COLORADO’S IMPERATIVE: Improve schools. Improve student success.

Excellent schools don’t just happen. They are carefully built by educators, community leaders and policy makers who understand that the most important asset for our future is our children’s education today.

We know there are several key elements needed to make great schools, including excellent teaching, high standards, and meaningful assessments of students’ achievement and growth. These elements work together in a supportive system to improve readiness for college and career for every student in Colorado, regardless of zip code.

Colorado has been putting in place public policy aimed at creating the excellent schools we need to create the outcomes we want. There is still much to do, and Colorado’s efforts need time to come to fruition. With careful attention from education and policy leaders across the state, we are building toward something great.

“I see the difference in my own daughter. She is learning and thinking and analyzing things in such a different way. She’s excited and engaged and, I think for the first time, being responsible for her learning.”
– Ronda Lobato, school board member

In tiny Centennial School District nestled in historic San Luis, Colorado, the educational winds are changing. Ronda Lobato sees it from her decade long perch on the district’s school board. She’s noticed a change in her high school-aged daughter’s focus on learning. She’s seen a renewed sense of enthusiasm for improvement in her superintendent and principal. She’s even seen it in negotiations with the district teachers union, who is working collaboratively with the district to identify effective professional development for teachers.

WHAT’S THE ISSUE?
A number of important factors are prompting lawmakers to act.

“There are still some questions, but teachers have to look at this as a good thing. It’s not about wagging a finger at a teacher. It’s all to help us be better teachers.”
– Pam Monteferrante, English language arts teacher

Pam Monteferrante is a language arts teacher at Pagosa Springs Middle School. She and her colleagues have experienced some anxiety around the test scores. Yet, she’s confident that the anxiety will dissipate as districts choose the filters to use for student growth and clarify how student growth will be tied to educator evaluations.

61,000
The number of jobs produced annually in Colorado

30,000
The number of students graduating annually with qualifications for those jobs

The percentage of 4th graders that could not read at grade level on recent statewide tests

Colorado’s national ranking on a list of states with the largest gap in 4th grade reading proficiency by income

The percentage of students graduating who needed remediation in at least one subject when they arrived at a Colorado college
**WHAT'S AT STAKE?**

Public School Finance Act has remained largely unchanged. Colorado and its public education system have experienced significant changes over the last 20 years, the “There are a lot of us who understand that education has to the world we live in anymore. I would never see a doctor that is

In 2014-15, funding looks like this:

- **$135.4 MILLION**
  - **STATE TAXES**
  - **$1.85 BILLION**
    - **PROPERTY TAXES**
    - **LOCAL TAXES**

**EDUCATION INNOVATION IN COLORADO**

![Timeline Chart]

- **2008**
  - Process approved in Colorado to draft standards for 21st Century learning, with input from a variety of stakeholders statewide.
  - Colorado Academic Standards adopted by State Board of Education.

- **2009**
  - Common Core Standards integrated into the Colorado Academic Standards for English and Math.

- **2010**
  - Thirteen school districts begin implementing Colorado Academic Standards in 10 content areas.

- **2011**
  - 1st year all schools implement Colorado Academic Standards. With HB12-1240, Colorado joins the testing consortia, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) as governing member for English and Math. Science and Social Studies tests developed.

- **2012**
  - The State Board of Education votes to adopt a menu of school readiness assessments.

- **2013**
  - 1st year performance plans and accreditation categories finalized. These are used to hold districts and schools accountable for student performance on the same set of indicators and measures relative to state goals.

- **2014**
  - Performance plans and accreditation categories finalized. These are used to hold districts and schools accountable for student performance on the same set of indicators and measures relative to state goals.

- **2015**
  - 1st year accountability framework, accreditation, and performance plans are in place in schools statewide.

- **2016**
  - 2nd year of new accountability system.

**SCHOOL & DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY**

- **SB08-103HB14-1182:** The Education Accountability Act authorizes annual review of each public school district, implements improvement plans and accreditation categories.

**EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS**

- **SB10-191/SB14-165:** The Great Teachers and Leaders Act requires annual evaluations of principals, assistant principals, teachers and other education specialists.

**EARLY LITERACY**

- **HB12-1238:** The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act requires emphasis on and remediation for reading acquisition from Kindergarten through 3rd grade.

**STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS**

- **Senate Bill 08-212:** Colorado Legislature passes Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), with the purpose of aligning Colorado’s P-20 education system.

- Also called the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act, CAP4K required the revision of standards and design of a new state assessment system, including school readiness assessment. CAP4K required the State Board of Education to define school readiness and post-secondary workforce readiness.

- **HB14-1182 adopted to allow flexibility with accountability data requirements during transition to new tests. 3rd year of new accountability system.**

- **HB14-1182 adopted to allow flexibility with accountability data requirements during transition to new tests. 3rd year of new accountability system.**

- **SB14-165 provides flexibility around the use of student growth data in evaluation ratings for 2014-2015 school year. 1st year that ratings count against non-probationary status for Specialized Service Professionals.**

- **1st year that non-probationary status is dependent on record of ratings. 1st year that non-probationary status is dependent on ratings for Specialized Service Professionals.**
"There are a lot of us who understand that education has to completely change. The old style book work and testing isn’t the world we live in anymore. I would never see a doctor that is practicing medicine from 1975. I wouldn’t want a tax lawyer that is practicing tax law from 1987. Why would you send your child to a school that is relying on teaching methods from 1950?"

– Dan Hollweg, English teacher

Dan Hollweg is an English teacher at Loveland High School who is currently using new instructional methods and supports. In practical terms, that means Hollweg’s students spend their classroom time finding answers, analyzing solutions and mounting strong defenses of their reasoning, not sitting in lectures. With Hollweg’s guidance, they take ownership for their own learning while building the kinds of analytical skills they will need well beyond high school.

“They are solving their own problems. They do the detective work. They grow the skills. They aren’t handed the answers,” he said.

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

Most money for Colorado’s 178 school districts comes from the Public School Finance Act of 1994. While Colorado and its public education system have experienced significant changes over the last 20 years, the Public School Finance Act has remained largely unchanged.

In 2014-15, funding looks like this:
$5.9 billion total funding

THE “NEGATIVE FACTOR”

During the Great Recession, Colorado’s economy suffered and state revenues substantially declined. To fulfill Colorado’s balanced budget requirement, the legislature was forced to make significant funding cuts to a wide range of state priorities, including public education. Initially termed the “budget stabilization factor” when it was first implemented by the legislature in 2010, the “negative factor” reduces total funding proportionately across school districts. In FY 2013-2014, the negative factor decreased public education by approximately $1 billion.

WHAT’S AT STAKE?

Children’s potential
 Excellent teachers and schools
 Economic stability and growth in our Communities
 Keeping Colorado competitive in the global marketplace