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Introduction

The November 13 meeting completes a six month public process that gathered input to for Colorado's Race to the Top (RT2) application. This process invited input from across the state and involved at least fifteen public meetings, the participation of hundreds of members of the public (including a strong student voice), and opportunities for people to engage on-line. Four committees, as well as two affinity groups, will be providing you with their "Big Ideas" for inclusion in the application. These groups are:

- Turning around low-performing schools
- Longitudinal data systems
- Great teachers and leaders
- Standards and assessments
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) affinity group
- Early childhood education (ECE) affinity group

On November 13 the chairs from each of the committees will have approximately five minutes to summarize their work for you followed by a five minute questioning period (affinity groups will have half that amount of time). This document summarizes their "Big Ideas," provides some implications from those ideas, and suggests questions that you might want to ask.

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

Co-Chairs

- Monte Moses from Cherry Creek Public Schools (retired)
- Jesus Salazar from Credera (a business and technology consulting firm)
- Jeanette Cornier from Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

This group focused its recommendations around the moral imperative create a system that ensures there are no chronically low performing schools in Colorado by the end of R2T.

Big ideas are:

1. Human Capital: Invest R2T funding to develop a "Turnaround Corps" of educators that have the knowledge and skills to quickly reform schools
2. Knowledge Management: Invest R2T funding to develop a system that gives real time feedback to students and educators, and documents what works and what does not
3. Extended and Improved Instruction: Invest in low-performing schools to extend instructional time and to develop a portfolio of successful approaches to changing student outcomes in these schools

In application these ideas could mean:

- Developing a weighted student funding system where additional resources are attached to students in and from low-performing schools
- Providing incentives for people to work in turnaround schools including financial incentives, good working conditions, and intellectual stimulation
- Increased student involvement in governance, evaluation, and communications
- Increased school autonomy with increased accountability – fail fast/succeed faster

Great Teachers and Leaders

Chairs:

- George Sparks from the Museum of Nature and Science
- Nina Lopez from CDE

This group operated from the perspective that great teachers are fundamental to achieving the ultimate goal: student achievement.

Big ideas are:

1. Use data and standards to drive continuous improvement of the system and its people
2. Expect, measure and reward student achievement at the individual and team level

In application continuous improvement could mean:

- Evaluation that ties personal development needs to professional development plan
- Develop statewide criteria and rating systems for measuring the impact of professional development programs
- Teacher education programs and school districts share a common set of teaching standards and a common assessment framework for teacher evaluation

In application expecting, measuring and rewarding student achievement could mean:

- Leverage incentives to produce large numbers of effective teachers in hard to staff schools and subjects and retain them in these positions long enough to make a difference for ALL students and the school environment
- Providing financial bonuses for teams in a building that achieve exceptional student growth
- Incorporating 360 reviews (peers, principals, parents and students) into teacher evaluation

Longitudinal Data Systems

Co-chairs:

- Annette Quintana from Istonish (a technology talent and IT consulting firm)
- Rich Wenning from CDE

This group operated from the perspective that students, parents/guardians, and educators will interact with technology in very different ways in the next 5 years. We should build a system that will be robust and agile, accommodating all their future needs.

Big Ideas:

1. Longitudinal data system tools are central to education reform: high quality data systems improve educational practice and provide people with a clearer picture of where to focus their efforts.

2. Transforming the culture of technology use in education: technology is not just as a tool for compliance but also as an enabler for improving student performance.
3. Return on Investment: A high quality data system is about accountability, outcomes, and returns on investment, helping us pinpoint successes and challenges.

In application this could mean:

- A longitudinal data system capability to support student progress, data exchange, data matching, reporting to stakeholders, portability, business intelligence, and predictive indicators
- State offers core system functionality and data standards that districts can build upon and develop systems that allow linkages between student and teachers data.
- State implements performance management/continuous improvement data systems to guide decision-making such as “early warning indicators” for student interventions
- State provides efficient and innovative support and professional development model to equip system users with tools to effectively use the data
- User-friendly system that includes a state-wide data warehouse and information displays that have role-based security and robust search capability

Standards and Assessments

Co-Chairs

- Michael Hancock, Denver City Council District 11
- Jo O’Brien from CDE

This group operated from the perspective that Colorado’s new standards and assessments should be rooted in the principle of “fewer, clearer and higher” and encompasses 21st century skills (critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction and invention).

Big ideas:

1. Coherence: standards and assessments are linked to curriculum and instruction that engage educators, parents, and most importantly, students.
2. Formative: scoring criteria (i.e., rubrics) are widely publicized so expectations are well understood by students, teachers and parents and assessments gauge individual student growth.
3. Mastery: student progression through educational system is based on satisfying explicit mastery of clear standards and skills.
4. Relevance: the main purpose of rigorous assessments is so students can monitor the progress of their own learning against well-defined learning progressions.

In application this could mean:

- Real-time computer aided assessment technology provides real-time feedback that allows rapid responses to student needs
- Multiple opportunities for assessments to demonstrate mastery throughout the year using multiple formats
- Emphasis on competency not seat-time
- Mix-method approach to assessments incorporating group collaboration and online formats
- Open-source curriculum knowledge platform to support educators

Early Childhood Education Affinity Group

This group was organized and managed by:

- Elizabeth Groginsky from the Office of the Lt. Governor.

This group operated from the perspective that quality preschool and full-day kindergarten are some of the strongest interventions to turn around a low-performing schools and improve student achievement.

Big ideas :

1. Offer full-day Colorado Pre-school Program (CPP) and full day kindergarten for all CPP and Head Start students.
2. Require low-performing schools and/or low-performing school districts to adopt an existing evidence-based early childhood parent education program (e.g. home visitation, early literacy).
3. Create a statewide Early Childhood Teaching and Coaching Network to improve the quality of CPP and Head Start teacher-child interactions
4. Create incentives for school districts to develop an intentional collaborative between four-year higher education institutions and high-quality early care and education (ECE) centers to research and support implementation of the new preschool and kindergarten model content standards
5. Implement a comprehensive early childhood data system that includes a student identifier.
6. Professional development to P-3 teachers throughout the state.

Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education

This group was organized and managed by

- Carole Basile from the University of Colorado Denver and the Colorado STEM Network.

It operated mainly through an on-line network (Google Groups).

The group believes that STEM education is crucial to Colorado's workforce development, economic development, quality of life, and supports a civil society.

Big ideas are:

1. Organizational infrastructure that informs and connects the STEM initiatives through: advocacy, promotion and support, and communication
2. A knowledge platform that provides access to all students and teachers to on-going opportunities to learn from, observe, and participate in the innovations and scientific discoveries that are happening in Colorado's national laboratories, research institutions, businesses, and industry
3. Partnerships to support family STEM activities (i.e. STEM days, family nights at the museum) utilizing a community "Even Start Model" through providers such as schools, after-school programs, child care providers, or informal organizations
4. Improving P-20 educator "connected knowledge" of career pathways, resources, and understanding of STEM as it applies to workforce readiness