

MEMORANDUM

To: William Moloney, Commissioner, Colorado Department of Education
From: Tim Snyder, Chairman, Colorado Department of Education Online Advisory Committee
Subj: Final Committee Report
Encl: 1) Committee Recommendations
2) Consensus Statements
3) Colorado Cyberschools and Enrollment—as of October 2003
Date: February 9, 2004

As per your direction, the Online Advisory Committee was formed in April, 2003 for the purpose of advising the department on state-level policies needed to guide the development of K-12 online learning. The committee focused on the issue areas of equity and access, quality and accountability, cost and funding, and organizational roles. Committee members were:

Bill Powell, Strasburg Superintendent
Stan Scheer, Littleton Superintendent
Dale McCall, Centennial BOCES Executive Director
Lorenzo Trujillo, Lester B. Arnold Alt School Principal
Tim Snyder, Colorado Online Learning
David Gray, CDE Southeast Region Director

Ken DeLay, CASB Executive Director
Phil Moeckli, CEA Executive Director
Kin Griffith, Colorado Virtual Academy Director
Don Wilkinson, Monte Vista Superintendent (retired)
Eric Feder, CDE Technology Education Center

Ed Steinbrecher chaired the committee through the summer but was unable to continue due to a change in personal circumstances. Tim Snyder filled that role starting in September. Committee meetings drew regular guest attendees and inspired frequent questions from others interested in the evolving arena of online learning in Colorado.

Early meetings of the committee were devoted to conversation regarding State Board of Education (SBE) rules for the administration and funding of cyberschools—in particular, attempting to establish parameters for the at-risk student exemption from the 135 student-slot limit on PPR allocations for cyberstudents not previously enrolled in public school. Later meetings focused on the heart of the committee's charge and a subcommittee was appointed to propose recommendations. The committee-as-a-whole then met and approved those recommendations submitted as Enclosure (1). Although the work of the committee is essentially finished, we would like the opportunity to provide an oral report of the issues and reasoning behind the recommendations and to respond to any questions you may have. Please let me know of a suitable time and location for this meeting and I will invite the committee.

Enclosure (2) represents core beliefs of the committee and Enclosure (3) provides details on the enrollment of students in the state's 20 cyberschools, as of October 2003.

The committee's most important recommendation concerns quality assurance. The committee recommends that the State Board direct the development of quality assurance guidelines that would inform accreditation, cyberschool development, and educational consumer choice. The Colorado Cyberschool Association and other online practitioners have already begun conversation in this area and stand ready to provide assistance.

It is increasingly evident that online learning can be a highly-effective tool in educating students. Colorado has been one of the most active states in promoting the growth of K-12 online learning programs, and we urge consideration of these recommendations as a means of addressing issues critical to the continued viability of the online teaching and learning tool.

The committee also discussed its role in the establishment of state policy and recognizes that the development of statute and rule is a complex process with the interaction of a variety of organizations and individuals and their associated ideas. This report further recognizes that its use of the consensus process allowed recommendations to be adopted that may not necessarily be endorsed by individual members of the committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CDE ONLINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 28, 2004

State Support for Online Program Development. Provide state funding support for Colorado Online Learning (COL) to assure its continued ability to provide supplemental online courses to all Colorado school districts and assume the additional mission of providing technical support, grant-developed online curriculum, and access to library and other resources to schools and BOCES desiring to develop and maintain online learning programs.

Local Control. Preserve local control by not creating a state agency to run, create or administer a statewide cyberschool. Continue to allow LEA's the authority to run, create or administer cyberschools or supplemental online programs.

Quality Assurance. Establish and periodically update a set of quality assurance guidelines. These guidelines should be provided by the State Board of Education to LEA's for use in determining accreditation of online programs within a school district or BOCES. The Colorado Department of Education should review the LEA's use of the guidelines in its accreditation process. The state should ensure adequate funding for the preparation, promotion and updating of the quality assurance guidelines. Existing accountability measures common to all Colorado public schools—CSAP, SAR's and district accreditation—should remain in place for cyberschools.

Access and Funding. Ensure unrestricted access to online learning for all Colorado students; e.g., remove present funding restriction for students not included in the prior-year student count. To assist in programming quality, provide in-district PPR for in-district online students and state-average PPR for out-of-district online students.

Special Education. Reform the financing of special education services to ensure adequate services and resource support for students with special needs and to distribute fairly the educational and financial responsibilities related to these students.

CDE Online Advisory Committee Consensus Statements

January 28, 2004

Public education delivers alternatives by which each student will meet or exceed Colorado's model content standards in all subject areas.

Students have individual and diverse learning needs and a student who is unsuccessful in one learning environment may find success in another. Colorado public schools are obligated to adopt policies, develop and implement instructional strategies, and institute management practices that will enable all learners to succeed, regardless of their circumstances. These schools must provide educational environments that will meet the varied needs of all their students. Online education helps to meet those needs.

Each Colorado student has the right to choose from all available public school educational options.

Public school districts have created traditional and alternative educational environments to meet the needs of their students. Each student is entitled to select from all available learning environments and to choose that which best meets his or her learning needs, including online education, regardless of the choices made in the past.

Colorado should support the development of online education resources.

Online education is new and provides different opportunities and challenges than do physical schools. Colorado should research best practices; develop, promote, and update quality assurance guidelines; and help online schools create the best possible programs for student success.

Colorado Cyberschools and Enrollments — as of October 2003

Enclosure (3)

School Name	District	Number of Students Enrolled (10/03 count)				
		Total	FT Res	PT Res	FT N-Res	PT N-Res
Alamosa Open High Cyberschool	Alamosa	7	7	0	0	0
Branson School Online!	Branson	987	1	0	946	40
McKinley Elem.; Canon City MidSchool; Garden Park HS	Canon City	5	1 (EI) 2 (HS)	0	1 (MS) 1 (HS)	0
Colorado Virtual Academy	Adams 12	1472	57	15	1150	250
Connections Academy; Online HS	DPS	300	41 (CC) 2 (HS)	4	227 (CC) 4 (HS)	22
Cotopaxi Home School Partnership School	Cotopaxi	34	11	0	23	0
Eagle View Academy	Walsh	2	0	0	2	0
Edison Academy	Edison	17	2	0	13	2
Hayden HS	Hayden	6	0	0	1	5
JeffcoNet Academy	JeffCo	0	0	0	0	0
Karval Online Education	Karval	45	0	0	44	1
La Jara Second Chance School	North Conejos	37	10	0	27	0
Lester Arnold High School	Adams 14	16	5	0	9	2
Mancos HS	Mancos	1	1	0	0	0
Monte Vista Online Academy	Monte Vista	88	3	0	85	0
North Park Jr.-Sr. HS	North Park	1	1	0	0	0
Peyton HS	Peyton	1	0	1	0	0
Southern Colorado Connections Academy	Pueblo 60	32	16	0	16	0
Vilas Online	Vilas	290	0	0	282	8
Ranum HS; Westminster HS	Adams 50	9	0	9	0	0
Totals		3334	160	29	2831	330

