the PEBC Teacher Residency program (formerly the Boettcher Teacher Residency merged with Stanley Teacher Prep in 2015). Today, PEBC has grown into an organization with an unrivaled reputation for its teacher residency programs, professional development model, its publications, and the expertise of its staff. PEBC is headquartered in Denver, CO, and works both locally and nationally. Its Board is comprised of business executives, school superintendents and a variety of community and professional organizations.

Attachment A: ESRII Membership

A multi-discipline, diverse stakeholder group helped to shape the recommendations in this document and support the outputs from the process. The partial list of participants included below is intended only as a representation of the diversity of voices included and is not a complete list of all participants nor is it intended as a formal endorsement by any organization.

Partial List of Participating Individuals

Sen. Bob Rankin	Colorado State Senator, District 8
Rep. Julie McCluskie	Colorado State Representative, District 61
Dr. Katy Anthes	Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education
Dr. Angie Paccione	Executive Director, Colorado Department of Higher Education
Angelika Schroeder	Chair, Colorado State Board of Education
Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser	President & CEO, Colorado Mountain College
Amie Baca-Oehlert	President, Colorado Education Association
Rebecca F. Holmes	President & CEO, Colorado Education Initiative
Karolina Villagrana	Educator
Kendra Carpenter	Dillon Valley Elementary School, Principal
Bree Jones	Superintendent, La Veta School District
Frank Reeves	Superintendent, East Grand School District #2
Wendy Wyman	Executive Director, Mountain BOCES
Bret Miles	Executive Director, Colorado Association of School Executives
Cheri Wrench	Executive Director, Colorado Association of School Boards
Jesus Escarcega	Co-Chair CO Assoc. for Latino/a Administrators and Superintendents
Harvey Rude	Director, Colorado Center for Rural Education
Liz Qualman	Director of Teacher Education, Colorado Mountain College
Landon Pirius	Vice Chancellor for Academic & Student Affairs, CO Community College System
Dr. Brittany Lane	Director of Educator Preparation, CO Department of Higher Education
Leslie Colwell	Vice President, Education Initiatives, Colorado Children's Campaign
Mark Sass	Colorado Executive Director Teach Plus
Dan Schaller	President, Colorado League of Charter Schools
Lee Wheeler-Berliner	Managing Director, Colorado Workforce Development Council
Dana Sorensen	Sr. Director of Professional Learning, PEBC
Kellie Lauth	CEO & President MindSpark Learning
Judy Perez	CEO, iLearn Collaborative
Annette Konoske-Graf	Senior Program Manager, TEACH Colorado
Mark Tapy	Apprenticeship Program Manager, Pinnacol Assurance
Lorne A Jenkins	CEO of Mini Money Management
Harris Rollinger	Volunteer, Energize Colorado
John Farnam	Chief of Staff, Morgridge Family Foundation

Attachment B: Fall 2020 Micro-Pilots & Field Studies

None of these micro-pilots and field studies would be possible without the participants and leaders of each who gave of their time and the generous support of the Gates Family Foundation and the Boettcher Foundation.

<u>Stream of Inquiry</u>	<u>Pilot Partner/Project Description</u>	<u>Pilot Discoveries</u>
Educator Workforce	<p><i>Edgewater Collective - Pathway Pods</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESRII provided funding to Edgewater Collective (EC), a community nonprofit in Jefferson County, to support EC's "pathway pods" as an inclusive, equitable way for students in their community to receive tutoring and after-school enrichment opportunities during the COVID disruption. • Edgewater has a long-term vision of developing a pathway into education careers for high-school students who are employed at EC as tutors • Funding supported capacity-building and materials to ensure tutors have a meaningful experience and opportunities to learn more about careers in education. 	<p>Micro Pilot Report</p> <p>Takeaways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC built an online tutoring program to support students and families in a virtual after-school environment • Working toward implementing an "Acceleration Academy" in summer 2021 to help students begin to catch up in math and literacy • EC plans to create opportunities for HS tutors to co-lead lessons in elementary classrooms in the spring semester, so they can experience what it is like to be a teacher. The hope is that these experiences and the time to reflect on them with teacher coaches will provide an opportunity for high school students to imagine themselves as teachers one day. • EC looks to build additional experiences to help these high school students discern what the teacher pathway to college and back looks like and provide them the resources to succeed.
Teaching & Learning	<p><i>Dillon Valley Elementary School - How to Ensure Access to High Quality Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Learner Instruction During a Disruption</i></p> <p>ESRII provided stipends for 4 teachers at Dillon Valley Elementary to support digging into a problem of practice:</p>	<p>Micro Pilot Report</p> <p>Takeaways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student ownership of their own learning drove this project • Increased ownership led to greater awareness and focus to their work • Teachers noted an increased awareness of the 5 language domains (listening, speaking,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices in delivering culturally responsive instruction across learning environments (remote, in-person, hybrid) • The teachers focused on bringing language awareness to students and noting the impact it had on their learning 	reading, writing, metacognition) among students
Training & Supporting Great Teachers	<p>Mental Health Focus Groups</p> <p>ESRII, in partnership with the Colorado Education Association, hired a facilitator to conduct educator focus groups with teachers from communities throughout the state in order to better understand educator mental health challenges/needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total of 3 focus groups with broad cross-section of educators across Colorado's school districts (~22 teachers in 3 different focus groups, representing urban, suburban and rural school districts) • Gain better understanding of teacher mental health needs in this current moment 	<p>Micro Pilot Report</p> <p>Takeaways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reacting to the pandemic teachers are anxious, stressed and experiencing mental health challenges • No one felt prepared for the challenges of teaching in a pandemic • Identified need for additional mental health supports in schools for teachers and students, especially in rural communities. • Additional points of emphasis were suggestions for professionalism and self-awareness coursework in Ed. Prep Programs, to support development of skills in self-advocacy, boundary setting, group dynamics, and holding difficult conversations
Training & Supporting Great Teachers	<p>Periscope Project - La Veta School District and Generation Schools Network</p> <p>Part of the Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP)</p> <p>ESRII provided funding to support a partnership between La Veta and Aguilar School Districts - adjacent, rural school districts in Southern Colorado - intended to improve both schools by providing educators opportunities to</p>	<p>Report (<i>Expected Spring 2020 to allow for project completion</i>); some initial findings include:</p> <p>These opportunities for cross-district collaboration have resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater confidence among educators; an increased sense of belonging & motivation for educators; higher expectations and greater aspirations among educators and for students; and the

	<p>work together and learn with and from one another by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring alternate perspectives through peer observations; sharing ideas, strategies, tools, and resources; engaging in reflective practice and providing one another contextual feedback; having productive conversations focused on solving wicked problems and improving outcomes for all students. • Funding is also intended to support the buildout of a peer network among teachers in additional school districts that already participate in S-CAP, establishing and driving three job-alike peer networks across 14 S-CAP school districts January-June 2020 	<p>beginnings of more project-based, student-led learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators have built relationships with peers who understand their context and their challenges – the peer network reduces rural isolation and builds <u>professional capital</u> (comprised of human, social, and decisional capital) <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to build effective relationships quickly, use time intentionally, function in a virtual world, and measure progress towards explicitly stated goals. <p>Spring 2020 Project Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This micro-pilot will establish and drive three job alike peer networks across 14 S-CAP school districts January – June 2021.
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