

RACE TO THE TOP YEAR TWO

Colorado

Colorado saw great progress in implementing its Race to the Top plan in year 2, and the \$18 million federal investment has enabled local leaders to continue and expand upon their work to improve education for all students.

The state's Race to the Top grant is part of efforts throughout Colorado to put into action the state's long-term strategic plan to create helpful resources and supports for school districts, educators and students. In year 2, Colorado continued to expand upon its work by designing and delivering more tools and materials that helped districts implement its reform efforts and supported the hard work of teachers and school leaders – all of which benefits students across the state.

Supporting Student Achievement and Growth

- Colorado's high school graduation rates increased from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2011-2012.
- Student proficiency in Colorado's math assessment increased modestly at all grade levels with a notable increase in grade 7.

Helping States and School Districts Implement Reform

- ***Providing support and accountability for districts.*** The state created and implemented the District Dashboard (DISH), an internal data system that aggregates and displays comprehensive information, to assist the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to gauge the progress of state reform initiatives at the local level. Multiple CDE offices collaboratively use DISH to identify challenges and provide specific school districts with more coordinated, targeted assistance.
- ***Creating STEM opportunities in and outside of the classroom.*** In May 2013, Colorado awarded "STEM in Action" grants of up to \$120,000 to four districts. The grant program provides opportunities for teachers and students to connect to STEM opportunities outside of their classrooms and to support the STEM curriculum within their schools. The program engages populations traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields in rural areas through partnerships between school districts, community organizations and postsecondary education programs.
- ***Statewide Resources and Communication.*** The state enhanced communication efforts through the development and dissemination of communication toolkits for the Educator Effectiveness and the Standards and Assessment units to support districts and education organizations to provide effective and consistent messaging around the reform initiatives. CDE also utilized a variety of media sources, including social networks such as Twitter, to promote timely, accurate, and positive messaging about the state reform initiatives to stakeholders, particularly educators, education organizations and advocacy groups.
- The state's Content Collaborative teams reviewed and vetted classroom-level assessments to assist in ensuring that the measurements of student academic growth are fair, valid and reliable. Furthermore, the State developed and disseminated resources, professional development, and tools designed to assist with reviewing district-developed or chosen assessments.

Building Educators' Capacity

- ***Supporting educators in creating curriculum aligned to new standards.*** CDE implemented the Sample Curriculum Project to provide guidance, tools and training to educators to support their transition to the state standards and the Common Core State Standards. Through this project, Colorado educators created over 700 sample curriculum units aligned to the new standards that are available other educators through the CDE website.
- ***Better feedback on performance.*** All districts implemented new educator evaluation systems, and all teachers received feedback and ratings based on Year 2 evaluations. The state developed *Elevate Colorado*, a tool to promote common interpretations of teacher quality and to support evaluators' ability to provide useful and actionable feedback to educators based on information and data collected through observations. In using the system, evaluators can view short videos of practicing teachers, rate teacher performance based on the State Model Evaluation System rubric and receive feedback on their ratings.
- ***Supports for specialized service professionals.*** The state drafted educator evaluation rubrics outlining professional practices for nine categories of specialized service professionals (SSP) such as school counselors, social workers and psychologists. The SSP evaluation system is meant to ensure that SSP's evaluations provide meaningful and actionable feedback allowing for continuous improvement of their practice. Nineteen districts are piloting SSP evaluation rubrics in school year 2013-2014.

MAJOR CHALLENGES IN YEAR TWO

- After uploading tools and resources related to classroom assessments, CDE suspended work on the Resource Bank – an online depository of tools and resources that educators can use to implement state reform initiatives. Based on feedback from the field, CDE worked with a business analyst to determine the best course of action to build a single, sign-on functionality and to identify a platform for housing identified resources to meet the needs of the field (i.e. using common tagging features to group curriculum, related instructional plans and assessments).
- Though many locally developed or purchased assessments are available, CDE struggled with adequately scaling up state-provided technical assistance to support educators' capacity to fully implement the assessments in the classroom.
- Colorado continued to grapple with deciding the best method for providing technical assistance to support its school districts in choosing and weighting the multiple measures used to determine the student growth component of the educator evaluation system.

MILESTONES FOR YEAR THREE

- Colorado plans to improve the Resource Bank functionality so that educators can easily access all resources developed through Race to the Top activities.
- Content Collaborative teams are scheduled to develop Colorado's Assessment Literacy Program and create a dissemination plan to deliver information, training and resources to support educators' increased understanding of using assessment data effectively to support student learning.
- Colorado plans to complete the pilot of the specialized service professionals' educator evaluation system in school year 2013-2014, with full statewide implementation occurring in 2014-2015.
- Colorado will focus on expanding the resources in *Elevate Colorado* and providing technical assistance to the field associated with the tool to support increased understanding of the

professional practices that comprise the teachers' model education evaluation system and to assist evaluators to deliver fair and consistent educator evaluations.