

April 13, 2010

Commissioner Dwight Jones
Colorado Department of Education

Commissioner Jones:

I was very disappointed to learn of your *Denver Post* guest commentary supporting Senator Michael Johnston's "Educator Effectiveness" bill. I was surprised to see how closely you linked the legislation to the pending success of Colorado's Phase 2 Race to the Top application. Your commentary seems to suggest you have given up on the strong collaboration with teachers and the Colorado Education Association that was a centerpiece in Phase 1.

The CEA has been a committed partner in Colorado's Race to the Top process and application since the beginning of the work. Colorado was one of the few states that had a union representative on a state team interviewing in Washington D.C. in mid-March. CEA's Director of Teaching and Learning Linda Barker worked tirelessly with the Colorado team to present a product that would move our public education system forward.

The CEA has been engaged in the educator effectiveness conversation for several years. We have taken leadership roles in shaping legislation to create the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, the educator identifier system, the longitudinal growth model, the TELL survey, and stipends to reward teachers with National Board Certification. Most of these efforts were done in collaboration with your department. In December, we worked with Governor Ritter and your staff to create the Governor's Educator Effectiveness Council focused on creating a definition of educator effectiveness and a new educator evaluation system that will be used to make high-stakes decisions about teacher employment and compensation.

The Governor's Council was a major component of the Race to the Top Phase I application and was applauded by the USDOE reviewers. Now that the Phase 1 results have been released, it has become fashionable to label the CEA as the scapegoat for the state's 14th place finish. Your *Denver Post* commentary shows that you have joined Senator Johnston on the bandwagon of blaming teachers and their professional association for Colorado's Race to the Top shortfall, instead of focusing on all areas of the state application that need improvement for Phase 2.

Rumors have been circulating for several days that the state does not need our Association's support for Phase 2 success. Senator Johnston has contributed to this in comments made in the *Denver Post* and elsewhere. Now your column reinforces this approach, which is the antithesis to the collaboration with teachers that you have stated the importance of so many times.

The CEA stands firm in our support for the Governor's Council for Educator Effectiveness to do good work in creating a meaningful educator evaluation system that can be used to improve teacher effectiveness. Shortcutting this process with political motivations to strip teachers of their rights does nothing to help build a better education system focused on teaching and learning. It is unfortunate that you have given up on the Council so quickly, especially when staff from your own Department of Education is spearheading this important effort.

The CEA will remain engaged and committed to the Governor's Council. We believe this is where the real work will get done -- not in shortsighted, hasty legislation. As long as you are tying Colorado's Race to the Top success to Senator Johnston's legislation, we are unable to remain partners in the Phase 2 effort.

During the Phase I interview last month in Washington, you stated that you were not willing to "throw teachers under the bus." Your support of the Johnston bill and its linkage to Race to the Top does exactly that!

Respectfully,

Tony Salazar

Executive Director

Colorado Education Association

