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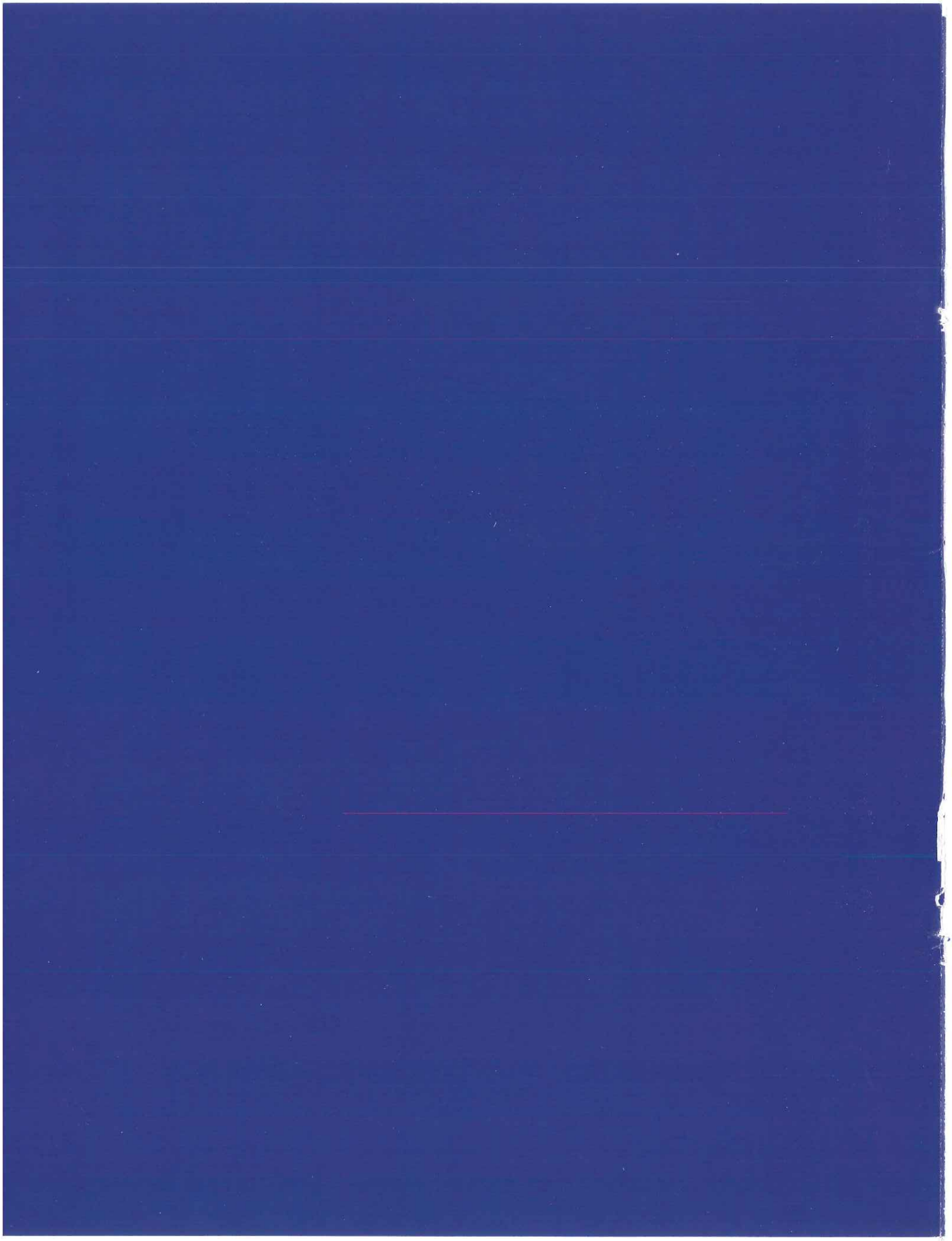
The Expanded Learning Opportunities Commission

Beyond Walls, Clocks and Calendars

RETHINKING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN COLORADO

Investing in Innovation in our Public Schools

cde Improving Academic Achievement
Colorado Department of Education



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Executive Summary

The world is changing rapidly. How children learn and what they need to know is changing, too. The technological advances of the 21st century and the enormity of information in our global society compel state and education leaders to think differently about how to educate students in ways that are relevant, engaging and dynamic.

It is imperative that young people in this day and age acquire a high-quality education in order to succeed in civic and economic life, and to sustain and advance America's economic and cultural legacies. And while the American education system has indeed adapted and improved over the past two centuries as American culture and citizenry have progressed, the high-tech and fast-paced world of today requires innovative and far-reaching approaches to ensure that all students have opportunities and tools to succeed and thrive.

Research is clear that when students find relevance, challenge and excitement in learning, they are more likely to have increased attendance, achievement and engagement. Educators must adapt their instructional approaches and the ways in which schools are organized to address the new reality of how kids learn in a digital world and how to engage students in learning today. The Colorado Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Commission was formed in May 2010 to tackle these issues.

The Commission's charge is to advance a vision of the learning experience for students in ways that transcend the traditional school day and traditional classroom models, a vision for education in Colorado that is student-centered, reflective of the modern world and how it has advanced, a vision that uses student interests and experiences to drive teaching and learning.

"By rethinking when, where and how teaching and learning take place, the Commission challenges education leaders to consider how school could be fundamentally different."

– Elaine Gantz-Berman, Colorado Board of Education; Chair, ELO Commission

The ELO Commission proposes the creation of this vision for Colorado: to design and implement learning environments that support how students learn and that are not limited by the resources, expertise or location that characterize a school. To expand and deepen learning opportunities for *all* students, we must look beyond the structures that traditionally define "school" – beyond "walls, clocks, and calendars" – beyond classrooms, class schedules and the school year.

The traditional restrictions of walls, clocks and calendars, as well as ways of grouping students and professionals, are no longer necessary. The universe of learning options can be expanded to create student-centered environments that help all kids learn what

they need to know to be successful in today's rapidly changing world.

Colorado educators and education leaders are integral to intensifying and scaling this work. Already they are making great efforts to accelerate student achievement across the state, and they are increasingly leading and pushing the system to look for ways to employ new, multifaceted strategies to engage and teach all students to their highest potential. Indeed, many of these strategies are already happening. With all the amazing technology and fast-paced changes of our society, improvement is imperative. Colorado can create a system where both professionals and students flourish and reach their utmost potential.

The ELO Commission considered its charge – to expand learning in innovative ways – an opportunity to learn not only from research and experts, but also from current practice in Colorado. While many reports, studies and initiatives assess after-school programs and use of time, community partners and technology in education, there is no single effort that aligns these opportunities into a bigger picture for education in Colorado. The Commission attempts to do this here.

ELO Commission Recommendations

The overarching recommendations of the ELO Commission, presented below, encourage state and district leaders to engage in opportunities that maximize flexibility for schools and communities to support student needs. Recommendations are targeted at creating streamlined and efficient systems and minimizing additional data collection or other burdens placed on schools and districts as a result of expanding learning opportunities for all students.

The ELO Commission recognizes that some of this important work is already underway. Recommendations are organized within the context of Colorado's evolving education systems to highlight potential for systemic change.

Accountability Systems

- Develop an assessment system that encompasses real-time measurements and creates flexibility for schools to test students when they are ready to advance.
- Modify the longitudinal growth model to incorporate real-time measurements, multiple benchmarks of individual student growth and learning that takes place across multiple venues.

Blended, Distance and Online Learning Systems

- Expand blended, distance and online learning as primary strategies for expanding learning opportunities and meeting individual student needs.
- Further explore and disseminate models that effectively incorporate blended learning models with the traditional classroom.
- Provide support and professional development to educators around quality instruction in online and blended settings.
- Ensure all areas of the state have access to adequate bandwidth to utilize today's technology to its fullest.

Broadband and Colorado school districts

EAGLE-Net reported that in 2009:

✓ Colorado ranked 42nd out of 50 states in broadband connectivity.

✓ Schools in Colorado averaged 3.5 kbps of Internet bandwidth per student, approximately 55 percent of the national average. Moreover, the need for broadband connectivity was expected to increase more than seven times by 2011.

✓ Significant connectivity issues exist that impact advanced educational opportunities.

For additional information on EAGLE-Net's report and the state of broadband in Colorado: www.co-eaglenet.net.

Personalized Learning Systems

- Develop individualized learning and assessment plans for students that are co-developed by teachers, families and the student and include flexible schedules, as well as blended, direct, online, project-based, experiential and creative learning opportunities, based on each student's needs and interests.
- Expand the use of career and technical education, pre-collegiate service providers and community-based organizations to customize student learning opportunities, including both in- and out-of-school contexts.

Data Systems

- Create common platforms for identifying and sharing student data across districts and community partners, including higher education, career and technical education, pre-collegiate service providers and community-based organizations.
- Address the complexities and student privacy considerations around collecting and sharing data among key stakeholders.

The majority of Colorado school districts designate the specific work day for all employees. Many districts are encouraging creativity within the agreed-upon work length to identify flexible schedules that better support individual student and teacher needs.

Staffing Models and School Structure

- Develop teacher and principal accountability/ evaluation models that account for "team" teaching and multiple modes of student learning.
- Create flexibility in staffing models, which may include examining teacher licensure and evaluation and the definition of what qualifies as a teacher.
- Work with universities and teacher preparation institutions to consider new ways of educating teachers and administrators to include the use of technology, community partners and data to individualize learning.
- Provide leadership around models that enable schools to be flexible about school staffing, structure and schedules within the school day and calendar year.

Student Funding Systems

- Determine a new funding approach based on student outcomes and mastering competencies versus seat time and grade level enrollment.
- Determine a school finance formula that equitably addresses student participation in both in-school classroom learning and blended, distance and online learning options within and outside of the school building.

Colorado school finance and "seat time"

Currently, the state of Colorado funds schools based on the amount of student-teacher contact time scheduled for each student. Generally, students are eligible for full time funding if their schedule provides at least 360 hours of student-teacher contact and instruction per semester. All districts are required, but not limited, to provide:

- ✓ A school year calendar for each secondary school, which must be adopted by the local board of education, the district administration, the school administration or any combination prior to the beginning of the school year.
- ✓ The bell schedule for each secondary school.
- ✓ Student schedules for all secondary students.

For additional information on student count and funding eligibility in Colorado: www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/download/pdf/StudentOctoberCountManual.pdf

Carnegie Unit System

- Redefine "credit" in regard to completion of standards at a certain proficiency level.
- Ensure that current state rules are not too restrictive on the definition of "course."

Course credit and Colorado education policy

An academic unit, often referred to as a Carnegie unit, is equivalent to one full school year of credit in a specific subject. According to Colorado's Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR), students must complete 17 academic course units in specific academic content areas to meet the freshman admission standard. Students must receive a passing grade in each course to fulfill the requirement.

For additional information on HEAR: http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Policies/Current/i-partf.pdf.

Outlined in greater detail throughout this report, these recommendations should be viewed as a whole, as elements that work together to expand the learning opportunities and outcomes for all children in Colorado. This report is intended to stimulate debate and dialogue among all sectors interested in the future of education for the children and youth in Colorado.

Introduction

The Colorado Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Commission was created to advance a vision of the learning experience for students in ways that transcend the traditional school day and traditional classroom models, a vision for education in Colorado that is student-centered, reflective of the modern world and how it has advanced, and a vision that uses student interests and experiences to drive teaching and learning.

By rethinking when, where and how teaching and learning take place, the Commission challenges education leaders to consider how school could be fundamentally different in 10 years – suggesting that it is entirely possible to begin this work now. While encompassing of and intended for *all* students, the goals of this initiative are strongly linked to the overall education goals of the state of Colorado: increase academic growth for struggling students, close the achievement gap, increase student attendance and decrease the dropout rate.

Expand: *verb*

1: to open up

2: to increase the extent, number, volume, or scope of

Synonyms: *unfold, amplify, develop, elaborate, enlarge*

The ELO Commission proposes the creation of learning environments that are reflective of how students learn and that are not limited by the resources, expertise or location that characterize a school. To expand and deepen learning opportunities for *all* students, the time has come to look beyond structures that traditionally define "school," namely, classrooms, class schedules and the school year. Especially with Colorado's new academic standards and assessments, teacher and leader effectiveness standards, and data and accountability systems, the former "structures" are no longer the constants of education, but rather the variables. Think about a learning environment that expands beyond the traditional walls of the school building, beyond the traditional clocks of the school day, and beyond the traditional calendar of the school year. As *The Futures of School Reform*[1] describes,

[Today is] a world in which access to knowledge is relatively easy and seamless; in which one is free to follow a line of inquiry wherever it takes one, without the direction and control of someone called a teacher; and, in which, with a little practice, most people can quickly build a network of learners around just about any body of knowledge and interests, unconstrained by the limits of geography, institutions, and time zones.

1 *The Futures of School Reform*. Richard Elmore, Gregory R. Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership and Co-Director of the Doctor of Education Leadership Program, Harvard University *Education Week* published online May 16, 2011.

The Colorado ELO Commission believes this is the kind of environment students need. However, to create it some overarching assumptions must be challenged:

- Why must learning take place in a school building over the period of a six- to eight-hour day?
- How is learning that takes place outside of school disconnected from student achievement?
- How can one teacher effectively meet the varying needs of each student in their class?
- Why is it that school "breaks" mean students should take a break from learning – and that the agrarian calendar should drive when this happens?
- Is age really the best determinant for pace and style of learning?
- Is it really true that businesses, research firms and community partners are not a part of – or are an add-on to – the education system?
- Are trends in technology and social networking actual distractions from student learning? Should students be forced to "power off" until after school?

The ELO Commission's vision is to move Colorado's education system beyond the traditional structures, beyond walls, clocks and calendars.

Over the past year the ELO Commission has met with hundreds of individuals and groups across the state. Teachers, principals, district leaders, program providers, students, parents and community organizations have shared their knowledge about the availability and effectiveness of expanded learning opportunities in Colorado and beyond. They have helped to identify the resources and policies that are still needed to ensure that the learning prospects for all Colorado students are many and varied, and of high quality. The Commission's work has also been informed by years of research that links student engagement to trends in dropout and graduation rates. For example, studies show that almost one-third of all public high school students – and nearly 50 percent of minorities – fail to graduate with their class. Evaluating these cases found that academic failure was not the principal cause: 70 percent of students reported that they did not see the real-world applications of their schoolwork and nearly half felt bored by their classes. More than 80 percent of students believed

Beyond "Walls": Involves reducing barriers raised by traditional brick and mortar schools to expand learning and personalize instruction for students. Moving beyond walls supports the idea that learning can take place anytime, anywhere. Primary strategies include innovative use of community partners and career and technical education, as well as blended, distance and online learning, that could occur outside traditional classroom walls. Learning spaces are designed to allow seminars, differentiated groupings, individual study, hands-on laboratories, project- or problem-based instruction, experiential learning and an array of virtual classroom spaces.

Beyond "Clocks": Involves creating a school culture that maximizes student learning time by rethinking what the traditional school day can look like. Maximizing learning time may occur by identifying innovative approaches to reorganizing existing time or extending the length of the school day. Examples include block scheduling, early starts/late starts for students and teachers, extended or staggered school day, Saturday school or staggered week schedules. Learning time is also used to facilitate more personalized instruction with an increase in the use of technology.

Beyond "Calendars": Involves reorganizing the school calendar to optimize opportunities for student learning that are currently constrained by the traditional school year. Examples include intensive "quarters," year-round schooling options, staggered calendars for teachers and students, summer learning opportunities and student-led pace of learning, or competency-based learning.

that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning – such as service learning, work-study and internships – these opportunities would improve students' chances of graduating from high school.[2]

Additional research validates this belief, demonstrating that student participation in high-quality expanded learning opportunities can improve a variety of student outcomes, including academic achievement, school attendance, student engagement, work-study habits and social and emotional development. High-quality expanded learning opportunities – including early learning opportunities – also offer support for working families and help foster stronger links among schools, families and communities. These supports and services are proven to be particularly important for low-income and minority youth, who often lack sustained access to enriching activities and academic support during non-school hours.[3]

The financial climate for education in Colorado and across the country makes this work increasingly pertinent. In 2010 Colorado spent $8,514 per student for K-12 public education. And while the state graduation rate increased that year to 74.6 percent, the dropout rate decreased by only .2 percent. Further, education budgets are projected to continue declining in coming years. While many schools and districts across the state are operating very effective and innovative programs, solutions must be developed – in cost-effective and collaborative ways – to ensure that *all* students are engaged and on the path to postsecondary and workforce success. Encouragingly, current models indicate that expanded learning opportunities hold potential to change educational outcomes for Colorado's students within available resources, and moreover, to shift mindsets about how to best leverage and allocate resources altogether.

The ELO Commission expects that a flexible, dynamic system of expanded learning opportunities will transform the educational experience to fully engage students in their learning and result in outcomes that are better for *all* students.

Student Outcomes

This focus on students' learning needs instead of the system's traditions will promote the following outcomes for students:

- Customized and relevant learning experiences, resulting in more students attending and staying in school and receiving personalized support to meet their individual needs, leading to improved student outcomes.
- Learning focused on higher level thinking skills which address the shift in thinking patterns of digital students.
- Student ownership and management of their learning progress and needs, resulting in students who are engaged and prepared to handle the challenges of life beyond high school.
- Increased overall competitiveness of Colorado students, demonstrated by mastery of essential content and skills.
- Increased connections between instruction in school and the world outside.
- Guaranteed access for all students to the best teachers and content, through face-to-face and digital means, thereby providing quality choices to all students statewide.
- Learning opportunities available 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and seven days a week – time is currency.

2 Bridgeland, John M., John J. Dilulio, Jr., & Stuart C. Wulsin. *Engaged for Success: Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention*. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, 2008.

3 *The Quality Imperative: A State Guide to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association, 2009.

ELO Commission Statewide Vision

Students are often limited in the content they receive by what their teacher knows, and they may be limited in what they learn or the style in which they learn by how their teachers teach. Students' pace of learning may be limited to how quickly they grasp material, by the number of hours they spend with the teacher, or by the number of days that they come to school. The school bell rings at 2:30 or 3:00 p.m. each day and students are out of school until the next day. Summer starts in June and students are on their own until the next school year.

But now imagine the *learning system* – not the current "school system" – going beyond the traditional infrastructure and elements. Think about a learning environment that expands beyond the traditional walls of the school building, beyond the traditional clocks of the school day, and beyond the traditional calendar of the school year. Instead of attending class solely at a school building, what if part of a student's formal learning took place in libraries, at museums, at home on a computer, through distance learning or even through video games? Instead of a traditional "school day," what if some students arrived at school early in the day and others arrived in the afternoon? What if teachers worked in shifts so that the learning day could be extended for longer periods of time? And instead of the traditional September-to-June school calendar, what if schools set up varying blocks of time in which students attended for three months at a time with a month-long break in between?

This new system is centered on students, not the building and time constraints. It offers more *choices* for students to determine the best path that will meet their needs and their interests in learning. Choice plus ownership equals motivation that leads to greater student (and teacher!) success. The new system also allows flexibility for curriculum and assessment. What if students could progress at their own pace, moving ahead in lessons or "grade level" by demonstrating mastery of a subject, rather than having to sit through hours of class because other students have not yet grasped the material? The explicit goal is for students to learn and grow – to acquire knowledge, skills and mastery of subjects and information – not to log hours in a classroom.

The current education system in the United States is still largely an industrial, factory model of educating large numbers of students (which served us well for a time given the context and needs of our country). *For the most part*, children enter a school building at the same time at the beginning of each day, file into one of several classrooms, sit and listen to teachers deliver content, and hear and read the same thing at the same time, and at the same pace.

The traditions and norms of our current education system uphold habits and practices that might not make the best sense for truly "student-centered" learning systems. Instead, what if each student had an *individualized* learning and assessment plan co-developed by teachers, families and the student that includes flexible schedules and blended, direct, online, project-based, experiential, and creative learning opportunities based on each student's needs and interests? In this day and age, learning really can and should take place anywhere, anytime, tailored to students' passions, interests and needs at their own pace of learning. Within this vision for expanded learning, "school" remains the foundation of a student's learning portfolio and community, where the core of professionals and family work together to assess a student's needs and how to meet them.

Educators and education leaders are integral to intensifying and scaling this work. Already they are making great efforts to accelerate student achievement across the state, and they are increasingly leading and pushing the system to look for ways to employ new, multifaceted strategies to engage and teach all students to their highest potential. Indeed, many of these strategies are already being employed in Colorado. With the sophisticated technologies and fast-paced changes of our society, Colorado can create a system where both professionals and students flourish and reach their utmost potential.

ELO Commission Learning and Research

Learning from Local Practice

This tour provided information about the extended-day and after-school programs and services presently available to students in Colorado, including information about what efforts are working and what needs to be done to improve and expand services to engage more students in meaningful ways. Additionally, it provided Commission members the opportunity to identify perceptions, barriers and levels of awareness surrounding expanded learning.

Overwhelmingly, "flexibility" and "individualization" were consistent themes across every region. Coloradoans provided examples of programs in practice and overarching feedback about the education system's need to change the experience of learning for Colorado's students and be more encompassing of learning that takes place outside of school.

Additional feedback that was consistent throughout the tour includes:

- Teachers and community partners yearn for opportunities to customize instruction and experiences for students to better meet individual needs. Grouping students and teachers by grade level, as opposed to by ability, is a perceived barrier to doing this well.
- The idea that time is a variable and an opportunity for innovation that drives learning is not a new one. Participants offered ideas from rethinking the traditional school calendar, to staggering start and end times for teachers and students, to lengthening the school day, to operating on a trimester system, and more.
- While recognized as difficult to coordinate, participants believe schools and community-based organizations should work together to maximize resources targeted toward student learning and respond to students' varied learning styles and needs. For example, implementing expanded learning programs that are not just school day teachers holding longer classes, but that bring in community-based organizations to coordinate learning and partner with teachers to facilitate academic enrichment in hands-on ways.

To garner public input and support, the ELO Commission conducted a seven-city "listening tour" and online survey to hear from over 250 educators, program providers, parents, students and others about the challenges and successes of expanded learning time and ideas for strengthening programs and community partnerships.

- Technology is a need and a barrier. While efforts are underway to improve bandwidth and capacity statewide, schools and community partners seek consistent and sophisticated technology systems to better target individual student needs and learning styles and provide equal opportunities for students for whom geography or transportation is a barrier. One example is to expand access for students who lack a specific learning opportunity within their school or community.
- Schools and communities would like help thinking about competency-based learning systems and how they can move toward cultures and norms that promote student progression and retention by ability, as opposed to by age or grade.

While the listening tour represented only a fraction of the statewide efforts likely to inform Colorado's ELO Initiative, evidence seems clear that there are many schools and communities engaging in expanded learning opportunities in some way, under the current funding climate and current policy constraints.

What also seems clear is a need for better guidance around how to maximize expanded learning opportunities not only to engage students, but also to drive achievement outcomes. Data is available regarding models of effective and promising practice that validate the interests and needs identified by tour participants. Such data can inform Colorado's transition from pockets of innovation to a state system that leverages and incentivizes this work.

Learning from National Research

Colorado's initiative to articulate a vision for expanded learning is well-timed to both learn from and inform national efforts focused on evaluating and funding this work across the nation. A number of prominent organizations and researchers are paving the way for Colorado and others to advance expanded learning opportunities in meaningful ways within local policy and practice. Importantly, expanded learning opportunities present an emerging body of work and research with early indicators of success but limited history to support longitudinal trends. At the same time, there are many working examples of comprehensive and holistic approaches to expanded learning opportunities that warrant its consideration as a cornerstone of education reform.

This national research and local and national experiences have provided ELO Commission members with knowledge about the current environment and the needs for expanded learning opportunities.

FIRST, THE WORLD IS CHANGING - *FAST* - AND THE WAY STUDENTS ARE EDUCATED SHOULD CONTINUE TO CHANGE TOO.

Consider that:[4]

- Americans have access to 6 trillion web pages, 65,000 iPhone apps, and over 200 cable television networks.
- Wikipedia, launched in 2001, now features over 13 million articles in 200 languages.
- The average American teen sends 2,272 text messages per month.
- The mobile device will be the primary connection tool to the internet in 2020.
- The computer in a cell phone today is one million times cheaper, a thousand times more powerful, and one hundred thousand times smaller than the one computer at MIT in 1965.

4 "Did You Know" on You Tube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ILQrUrEWe8 Version 4.0 ShiftHappens, 2009.

According to Project Tomorrow 2011:[5]

- In 2005, half of all 6th graders said they had a cell phone. Today that statistic holds true plus an additional one-third say they now have a smartphone.
- Almost 73 percent of 6th graders have an MP3 player today compared to one-third in 2005.
- In 2005, 6th graders complained about the internet at their school as being too slow; today their number one complaint is that school filters and firewalls block websites they need for schoolwork.
- Half of all 6th graders take tests online today and three times as many have taken an online class than in 2005.
- Twenty-five percent of today's 6th graders are already using an e-textbook.
- In 2010, almost half of all 6th-grade girls and over one third of 6th-grade boys regularly updated their social networking site, an increase of over 125 percent since 2005, in spite of the fact that most 6th graders are not old enough to legally register on many social networking sites.

We also know that nearly half of students who drop out of school say they do so because they find school unchallenging and less important to them than other options. Dropouts who return to school through high-quality alternative programs do so because the program is relevant and offers internships and other kinds of hands-on learning.[6]

The C. S. Mott Foundation-funded report, *A New Day For Learning*, shows that research from neurologists on the "science of learning" indicates that problem solving and reasoning come more naturally to today's students probably because of the myriad of experiences and technologies now available to them. Some say these experiences have "stretched the structures of the brain" and that an optimum learning environment blends and works with informal learning outside of school.[7]

SECOND, PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH ON STUDENTS PROVIDES NEW INFORMATION ABOUT HOW STUDENTS LEARN.

Don Tapscott, author of *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World*, and the founder and chairman of Moxie Insight, describes how young people today - the "Net Generation"-- think and learn differently from their forebears. He says, "The differences stem from their immersion in digital technology. By the time they are in their 20s, the Net Generation will have spent more than 30,000 hours on the Internet and playing video games. This is happening at a time when their brains are particularly sensitive to outside influences, and it has changed their mental reflexes and habits and the way they learn and absorb information."[8]

In the excerpt[9] below from a *Bloomberg Business Week article* on pedagogy and the future of higher education, Dan Tapscott discusses Joe O'Shea, the 22-year-old student body president of a university.

O'Shea said, "**I don't read books, I go to Google, and I can absorb relevant information quickly.**" O'Shea explained that he can use Google Book Search to grab the information he needs. "But sitting down and going through a book from cover to cover doesn't make sense," he said. "**It's not a good use of my time, as I can get all the information I need faster through the Web.** You need to know how to do it - to be a skilled hunter."

5 Project Tomorrow, *The New 3 E's of Education: Enabled, Engaged, Empowered, How Today's Students are Leveraging Emerging Technologies for Learning; Speak Up 2010 National Findings*, 2011. Access May 16, 2011, www.tomorrow.org/speakup/pdfs/SU10_3EofEducation(Students).pdf.

6 *A New Day For Learning: A Report from the Time, Learning and Afterschool Task Force*. Edutopia, 2007.

7 Edutopia, 2007.

8 Tapscott, Don. "How Digital Technology Has Changed the Brain" in *Bloomberg Businessweek*, November 10, 2008.

9 Ibid.

Presenters at the 2011 Colorado Blended Learning Conference, sponsored by the Donnell-Kay Foundation, also noted that, "We are in a complete pedagogical shift right now. It's not about technology alone, it is about a whole new pedagogical framework to consider."

Many experts contend that if young people try to absorb multiple streams of information at the same time, they'll make mistakes, slow down, and think less deeply and creatively. Tapscott's observations of hundreds of "Net Geners" leads him to a different conclusion: Net Geners are faster at switching tasks and better at blocking out background noise. They can work effectively with music playing and news coming in from Facebook. They can keep up their social networks while they concentrate on work – they seem to need this to feel comfortable. "I think they've learned to live in a world where they're bombarded with information, so that they can block out the TV or other distractions while they focus on the task at hand. This is a powerful advantage in a digital environment that's buzzing with multiple streams of information."[10]

Tapscott notes: "The digital world that Net Geners have been weaned on is profoundly interactive. Kids have grown up to expect a two-way conversation, not a one-way lecture. This interactive reflex has a profound effect on what one academic has called their 'habits of mind.' Instead of simply absorbing information – from a teacher or even a book – they go out and find it. Like Joe O'Shea, Net Geners use Google when they want to find out something. When they do so, they construct their own story, their own idea, rather than following the line of thought drawn by someone else in a book. This obviously doesn't replace conventional book reading, nor should it. But what we're seeing is a new form of literacy that many experts say is just as intellectually challenging as reading a book."[11]

A third essential consideration is student learning styles. Every person learns and processes information at a different pace and in different ways. While some students want more time for learning, others are able to get through certain material at a quicker pace so that they can move on to more challenging and engaging material. Students living in low-income communities are, by fifth grade, two years behind their middle class peers in verbal achievement.[12] In addition, "summer learning loss" – when knowledge and skills may be lost during the time when students are not in school from June through August – for low-income students accounts for over 66% of the performance gap.

As one example, a successful initiative for extending learning time was the 2009 Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time (ELT) initiative, which redesigned the school day and added 300 more hours per year for all students in the project schools. The academic gains of the project have translated into higher achievement in all tested subjects. Students in the project schools gained proficiency at double the rate in English language arts and math and gained at nearly five times the rate of the state in science across all grades.[13] Importantly, the initiative has uncovered some specific lessons about ensuring that more time translates to higher achievement.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Entwisle, Doris, Karl Alexander, & Linda Olsen. *Children, Schools and Inequality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

13 *More Time for Learning: Promising Practices and Lessons Learned; Progress report of the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative*. Boston: Mass 2020, 2010.

Successful ELT Schools:[14]

- Are relentless in their use of data to drive continuous improvement and strengthen core instruction
- Add core academic time that allows teachers to individualize support for students and accelerate achievement
- Strategically add time for teachers to collaborate to strengthen instruction
- Engage students in high-quality enrichment programs that build skills, interests and self-confidence.

FINALLY, RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES THAT HIGH-QUALITY ELOS CAN IMPROVE A VARIETY OF STUDENT OUTCOMES.

A 2009 report from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) states: "Participation in high-quality ELOs is linked to improvements in academic achievement, school attendance, student engagement, work-study habits, and social and emotional development. In addition, ELOs offer support for working families and can help foster stronger links among schools, families, and communities. The supports and services that high-quality ELOs provide are particularly important for low-income and minority youth who often lack sustained access to enriching activities and academic support during non-school hours... [For these reasons,] effective ELOs should be considered an integral part of state elementary and secondary (K-12) education systems."[15] The report does note that all ELOs do not produce similar results. In fact, low-quality ELOs fail to show positive impacts and can even have negative effects on children.

Importantly, experts are also paying attention to the role that states can play in using student-centered research to rethink education systems. A 2011 report by the International Association for Online K-12 Learning (iNACOL) suggests that new approaches to state policy can support the development and expansion of innovations tied to student-centered learning.

According to the report, design principles that provide a strong state policy framework include:[16]

- **Driving Policy by Student Learning Outcomes:** Focus on student learning and student learning outcomes. First and foremost, policies should be made to support the needs of students.
- **Guarding High Academic Standards:** States will need to be vigilant to ensure that academic expectations do not slip, resulting in lower achievement for groups of students. Focus on equity with high expectations for all students.
- **Expanding Student Options:** State policies should expand, not limit, the options that students have to reach learning outcomes.
- **Creating Shared Vision:** Policy development cannot be top-down. It will be important to keep communication open, inviting stakeholders to contribute to the vision and the steps to get there.
- **Offering Districts and Schools Flexibility:** Be clear about desired outcomes and then provide incentives for educators to take different pathways to achieve the goal. Remove process rules and regulations in order to allow and encourage innovation.
- **Committing to Continuous Improvement:** Policy will need to evolve as knowledge is gained about the dynamics of next generation learning, requiring ongoing improvement efforts.

See Appendix G for a list of the key research reports that informed the ELO Commission work.

14 For more specifics on these five strategies, see the Mass 2020 report cited above.

15 *The Quality Imperative: A State Guide to Achieving the Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities*. Washington, DC: CCSSO, NGA, 2009.

16 Sturgis, Chris, Susan Patrick and Linda Pittenger. *It's Not a Matter of Time: Highlights from the 2011 Competency-Based Learning Summit*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K-12 Online Learning, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011.

Beyond Walls, Clocks and Calendars – Definitions, Exemplars and Tools

A child's learning should not be restricted by the traditional walls of the school building – especially at a time when one has access to the worldwide library on a mobile phone or an iPad. Students today have access to free online tutorials ranging from rocket science to chemistry to knitting a sweater. Via online and distance learning, they can access pre-college, college and masters-level classes, and even events like an archeological dig as it happens.

Beyond Walls

Students also have access to simulations, video and complex gaming right on their mobile devices. In 2011, the opportunities to learn are limitless through all of these environments and technological formats. So why should the learning of any child be limited to what one teacher knows, in one building, in one classroom at one hour of the day? It is possible to find sustainable ways to embed online, experiential, self-paced and self-interested learning all the time, in learning spaces that are designed to allow seminars, differentiated groupings, individual study, hands-on laboratories, project or problem-based instruction and an array of virtual classroom spaces. Schools can tailor learning to each student's needs, interests and pace, and provide relevance to learning in a revolutionary way.

The following strategies and practices, which expand learning and personalize instruction for students, offer alternatives to the limitations of the traditional brick and mortar school building:

- **Blended learning:** Use of online resources and tools coupled with teacher-led instruction in schools.
- **Online learning:** Entire course or tutorial taken via computer in a self-paced format.
- **Distance learning:** A variation on online learning, effective for students that have a particular interest in a subject area not taught at their current school, such as Advanced Placement or high-level science or mathematics courses.
- **Team teaching and collaboration with community and business partners:** Offers ways to expand learning beyond one teacher in the classroom.
- **Linking career and technical education and college preparatory opportunities**: Leverages business, higher education and community college partners.
- **Home schooling and blended home schooling:** An option for students to take classes at their school, while allowing other interests to be cultivated at home. This model may make sense for some students. For example, a student may live part-time with one parent in a rural area of Colorado, or may have health concerns that would take him/her out of the school for part of the day.

- **Experiential learning:** Students *experience* their learning, for example, by taking a hike to learn navigation and mapping, visiting the zoo to learn about biology, or visiting the city center to learn about urban planning.
- **Community schools:** Education, health care, mental health services, and community services which support the entire school community in a holistic way.
- **"After" school programming and extra curricular activities:** Extension of learning to make it more engaging, tap student interests and energy, and have more hands-on, relevant activities connected to the learning of the day.

The Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) Public Schools program is one Colorado-based example of operating beyond walls. Technology and partnerships transform learning environments and customize student-teacher interaction. Students are engaged in science and technology internships during school and after school hours. DSST achieved the second-highest longitudinal growth rate in student test scores statewide, and 100 percent of DSST graduates have been accepted into a four-year college.

For additional information about DSST's model: www.dsstpublicschools.org.

Highlighted below, the School of One is one prominent example of a model that customizes learning environments to student needs by thinking beyond the traditional use of classroom walls and the student/teacher interaction within them.

School of One in New York, NY is the full-time in-school math program at three New York City public middle schools. School of One serves 1,500 students in grades 6-8, with 88 percent eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. The program employs approximately 30 certified teachers and 15 student teachers across the three sites.

School of One offers a range of learning modalities, including large- and small-group instruction, small-group collaboration, one-on-one teaching, online instruction, live remote tutoring, virtual instruction and independent practice. The school uses sophisticated technology to match students with the teachers, modalities and resources that best meet their individual needs. Additionally, School of One has a learning algorithm that collects up-to-date data about students and available materials and creates a unique schedule for every student, every day. In this way, students' curriculum is both personalized and adaptive, ensuring they move ahead only once mastery has been demonstrated.

Use of space further supports students working at their own pace. Large spaces enable different ways of learning to happen simultaneously; some students work with teachers, some with tutors, some work independently with books and computers and some work in small groups.

Results

- ✓ Students in the 2009 summer school pilot acquired new math skills seven times faster than peers with similar demographics and pre-test scores.
- ✓ Students in the 2010 after-school pilot made significant gains on the norm-referenced MAP test compared to students who did not participate. Gains were reported across achievement levels. Students who participated in the in-school pilot made greater gains on the MAP test than students who did not participate.[17]

17 http://schoolofone.org

Tools to move beyond walls:

- **National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL):** Find promising practices, implementation tools and videos to get started at http://www.timeandlearning.org/
- **Donnell-Kay Blended Learning Project:** Colorado-based report with recommendations and excerpts from national experts on blended learning: www.dkfoundation.org/projects-BlendedLearning.asp
- **Coalition of Community Schools:** Find ways to integrate community partners in more lasting and meaningful ways at www.communityschools.org.

Beyond Clocks

The use of time for the school day has not changed much in 100 years. Many schools today are still governed by bells ringing every 40 to 50 minutes with students moving through the building after each bell to their next class. But what if students were not limited to this traditional daily schedule? Adding flexibility to the school day can greatly expand learning opportunities and create opportunities for deeper engagement, partnerships, and collaboration. Staggered use of time has been shown in some cases to offer more instructional time for students, less transition time for students and teachers, and more teacher planning and collaboration time. Eliminating the tradition of "clocks" also allows time to be used in larger or smaller blocks based on students' needs.

State legislators serving on the ELO Commission recognized the increasing prevalence in Colorado schools and districts moving to four-day school weeks and called for a review on the academic and financial impact of these shifts. A 2011 report published by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) indicates that the average district could produce a maximum savings of 5.43 percent of its total budget by moving to a four-day week. Additional research is needed to determine implications on student achievement.

For additional information on ECS' report: www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/93/69/9369.pdf.

A number of options and strategies to learn beyond the current clock structure include the following:

- **Block scheduling:** Longer periods of time for students to get involved in content, such as science experiments and shorter blocks of time for tutoring, PE breaks, gaming, and creative activities.
- **Early starts/late starts:** Research shows that teenagers' brains function better after 10 a.m.
- **Extended or staggered school day:** Flexible schedules that may include differing start and end times for students and teachers to individualize time for teacher and student collaboration, planning, vacations and professional development.
- **Online classes:** Can be taken anywhere at any time to suit student needs.
- **Blended schooling models:** Students study independently at home and part of the time at school.
- **Saturday school or staggered week schedules:** Students and families choose the best option for them, for example, Monday through Friday or Tuesday through Saturday.

Fort Logan Elementary School is one Colorado-based example operating beyond clocks. Fort Logan expanded learning by 72 extended days and an additional 126 hours of instructional time in 2010-11, the program's first year of implementation. The school utilizes a "second shift" of educators, including literacy staff, teachers from other area schools and community partners. Based on preliminary plans, the school anticipates totaling nearly 300 extended days and an additional 540 hours over the next three years. Still early in implementation, additional research is needed to determine implications on student achievement.

For additional information about Fort Logan's expanded learning time model: www.sheridansd.fles.schoolfusion.us.

Highlighted below, the ELT Initiative is one prominent example of a model that uses nontraditional student and teacher schedules to accommodate diverse teaching and learning needs and engage students in targeted, credit-bearing opportunities.

The Massachusetts ELT Initiative redesigned the school day and added 300 hours per year for all students across 19 schools. This initiative has uncovered specific lessons about ensuring that more time translates to higher achievement.

Key features of the program design include:[18]

- **Significantly more school time:** School calendar includes at least 300 more hours per year.
- **Mandatory student participation:** All students participate in the redesigned and expanded school schedule.
- **Balanced use of expanded time:** Redesign adds time for core academics, enrichment, and teacher planning and professional development.
- **Redesign planning process:** School redesign teams include teachers, administrators, union representatives, school partners and parents and create data-driven redesign plans during the year prior to implementation.
- **Partners to expand opportunities:** Schools are encouraged to partner with community organizations, businesses, higher education institutions, art and cultural organizations and health institutions to expand opportunities for students.
- **Performance agreements:** Schools develop their own measurable, explicit targets for improvement in academic achievement, effective teaching and well-rounded education that must be approved by the state department of education.

Results

✓ The academic gains resulting from expanded time have translated into higher achievement in all tested subjects. Specifically, the schools that participated in the ELT Initiative saw achievement gains in English language, math and science as compared to the state averages. Students also gained proficiency at double the rate in English language arts and math and gained at nearly five times the rate of the state in science across all grades.[19]

✓ Compared to other high-poverty schools and to a set of matched comparison schools, ELT schools produced far more high-growth schools.

18 *Learning Time in America: Trends to Reform the American School Calendar.* Boston, MA: National Center on Time & Learning and Education Commission of the States, 2011.

19 Mass 2020, 2010.

Tools to move beyond clocks:

- Generation Schools (www.generationschools.org) has created strategies – some that are cost-neutral – for adding more time to the school day: daily schedules for teacher and students; planning time for teachers; staggered teacher and community partner schedules; use of extended day and staggered year scheduling; and collaboration with community partners.
- National Center on Time and Learning offers promising practices, implementation tools (including time tracking tools) and videos at www.timeandlearning.org.
- The National Afterschool Alliance has online resources and tools for extending the school day so that it is linked to classroom learning objectives. See: www.naaweb.org/default.asp?contentID=608.

Beyond Calendars

The traditional school calendar of 180 days of instruction was created in a different time and place in this country to meet the needs of an agrarian society; but the student population and their needs are much more diverse now. It is unrealistic to think that all students would need the same amount of time to obtain proficiency in a variety of subjects. A more flexible and student-centered school calendar would include some schools on a year-round schedule, or the option for year-round classes for some students.

Other models might stagger the yearly schedule, allowing for different types of learning and for different "shifts" of teachers to engage with students at different times of the year. Shortening the summer break from three months to weeklong increments throughout the year may prevent learning loss in students that are away from material for too long. Yearlong schedules – or at least not being locked into the traditional 180 days and September-June timeframe – will allow schools greater flexibility in how they deploy resources, engage students and provide a professional work environment for teachers.

In addition, the calendar should not constrain students from moving through content and coursework at their own pace. Competency-based learning is gaining traction around the country. iNACOL defines competency-based pathways as a system that incorporates three design principles: **(1)** students advance upon mastery, **(2)** explicit and measurable learning objectives empower students, and **(3)** assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.

iNACOL's 2010 report on competency-based learning notes that there is a tremendous risk in considering competency-based approaches as equivalent to credit flexibility. "Simply unhooking credits from the Carnegie unit could contribute to a new mechanism for institutionalizing low expectations. Our challenge is to design competency-based pathways so that they replace the time-based system with a set of practices that propel students toward mastery of college and career-ready skills."[20]

Options and strategies to learn beyond the current calendar schedule include:

- Intensive "quarters" or segments of the year that are focused on project-based learning, which helps to engage students in learning with hands-on experiences and more relevance to what they are learning.
- Year-round schooling options that might be customized for students and their families based on their specific needs.
- Staggered calendars for teachers and students allowing some to go to school January, February, April, May, and July, others attend December, February, March, May, and August.
- New summer learning opportunities to include online classes, credit options, and experiential options.

20 Sturgis, Chris and Susan Patrick. *When Success is the Only Option: Designing Competency-based Pathways for Next Generation Learning*. Vienna, VA: 2010.

- Student-led pace of learning in which seat time and grade levels are not dictated by year-to-year movement. Rethink what counts as a "credit" or a Carnegie unit.
- Student internships with community organizations and businesses for several "project-based" learning weeks during the year.
- Dual credit/course sharing with postsecondary institutions.

Adams County School District 50 is one Colorado-based example operating beyond calendars. As opposed to traditional grades, students engage in standards-based Levels (1-14) that are tied to measurable demonstration of mastery versus age or calendar year. Adams 50 has been nationally recognized for its data sharing platforms and community engagement process. Still early in implementation, additional research is needed to determine implications on student achievement.

For additional information about Adams 50's standards-based model: www.sbsadams50.org.

Highlighted below, Brooklyn Generation School is one prominent example of a model that restructures the school year calendar to expand learning opportunities for students while also prioritizing time for effective teacher collaboration.

Brooklyn Generation School in Brooklyn, New York, serves 318 students in grades 9–12 with 84 percent eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch and a majority entering 9th grade performing behind grade level.

The Generation School model uses expanded days and years, in addition to reorganized time throughout the school day, to increase student learning and teacher collaboration time. Students follow a 200-day school calendar, while teachers work a 180-day calendar in alignment with the New York City teachers' contract. The school maintains this arrangement through creative use of staffing across the school year, including staggered vacation time and daily schedules, and a staffing model where almost 90 percent of the organization's full-time professional staff teach, and most staff have flexible, dual roles.[21] Additionally, Generation School enrolls students in off-campus internships and uses a different set of specialist instructors to deliver focused mini-courses called "Intensives."[22]

The daily schedule for teachers involves three classes and two hours of collaborative planning time with colleagues. Classes include two 90-minute blocks of academic core courses averaging 14 students per class and one 60-minute block of larger elective studio courses. Teachers work in and across grade-level teams, with each team designed to blend different types of expertise and levels of expertise.[23] Teachers also receive more than 20 days of training each year.[24]

Generation School works with the American Federation of Teachers in New York City and has a union contract with the same overall budget as other schools of comparable size.[25] Generation Schools is working with Colorado to implement the model in local schools.

21 Newstead, Barry, Caitrin Moran Wright & Susan J. Colby. *Next Generation Learning: Can We Crack Four Problems to Unleash Quality Education for All?* The Bridgespan Group, 2010.

22 National Center on Time & Learning and Education Commission of the States, 2011.

23 Ferriter, William M. "The Key to Changing the Teaching Profession" in *Educational Leadership*, May 2010, 67:8.

24 The Bridgespan Group, 2010.

25 Ibid.

Results

- ✓ In the first year, Brooklyn Generation School scored in the top five of 40 comparison schools in attendance, credit accumulation and Regents (exams given statewide) pass rates.
- ✓ In the 11th grade New York State Regents, Generation Schools students outperformed both the city average and comparable schools in math, science and global studies.
- ✓ While 20 percent of students enter high school on grade level, an average of 78 percent of the student body is on track for graduation in four years. Attendance rates remain strong even with the longer 200-day school year.

Tools to move beyond calendars:

- **Summer Advantage:** a program about harnessing the power of summer learning to raise student achievement for all children. Research, programs and tools are available at www.summeradvantage.org.
- **Year Round Schools:** see the "Research Center" at *Education Week* to learn more about year round schools and whether to consider that approach in your district: www.edweek.org/ew/issues/year-round-schooling/.
- Both National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL) and Generation Schools have strategies and resources on rescheduling the school year to suit students and teacher needs. See: www.generationschools.org. and www.timeandlearning.org/.

Aurora Public Schools Vista PEAK P-20 Campus provides a unique blend of strategies beyond walls, clocks and calendars, including restructuring the school day and year and engaging with community and business partners to create relevant, student-centered learning opportunities for all students.

Aurora Public Schools Vista PEAK P-20 Campus in Aurora, CO, utilizes flexible schedules with different student days than those identified by the district and different calendar constructs for both staff and students. Vista PEAK organizes the schedule to maximize learning time for students and ensure time for staff planning and professional development. School leaders are in control of their time in order to restructure the day to meet the vision and mission of the school. The Vista PEAK Campus schedule includes: minimally 90 minutes daily for planning purposes; freedom over all instructional minutes; advisories where students work on digital portfolios, developing and managing Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) and building relationships and mentorships; and independent study where learning is socially constructed.

Vista PEAK is designed as an Innovation School, with the appropriate autonomies to augment the unique nature of a 21st century P-20 Campus system and fully support the vast range of learning environments for students and staff. The ultimate goal is to provide all students with customized learning opportunities including internships, externships, college visits, credit acceleration, credit recovery, health and wellness, creative arts, science symposiums, tutoring, intramural sports, field experiences, challenge-based learning, virtual field trips, language labs and financial literacy training.

First initiated during the 2011-12 school year, it is too soon to tell if Vista PEAK's expanded year calendar and built-in PoWeR sessions will produce results. With careful implementation and monitoring, Vista PEAK will determine and act upon its yearly goals around curriculum and instruction, equity and culture, and communication and accountability.

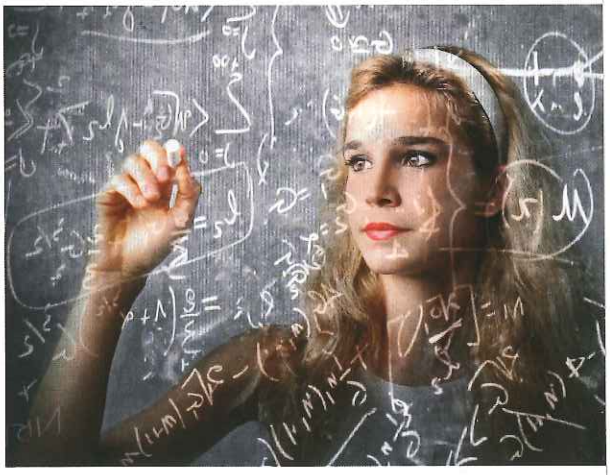
How the ELO Commission Vision Can Come Together

The particular context of a school and district certainly will be important when considering which strategies discussed in this report might work – or which strategies combined would be most beneficial. Not all strategies will be possible or make sense for all Colorado districts, but many ideas can be tried incrementally, some are cost-neutral and many are not constrained by current Colorado education policy. The Commission is convinced that this is the system Colorado should be moving toward: one with flexibility, choice, individual motivation and relevancy for students. In fact, given the realities of our fast-changing world and how students engage, interact and acquire information, schools and districts *must* act. Colorado educators, families and communities should capitalize on this reality to guide students to incredible opportunities for academic achievement as well as postsecondary and career success.

Role of Educators

In this vision of student-centered education, the roles of educator, community partner and afterschool provider look very different. Teachers, in particular, would become not only facilitators of learning and brokers of learning experiences, but also content providers and guidance counselors. The Commission is confident that teachers would want this kind of nimble and exciting job in which they link students to their passions and guide them through their own interests and learning paths. Colleges of education would have to prepare teachers in different ways in order for them to be successful at implementing and integrating more facilitative strategies with students, and it can be done.

The ELO Commission's vision of a student-centered and highly flexible education system is possible. While very real concerns about funding, culture, and district and state policies must be addressed, Commission members believe designing and implementing strategies for moving beyond walls, clocks and calendars to engage all Colorado students is imperative and achievable.



The primary findings of the ELO Commission's work now have the potential to fundamentally change education and educational outcomes in Colorado. *The system needs to evolve*. In a day where learning really can and should take place anywhere, any time, tailored to students' passions, interests and needs at their own pace of learning, Colorado has a responsibility to provide the conditions and supports to make this happen.

ELO Commission Recommendations

Role of Policy

Education policy in Colorado can offer more leverage points than barriers to implementing effective expanded learning opportunities. Notably, the examples and practices discussed in this report were born not out of policy reform, but out of a willingness to think differently about school culture and deployment of resources. Feedback provided to the ELO Commission reaffirmed that the most common barriers to implementing expanded learning opportunities are norms and traditions around school structure and operations. It is possible that schools, districts and community partners can use Colorado education policies to expand flexibility and innovation in learning. It is also possible that state leaders and policymakers can commit to strengthening policies and priorities toward these ends.

Taken together, these state education policies tell us that schools and districts do have much flexibility in scheduling their day and school year as well as rethinking how educators do their work and are evaluated for it. They tell us that schools and districts can start now to implement many of the reforms described in this report. However, the state education policies also show that more evolving policy development needs to be done. Colorado will need to rethink several evolving opportunities, presented below, to truly see the ELO Commission's vision come to life.

ELO Commission Recommendations

The overarching recommendations of the ELO Commission, presented below, encourage state and district leaders to engage in opportunities that maximize flexibility for schools and communities to support student needs. Recommendations are targeted at creating streamlined and efficient systems and minimizing additional data collection or other burdens placed on schools and districts as a result of expanding learning opportunities for all students.

The ELO Commission recognizes that some of this important work is already underway. Recommendations are organized within the context of Colorado's evolving education systems to highlight potential for systemic change.

Accountability Systems

- Develop an assessment system that encompasses real-time measurements and creates flexibility for schools to test students when they are ready to advance.
- Modify the longitudinal growth model to incorporate real-time measurements, multiple benchmarks of individual student growth, and learning that takes place across multiple venues.

Blended, Distance and Online Learning Systems

- Expand blended, distance and online learning as primary strategies for expanding learning opportunities and meeting individual student needs.
- Further explore and disseminate models that effectively incorporate blended learning models with the traditional classroom.
- Provide support and professional development to educators around quality instruction in online and blended settings.
- Ensure all areas of the state have access to adequate bandwidth to utilize today's technology to its fullest.

Broadband and Colorado school districts

EAGLE-Net reported that in 2009:

✓ Colorado ranked 42nd out of 50 states in broadband connectivity.

✓ Schools in Colorado averaged 3.5 kbps of Internet bandwidth per student, approximately 55 percent of the national average. Moreover, the need for broadband connectivity was expected to increase more than seven times by 2011.

✓ Significant connectivity issues exist that impact advanced educational opportunities.

For additional information on EAGLE-Net's report and the state of broadband in Colorado: www.co-eaglenet.net.

Personalized Learning Systems

- Develop individualized learning and assessment plans for students that are co-developed by teachers, families and the student and include flexible schedules, as well as blended, direct, online, project-based, experiential and creative learning opportunities, based on each student's needs and interests.
- Expand the use of career and technical education, pre-collegiate service providers and community-based organizations to customize student learning opportunities, including both in- and out-of-school contexts.

Data Systems

- Create common platforms for identifying and sharing student data across districts and community partners, including higher education, career and technical education, pre-collegiate service providers and community-based organizations.
- Address the complexities and student privacy considerations around collecting and sharing data among key stakeholders.

The majority of Colorado school districts designate the specific work day for all employees. Many districts are encouraging creativity within the agreed-upon work length to identify flexible schedules that better support individual student and teacher needs.

Staffing Models and School Structure

- Develop teacher and principal accountability/ evaluation models that account for "team" teaching and multiple modes of student learning.
- Create flexibility in staffing models, which may include examining teacher licensure and evaluation and the definition of what qualifies as a teacher.

- Work with universities and teacher preparation institutions to consider new ways of educating teachers and administrators to include the use of technology, community partners and data to individualize learning.
- Provide leadership around models that enable schools to be flexible about school staffing, structure and schedules within the school day and calendar year.

Student Funding Systems

- Determine a new funding approach based on student outcomes and mastering competencies versus seat time and grade level enrollment.
- Determine a school finance formula that equitably addresses student participation in both in-school classroom learning and blended, distance and online learning options within and outside of the school building.

Colorado school finance and "seat time"

Currently, the state of Colorado funds schools based on the amount of student-teacher contact time scheduled for each student. Generally, students are eligible for full time funding if their schedule provides at least 360 hours of student-teacher contact and instruction per semester. All districts are required, but not limited, to provide:

✓ A school year calendar for each secondary school, which must be adopted by the board of education, the district administration, the school administration or any combination prior to the beginning of the school year.

✓ The bell schedule for each secondary school.

✓ Student schedules for all secondary students.

For additional information on student count and funding eligibility in Colorado: www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/download/pdf/StudentOctoberCountManual.pdf.

Carnegie Unit System

- Redefine "credit" in regard to completion of standards at a certain proficiency level.
- Ensure that current state rules are not too restrictive on the definition of "course."

Course credit and Colorado education policy

An academic unit, often referred to as a Carnegie unit, is equivalent to one full school year of credit in a specific subject. According to Colorado's Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR), students must complete 17 academic course units in specific academic content areas to meet the freshman admission standard. Students must receive a passing grade in each course to fulfill the requirement.

For additional information on HEAR: http://highered.colorado.gov/Publications/Policies/Current/i-partf.pdf.

These recommendations should be viewed as a whole, as elements that work together to create the learning opportunities and outcomes we seek for all children in Colorado. This report is intended to stimulate debate and dialogue among all sectors interested in the future of education for the children and youth in Colorado.

A listing of Colorado Education Laws, grant opportunities and funding streams concerning expanded learning opportunities can be found in Appendix D. Further, Appendix E outlines related legislation currently being implemented, with questions for policymakers and practitioners. Lastly, see Appendix F for more information about the recommendations and specific district, school, community and state roles.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The ELO Commission asks education leaders and policymakers to use this information to drive strategic planning, policy decisions and funding priorities; agree that this is the right direction for education in Colorado; and make decisions that propel it forward. This should include a plan of action by the Colorado Legacy Foundation and Colorado Department of Education, in partnership with state and local education leaders, to advance each recommendation, further explore policy barriers and identify available resources.

Input about the ELO Initiative is welcome, including ideas, promising practices, barriers and needed support related to this work. Contact the Colorado Legacy Foundation for the latest research, opportunities and other updates about next steps for Colorado.

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Education and educational outcomes in Colorado can fundamentally change, but the system needs to evolve to realize this goal. The production of this report marks the launch of the statewide ELO Initiative focused on building the capacity and will to advance a comprehensive system for expanded learning opportunities for all students.

APPENDIX A: ELO Commission Members

Amy Anderson, Director of Strategic Partnerships
Donnell-Kay Foundation

Greg Anderson, Dean
Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

Linda Barker, Director
Teaching and Learning
Colorado Education Association

John L. Barry, Superintendent
Aurora Public Schools

Jill Brake, Director
Thatcher Learning Center
Commissioner, Colorado Commission on Higher Education

Elaine Gantz Berman (Chair), Member
Colorado Board of Education, District 1

Shirley Farnsworth
Director of Extended Learning
Denver Public Schools

Helayne Jones, President and CEO
Colorado Legacy Foundation

Alyssa Lasseter, Director,
Tony Grampsas Youth Services
Department of Public Health and Environment

Hon. Tom Massey
State Representative (R), District 60

Linda Preston, Board Member
Colorado Alliance for Quality School-Age Programs

Hon. Gail Schwartz
State Senator (D), District 5

Diana Sirko, Deputy Commissioner
Colorado Department of Education

Hon. Judy Solano
State Representative (D), District 31

Hon. Nancy Spence
State Senator (R), District 27

Jennifer Stedron, Executive Director
Early Childhood Leadership Commission

Ed Vandertook, Superintendent
Strasburg School District 31J

APPENDIX B: ELO Commission Overview, Charge and Goals

Purpose and Overview:

Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones appointed the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Commission in May 2010. The commission was given the charge of examining the state-level policies needed to most effectively use the school day and to foster collaboration and partnerships among teachers, schools and community partners that go beyond core subjects to fully engage and enrich all students. The goals of the Commission are strongly linked to the overall education goals of the state of Colorado: increase academic growth for struggling students, close the achievement gap, increase student attendance and decrease the dropout rate.

ELO Working Definition:

Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) seek to transform the educational experience to fully engage students in their learning, their passions and their interests. ELOs foster collaboration and partnerships among teachers, schools and community partners to effectively use the school day so that it is unrestricted by walls (blended and online learning), clocks (flexible school days), calendars (expanded school week and year) or tradition.

Overall Goal of the ELO Commission:

The Commission will outline a vision of student-centered learning that transcends the school day and location and encourages education systems to use time, partners and technology in new ways to achieve greater long-term outcomes for students.

ELO Commission Deliverable:

To fulfill its vision, the ELO Commission will deliver to policymakers a report that reviews statewide policy to ensure they support expanded learning opportunities that result in increased academic growth, closing of the achievement gaps, decreased dropout rates and increased student postsecondary and workforce readiness.

Commission Action Steps:

The ELO Commission will begin its work by examining current research and effective strategies on expanded learning opportunities across the country. The commission will also conduct a "listening tour" in Colorado focused on gathering input from community partners across the state on policy opportunities and challenges. The ELO Commission's findings will form the basis of recommendations for integrating new and expanded learning opportunities into education reform efforts in effective, measurable, and sustainable ways.

Elements of the Commission's recommendations might include:

- Examining and analyzing Colorado statutes and practices pertaining to length of school day and/or school year that prohibit effective ELO implementation
- Examining and analyzing Colorado statutes on blended and online learning
- Highlighting best practices on flexible day and utilization of community partners in providing additional learning experiences
- Incorporating ELO program guidelines that are research-based and adaptable to a wide variety of programs and determining ways to measure ELO performance and demonstrate results tied to state goals and program mission

APPENDIX C:
ELO Commission Presentations and Listening Tour Regional Meetings

Presentations

- *The Case for Expanded Learning Opportunities*, Don Quick, District Attorney, Adams County; Judith Martinez, Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement, CDE; Michael Clough, Superintendent, Sheridan Schools; Diana Sirko, Deputy Commissioner, CDE
- *ELO National Policy Scan*, Jennifer Stedron, NCSL
- *ELO Colorado Policy Scan*, Kady Dodds, CDE
- *National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL) presentation: A Potential Partnership to Expand Learning Time to Enable Higher Achievement and Broaden Opportunities for Colorado Students*, Jennifer Davis, Executive Director, NCTL
- *Generation Schools*, Furman Brown
- *Blended Learning Report*, Amy Anderson, Donnell-Kay Foundation
- *Youth and Teacher Programs, Denver Museum of Nature & Science*, Polly Andrews
- *Overview of competency-based learning systems*, Susan Patrick, President and CEO, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)
- *Adams 50 Story of Implementing Competency-based Learning*, Superintendent Roberta Selleck
- *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, Michael Horn, Innosight Institute.

New York City Site Visit, January 19-21, 2011; sites included:

- East Bronx Academy for the Future (blended learning school)
- Young Woman's Leadership School (partner with Generation Schools)
- NY DOE Central Office re: Overview of the iZone and future plans
- School of One
- The Equity Project (TEP) school

Listening Tour Regional Meetings

Over 250 people participated in the seven meetings, representing schools, districts, afterschool program providers, youth development programs, justice agencies, and parents. In addition, 69 people provided feedback via an online survey that was open from September through December.

- September 22, Denver, as part of the REL/McREL/CAN Forum, *Structuring Out-of-School Time to Improve Academic Achievement*
- October 25, Grand Junction, as part of the Western Superintendents Meeting
- November 8, Limon
- November 10, Fort Collins/Loveland
- November 11, Sheridan School District
- November 15, Pueblo
- January 24, 2011, Colorado Youth Advisory Council (Denver)

APPENDIX D: Colorado Education Laws and Grant Possibilities Concerning Expanded Learning Opportunities

Statutory Provision or Grant Program	Description
School Year C.R.S. 22-1-112	The school year shall begin on the 1st day of July and end on the 30th day of June.
School Age C.R.S. 22-1-115	School age is any age over 5 and under 21 years; but any child attaining school age during the school year may be admitted to school subject to the requirements for admission fixed by the school board of the district in which he or she applies for enrollment.
School Attendance Law C.R.S. 22-33-101 to 110	Every child who has attained the age of six on or before August 1 of each year and is under age of seventeen must attend public school for at least the following number of hours during each school year: • 1056 hours if a secondary school student; • 968 hours if an elementary school student in a grade other than kindergarten; • 900 hours if a full-day kindergarten student; or • 450 hours if a half-day kindergarten student. (Exceptions for students who are temporarily injured, who are absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability, or who have been suspended, expelled or denied admission, etc.) A school may not be in session for fewer than 160 days without the specific prior approval of the commissioner. Statute specifies that law does not require a child who begins attending preschool or kindergarten at 5 or 6 to advance to 1st grade in the following year. Local boards of education are required to adopt written policies setting forth district attendance requirements.
Education of Exceptional Children—Length of School Year C.R.S. 22-20-112	An administrative unit may conduct special educational programs for any length of time, except that the AU must meet the minimum length of time as established by law for school districts. Each AU, state-operated program, and eligible facility must provide extended school year services to a child with a disability only if the child's IEP team determines that extended school year services are necessary to provide the child with a free appropriate public education.
Education of Migrant Children C.R.S. 22-23-101 to 107	Statute establishes a program for the education of migrant children, in order to facilitate the education of migrant children who are unable to receive continuous education during the regular school term. Statute indicates that districts may apply to the State Board to participate in the program. An educational program for migrant children may be operated within the period from the termination of the regular school term in the spring until the regular school term convenes in the fall. For purposes of the summer school program, a child of school age will be considered a migrant child if he was not able to attend the full number of days prescribed by law during the previous school year as a direct result of being in the custody of a migrant agricultural worker.
Migrant Education Program ESEA, Title I-C	Federal funding is based upon the number of migrant children that are identified and certified in the state. Allowable uses of funding include increasing summer school enrollment and other initiatives to achieve state goals. CDE currently funds 8 local Migrant Education Projects statewide (amounts vary between $80,000 and $1,000,000).
Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment Program (ASCENT) C.R.S. 22-35-108	ASCENT program was established to increase the percentage of students who participate in postsecondary education, in part to decrease the amount of time that is required for a student to complete a postsecondary degree or certificate. A qualified student may concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses, including academic courses and technical education courses, in the year directly following the year in which he or she was enrolled in the 12th grade of a local education provider.
Second Chance Programs for Problem Students C.R.S. 22-52-101 to 107	Students who have dropped out and are between the ages of 17 and 21 may apply to participate in a second chance program and may enroll until he/she obtains a high school diploma or its equivalent or until he reaches 21. Students must be recommended for participation in the program by his or her district of residence with the concurrent of the child, the child's parent and the receiving district. Eligible schools are: (1) public schools in districts that have a dropout rate above the statewide average dropout rate; (2) public schools in districts contiguous to districts that have a dropout rate above the statewide average dropout rate; (3) schools operated by BOCES; and (4) community colleges.

Statutory Provision or Grant Program	Description
Local School Board Powers and Duties—summer schools, continuation, evening and community education programs C.R.S. 22-32-118	A local board may provide courses in subject matters normally included in the regular school program or in demand by the pupils of the districts, may fix and collect a charge for attendance at such courses, and may give regular school credit for satisfactory completion by students. A local board may establish and maintain continuation programs, part-time programs, evening programs, vocational programs, programs for aliens and other opportunity programs and may pay for such programs out of the moneys of the district or charge a fee or tuition. A local board may establish and maintain community education programs in cooperation with any unit of local government, quasi-governmental agency, IHE, or civic organization and may pay for such programs by a fee or tuition charged or out of the moneys of the school district.
Summer School Grant Program C.R.S. 22-7-801 to 807	Program provides grants to school districts and Institute charter schools to assist them in providing summer school programs for students who are entering 5th through 8th grade, and are performing unsatisfactorily in reading, writing, or mathematics. In the summer of 2009, fifteen grants were awarded in seven regions of the state. The program is not currently funded.
Before- and After-School Dropout Prevention Programs C.R.S. 22-27.5-101 to 106	Program is designed to fund ***before- and after-school*** arts-based and vocational activity programs for students enrolled in 6th through 12th grades, in order to reduce the number of students who choose to drop out of school prior to graduation.
Healthy Choices Dropout Prevention Pilot Program C.R.S. 22-82.3-101 to 110	Program is designed to fund activities ***during times outside of the regular school day*** for students in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Eligible schools are those that have a coordinated school health team and that are "at-risk" (i.e., schools in which the annual absentee rate averages at least fifteen days per student and which are located in a district in which at least thirty-five percent of students failed to graduate from high school in the prior year or at least sixty percent of the students enrolled in the school are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch, the annual absentee rate is at least twelve days per student and the school is located in a district in which at least thirty percent of students failed to graduate).
21st Century Community Learning Centers ESEA, Title IV, Part B	Program is intended to establish or expand community learning centers that provide students, particularly those who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools, with academic enrichment opportunities along with activities designed to complement the students' regular academic program. Community learning centers must also offer families of these students literacy and related educational development. Centers, which can be located in elementary or secondary schools or other similarly accessible facilities, provide a range of high-quality services **during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session** (such as before and after school, or during summer break). These services support student learning and development and may include: tutoring/mentoring, homework help, academic enrichment (such as hands-on science or technology programs), community service opportunities, as well as music, arts, sports and cultural activities.

Statutory Provision or Grant Program	Description
Additional **State** Grant Programs that Could Provide Funding for Expanded Learning Opportunities	**Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement Act**, C.R.S. 22-14-101 to 111, provides for grants to local education providers to use in providing educational services and supports to students to maintain student engagement and support student re-engagement in high school, which may include practices related to course completion and credit recovery and alternative and flexible learning strategies. **Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant Program**, C.R.S. 22-33-205, provides grants to school districts, charter schools, alternative schools in school districts, nonpublic, non-parochial schools, BOCES, facility schools and pilot schools to provide educational services to expelled students which have been approved by the State Board. **Science and Technology Education Center Grant Program**, C.R.S. 22-81-201 to 206, provides matching funds for existing or proposed nonprofit science and technology education centers (including those that promote aviation and aerospace education that provide science and technology education activities, materials and educational workshops for students and their teachers). **Read-to-Achieve Grant Program**, C.R.S. 22-7-901 to 909, provides funding for intensive reading programs for pupils whose reading readiness or literacy and reading comprehension skills are below levels established by the State Board for students in kindergarten, grades 1-3, and between 3rd and 4th grade. **Family Literacy Education Grant Program**, C.R.S. 22-2-124, provides funding to provide the following services: (1) family literacy education for eligible parents and their children; (2) adult literacy education for eligible adults; and (3) English language literacy education for adults needing English language instruction, including but not limited to intergenerational services. (An "eligible adult" is an individual who is at least 17 years of age, is not enrolled in a public or private secondary or postsecondary school, and lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent or is in need of English language instruction.)
Additional **Federal** Grant Programs that Could Provide Funding for Expanded Learning Opportunities	**Title I School-wide and Targeted Assistance Grants** may be used to fund extended-time programs (such as before/after school programs and summer school). Funding for schools is based on poverty rates. **Title I, Part A Family Literacy Grants** are limited to LEAs that receive Title I, Part A funding. Eligible LEAs may apply in partnership with Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, Even Start programs (formerly or currently funded), Head Start, or Family Resource Centers. A total of $330,000 is currently available for distribution to LEAs and the estimated range of awards is $5,000 to a maximum of $75,000. **Title I B-3 Even Start Family Literacy Program Grants** are provided to participants on a voluntary basis and must be of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and must integrate the following four components: (1) parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, (2) early childhood education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences, (3) training and support for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and how to be full partners in their education, and (4) interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. **Title I D Prevention and Intervention Program Grants for Children that Are Neglected and Delinquent** provide funds for youth in state-operated institutions or community day programs. They also provide assistance to school districts who work with local correctional facilities. Colorado receives formula funds based on the number of students in state institutions and costs per pupil.
List of Approved Supplemental Services Providers C.R.S. 22-2-129	CDE must annually issue a request for proposals through which providers of supplemental education services may apply to the department to be included on the list of approved supplemental education services providers. "Supplemental education services" is defined as tutoring services and other academic enrichment services required to be provided to eligible students pursuant to NCLB and that are provided to students in addition to the standard curriculum of instruction provided during the school day.
Online Education Programs C.R.S. 22-30.7-101 to 111	Statute establishes a division of online learning within CDE to consult State Board in establishing quality standards for use by authorizers to evaluate and report on online programs, to evaluate applications for certification of online programs and to establish a review process for evaluation of online programs. "Online program" is defined as a full-time online education program or school that "delivers a sequential program of synchronous or asynchronous instruction from a teacher to a student primarily through the use of a technology via the internet in a virtual or remote setting." "Online program" does not include a supplemental program.

Statutory Provision or Grant Program	Description
Supplemental Online Education Grant Program C.R.S. 22-2-130; 22-5-119	Program provides funding to assist an eligible district, charter school, BOCES or facility school in providing supplemental online education courses to students. Funding may be used to reimburse the cost of purchasing supplemental online education courses or to increase ability to access supplemental online education courses (by providing technical equipment, hiring technical specialists, providing staff development or training for onsite personnel, or providing financial assistance to help hire site coordinators or other personnel needed to facilitate online access).
Service-Learning C.R.S. 22-32-137	Each district shall consider and may adopt a policy to encourage students to engage in community service or service learning and to recognize students' contributions to their communities through the community service or service-learning program.
Innovation School Act C.R.S. 22-32.5-101 to 110	Statute permits public schools to seek waivers from local and state statutes and regulations in order to gain greater autonomy and managerial flexibility over levels of staffing, personnel selection and evaluation, scheduling and educational programming with the goal of achieving improved student achievement. Schools that currently have innovation status have sought and obtained waivers from C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(I) (concerning local board duties related to schedule and calendar) and C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n)(II)(A) (concerning local board duties related to hours of teacher-pupil instruction and contact).
Preschool and Kindergarten Program Act—Coordination with Extended Day Services C.R.S. 22-28-111	Any district that established a district preschool program may coordinate the program with extended day services if the district advisory council and the district find that there exists a need for the services. The services may be coordinated by the district through one or more privately funded child care centers of publicly funded early childhood education agencies or through the district itself.
Residential Schools Feasibility Study C.R.S. 22-2-137	Statute directs the commissioner to study the feasibility of operating one or more state schools to serve students who are in need of greater academic support and who may be at risk of academic failure. Statute requires feasibility study to address (1) the goals that a state school would be designed to achieve and a method for measuring the level of achievement of those goals, (2) the appropriate student population to be served and the manner of selecting students, (3) the governance structure and funding for a state school, (4) the appropriate curriculum for the school, and (5) the types of student and family support services that the state school would provide. The study was required to be submitted to the house and senate education committees no later than February 1, 2010.
Pilot Schools for Students Expelled from 6th through 9th Grades C.R.S. 22-38-101 to 115	Statute permits the State Board to provide for the establishment and operation of one full-time residential pilot school and up to 3 year-round nonresidential pilot schools in geographic areas of the state that will provide the easiest access to the maximum number of expelled and at-risk students eligible to attend the pilot schools. Pilot schools must operate on a year-round basis and offer services for an extended period of more than 8 hours during each educational day.
Alternative School Finance Models C.R.S. 22-58-101 through 105	Statute establishes a program to encourage districts and charter schools to identify and collect data to measure what the effects would be if an alternative model of calculating school funding were applied compared to actual per pupil funding that is received. Those selected to participate in the pilot program must collect data for at least 2 budget years that demonstrate the effects of an alternative school funding model and then must subject the collected data and any conclusions to an advisory council for the pilot program. The advisory council may seek, accept and expend public or private gifts, grants, or donations or services in kind to assist the council in implementing the pilot program.

Prepared by CDE Staff 9.16.10

APPENDIX E: Leverage Points for Flexibility and Innovation in Colorado Education Policy

Colorado Education Laws and Grants	Summary	Link to Expanded Learning Opportunities	Questions for Policymakers and Practitioners
Senate Bill 10-191: Ensuring Quality Instruction Through Educator Effectiveness Act	Promotes effective teachers and school leaders for every student in Colorado. Shifts the focus of career advancement qualifications to demonstrated effectiveness based on student academic growth.	Standards for evaluating teacher and leader effectiveness include the idea of marshaling community resources to meet school and student needs. Evaluation of individual student growth provides one avenue for informing which students teachers are most effective with.	What supports can be provided to teachers and schools to build capacity to incorporate meaningful community partnerships aligned to standards and tied to student learning? How can educator effectiveness data and evaluations be used to partner teachers with the type of students and content they teach best? How can educator evaluations and supports incorporate effectiveness around team teaching, use of technology and blended learning instruction to customize student learning?
Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems: 2009 SLDS Grant	Builds a state longitudinal data system that tracks student and educator data from prekindergarten to postsecondary education and the workforce and focuses on all initiatives required to provide Colorado citizens, educators and students the benefits of effective data collection and alignment with standards, and the tools for interactive provision of accurate and timely data for use in continuous educational improvement.	Demonstrates a cross-agency partnership around shared goals relating to, but not exclusive to, education; joins the Colorado Department of Education, the Office of Information Technology, the Colorado Department of Higher Education, the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.	How can community-based organizations and others involved in student learning access student level data to inform program development and individual engagement plans? What data is collected regarding blended learning and out-of-school activities? How can this partnership inform other cross-system initiatives with the ability to leverage resources toward learning?
Senate Bill 09-256: Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP)	Assists a student and his or her parent or legal guardian in exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities available to the student, aligning course work and curriculum, applying to postsecondary education institutions, securing financial aid and ultimately entering the workforce.	Requires a personalized plan for all students starting by ninth grade that is informed by interests, goals and progress, includes activities and accomplishments, is tracked in an online portfolio and is reviewed and updated annually.	How can students access online content aligned to the goals, interests and learning needs identified in their ICAP? How can aggregated ICAP data be used to identify common interests, craft student-centered learning experiences and match teachers and students in innovative ways?
House Bill 09-1319: Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act	Broadens access to and improves the quality of concurrent enrollment programs, improves coordination between institutions of secondary education and institutions of higher education and ensures financial transparency and accountability.	Offers credit-bearing opportunities for students to engage in learning outside of traditional high school.	How can blended learning opportunities be better utilized to meet individual students' concurrent enrollment needs? How can business and community partners be utilized to enhance or supplement concurrent enrollment programs?

Colorado Education Laws and Grants	Summary	Link to Expanded Learning Opportunities	Questions for Policymakers and Practitioners
Senate Bill 09-163: Education Accountability Act	Holds the state, districts and individual public schools accountable for performance on the same set of indicators and related measures statewide. Major purposes include: 1. Aligning conflicting accountability systems into a single system that passes federal muster; 2. Modernizing and aligning reporting of state, district and school performance information; 3. Creating a fairer, clearer and more effective cycle of support and intervention; and 4. Enhancing state, district and school oversight of improvement efforts.	Aligns the requirements of Colorado's new accountability act with the requirements of online learning.	What efforts are underway to ensure that the requirements of online schools align with those of brick and mortar schools? How can accountability systems incorporate effectiveness around use of community partners and blended learning to meet student needs?
Senate Bill 08-212: Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act (Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids, or "CAP4K")	Establishes a common definition for "postsecondary and workforce readiness," revised 21st century standards and assessments and local postsecondary and workforce readiness programs promoting student mastery of both content and skills.	Implements local postsecondary and workforce readiness programs that every student must enroll in and successfully complete starting in ninth grade. Introduces the idea that competency matters more than seat time; identifies what a student should know and be able to do at grade level and explores assessments that allow students to demonstrate attainment/progress.	How can schools and community partners work together to understand Colorado's revised standards and align efforts to share ownership for meeting them? How can schools and districts use real-time assessment data to create flexible schedules and nimble student/teacher relationships that respond to individual learning needs? How can community partners and blended learning programs be utilized to enhance or supplement local postsecondary and workforce readiness program requirements?
Senate Bill 08-130: Innovation Schools Act	Supports greater school autonomy and flexibility in academic and operational decision-making to improve student outcomes. Provides a means for schools and districts to gain waivers from state laws and collective bargaining agreements.	Provides one avenue for making non-traditional staffing decisions and schedules.	How can the successes and failures of Innovation Schools inform statewide policy and practice? How can schools and districts use innovative approaches to time, technology and community partners to develop effective Innovation Schools proposals?
Senate Bill 07-215: Online Education Programs	Establishes guidelines, reporting and accountability requirements and quality standards for Colorado's online programs.	Provides one avenue for engaging students in blended learning environments.	How can policies around use of online education programs be expanded to reflect current blended learning opportunities and accountability requirements?

Summary information captured from the Colorado Department of Education web site: www.cde.state.co.us.

APPENDIX F: ELO Commission Recommendations for Schools/Districts/Parents/Communities and State Leaders/Policymakers

Overarching Recommendations	Recommendations for Teachers, Parents, Community and District Leaders	Recommendations for State Leaders and Policymakers
Identify strong local community partners and new entrepreneurs to support schools to expand and enrich learning opportunities for students.	Convene teachers and community partners to identify: gaps in school and student learning needs; overlap between academic standards/learning goals and community content/ experiences; and resources that could be leveraged toward common goals. Build business and community partnerships into student and school learning goals in meaningful, measurable and credit-bearing ways. Identify a community liaison in schools or districts to align school and community resources targeted toward student learning and broker partnerships that meet students' interests and needs.	Establish guidelines that identify how to align academic content standards with content and experiential learning offered by expanded learning opportunities. Lead efforts to create effective data platforms that districts, schools, teachers, parents and community partners can utilize to manage student data, assess student learning, host content and provide the information and infrastructure required to customize learning for all students. Ensure accountability systems that recognize and support shared ownership over student learning.
Incentivize participation in blended learning models that promote student completion and success. Incent districts and schools to pilot innovations with walls, clocks and calendars and resource these zones of innovation through a competitive grant process.	Convene teachers, parents, community partners, city officials, union representatives and district instructional and operational staff to quantify true student learning and teacher collaboration time in the school day and year. Identify opportunities to restructure or expand time to improve student engagement – beyond just tacking time at the end of the school day. Institute flexible school days, schedules and use of time during the day by using data to match individual student needs with teacher strengths and engaging community partners in innovative ways.	Identify and share strategies that schools, districts and communities can use to reorganize the school day and year and optimize the use of staggered schedules, school breaks, summer vacations and blended learning within available resources. Develop a repository of tools, models and resources that schools, districts and community members can use to initiate and support local action. Provide professional development modules to support administrators in implementing new strategies and practices.
Identify viable mechanisms for moving toward competency-based learning, where students progress when they are ready and are afforded more time to master content and skills when needed.	Use student data to create flexible learning environments that respond to students' learning needs and achievement gaps. Work with students, teachers and families to create customized and real-time learning plans for students that correlate to standards and articulate how, when and where students will best learn the content they need, at their own pace, based on their learning style, interests and needs – irrespective of age or grade level.	Identify and share strategies for implementing competency-based learning systems. Provide leadership and build flexibility around the definition of "credit" and "courses" in regard to completion of standards at a certain proficiency level. Lead efforts to create real-time assessment systems that regularly inform student achievement and growth. Lead efforts to create effective data platforms that districts, schools, teachers, parents and community partners can utilize to manage student data, assess student learning, host content and provide the information and infrastructure required to customize learning for all students. Ensure accountability systems that recognize and support shared ownership of student learning.

Overarching Recommendations	Recommendations for Teachers, Parents, Community and District Leaders	Recommendations for State Leaders and Policymakers
Research and evaluate the effectiveness of expanded learning opportunities occurring within and outside the state and use this information to inform future replication, funding and policy actions.	Inventory the programs and organizations that students interact with in their communities. Identify alignment between hands-on experiences outside of the classroom and learning goals required in school.	Establish guidelines for assessing the quality and effectiveness of expanded learning opportunities and demonstrating results tied to student learning goals.
Incorporate technology and blended learning environments in more sophisticated, customizable and accessible ways.	Evaluate policies and practices that restrict appropriate use of computers, phones, e-tablets, etc. Provide training for teachers in the use of technology to meet student needs and the delivery of instruction via blended learning models.	Continue to identify and implement promising blended learning practices that combine traditional face-to-face instruction with online and virtual supports to individualize learning. Lead efforts to create real-time assessment systems that regularly inform student achievement progress. Ensure accountability systems that recognize and support shared ownership of student learning. Incentivize participation in blended learning models that promote student completion and success.
Create a statewide system to support the incorporation of expanded learning opportunities for every student, across every district in Colorado.	Seek out opportunities to learn about, share or pilot promising practices for expanding learning opportunities in measurable, sustainable, customizable and student-centered ways.	Develop mechanisms for effective engagement in expanding learning opportunities and incentivize schools, districts and communities to replicate what works. Explore rural-specific strategies and structures for expanded learning opportunities that are relevant to multi-district collaborations, BOCES and Regional Service Areas. Develop a statewide ELO Network to align, share and replicate effective initiatives across schools, districts and communities.

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Summer School: www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/IssueCollapse.asp

Notes

The Expanded Learning Opportunities
Commission Report

September 2011
Beyond Walls, Clocks and Calendars
Rethinking Public Education in Colorado

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