



June 2010

The first half of the year has been filled with a flurry of important activity in the education area. But even now that school's out, summer's here and the legislature is done, our education work continues at a fast pace. Here are a few highlights of what has been keeping us busy and what we'll be focusing on in the coming months.

Dropouts

The Colorado Graduates Initiative (CGI) continues to engage in efforts to curb the high school dropout rate in Colorado. Armed with a strategic plan and clear vision for tackling this work, efforts are underway to engage more school districts in partnering and supporting policies that support student success. The CGI was one of six states to receive a National Governor's Association planning grant, and was asked to present at the prestigious American Educational Research Association conference held in Denver in early May.

Also, legislation was passed this session to further examine the way students are counted and funded in Colorado. The foundation will help fund a study by the Department of Education to evaluate the feasibility, design and impact of a system to determine pupil enrollment based on the average number of days that each pupil is enrolled in school during the year rather than based on a single count date.

Alternative Education

We are working with many groups in Colorado to support a strong, but fair, accountability system for the Alternative Education Campuses. Additionally, we want to dive more deeply into this issue and partner with other interested organizations to ensure that all students in Colorado, including those who have fallen off-track to graduation, have access to a high-quality educational option. For more information, contact Kim Dolan at kknousdolan@dkfoundation.org.

Colorado Summit on Blended Learning

On March 18th, Donnell-Kay hosted a summit to convene a group of education and policy leaders from Colorado to learn more about innovative online and blended learning programs and systems, both locally and nationwide. We saw exciting examples of blended learning innovations in practice and discussed key policy and systemic changes that we need to do in Colorado in order to create the next generation of classrooms and schools that fully integrate online and leading technology into their programs while preparing students for success in the 21st century.

Nearly 130 people attended the summit to hear the Lt. Governor Barbara O'Brien, and speakers such as Susan Patrick, President & CEO, International Association of K12 Online Learning (iNACOL) and former Director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education, and keynote speaker Michael Horn with Innosight Institute and co-author of the book "*Disrupting Class.*"

Other speakers included representatives from leading-edge programs and systems that are moving blended learning forward in exciting directions such as, New York City's School of One, Chicago's VOISE Academy, Woodland Park (CO), Idaho Digital Learning Academy, Southern Regional Education Board, among others. In addition, Colorado's Commissioner of Education, Dwight Jones, sat on a panel with Kurt LeVasseur, Director for Online Learning, Boulder Valley School District and Ed Vandertook, Superintendent, Strasburg School District, and also Susan Patrick and Michael Horn to discuss "Next Steps for Colorado."

The response from attendees to the summit has been extremely positive and in turn has stimulated discussion and developments in continuing the movement of blended learning forward within Colorado. For more information, contact Amy Anderson at aanderson@dkfoundation.org.

“Hot Lunch” Speaker Series

Our “*Hot Lunch*” speaker series continues to be increasingly popular as we bring speakers in from around the nation, including Susan Patrick, who gave a global and national perspective on the future of education; Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education at NYU, a historian on education and author of the recently released book “*The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education.*” who shared her change in perspective on certain education reform in recent year, including charter schools; and wrapping up the season John Danner, CEO and Founder of Rocketship Education who spoke about the Rocketship hybrid school model, the highest performing elementary schools in California -- half the teachers, twice the pay.

We are busy developing the schedule for the 2010-11 season, and have already confirmed several speakers, including Andrew Smarick, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Dr. Ray Cortines, Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District; and several school-level folks doing incredibly innovative work (e.g. School of One and Generation Schools in New York City.) We also welcome any suggestions for possible speakers who might be interested in presenting at one of our “*Hot Lunches.*” For more information, contact Claudia Winkler at cwinkler@dkfoundation.org.

Education Entrepreneurship

Donnell-Kay has been invited to become part of a national effort organized by The Mind Trust (www.themindtrust.org) called CEE-Trust (City Based Education Entrepreneurs Trust) that includes members from various cities around the country engaged in cultivating and attracting more education entrepreneurs to partner with schools and school systems in their respective cities and across member cities. We are also exploring the idea of creating a center for education entrepreneurship in the Denver metro area to incubate new ideas and support the growth of existing entrepreneurs running innovative and promising programs. For more information, contact Amy Anderson.

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

We continue to explore the potential for and support the formation of partnerships between charter schools and early care and education centers. The Finance Project (www.financeproject.org) has nearly completed a case study of the financial sustainability of two local early education providers to explore the replication of existing models in partnership with charter schools. We anticipate releasing this study this month (check our website.) We are also providing support for AXL Academy, a K-8 charter school in Aurora, to support its expansion down to pre-Kindergarten this fall. Documenting AXL Academy’s efforts will provide valuable insight and guidance for other charters interested in providing early education. For more information about these projects, please contact Tony Lewis at tlewis@dkfoundation.org.

Recent Grants

Our recent grant-making efforts have included support to The Partnership for Families and Children (\$15,000), Colorado Youth For A Change (\$15,000), Colorado Children’s Campaign (\$25,000), International Association for K-12 Online Learning (\$10,000), The Finance Project (\$15,000). We welcome concept papers on education policy issues from any interested applicants.

Staff Changes

We welcome our summer intern Adam Jones, a graduate student of public policy and management at Carnegie Mellon University, who will be researching and analyzing leading-edge programs and systems nationwide and within Colorado related to our areas of interest. And with sadness and appreciation, we wish Reyna Perez-Oquendo the best as she leaves to pursue her next adventure. Reyna will be teaching English in Maseru, Lesotho (South Africa) for the next two years while working toward a Master’s in Education as her boyfriend begins his first tour as a new Foreign Service Officer.

As always, we enjoy the opportunity to update you on our work and we value your support and input. For more details about any of our projects, please go to our website, www.dkfoundation.org.

Cheers,

Tony Lewis ▪ Amy Berk Anderson ▪ Kim Knous Dolan ▪ Adam Jones ▪ Claudia Winkler