

Moving from HQ to TQ
Colorado Department of Education (CDE) HQT State Plan
Amendments (November 2008)

As of November 2008, Colorado's state plan is on track and few changes need to be made to the overall structure. This document provides updates and additional detail to the original plan. Only the activities that had significant alterations in timelines, procedures or level of detail have been included.

Due to the complexity of implementing the state HQT and equity plan, CDE has had to slow down and examine the issues in more depth. Before any initiatives could be fully launched at the local level, CDE recognized the need for further analysis at the state level. The state has tried to build a more cohesive approach to improving teacher quality, and this has meant interweaving established and new state-level initiatives - which takes considerable coordination.

Research on Teacher Quality and Statewide Initiatives

State Reports on the Teacher Gap. In 2007-08, CDE partnered with the Alliance for Quality Teaching's research committee to develop a statewide report. The report provided information and data on Colorado's teacher gap and included recommendations to stakeholders to address these issues. As a follow-up to this report, CDE sponsored an attrition study that focused on teacher gaps in areas of concern, including Title I schools, rural districts, and special education teachers. A more in-depth analysis of the data was performed on these special populations and interviews were conducted. The interviews were especially important in telling the rural "stories" since data analysis and reporting in those districts is restricted by the small numbers of teachers. This study will be released at the beginning of 2009. A communication plan has been created to share the results with districts and engage in further discussions on these issues.

Quality Teacher Commission and the Educator Identifier. In 2007-08, the State Legislature called for a Quality Teachers Commission to examine the existing teacher gap in the state and to make recommendations on creating a teacher identifier. CDE is staffing this Commission. To date, the commission has made recommendations to pilot the educator identifier (for teachers and principals) in select districts. This pilot should be launched in the next year (upon available funding). The state will partner with researchers and a few selected districts to demonstrate how the identifier will link various data sets together to provide a more complete picture on the state of teaching in Colorado – including Human Resource data, student data (including longitudinal growth data), teacher preparation data, professional development data and other data sets. Once the pilot is underway, the commission will continue to examine the teacher gap and begin to explore a potential principal gap.

Teacher and Principal Working Conditions Survey. A component that has been historically missing from Colorado's teacher analysis has been a mechanism to examine teacher and principal perceptions of their working conditions (e.g., access to resources, strength of leadership) and the relationship between educator satisfaction and student performance. CDE has recently posted a documented quote to hire a research vendor to survey teachers on their present conditions, including such factors as access to resources and time, leadership, and other supports. CDE then

plans to match this data with student results to gain a better sense of how supports for teachers also impacts student success. The first annual survey will be launched in spring 2009.

P-20 Council and Alternative Compensation. Another noteworthy development in Colorado is the formation of a P-20 Education Council. Council membership encompasses a broad array of stakeholders, including representatives from the governor's office, CDE, the Department of Higher Education, early childhood, districts, higher education, businesses, parent groups, researchers and others. There are several subcommittees, including one dedicated to educator issues. In their first year of meeting (2007-08), this committee focused their discussions and resulting recommendations on alternative compensation. Based on this work, the state legislature created an alternative teacher compensation package. CDE is in the process of developing an RFP to distribute these dollars. The state is also examining ways to provide districts with technical assistance (e.g., panels with districts that have begun work on altering their systems, offering experts in the field) as they re-examine their compensation systems.

With these initiatives underway, the state is better positioned to continue working with districts on identifying models of success, lessons learned and other initiatives to stimulate best practices. These initiatives support and are woven throughout the state's HQT and equity plan.

Section 1: Data Analysis

CDE continues to run data in a way consistent with the original plan. Analysis of Colorado's HQT data is available on CDE's website. CDE will continue to perform this function in the future. Building on the research initiatives discussed above, CDE will also continue to dig deeper to determine what variables are associated with an effective teacher. This will include new and continued studies of other factors that lead to instability in the state's teaching workforce. Previously referenced activities such as the attrition study, educator identifier and its pilot, and the Teaching and Learning Survey will inform this process.

Section 2: LEA HQT Status

CDE continues to identify LEAs' HQT status through the annual HR collection. CDE also identifies district that meet the 2141a and 2141c criteria. Support for LEAs is discussed in section 4.

Section 3: Technical Assistance

Colorado continues to offer an extensive system of professional development and technical assistance. Additional opportunities were discussed above and are embedded in the other sections.

Section 4: Failure to Reach 100% Goal

CDE has taken a multi-pronged approach to working with districts that have not met the 100% Highly Qualified teacher goal. This has included extensive statewide training, required teacher plans, funding restrictions, and implementation of NCLB's section 2141.

Training. CDE has done extensive work to provide clearer guidelines on the HQ requirements. This has included resources on the HQ website (e.g., HQ Handbook), periodic communications (e.g., emails, newsletter articles) and numerous trainings throughout the state (e.g., face-to-face trainings, webinars). Beginning in 2007, several offices (federal programs, special education, licensing, data and research) within CDE teamed up to provide integrated trainings. This has helped to draw the necessary links for LEAs between the very complicated system of HQ, licensing, special education, and the associated data collection requirements. These trainings have helped to greatly reduce anxiety among LEAs because they now understand the rules and are able to appropriately hire and reassign staff to ensure they remain in compliance. CDE will continue with this training format to reinforce LEAs knowledge on these topics.

Individual Teacher HQ Plans. Beginning in fall 2006, CDE required that an individual plan for any non-HQ teachers be submitted to CDE through an online planning system. This system built on the annual HR collection results by pulling core content teachers that were not HQ. LEAs were then required to enter a reasonable plan (e.g., timeline to prepare for and pass a content test, timeline that lists a few courses to obtain 24 semester hours in the assigned content area) to get the teacher to HQ status. CDE staff reviewed each case and provided feedback. Release of NCLB funds were leveraged to ensure full participation in the process:

- All plans had to be received and approved by CDE before funds would be released.
- Any teacher funded through NCLB (e.g., Title I teacher, class size reduction through Title IIA) had to be HQ – without exception. CDE consulted final HQ determinations and then altered the consolidated application to check the HQ status of staff funded through NCLB funds.

CDE will continue with this same model of follow-up on any non-HQ staff. Strides are being made to improve the system by making the data available sooner and making changes to increase the accuracy of the collection. Historically, the data has not been available until August - after the school year is over. However, CDE is now in the process of developing a new online HQ system that is built into the ADE system – rather than a separate stand-alone system. This means that the two data systems can work in tandem and communicate. With these changes, the final HR and HQ data will be available in the spring. CDE is also anticipating that the data will be more accurate as it streamlines the reporting for LEAs. CDE will continuously monitor and adjust the data systems to increase turnaround time and improve reporting accuracy.

2141a Identification and Activities. With clarification on the requirements from the USDE in spring 2007, CDE designed a system to meet the requirements of 2141a and began implementation immediately. In addition to providing individual teacher plans, identified districts were expected to complete a districtwide plan that identified the barriers to meeting the 100% HQ goal. These plans were submitted as a part of their consolidated application (beginning in spring 2007). Districts encountered a number of barriers that ranged from unclear hiring and/or reassignment policies to limited access to a pool of qualified applicants, particularly among small isolated districts. LEAs are focusing funds to support non-HQ teachers become HQ; create HR positions to better ensure requirements are met and data accurately documented and reported; and implementing new recruiting and retention strategies. CDE plans to continue with the same protocol annually.

2141c Identification and Activities. CDE began identifying and notifying LEAs under this provision in winter 2006. However, with clarification from the USDE in spring 2007, CDE added in the financial agreement requirement in spring 2008. It has been an evolving process. Because of the late notice, CDE contacted districts right away to discuss priorities for the use of Title IIA funds:

- Working toward individual core content teachers becoming HQ
- Conducting needs assessments around professional development and hiring
- Implementing Professional Development
- Piloting innovations around recruitment and retention of teachers and principals

In spring 2008, CDE conducted phone interviews with individual districts, but the main portion of the agreement process happened during the consolidated application process beginning in June 2008. The focus was on targeting funds toward getting teachers HQ and/or supporting the district to make AYP. When an activity did not appear clearly focused on that goal, the LEA was asked to respond with a justification or reallocate funds. While CDE and the identified districts came to an agreement on the use of funds, there were some components that needed improvement. Using the application process was too late in some cases to make significant changes (e.g., salary for class size reduction). In those cases, the district had to reduce dollars spent on the non-priority activity or provide a written agreement to curtail activities in the future.

To address the timing issue for the next round of identified district in fall 2008, CDE has combined the Title I Program Improvement and Title IIA 2141c process. Identified districts are expected to create a cohesive Title I and Title IIA plan. Furthermore, districts are expected to complete action plans (including projected Title IIA budgets) to address Highly Qualified and AYP issues. The plans are due in January 2009 – well before the 2009-10 consolidated application process. This new process will allow CDE to work with districts in a more timely manner to ensure that Title IIA activities are squarely focused on the identified priorities. Activities such as class size reduction will require strong evidence of success and impact on the identified issues before being approved. Any 2008-09 budget revisions will also undergo close scrutiny to ensure alignment with the priorities. One district identified under 2141c was not identified for Program Improvement; therefore, the action plans for this district were tailored to address the 2141c planning process only. CDE will provide further training and technical assistance to all identified districts (e.g., webinars, additional grant opportunities) over the next few months as they begin to formulate their plans.

The 2141c districts were given higher priority on a teacher recruitment and retention grant offered in winter 2008. This particular grant was aimed at encouraging districts to assess staffing needs and consider innovative approaches to addressing those needs. This included examining the equitable distribution of experienced, qualified and effective teachers and increasing Colorado's statewide percentage of highly qualified teachers and Title I paraprofessionals to 100%. Funds could be used for the following types of activities:

- Conducting a needs assessment on staffing (including the equitable distribution of effective teachers)
- Planning and/or implementing a research-based teacher and/or principal mentoring and induction program

- Planning and/or implementing strategies to recruit, hire, and retain highly qualified teachers and principals
- Providing supports to help get teachers -- especially special education teachers and other hard-to-staff positions -- or Title I paraprofessionals become highly qualified.

Progress reports indicated that the tight focus of this grant enabled districts to provide extra attention on their staffing needs assessment, conduct HQ reviews, study their HQ data, examine the equitable distribution of teachers, and address other relevant requirements. Given the success of this grant, CDE is planning on offering this opportunity again in late 2008 (if state level funds are available).

Section 5: HOUSSE Process

Since the original plan was approved, CDE has created and implemented three HOUSSE provisions: (1) an Elementary HOUSSE for Veteran Teachers, (2) a Secondary HOUSSE for Multi- Subject Special Education Teachers; and (3) a Secondary HOUSSE for Multi-Subject Rural Teachers.

Elementary HOUSSE for Veteran Teachers. The elementary HOUSSE is still available for veteran teachers who have not gone through the process yet. The eligibility requirements include:

- Valid teaching license on or before July 1, 2006 (in or out of state), and
- One or more years of teaching experience (in or out of state).

The elementary HOUSSE provision was created in spring 2006 and made available to eligible elementary teachers to complete the 2006-07 HQ data collection. To date, the vast majority of general and special education teachers that needed the elementary HOUSSE have used it. However, veteran teachers coming from other states and elementary teachers returning to the profession still need to have this provision available. Colorado relies heavily upon out of state recruiting but does not accept HQ certification from other states. Therefore, out-of-state elementary teachers have few options to demonstrate subject matter competency in elementary content – except through content tests and the HOUSSE provision. For that reason, it was decided to create a HOUSSE that would be helpful to elementary teachers but also still phase itself out over time. This was done by fixing the eligibility requirements to one point in time (eligible teachers need to be licensed on or before July 1, 2006). It should be noted that the state maintains control over approving the HOUSSE provisions.

Multi-Subject HOUSSE for Secondary Teachers in Rural Settings. The following are the eligibility criteria for teachers in rural schools to use the HOUSSE. Candidates must meet all criteria to be eligible for the HOUSSE provision:

- District is eligible for the most recent Small Rural School Achievement Program (SRSA).
- Candidate has been assigned to teach two or more core content classes in a secondary grade (i.e., 6th through 12th grade).
- Candidate has a valid Colorado license and at least one year of teaching experience (in or out of state). If hired in a charter school where licenses have been waived, candidate has at least a Bachelor's degree.

- Candidate is already Highly Qualified in at least one core content subject without the use of this HOUSSE provision.

Multi-Subject HOUSSE for Secondary Special Education Teachers. The following are the eligibility criteria for special education teachers to use the HOUSSE. Candidates must meet all criteria to be eligible for the HOUSSE provision.

- Candidate is the sole provider of instruction (see definition below) for two or more core content classes in a secondary grade (i.e., 6th through 12th grade).
- Candidate has a Colorado license with the proper special education endorsements.
- (If a new teacher licensed on or after July 1, 2007) Candidate is already Highly Qualified in at least language arts, math or science without the use of this HOUSSE provision.

The “sole provider” of content at the secondary level is defined as: (1) the person who introduces core content and provides full lessons on key concepts to students or (2) the person who makes instructional decisions for students (e.g., assessments, curricular design).

Section 6: Equity Plan

CDE has continued to run the data each year as it was first shared in the original HQT state plan. In 2007-08, individual reports were run for districts that had a higher incidence of inequitable distribution of its teachers in any of the elements:

- Teachers with less experience in schools with a higher percentage of minority students
- More non-highly qualified teachers in schools with a higher percentage of minority students
- Teachers with less experience in schools with higher poverty
- More non-highly qualified teachers in schools with a higher percentage of minority students

These identified districts were given priority on the Recruitment and Retention grant described in section 4. Given the success of the grants, CDE is planning on offering the opportunity again in late 2008 (if funds are available).

Training on the equity plans was provided at the NCLB directors meetings. All districts were expected to look at their own data and provide an outline of a plan – except for small districts that only had one school per level (i.e., one elementary). These were submitted in the 2008-09 consolidated application. Unfortunately, the plans have proved to be somewhat superficial.

In talking to districts and in reading their plans, it is apparent that Colorado has only scratched the surface of this reform-oriented provision. CDE was also somewhat dissatisfied with the analysis that it ran. Given the high number of HQ teachers in the state (98% in 2006-07), the analysis was not very sensitive to differences in districts. It was difficult to know how much of the difference between the schools was significant and worth further action.

For 2008-09, CDE has run the data for the statewide snapshot of teachers' distribution throughout the state. However, CDE is proposing a new strategy to continue work on the equitable distribution of teachers. CDE will:

- Create a partnership with the University of Colorado-Denver (one of the same partners that worked with CDE on the teacher attrition study) to discuss more sophisticated analysis
- Create a field team to discuss possible analysis and feasible strategies
- Provide more in-depth workshops with districts to create meaningful analysis and plans. (Some of the materials from NCCTQ provide for nice structure to facilitate deeper discussion.)
- Continue to monitor data and follow up on an annual basis with districts' progress on their plans