



SCHOOL FINANCE PARTNERSHIP

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SCHOOL FINANCE PARTNERSHIP RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS ON SCHOOL FUNDING

Bipartisan Coalition of Colorado Leaders Work to Modernize Education Funding in Colorado

DENVER – After a year of intense work, the School Finance Partnership – a bipartisan group of education reform advocates, education and business leaders, and elected leaders – released its recommendations on revamping Colorado's system for financing public education.

Contextual information about the Partnership, as well as the recommendations, is available on the School Finance Partnership website at www.schoolfinancepartnership.org.

The recommendations are the result of a process that began in the spring of 2011. The School Finance Partnership met monthly to examine how Colorado currently funds its public schools, consider options and alternatives, and ultimately propose what systematic changes should look like.

The Partnership, along with the Colorado State Board of Education, will host a panel of experts this evening, March 19, from 5:00 to 8:30 at the University Club to discuss school finance design and how that affects student achievement. The event, "*Making the Connections – School Finance Design and Student Achievement*" will feature four members of the Partnership's Steering Committee: Sen. Mike Johnston, Cary Kennedy, Bob Deibel and Paul Teske from the University of Colorado – Denver, School of Public Affairs. National experts on school finance will also serve as panelists. **The event is open to the media.**

School finance legislation is typically updated at least every 10 years, both in Colorado and across the country, but it has been nearly 20 years since Colorado last rewrote how it funds its public schools. The School Finance Partnership seeks to connect the funding schools and districts receive to the outcomes the public expects students to achieve. The current system for financing education in Colorado hasn't been updated since 1994 and doesn't take into account the myriad of education laws that have been passed in the last 18 years.

The Partnership, which operates on a consensus model, is unique in its makeup, structure and process. It brought together stakeholders that represent diverse constituents and viewpoints that saw a common purpose – to ensure every student in Colorado receives a high quality education. All organizations that participated in the Partnership's leading Steering Committee have remained involved in the process.

“What was so inspiring and unique about this group was how individuals and organizations came together with significant differences in viewpoints and opinions, but listened to one another and remained committed to the process and its end-goal of creating a better public education system for our kids,” said Chris Watney, co-chair of the Partnership and President and CEO of the Colorado Children’s Campaign. “We learned we had a lot more in common than we had differences. Everyone involved is committed to making sure our kids get the best public education possible.”

The Partnership was led by three co-chairs – Chris Watney, Cary Kennedy and Bob Deibel – and consisted of two key bodies: a Steering Committee, which has decision-making authority and is composed of 15 executive leaders who represented education stakeholders (such as teachers and school administrators), business leaders, legislators and advocacy organizations; and a Partnership Committee, which was open to the community, funders and a wide range of stakeholders and organizations. The full Committee provided broad insight and feedback to inform the recommendations made by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee membership include: Colorado Association of School Boards, represented by Ken DeLay; Colorado Association of School Executives, represented by Bruce Caughey; Colorado Education Association, represented by Tony Salazar; Colorado Forum, represented by Kara Veitch; Colorado Legacy Foundation, represented by Helayne Jones; Colorado Succeeds, represented by Tim Taylor; Denver Metro Chamber, represented by Kelly Brough; Donnell-Kay Foundation, represented by Tony Lewis; Great Futures Colorado, represented by Lisa Weil; Early Childhood Education Representative, Barbara O’Brien (Piton Foundation); Higher Education Representative, Paul Teske (University of Colorado – Denver, School of Public Affairs); State Representative Tom Massey (HD 60); State Senator Mike Johnston (SD 33); Chair – Colorado Children’s Campaign President and CEO, Chris Watney; Chair – Denver CFO and Former State Treasurer, Cary Kennedy; and Chair – President and Owner of OfficeScapes, Bob Deibel.

Under a full consensus model, all members of the Steering Committee agreed to move each recommendation forward. These recommendations will dramatically change how schools are funded and are intended to also drive improvement in the student outcomes that Colorado’s public schools can achieve.

On a broad level, the recommendations outline that funding should align with and be accountable to student outcomes, encourage innovation, and distribute funding in an equitable, sufficient manner to meet the various needs of students and school districts.

“The work of the Partnership is just the first step in updating the way we fund public education,” said Cary Kennedy, co-chair of the Partnership and Denver CFO and Former State Treasurer. “And that work is continuing. The Partnership is committed to partnering with any group interested in improving public education and is willing to serve as a resource for those efforts. The Partnership does not want these recommendations to sit on a shelf and gather dust. We all know the funding system has to change to address new realities in education.”

Bob Deibel, co-chair of the Partnership and President and Owner of OfficeScapes, added, “This has been a truly extraordinary effort. We learned there is no quick or easy answer and we’ve worked over the last year to earn each other’s trust. At a time when Colorado’s education system needs to improve, the ideas put forth by the Partnership provide real value in helping Colorado create a funding system where all students get the best public education possible.”

For more information on the specific recommendations of the Partnership in the areas of Alignment and Accountability to Student outcomes, Innovation, Equity and Sufficiency, please visit:

www.schoolfinancepartnership.org.

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