Ensuring an **Effective and Supportive Teacher Licensure** and Renewal System in Colorado

A COLLABORATIVE REPORT FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE VIVA CEA IDEA EXCHANGE

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**Prepared by:** Members of the VIVA CEA Writing Collaborative

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**Abstract & Summation:** Educators working in Colorado spent hundreds of hours debating ways to improve teacher licensure and renewal. Then, a small group of the participants distilled those ideas into nine recommendations and 29 proposed solutions for improving the teacher licensure and renewal process.

**Partner:** Colorado Education Association and National Education Association

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The VIVA CEA Idea Exchange

Introduction

The VIVA (Voices, Ideas, Vision, Action) CEA Idea Exchange invited educators from throughout Colorado to share their ideas about ways to improve teacher licensure and renewal. CEA sought this input from practicing educators to inform its position on licensure legislation that will be introduced in the Colorado General Assembly in 2014. The members of the Writing Collaborative synthesized the recommendations and proposed solutions from the Idea Exchange participants to prepare this report.

The VIVA Idea Exchange™, an innovation of the nonprofit New Voice Strategies, combines technology and collaboration to amplify the voices of key stakeholders in critical policy matters. Facilitated by a professional moderator, the conversation is open to peers seeking a safe, productive and easily accessible avenue for joint problem solving and action.


The VIVA CEA/NEA Idea Exchange was conducted in three phases:

During Phase I, which occurred from October 7 – October 25, 2013, members of the Colorado Education Association were invited to share their ideas in answer to this question:

“How can we ensure our licensing and renewal system is effective at attracting and supporting teachers?”

In response, 205 members added 75 ideas and shared 128 comments with one another.

During Phase II, from October 25 – November 28, 2013, six educators worked together as the VIVA CEA Writing Collaborative. These individuals were selected because of their active participation in Phase 1, in terms of both quantity and quality. Their assignment was to take the ideas presented during the online forum and summarize and synthesize them into discrete, workable recommendations for teacher licensure and renewal.

Phase III of the process will begin on December 16, 2013, when the members of the Writing Collaborative present their ideas to CEA President Kerrie Dallman and other CEA leadership.

New Voice Strategies believes in the inspiration that grows from pragmatic experience, and in the power of individual voices to make big change. The VIVA Idea Exchange™ is one example of that power in action. We are inspired by the teachers and grateful for their positive contribution to the strength of our schools and America’s democratic process. Many thanks to these VIVA Teachers: Kerry Adams, Timothy Brown, Jenny Hart, Elizabeth Tarbutton, Jeanne Kleinman Williams, and Ann Wyatt, whose profiles can be found at the end of this report. The innumerable hours these individuals spent grappling with big ideas and small details made this work possible.

We also wish to thank our partners in this endeavor, the Colorado and National Education Associations.
Overview

The new evaluation requirements established through Colorado Senate Bill 10-191 (SB10-191) struck fear in the hearts of educators around the state. As educators cautiously navigate this new system, which was implemented by districts in the summer of 2013, they have expressed concerns about its funding and sustainability. They have also united in voicing their opposition to tying licensure and renewal to this untried evaluation system while funding for evaluation programs is tight. This is not a time for hasty, reactionary changes to the licensure process. Any changes that are made to the process need to be supported by unbiased research and come from the common intent of promoting student achievement. Nor is it a monetarily or politically appropriate time to overhaul the system. Alternatively, we recommend refining the current licensure and renewal system; it is the logistics of this system, not the licensure requirements, that are flawed. The system needs to be consistent across the state and accessible to all stakeholders.

Through the following recommendations, our panel of educators has proposed specific ideas for refining the licensure and renewal processes, and for offering support to our teachers. These range from improving the online license application process, to simplifying reciprocity between states, to properly supporting new and seasoned teachers with mentors and coaches. Teacher retention, including those who come to the profession through alternative licensure, requires action to elevate the profession.

We acknowledge these suggestions come amidst a tumultuous time of change. However, if we are looking to improve instruction statewide, we need to recruit, support and retain talented educators.

“We know far too little about how effective or reliable this new Educator Effectiveness system will be. We know far too little about the reliability and validity of the new assessments. Until we do know the validity and reliability of these measures, we should hold off on connecting them to licensure.” — Sheryl C.

“Before we talk about creating new licensure standards, we first have to ask ourselves what is wrong with the current system that is in place. I suspect that all this talk about creating new licensure standards centers around the educational reform movement’s untested theories that are so prevalent today.” — Gerry C.
Index of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1
Support Colorado's current system of certification and recertification.

Proposed Solutions
1. Maintain Colorado's current practice of licensing educators.
2. Base initial licensing on an educational path that provides specific training for the educator and requires a period of meaningful hands-on experience.
3. Base license renewal on the applicant's continued desire to become a better educator.
4. Limit overturning or non-renewal of a license to extreme situations.
5. Ensure all decisions made to change the licensure system are rooted in non-partisan, properly vetted research.
6. Increase statewide education funding to provide better pay for educators and a higher rate of per pupil investment.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Evaluate teacher qualifications through mentorship/coaching and peer evaluation.

Proposed Solutions
7. Devise consistent induction programs across Colorado that provide mentorship and coaching for new teachers in their early years.
8. Evaluate teacher qualifications using the mentor/coach, based on the state standards for effective teaching.
10. Establish peer evaluation boards that include the mentor/coach, and use as data to approve or not approve professional licensure.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Retain alternative licensure programs in Colorado.

Proposed Solutions
11. Evaluate the quality of the approximately 26 alternative programs in Colorado.
12. Encourage and promote diversity among educators throughout the state.
13. Allow for alternative licensing of candidates with a college or university degree and specialized training.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Preserve both traditional and alternative educator preparation programs in Colorado.

Proposed Solutions
14. Provide a strong start for new educators entering the profession by requiring that basic, consistent standards be met, including coursework or instruction on classroom management, individualizing for all students, and using data to drive instruction.
15. Preserve teacher preparation programs so that any educator who is deemed insufficient based on two years of evaluations would have programs available to support them in improving their craft of teaching.
RECOMMENDATION 5
Strengthen expectations for educator preparation programs.

Proposed Solutions
17. Require future educators to have time in a classroom during at least two years of their educator preparation program.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Attain consistency in the language used for licensure on the Colorado Department of Education website.

Proposed Solutions
18. Identify the purpose and procedure for local control in determining hiring practices across school districts in Colorado.
19. Gather data regarding minimum hiring requirements from all school districts in Colorado and post links to those sites.
20. Develop a user-friendly, well-structured chart that presents the information for all licensure requirements in one highly organized section on the website.
21. Disseminate the information on licensure requirements for special service providers to their individual professional organizations in order to allow stakeholders to keep up-to-date with the state’s policies.

RECOMMENDATION 7
Provide greater assistance during the application process.

Proposed Solutions
22. Invite applicants to contact a representative by phone or email when they have questions about the application.
23. Evaluate “workbooks” that assist with compiling and completing endorsement applications and make sure they are current.
24. Ensure “workbooks” use the same terminology when referring to sections of the license application.
25. Ensure that software is compatible for applicants using a variety of operating systems and is accessible with a Mac or PC.

RECOMMENDATION 8
Provide reciprocity for licensed educators from other states.

Proposed Solutions
26. Provide teachers with current educator licenses in other states with a smooth transition into a Colorado teaching license.
27. Allow licensed educators to attain a Colorado license without additional testing.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Provide license options for all areas, especially those for which state standards are provided.

Proposed Solutions
28. Provide licensure for educators in all areas for which there are state standards (including dance).
29. Provide licensure for specific areas to encourage educators to be specialists (middle school science, high school math, etc.).
Recommendations For Educator Licensure In Colorado

RECOMMENDATION 1

Support Colorado’s current system of certification and recertification.

Statement of the Problem

There is a growing desire by some in Colorado, based upon the new SB 10-191, to link educator evaluations to the state’s certification and recertification process. However, the evaluation process is new and barely tested. Local and state personnel and funding resources will be strained as the state adjusts to the changes and creates new infrastructures to build a solid and manageable evaluation process. With the failure of Amendment 66, it is apparent that Colorado is not willing to tax its public to fund any more changes in the education system or educational innovations. The system needs to provide stable, proven methods to acquire new teachers and to retain the educational professionals it already has.

Proposed Solutions

1. **Maintain Colorado’s current practice of licensing educators.** A license assures the employer and the public that the person is specially trained to do his or her job in the education profession, whether it is as a teacher, school librarian, or gifted and talented specialist. At least 30 other occupations in Colorado are licensed with the same idea of assuring that the person is trained to do the job.

2. **Base initial licensing on an educational path that provides specific training for the educator and requires a period of meaningful hands-on experience.** This is and should be student teaching.

“As I reflect on my entry into the teaching profession, I can affirm that completing a teacher preparation program was and has been essential to my success in the classroom.” — Cassie H.
3. **Base license renewal on the applicant’s continued desire to become a better educator.** Renewal requirements should be accomplished in a timely manner so that the educator keeps abreast of the most current techniques in education or in the relevant content area. This could be done with university credit, or obtained through leadership activities (peer coaching, providing professional development, educational research or work on state testing) or experience in content fields (working as a geologist, musician, or in a business setting).

4. **Limit the overturning or non-renewal of a license to extreme situations.** This action should only be considered if there is a serious breach of trust or illegal behavior. Consideration of non-renewal should be conducted by a review panel of educators. Members of this panel should be chosen by their peers and paid. Those on the panel should have a term length such that there is time to develop legal expertise, as well as a capacity to understand the essence of a good educator. It is suggested that five educators serve on the panel. The panel should have an election rotation so that there is always some experience on the board.

5. **Ensure all decisions made to change the licensure system are rooted in non-partisan, properly vetted research.** Research funded by a variety of organizations has been utilized to make changes in regards to teacher licensure and renewal. It is imperative that non-partisan research that does not seek to advocate for a predetermined position, and is properly vetted using academic standards, serves as the basis for educational decision-making.

6. **Increase statewide education funding to provide better pay for educators and a higher rate of per pupil investment.** Colorado ranks 44th nationally in teacher salaries and 42nd in per pupil funding. It is difficult to attract people into the state with these numbers. Recent elections continue to cast a shadow on the state population’s willingness to offer more to attract the best and brightest from other areas of the country.

“**I wasn’t aware that the current system of licensing in our state was broken. I am of the philosophy that if it isn’t broken, why fix it? With all of the changes currently happening in our profession why are we adding another change to something that works?”** —Jane S.

“**The need for legislators to continuously make changes to the teacher evaluation and licensure process has had little to no effect on the progress of children’s successes in education. The greatest impacts are made by individual teachers who make it their life’s goal to help children learn and hold them accountable. By changing the evaluation system we are not going to see great teachers become greater or beginning teachers become exemplary overnight. The requirements for teacher licensure are plenty adequate.”** —John C.
Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Colorado’s current licensure system needs some minor changes, but generally has worked well for many years. A new system would require funding and reorganizing that would reduce the availability of funds that go directly into the classroom. It is imperative to increase per pupil spending to maximize the resources needed for effective teaching.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

State resources should be dedicated to supporting educators and what they do in their classrooms. A change in the licensure system would require funding to be taken from an already small pool of money and add stress to the certification process. Initial certification through traditional and alternative paths is already a standard for colleges and universities, thereby allowing potential new educators an established direction of study. Re-certification can be improved by allowing the professional educator to demonstrate added experience in education processes and/or content to a group of peers. This process may reduce the cost of re-certification and continue to build a base of professionalism.
RECOMMENDATION 2

Evaluate teacher qualifications through mentorship/coaching and peer evaluation.

Statement of the Problem

As Stephanie C., expressed, “Teachers have to hit the ground running in year one and perform proficiently.” Teachers have expressed the desire to have direct mentoring during the initial licensure process. Teachers who have little support in their early years are more likely to leave the profession. Many teachers voiced the desire to have licensure governed by mentors and peers. They expressed fear and misunderstanding about the use of data in relation to the licensure process. Many teachers voiced concerns regarding the new teacher evaluation system. They also fear the lack of support in demonstrating efficacy, specifically with respect to the standards and achievement data.

“In [the medical and law] professions, the responsibility of ensuring ethical and effective practice falls on other professionals. Why do we as teacher rely on others to do it for us?” —Andrea L.

Proposed Solutions

7. Devise consistent induction programs across Colorado that provide mentorship and coaching for new teachers in their early years. Specifically, teachers with initial licenses would be paired with a mentor/coach. Providing a mentor through an induction program relieves the duties of the principal, as well, since support structures will fall on others besides just administrators.
   a. Assign coaches through local education association, which would offer members leadership opportunities and provide peers for teachers who do not have peers within their schools.
   b. Support mentors by offering training and allowing them to earn Colorado Department of Education (CDE) credit for their time and commitment to helping to grow new teachers.

“Mentorship is crucial for teachers new to the profession. The strongest teacher prep programs have teachers working in classrooms with skilled mentors helping at every step along the way.” —Jenny H.
8. **Evaluate teacher qualifications using the mentor/coach, based on the state standards for effective teaching.** Provide actionable feedback via the mentor/coach to the probationary teacher, so that the teachers can learn and grow in their practice.

9. **Support teachers in using student assessment and growth data through interactions with their mentor/coach.** Mentors and coaches can help teachers interpret data, and draw conclusions that can be used to inform their practice. Mentors can also support initial teachers in differentiation techniques to support student achievement.

10. **Establish peer evaluation boards that include the mentor/coach, and use as data to approve or not approve professional licensure.**

> "What would [mentoring] look like for a teacher who does not have a ‘peer’ in their school (music, art, PE, etc.)?" — Ann W.

### Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

This will work for students because experienced, effective educators will be evaluating teacher qualifications for professional licensure, which is a departure from solely basing licensure on education or professional development. Through this process, teachers will receive critical feedback on their work from experts, which will help them improve their practice based on the standards for effective teaching. This feedback will, in turn, improve the students’ classroom experiences. Having a coach support teachers in the use of data to drive their instruction will help them differentiate their practice to meet the needs of their students. According to Thomas Kane, a professor of education and economics at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, “Despite some fluctuation from year to year, we have found that a teacher’s record of promoting achievement remains the strongest single predictor of the achievement gains of their future students.” As such, a teacher who is aware of data can improve their data, which research demonstrates is good for student achievement.

> "Gates Foundation MET study on teacher effectiveness (n~3000, 7 districts, 7 states, 3 years) found three important measures that improve teacher effectiveness—none of them were better lesson plans, book clubs, or coursework. Student perception surveys, multiple observations including peer video observations and debriefs, and large assessments score watching and data mining have enormous potential; all have a measured effect on teacher quality and effectiveness." — Eric M.
Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Pairing teachers with coaches will support them during their formative years and provide them with the tools they need to be effective and successful. If the teacher falls short of any of the standards, the coach can provide feedback to help the teacher improve. Having the opportunity to continue learning and improving one’s practice is good for any professional. In this way, the coach will help the teacher meet the standards of effective teaching, documenting their proficiency for peer/board review. Demonstrating proficiency in these standards as a requirement for professional licensure will help ensure the teachers are fully prepared to positively impact student achievement; preparedness is good for teacher success. The mentor/coach can also help initial teachers use data to inform their instruction, so they can meet evaluation requirements, as well. Again, according to Thomas Kane, “We should focus on gains in test scores, not end-of-year scores. Any estimate of how much the student has improved while in the teacher’s class must take into account the fact that students start at different points. We want to know how much a teacher contributes to student growth during the time students are in that teacher’s classroom.” Helping teachers reflect on how they are supporting student growth allows them to identify areas of personal growth. Coaching positions through local associations will also create leadership opportunities for experienced teachers, which will be an incentive for effective educators to stay in the profession.
Retain alternative licensure programs in Colorado.

Statement of the Problem
Perceptions about alternative licensure in Colorado are inconsistent and often negative. Many educators feel it is a shortcut or cheap way into the profession, which degrades the profession as a whole. As Lynne R., stated, “If we continue to allow people to be licensed who have not gone through actual teacher education programs at proper colleges and universities, our children will suffer. By allowing so-called ‘alternative licensing,’ we cheapen the profession all around. [It seems] anyone can go around proper coursework and [a] basic understanding of education.” However, others feel it is an excellent way to enter the profession after another career. Daniel N. said, “I am a firm believer in the Alternative Teacher Licensing process, because it gave me an opportunity to become a teacher. Teaching is my second career and the ability to obtain a teaching license while working was critical. I have seen many of the best teachers, especially in STEM fields, come through the alternative process.”

Proposed solutions

11. Evaluate the quality of the approximately 26 alternative programs in Colorado. Ensure there are high standards for admittance, continuity of programs, and stringent guidelines in place to help educators meet standards with support. CDE’s Alternative Licensure Department is doing a terrific job of overseeing these programs. (See the Appendix for a roster of alternative licensing programs in Colorado.)

“Standards need to be high, but the profession must be accessible to experts.”
—Daniel N.

12. Encourage and promote diversity among educators throughout the state. Alternative licensure programs help to increase the pool of potential educators, particularly for rural school districts, which have very different needs from urban schools. Some alternative licensure programs in Colorado are one-year programs and others are two-year programs. Small towns need to be able to hire from their own communities, while knowing that their new educators are getting support to learn the craft of teaching as they enter the profession.
13. **Allow for alternative licensing of candidates with a college degree and specialized training.** Most educators choosing this route to licensure have life experience and often advanced degrees. This allows them to enrich their classroom experiences tremendously. Their teacher training should be specific and require a period of observation and assistance from mentors in the desired areas. The degree and student teaching (and/or mentoring in certain occupations of the education field) process would be similar to many other professions in and outside of Colorado. For example, pharmacists in North Dakota must complete a degree program and do “on-the-job” training during their last year of school in which they spend eight five-week rotations at various practice settings to bring the real world experience to their education.

> I spent five years as a PhD student in literature. I had the good fortune to teach during those five years, as well. I left the program A.B.D. and am now teaching A.P. Literature and Composition at a local high school as a result of an alternative licensing program.” —Jaime R.

> Well-constructed, cooperative, learning-based alternative licensure programs actually provide a more in-depth, full-year experience for beginning teachers…. Everyone in my cohort co-taught for the entire year, experiencing the nuances of setting up a classroom, the challenges of assessment windows, and benefited from learning to utilize Backwards Design, developmentally appropriate curriculum, cooperative learning techniques, as well as effectively differentiating instruction in the various content areas as students’ needs changed throughout the year.” —Kirsten N.

**Why We Believe This Will Work for Students**

Students benefit when their educators are experts in their field. The vast majority of alternative licensure candidates come to the profession after following other career paths. When they bring their expertise into the classroom, they enrich learning for their students in meaningful ways.

**Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers**

Educators need various pathways into the profession of teaching. Young students still in college may want to follow a traditional pathway, but most who have chosen other careers first need a pathway that allows them to work as they earn their license. The traditional pathway, which requires student teaching without pay, on top of tuition, is out of bounds for many. Colorado’s numerous pathways into licensure must be retained and supported.
Preserve both traditional and alternative educator preparation programs in Colorado.

Statement of the Problem

The Licensing Educators for Academic Development (LEAD) Compact proposal significantly reduces the need for educator preparation programs in our state. However, just because an educator candidate is an expert in a field, he or she does not necessarily have the skills required to teach. With the Teacher Quality Standards established by Senate Bill 10-191 in place, new educators will need support and instruction in order to teach effectively and positively impact student learning. Teacher preparation programs provide structures of support for new educators and help them become effective teachers in their classrooms. Mentorship is a critical piece in growing new educators. New teachers will need guidance in order to become proficient.

Proposed Solutions

14. Provide a strong start for new educators entering the profession by requiring that basic, consistent standards be met, including coursework or instruction on classroom management, individualizing for all students, and using data to drive instruction.

15. Preserve teacher preparation programs so that any educator who is deemed insufficient based on two years of evaluations would have programs available to support them in improving their craft of teaching.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

When students are learning in a classroom environment that is well managed, by an educator with the confidence to make a difference, great things happen. Educators only become excellent in teaching with supportive experts by their side. Traditional and alternative licensing programs help prepare experienced, knowledgeable adults to manage classrooms, diversify for all students, and meet students’ learning needs in meaningful ways.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

When new educators are given the tools they need to be prepared for teaching, they are much more likely to be successful. When educators are successful, they remain in the profession. Teacher preparation programs are there before, during and after the transition to the classroom to support new educators every step of the way.
RECOMMENDATION 5

Strengthen expectations for educator preparation programs.

Statement of the Problem

Educator preparation programs vary widely, and some do not provide enough experience and support for new educators to enter the profession prepared for the challenges ahead of them.

Proposed Solutions

16. **Re-evaluate expectations for educator preparation programs.** Educators must understand the progression of skills students need to build on their knowledge.

> "Elementary and early childhood teachers need to know the progression of learning from the first skill through grade six in Reading and Math." — Paige D.

> "If we truly want to retain teachers, they must walk into a job feeling confident that they have the skills needed to be successful. It appears to me that our new teachers need to come to us well prepared to teach first, then have access to powerful mentors who are allowed the time and resources to help them get off to a successful start. Otherwise, we are not going to attract or retain qualified people to perform the most important job there is." — Susan P.

17. **Require future educators to have time in a classroom during at least two years of their educator preparation program.** This could be done through practicum time or student teaching.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Students will benefit from beginning educators who already have classroom experience. They will have educators who are prepared with classroom management techniques implemented and observed in actual classrooms.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Future Teachers

Future educators will have a better understanding of and appreciation for the traits and techniques required to develop a healthy, safe and effective strategy for classroom management. New educators may be less likely to leave the profession when they are appropriately supported through in-classroom experiences.
RECOMMENDATION 6

Attain consistency in the language used for licensure on the Colorado Department of Education website.

Statement of the Problem
The current licensure section of the CDE website lacks clarity for stakeholders.

Proposed Solutions
18. Identify the purpose and procedure for local control in determining hiring practices across school districts in Colorado.
19. Gather data regarding minimum hiring requirements from all school districts in Colorado and post links to those sites.
20. Develop a user-friendly, well-structured chart that displays all licensure requirements in one highly organized section on the website.
21. Disseminate the information on licensure requirements for special service providers to their individual professional organizations in order to allow stakeholders to keep up-to-date with the state’s policies.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students
The purpose of licensure is to provide students with highly qualified individuals who are well-versed not only in their fields of expertise, but across all Colorado Content Standards that support rigor in the classroom setting. Passionate individuals who are well-equipped to handle the challenges involved in students’ lives require expertise in all areas. The current licensure process may be putting students at risk of not having the “best and brightest” to educate them. Students living in rural areas are the most at risk as their schools are competing for the best applicants with lower salaries. Colorado must compete for the most talented, well-qualified educators for all students, no matter the students’ geographic location, economic status, individualized needs, and preparation for school. CDE must provide a venue to attract those individuals and must sell itself with its website.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers
CDE needs to present licensure information that is easily accessible online by training programs and professional organizations that offer licensure requirements on their websites. It is the responsibility of each state, or should be, to disseminate current, precise, well-documented, and up-to-date information in order to allow professionals to understand each state’s minimum requirements. Not only is this information invaluable for professional organizations and training programs, but it also provides parents with information about the type of employee Colorado is looking for and what they can expect in their educators compared to other states. One professional organization’s website displaying nationwide licensing information had Colorado data that was seven years old.
That does not bode well when we are competing with other states for those applicants. CDE can become a leader in the application process by making changes without significant costs.

“Been there, done that. I would almost rather retire than go through [the process for renewal] again.” — Nancy H.

“The renewal process takes too long. An online renewal should be almost instantaneous. Instead, I’m still awaiting my license renewal that I submitted the first of August and this is October 10th.” — Cheryl C.
RECOMMENDATION 7

Provide greater assistance during the application process.

Statement of the Problem

Applicants are required to complete a multiple-page application and will lose their fee if they do not complete all sections of the application. However, CDE does not provide adequate assistance by phone or email if applicants have questions as they are completing the application. The “workbooks” provided to assist educators in preparing the materials they need to complete the application are not complete and can cause more confusion.

Proposed Solutions

22. Invite applicants to contact a representative by phone or email when they have questions with the application.
   a. Provide CDE contact information (phone numbers and email addresses) and live representatives who can walk through the application with an educator as they are completing the application. Currently, the call center is only available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Most educators will be completing their application outside of this time, as it is during normal teaching hours. Additional call center time needs to be available for educators to receive assistance.
   b. Change the lost fee policy. Many educators expressed concern with the difficulty of the online application and loss of their fees if the application wasn’t completed as desired by CDE.

23. Evaluate “workbooks” that assist with compiling and completing endorsement applications and make sure they are current. Educators have found that documents provided by CDE to prepare information for the application were not complete.

24. Ensure “workbooks” use the same terminology when referring to sections of the license application.

25. Ensure that software is compatible for applicants using a variety of operating systems and is accessible with a Mac or PC. Educators do not all possess the same equipment. Some computer resources are much more dated than others. The application should be easily accessed through old and new technology and across a variety of operating systems.

“Our school does not have a scanner so I had to figure out how to get my certificates, driver’s license, etc. into a digital format so that I could upload them to my renewal, requiring me to give my personal information to another employee who had access to a scanner. Somehow I don’t think much consideration was given to the fact that small school districts might not have all the necessary technology to support the latest renewal process.” —Candis H.
Why We Believe This Will Work for Students

Educators will be able to focus their time and energy on preparing for the classroom rather than being concerned about a confusing application, financial loss, or license expiration.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers

Educators will feel more confident that their application has been completed appropriately with added support, and their focus can be placed on preparing lessons and materials for their students.
RECOMMENDATION 8

Provide reciprocity for licensed educators from other states.

Statement of the Problem
Experienced educators from other states are required to complete additional testing regardless of their educator licenses from other states. Colorado should work to attract experienced educators.

Proposed Solutions

26. Provide teachers with current educator licenses in other states with a smooth transition into a Colorado teaching license. Experienced, licensed teachers could attain an initial license in their original endorsement area by providing a copy of their out-of-state license.

27. Allow licensed educators to attain a Colorado license without additional testing. Currently, experienced educators entering Colorado are required to complete the PLACE or Praxis II test even though they already have completed similar testing to attain their out-of-state licenses. The Praxis II test, although available in more content areas, is only accepted in certain endorsements. For example, a music teacher with acceptable performance on the Praxis test and a teaching certificate from another state must pay for and successfully complete the PLACE test before receiving an initial license in Colorado.

“I moved here from another state where I held a school counselor license and had 13 years of experience in the field. Yet CDE slammed the door in my face and would not honor it because I hold a master's in clinical counseling even though I also hold a teaching license. I would like to see reciprocity especially when it is clear that to hold that license in my former state I had to pass PRAXIS I and II.” — Diane H.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students
Students will have greater diversity in their school staff, as it will be easier for educators to transfer from other states and teach in Colorado.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers
Colorado will be more attractive to experienced educators who are licensed in other states.
RECOMMENDATION 9

Provide license options for all areas, especially those for which state standards are provided.

Statement of the Problem
Professionals who teach in schools are required to have a teacher license, but not all educators are provided the opportunity to have a license specific to their specialty.

“If we are going to test students over state standards in dance, we need to ensure there are qualified teachers delivering the content… If it is taught in our schools it is important to a child’s education and should be taken seriously. Those who teach these subjects should have high, rigorous standards to meet just like someone teaching a “tested” course and should be viewed with equal amounts of respect.”—Andrea L.

Proposed Solutions
28. Provide licensure for educators in all areas for which there are state standards (including dance).
29. Provide licensure for specific areas to encourage educators to be specialists (middle school science, high school math, etc.).

Why We Believe This Will Work for Students
Students will get to learn from experts and active professionals. This provides a real-life relevance and application for their knowledge when they are learning a specific subject.

Why We Believe This Will Work for Teachers
Educators will be able to hold a license in a specialty area, and professionals will be encouraged to share their knowledge through experience in the educational field.
Conclusion

Although there were varying opinions on many matters surrounding educator licensure, a common theme emerged: the current licensure requirements do not need to be discarded. Educators expressed the need to refine the process, addressing consistency across the state, making it more attractive to experienced teachers from other states, and providing better support with the online application. As the standards and assessment criteria are in a state of transition, untried assessment data, and by extension, evaluation data, are not dependable measures to which we should tie evaluation. Current practices should be retained and strengthened through additional support for new teachers and those new to Colorado, while leadership, mentorship and professional development opportunities are provided for experienced educators.

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Appendix I

Alternative Licensure Pathways

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Statewide program available for all public and independent schools in Colorado. Interested applicants contact Boulder Journey School.

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Statewide program available for all public charter, and private schools in Colorado.
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St. Elizabeth’s School (private), Stephen Knight CEE (DPS), The Logan School for Creative Learning (private), Tollgate Elementary School of Expeditionary Learning (APS), Virginia Court Elementary (APS), Westerly Creek Elementary (DPS), and SOAR (DPS)

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Public Education & Business Coalition: Colorado Boettcher Teacher Residency
South Central BOCES
Stanley British Primary School
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Western State Colorado University

See more at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/Licensure_alt_desigagencies.asp#sthash.xrh2DG3w.dpuf
Appendix II

Colorado Rural Schools Caucus
Teacher Licensure Survey Results

On October 14, 2013, the Colorado Rural Schools Caucus (CRSC) sent the following message to its members:

Teacher Licensure

In July, Sen. Johnston announced the formation of the Licensing Educators for Academic Development (LEAD) Compact, as a way “to allow stakeholders to have an in-depth conversation about the entire educator continuum (educator prep, licensure, induction, professional development, and career pathways)…with the goal of producing policy recommendations that will inform legislation in 2014.”

The mission of the Rural Caucus is to represent districts by developing a collective voice that can be used to promote the accomplishments of our schools and to influence critical debate. Since Teacher Licensure has emerged as a statewide topic that is likely to result in legislation, we intend to support the process and member districts by gathering authentic data that can add to the LEAD Process and that can be used by policy makers. To help us do so, we have developed the following survey.

Please respond immediately. It will only take a few minutes of your time to provide us with the authentic data that is needed to inform the LEAD members and others about what your priorities are and good, best practices you would like to see included in a bill if this proposed legislation comes to fruition.

Survey Questions

1. Rank in level of importance, the current initiatives you are leading or those most pressing issues facing you at this time:
   - Budget (213/66)
   - Gold Assessment
   - READ Act
   - Graduation Requirements
   - WIDA
   - New Assessments (PARCC/CMAP)
   - Bullying Program
   - Facilities/BEST
   - Implementing 191
2. Would you describe your ability to recruit teachers as: A top priority, A pressing issue, Somewhat of an issue, Not an issue? Explain.

3. Would you describe your ability to retain teachers as: A top priority, A pressing issue, Somewhat of an issue, Not an issue? Explain.

4. To what extent is licensure impacting your ability to recruit and retain teachers: A major factor, Somewhat of an issue, Not related to the problem in my district? Explain.

5. If licensure is not the reason your district is having difficulty attracting and retaining teachers, what is the reason? Explain.

6. Do you believe changing the current licensure system this year would help you attract and retain teachers? Yes. No. Explain.

7. What do you believe is the best predictor of teacher performance?

8. How many licensed staff do you have in your district?

9. How many have alternative and/or emergency licenses?

10. How many unfilled teaching and principal positions do you have annually?

11. What subject areas do you have that are unfilled?

12. What subject area(s) have historically been the most challenging to fill?

13. How often is your District faced with filling a challenging subject area which you previously identified? Annually; Every 2-3 Years; Every 4-5 Years; Every 6 plus years

14. Do you have any positions filled with unlicensed staff? If so, how many and in which subject areas?

15. How large is your district? 0-100 students, 100-500 students, 500-1000 students, 1000 - 3000 students, over 3000

16. How far is your district from Denver: within 100 miles, 100-150 miles, 150-200 miles, 200-300 miles, 300-400 miles

17. How familiar are you with the LEAD Compact and the work it is doing?

18. Do you believe professional practitioners have been given enough of a voice on the LEAD committee and in LEAD Compact discussions?

19. Do you believe changing the current teacher licensing system will result in the creation of policy changes that provide children the best chance of personal and academic success?

20. Would it be helpful to you if the Caucus sponsored a meeting that addresses best practices and research based changes?
Survey Results

Eighty (80) CRSC members responded to the survey. Therefore, the results reflect the opinions and input of approximately 61% of the CRSC’s current membership.

Question 1: Rank Level of Importance of Issues

In level of importance:

1. Budget was the clear winner with 45% of respondents ranking their budget as the most pressing issue, and 92% of respondents ranking it in the top five;
2. Implementing 191 was the next priority for most people with 39% of respondents ranking it as their first priority and 90% ranking it among the top five;
3. Although no one ranked New Assessments as their top priority, 77% percent of respondents categorized them as one of their top five;
4. 8% of respondents rated the implementation of Common Core/Standards as a top priority, and 74% ranked it among the top five;
5. Rounding out the top five was the READ Act, which no one ranked as a top priority but which 65% of respondents said was up there.

Teacher Licensure ranked higher than only Bullying and WIDA with respect to what respondents are concerned about and/or focused on. Not one person ranked it as a top priority and only 9% ranked it among their top five.

Question 2: Ability to Recruit Teachers

Although 73% of respondents stated that their ability to recruit teachers is either a pressing issue or a top priority, the majority of comments provided for this answer echoed the following statements:

- “Little interest in geographic isolation;”
- “Hard place to attract people to live. Low wage scale;”
- “Finding quality candidates is a significant challenge;”
- “We get few to no applications for most positions;”
- “It’s a top priority, but we are serious outgunned by other district’s resources;”
- “We have struggled the past couple years to hire our top candidates. However, I believe that is a reflection of our base salary more than any other issue;”
- “Teachers are certified in other states or in other areas but not highly qualified in Colorado”

Four of the twenty-eight individuals who provided comment noted that their ability to recruit teachers is a constant struggle in the content areas of math and SPED.
Question 3: Ability to Retain Teachers

67% of respondents said that their ability to retain teachers is either a top or pressing priority, but as with Question 2, comments reflected the following sentiments:

- “We are losing people because of initiative overload;”
- “Younger teachers don’t find our community as a place that they want to stay;”
- “Our salary schedule hurts our ability to do this and low pay encourages teachers to look elsewhere;”
- “We spend a great deal in PD and can’t pay to keep folks;”
- “It’s a top priority, but Front Range schools always win in the end.”

Question 4: Extent Licensure is Impacting Ability to Recruit & Retain

51% of respondents stated that Teacher Licensure is “somewhat of an issue” in their ability to recruit and retain teachers. 36% said it was “not related”, and 13% said it was a “major factor”.

Comments in this section ran the gamut, but by and large people had the following to say:

Not Related to Teacher Licensure

- “I’m not sure that I can determine that licensure is the issue or just scarcity or high quality teachers interested in coming to Southern Colorado;”
- “Money, quality professional development, lack of peers in same grade level or subject are much more important than licensing”
- “Salary, location, and rural life are the issues. A smaller overall hiring pool probably is the main reason, but we have no problem getting people into quality alternative licensure programs;”
- “Licensing does not play a factor at all. We have been very successful with the existing alternative program out of the Northeast BOCES;”
- “The alternative licensure programs in place allow us to hire staff that have not gone through a traditional teacher prep program;”
- “It is not a major issue yet, but I see it becoming an issue. I am worried that the process of becoming a teacher is just going to be too much of investment for the return;”

Related to Teacher Licensure

- “Teachers that come into Colorado should not have to take Place test. Their license should be good if it’s good elsewhere;”
- “I have had the opportunity to hire some phenomenal college professors, psychologist, etc but they are unable to get CO certification since they have not had traditional teaching background and weren’t interested in sitting through a year or two of alternative coursework;”
“CDE is too slow, which makes vetting substitutes very hard. New teachers are often hired and working almost the whole year before we get CDE official license ... I have no confidence they could cope with any changes.”

**Questions 5: If Licensure Isn’t the Reason What is?**

This question simply asked for responses. Sixty-five (65) of the eighty (80) respondents provided comments. The following sentiments were expressed, in some form, by every respondent:

- “Initiative overload, lack of resources, pay”
- “Pay and benefits at too low. The job is extremely stressful and taxing when compared to the low wages;”
- “Changing Licensure is not going to make the teachers any more available. It doesn’t change the fact that our District is located 50 miles from a Wal-Mart;”
- “The issues related to staffing are: budget resources to offer competitive salaries and benefits; isolation and lack of amenities that attract young professionals to our communities;”
- “Location: we are geographically isolated with the nearest grocery store and gas station 35 miles away. Pay: we cannot pay what the larger districts can and therefore lose candidates to districts who pay better.”
- “Having hired scores of people recently, and licensure was never the issue. The issue was low pay scale, poor location, minimal professional development, lack of opportunities for advancement in the district, anti-tax (including school taxes) community, three years of state education cuts;”
- “Bigger than licensure, is simply the pool of interested candidates has significantly dropped.”
- “I need the ability to compete salary wise with Front Range schools. Statewide salary schedule and funding to support it;”
- “Rural districts struggle to attract and retain new teachers. In a small district we all wear many hats, and often times that may mean the need for a teacher to have 3 preps, well over 100 students and coach. Larger districts also often have curriculum directors, assistant supt., lead teachers or content coaches. We can not provide those level of supports.”
**Question 6: Would Changing the Current Licensure System Help?**

83% of respondents answered this question with a resounding “No”. They also had the following to say:

- “The existing alternative licensure program already addresses needs;”
- “It will drive more people away from education.”
- “This effort is another waste of time, effort and scarce resources;”
- “Pipeline isn’t the issue, it is the ability to pay;”
- “Don’t mess with it, 191 was enough;”
- “We can find ways to employ individuals that want to work and live in our rural school district when we find a fit for any openings we have. Licensure has very little influence on our ability to do this.”
- “Being in rural area is always going to be the issue.”

Of the 17% that responded it would help, their comments reflected the following input:

- “It depends on the change;”
- “Only for related service personnel. Speech, OT, school psych;”
- “If alternative licensure would allow student teaching as an avenue (accept people into the program if they were in an internship/student teaching);”
- “We live so close to the state border that we are often considering teachers from out of state. Colorado has a reputation of having a challenging system for licensure. The time it takes for our licensure process makes it very difficult at sometimes impossible for us to get good teachers;”
- “As a K–12 campus, we share many of our teachers. As the student population demographics change and the needs of the building change we may get locked into a teacher at a certain grade level 6th grade in the middle school. We are looking at moving the 6th grade to the elementary, that may mean we have to cut secondary content specialists and hire elementary people. Our content specialists can not support/teach 4th or 5th grade due to highly qualified. We have very limited resources and we need to have some flexibility in maximizing our resources.”
- “I believe that amending the current law to allow for superintendents to sign off on someone that has a bachelors degree or higher after three years of successful teaching should suffice for licensure and help us fill positions.”
**Question 7: Best Indicator of Teacher Performance**

Again, this was a question that asked only for responses. Seventy-one (71) of the eighty (80) respondents provided comments. The most common answers are listed below:

- “Evidence of a good work ethic and a love for what they are doing regardless of everything going against them...Student growth, not necessarily on standardized tests...but hard quantifiable evidence that a student is growing and progressing;”
- “Intelligence, work ethic, a passion for children and the willingness to be coached;”
- “Content knowledge and strong support in classroom during first 1-2 years of teaching. On-going, meaningful professional development opportunities;”
- “Passion for the subject, pedagogical expertise, ability to create rapport with kids, and desire to get better;”
- “Disposition, quality preparation, ability to think on your feet and work well with people, excellent content knowledge and adaptability;”
- “Kid centered attitude and ability to work with kids;”
- “University preparation and district support for new teachers including mentors and professional development;”
- “I still hang onto the old model of a three legged stool. Parental involvement, student engagement and school support are all necessary. I feel the same for the success of the school’s staff.”
- “Ability to plan, assess, reorganize, reassess, critique, build on success/failure in moving forward.”

As is evident in the comments above, the vast majority of respondents identified passion for the job and the children combined with a good work ethic, plus professional development and district support as the primary indicators of success. Only four of the respondents identified either student achievement or teacher evaluations as a primary indicator of teacher success.

**Question 8: Number of Licensed Staff in Your District?**

- **41%** have from 0-30
- **27%** have from 31-60
- **16%** have from 60-100
- **16%** have over 100
**Question 9:** Number of Licensed Staff With Alternative and Emergency Licenses?

- 75% have only 1-2
- 15% have 3-5
- 8% have 6-10
- 1% had 11 or greater

**Question 10:** Number of Unfilled Teaching and Principal Positions Annually

- 49% have 0
- 27% have 1
- 23% have 2-4
- None have 5+

**Question 11:** Subject Areas That Go Unfilled

Math (31%), Science and Foreign Languages (20%), and Elementary and Music (16%) rounded out the top content areas that are the most difficult to fill. These were followed by ESL (13%) and SPED and RDG Intervention (11%).

Comments were also requested and included:

- “We would have more if we had the funding to hire needed positions such as in the Arts, and additional reading and math interventionists as well as another administrator;”
- “Speech, OT, PT, School Psych;”
- “Due to budget, our Board cut a few positions that are needed. Technically, they’re not unfilled. I need a counselor and a tech teacher at my ES;”
- “Counselor;”
- “Because we only offer 1 period a day of foreign language. Nobody will move to our town for 1/7th of a contract so we use the WAVES system;”
Question 12: Historically Difficult Positions to Fill

This question asked only for responses, and seventy-three (73) of the eighty (80) respondents provided comments.

Math, science and SPED were the three areas people said they had the most difficulty filling. The Arts, Foreign Languages and CTE were semi-problematic. English, Special Services, Counselors and ESL were all mentioned. One person said, “It seems like all of them at this point.” While another stated, “I haven’t had the problem as of yet.”

Question 13: How Often is District Faced With Filling Those Positions?

- 50% said Annually
- 42% said every 2-3 years
- 4% said every 4-5 years
- 5% said every 6 plus years

Question 14: Positions Filled With Unlicensed Staff?

65% said, “No” and 35% said, “Yes”. Comments included:

- “Special Education...emergency license;”
- “AG, we are using licensed teachers who must work on certification;”
- “Elective areas—Part time shop, part-time guitar;”
- “Library/media”

Several respondents said simply, “math and science,” while others pointed out that they had teachers in alternative licensure programs.

Question 15: District Size?

- 9% have 100 or fewer students
- 45% have 100-500 students
- 23% have 500-1000 students
- 7% have 1000-3000 students
- 5% have 3000-6500 student
Question 16: Distance From Denver?

16% are within 100 miles
17% are 100-150 miles
31% are 150-200 miles
19% are 200-300 miles
18% are 300+ miles

Question 17: Familiarity With LEAD?

Although a general overview of the LEAD Compact Group and its charge was attached to the survey e-mail, approximately 85% of respondents fell into the semi-familiar to not familiar at all range with respect to LEAD, with the largest percentage stating, “I could use more information.” Only 16% of respondents said they were “very familiar” with LEAD.

Question 18: Have Enough Professional Practitioners Been Given A Voice on the LEAD Compact Committee and in LEAD Compact Discussions?

A resounding 92% of respondents answered “No” to this question and provided the following comments:

- “It seems like a group focused on change without understanding any of the real issues;”
- “The whole idea is being driven not by educators, but by politicians and business leaders. Can you imagine rewriting how lawyers or doctors would be licensed without any lawyers and doctors involved? It’s nuts.”
- “It should be staffed by principals, teachers and supers from identified high achieving districts, those that have broken the code and are succeeded where others are failing.”
- “Of the 38 members, only 8 are practitioners. There are too many politicians on the group;”
- “This legislation is politically motivated (good for Gov and Sen Johnston) and not at all about helping districts serve their students... despite the rhetoric otherwise. It doesn’t include things districts need and want. Tying licensure to evaluations is obviously some policy geek’s idea, not from a practitioner!”
- “I would have liked to have seen half of the spots going to people directly involved with K–12 schools;”
- “It appears that the committee is predominantly from the Front Range and little information is funneled to the rural communities;”
• “The issues that rural school districts face are different than Denver or the Front Range. Representation should also be balanced with Rural and front range.”
• “This is the first I have been asked. I am sure those on the front range have a voice, but I am rarely asked about initiatives from CDE - or it does not feel that the voice of a smaller district has credibility;”
• “Today was the first time I heard the acronym LEAD. I knew licensure legislation was on the horizon, but had no idea the LEAD Compact work had been occurring.”

**Question 19: Will Changing The Current System Result in The Creation of Policy Changes That Provide Children The Best Chance Of Personal and Academic Success?**

Again, the answer was a resounding “No” from 86% of respondents. Comments included the following:

• “It will be a step backward for two reasons: 1. Politics will enter the equation and spoil the results and 2. Even if done right, we are cannot handle more change right now;”
• “If the changes are done differently! The current proposal is garbage. More input from field is needed and it needs to be informed by research and what’s worked in other places;”
• “I don’t have faith that this will occur with the makeup of the LEAD membership;”
• “Still need more data to better understand the problem and need for such a massive change in licensure. I am concerned that creating so many layers to licensing and connecting it to performance may deter people from entering the profession, particularly if the state fails to provide funding to increase the compensation commensurate to the requirements under the new licensing proposal;”
• “We already have alternatives available for those that are willing to put in the time and learn the basics needed prior to entering classrooms. Expanding reciprocity with other states would be a more reasonable approach that would not be costly;”
• “The focus needs to be on the preparation programs rather than the licensure process;”
• “I believe it will add another layer of bureaucracy and confusion;”
• Even the 14% who answered “yes” said:
• “Of course my hope would be that an overhaul of the licensing system would help students and teachers, but I have my doubts;”
• “The licensure issues are mostly inconsistencies in across endorsements. For example, special education endorsement requires only passing the test (insufficient; a very low bar) but other areas require extensive prep at a graduate level (CLD)—makes no sense.”
• “Depends on what changes. I’m doubtful that this will help based on experiences with these types of initiatives. Rural educators are rarely the focus.”
• “Maybe, it is just one aspect and it may or may not. It seems most of the legislation to date has merely meant more unfunded work for our state's schools.”
Question 20: Would It Be Helpful If The Caucus Sponsored A Meeting That Addresses Best Practices and Research-based Changes?

The answer to this question was an overwhelming (86%) “yes”.

Conclusion

We believe the results of the survey clearly show that while there may be some issues within the current licensure system that may need to be refined, in the professional opinion of our rural educators, these issues do not rise to the level of a total re-write of the educator licensure law at this particular point in time.

Teacher licensure is not a priority. It might be someday; however, right now, it is a capacity issue. Much of our members’ additional resources and energy are being expended on Educator Effectiveness, PARCC, READ, and many other items. Therefore, the issue of licensure really becomes one of time. Being required to spend more time on managing another reform is not something our rural schools can afford to do. It adds yet another state requirement to rural schools already overwhelmed by layer upon layer of new legislation, much of it unfunded. It further fragments their time, and diminishes their ability to implement other recently adopted new laws with fidelity.

Moreover, there was a clear sentiment expressed that “opening up or closing down licensure will not help districts in isolated areas fill the positions.” This is because, as was noted in the comments section of several of the questions, the struggle to attract and retain candidates is a reflection of salaries, geographic isolation, and major lifestyle changes more than any other issue.

Hard to fill content areas (math, science and SEPD) were identified and several suggestions were made as to how the current system could be improved. In addition, a few policy changes were suggested that could make an impact with regard to hiring in rural areas. But, the survey garnered no information to support the idea that rural educators are the people asking for changes to be made. What people asked for were more time and appropriate resources—the two things that have the biggest impact on student achievement.
Kerry Adams, a high school science teacher in Alamosa, has been an advocate for science education for more than 35 years. Prior to becoming a teacher, he worked as a geologist for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on water projects. Kerry’s passion for science education has led him to be a leader as a past president of Colorado Association of Science Teachers and Colorado Earth Space Network. He has also written and evaluated state test items, and benchmarked scoring. Kerry served six years on the CEA Board of Directors.

Timothy Brown is a National Board Certified Music Teacher. He is in his 26th year of teaching, serving the Denver Public Schools since 1991. He has served in numerous roles during that time, including assessment and curriculum. Timothy has researched aural skills acquisition and is a published composer. He holds a doctorate from the School of Music at the University of Northern Colorado. He has held various leadership roles in the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, Colorado Education Association, and National Education Association. He volunteers on a crisis hotline, and is a registered suicide intervention skills trainer.

Jenny Hart is a passionate elementary school teacher with 19 years of experience. She currently teaches a combined third and fourth grade class at a tiny rural school in Ouray, where all students from preschool through 12th grade learn in one building. In addition, she is the council mentor teacher for the West Central Alternative Licensure Program. This year, Jenny oversees eight teacher candidates from all over the western slope of Colorado. She is also a 16-year volunteer with the Ouray Mountain Rescue organization.
Elizabeth Tarbutton teaches math at Otho E. Stuart Middle School in Commerce City. She has led professional development for math teachers as a leader of the Rocky Mountain Math Teacher’s Circle. She has a passion for supporting students in developing problem-solving skills. She is also passionate about advocating for students through the school’s RTI team. Elizabeth sits on the instruction leadership team at her school, and is the school’s data analyst.

Jeanne Kleinman Williams, M.A. CCC-SLP, is completing her 39th year as a speech-language pathologist in Colorado Springs. All but two years of her career have been with Colorado Springs School District 11 (CSSD11), where she has held the position of Communication Department chairperson. She has supervised graduate students when she worked at Colorado Springs’ Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center and in CSSD11. The Colorado Springs Education Association honored Jeanne as a “Teacher in the Spotlight” for her commitment to working in tandem with her colleagues to meet the needs of all students. In November, she was notified that the special education team at Howbert Elementary, of which she is a member, has received the 2013 “Excellence in Inclusion Award” from the CSSD11 Special Education Department.

Ann Wyatt, a fourth-generation educator, received a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and a Master of Education from Grand Canyon University. She currently teaches Elementary Music at Peabody Elementary in Centennial (Littleton Public School District), and has experience teaching preschool through 12th grade students. That includes fifth grade through 12th grade band in Nebraska, and beginning and intermediate band students with the Colorado Honor Band Association. With changes in the teacher evaluation system and state standards, she feels the need to represent her peers and students in issues concerning the future of education.
New Voice Strategies

New Voice Strategies is a nonprofit corporation founded by a group of seasoned professionals who believe in an individual’s ability to make our world better, fairer and more productive. New Voice Strategies created the VIVA Idea Exchange™ to offer leaders a new way to communicate with their stakeholders. The VIVA Idea Exchange™ is an online peer collaboration platform that plumbs the wisdom of committed people with front-line experience to create consensus on a variety of actionable recommendations. We believe in the power of authentic experience and provide committed people with an avenue to make a difference.

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Board of Directors

JILL BASS taught in the Chicago and New York City public schools for 14 years. She has a master's in instructional leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and has been a professional developer, curriculum writer, educational consultant, and instructional coach. She is currently director of the Mikva Challenge’s National Center for Action Civics, overseeing curriculum development and teacher training.

JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD is currently a senior advisor at the College Board, focusing on developing the organization's career readiness initiative. He is the former chief executive of Chicago Public Schools. Prior to his appointment in Chicago, he was superintendent of schools for the Rochester City School District in New York.

ANNA BURGER is long-time strategist who was an advanced leadership fellow at Harvard University and served on President Obama’s Economic Recovery Board. She was chair of Change to Win and the first woman to head an American labor federation. In 2010, Burger retired as secretary-treasurer of SEIU, the nation’s fastest growing union, where she had served since 2001. Burger was named one of Washingtonian magazine’s 100 Most Powerful Women in 2006 and 2009.

JOHN HUSSEY is chief strategy officer at Battelle for Kids. He provides organizational and strategic oversight for the organization’s clients in the areas of innovation, technology, communications, development, and strategic planning. Prior to joining Battelle for Kids, John enjoyed a 30-year career in education and technology. He previously served as the regional manager for SchoolNet, Inc., helping create web-based products to help teachers access student data and curricular standards via the Internet for use in instructional planning. He was also a middle school science teacher and technology coordinator in several Ohio school districts.

KIPLUND “KIP” KOLKMEIER is of counsel to the Political Law and Government Relations practice groups of Perkins, Coie, LLC & Kolkmeier Consulting. His legal practice focuses on state legislative lobbying in Illinois, corporate and governmental ethics issues, administrative rulemaking and executive agency lobbying, PAC management, state and federal campaign finance issues, and association management. He previously was a partner at the law firms of Sidley & Austin, Altheimer & Gray, and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon.

ASHLEY WARLICK has been a public school teacher for more than 12 years. For eight of those years, she taught elementary school in the Cambridge Public Schools in Massachusetts. She has expertise in teaching students with special needs, and brings a strong interest in the arts to her work. Ashley recently accepted a position teaching abroad at the American Overseas School in Rome.