



RURAL NET

October 4, 2016

Burlington School District granted Innovation Status

In September, the State Board granted the Burlington School District's Innovation application, granting relief from burdensome and/or unnecessary mandates including teacher evaluation and dismissal, school readiness and licensure. "By approving these requests, the state board allows our schools to focus more of our resources on students rather than on compliance and reporting," said RE-6J superintendent Tom Satterly. Burlington's request was approved on a 5-2 vote.

The district obtained flexibility to hire unlicensed teachers in certain rare circumstances when someone in the community possesses unique qualifications to teach a subject in which they have expertise.

The district SB 191 waiver replaces the existing "due process" system. After their first three years in the district teachers who are renewed will be offered a "professional teacher" contract for three, five or ten years. During the multi-year contracts, teachers retain all of the protections provided by state law. When the multi-year contract expires, the district has the option to offer another multi-year contract, to offer a one-year probationary contract, or to decline to offer

another contract. Teachers will be subject to a formal evaluation during each of their first three years and during the final year of a multi-year contract.

Burlington's school readiness waiver allows them to use a locally developed report card to assess and track kindergarten readiness, rather than TS Gold or other state approved assessment. Kandy Davis, principal at Burlington Elementary, explained: "We don't believe the existing process is a good fit for small districts like ours where almost all of our kindergarteners have either attended the district preschool or the community preschool around the corner. We are familiar with our kindergarten students and their families in a way that isn't possible in large districts with hundreds of kindergarten students."

The State Board also granted school readiness waivers to the Wray and Lewis Palmer school districts on a vote of 4-3. Kudos to all three districts and their staff for putting together excellent applications and presentations.

Bethune Students Host Senator Todd at a Luncheon Honoring Rural Teachers

Senator Nancy Todd is a former teacher who cares deeply about issues affecting students and teachers. Last session, she joined with Senator Sonnenberg and Representative Becker on the Rural Teacher Recruitment bill (SB104), which provides funding for rural teacher recruitment programs and provides scholarships/incentives for teachers in rural schools.

Last month, Senator Todd and her husband Terry drove to Bethune to join Shila Adolph, Superintendent, and students from their Student Leadership Advisory Council (SLAC) for a tour of the district and lunch with teachers and administrators from districts in the Eastern Plains Consortium.

Thank you to Shila Adolph and the SLAC kids for hosting an amazing day. Thank you to Senator Todd and Terry for making the trip out.

The teacher shortage continues to be a critical concern for schools nationwide, particularly rural schools, and it is likely to get worse. Here is a link to a study by the Learning Policy Institute, established and directed by Linda Darling-Hammond:

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/coming-crisis-teaching>

The Study details some interesting recommendations for solutions moving forward.

Governor Launches Two K-12 Initiatives: Apprenticeships and Internet

CareerWise Colorado, (formerly BASIC), is a statewide youth apprenticeship program that will train and prepare students from across Colorado through youth apprenticeships that get them on track to for jobs and careers. The program is a public-private partnership to bring school districts and workforce development councils together to identify and develop paid apprenticeships that allow students to gain essential skills in Colorado high-growth industries while also earning college credit.

Gretchen Morgan, formerly with CDE, is one of the leaders of this effort and we are exploring ways to extend the effort to impact rural students and communities.

Kids Link Colorado is a partnership between the Office of the Governor, the Governor's Office of Information Technology and EducationSuperHighway (ESH), the nation's leading nonprofit focused on upgrading internet access in every public school classroom in America. Representatives from the Education Superhighway will be (or have been) reaching out to school districts to better understand regional challenges and opportunities. The goal is to identify schools that need better access and identify strategies to lower costs.

More information: <https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/gov-hickenlooper-announces-project-expand-high-speed-internet-colorado-schools>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit CareerWise Colorado website:

<http://www.careerwisecolorado.org>

Opportunities Abound for Students in (and around) Peyton School District

Last fall, Peyton School District launched its Woods Manufacturing Program, which offers students a career-training path and national certification in the use of woodworking machines, manufacturing equipment, software and procedures. The program also teaches the “soft skills” essential for student growth and success. To date, industry partners have donated over \$700,000 worth of tools and equipment for use in the state of the art classroom. The program is widely successful and is available to students enrolled in schools throughout the region.

Peyton is now partnering with the Widefield School District to build a national training center for skilled trades, starting with woodworking and expanding to metals, construction, automotive and possibly others. The curriculum for students

attending the Peyton/Widefield Vocational Education

Campus will be developed in close collaboration with local industry with the intention of preparing students for jobs in their region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

State of the Art Woodworking Facility a Dream Come True:

<http://gazette.com/state-of-the-art-woodworking-facility-at-peyton-school-district-a-dream-come-true/article/1562011>

Widefield, Peyton Districts partner to create skilled-trades school:

<http://gazette.com/widefield-peyton-districts-partner-to-create-skilled-trades-school/article/1585031>

Call for Nominations: Demont Leadership Award

The Demont Award was established in 2002 by Representative Jim Wilson to honor administrators from rural schools with 1,500 or fewer students who have demonstrated high moral character, compassion and positive contributions to public education. Rep. Wilson will present the award at the Rural Alliance Annual Breakfast, scheduled during the CASB convention at the Broadmoor, on Friday, December 9, 2016.

FOR NOMINATION PACKETS AND/OR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jim Wilson – State Representative -- Colorado House District 60
(C) 719-221-8383 E-mail: therunningw@bresnan.net

Completed nomination packets must be received in the Salida R-32-J Board of Education office on or before the close of business **on October 31, 2016**

Executive Update

Funding/Finance. Superintendents representing about ½ of the school districts in the State gathered at the CASE conference in Avon to explore the intricacies of Colorado’s school finance formula and learn more about possible pathways to more funding. The

conversations took on an increased urgency after the most recent revenue forecast indicating significant budget deficits for FY 16-17 and FY 17-18.

The superintendents were joined by Representatives Rankin and Hamner, who explained their efforts to work with a bi-partisan group of legislators to create a vision for public education as necessary to convince voters to increase revenues for K-12 and other critical state services in 2018. The superintendents expressed their support for this work and spoke to their intention to play a critical leadership role in these discussions. The superintendents group will meet again as a group in October to discuss strategies for the 2017 legislative session and beyond.

In the news. Colorado Public Radio continues its ongoing series trying to explain Colorado school finances to the public and the struggles many schools are in. Here are links to two stories that aired last week featuring the RE-1 (Sterling) school district

One Rural Colorado District Sees Closing Funding Gap As Voter Education Challenge

<http://www.cpr.org/news/story/in-colorados-re-1-valley-district-closing-the-funding-gap-is-a-matter-of-voter-education>

Funding Crunch: Rural Caliche High Does The Best It Can With What It Has

<http://www.cpr.org/news/story/despite-crimped-funding-rural-caliche-high-does-the-best-it-can-with-what-it-has>

Accountability. We have heard from many of you who received calls from CDE explaining how your school/district accreditation rating will be impacted by low participation rates caused by parent or student opt-out. As we understand it, districts that coded parent opt-out on their assessments won't recognize a drop in rating but the low participation will be noted on the SPF/DPF (for example: Performance Plan-Low Participation. Districts who did not meet 95% participation in two or more content areas when parent opt out is removed from the equation will either receive (i) a rating of "insufficient data" if less than 16 students took the test (at the school/district levels); or (ii) a drop in accreditation level/plan type.

Districts will have the opportunity to provide evidence of parent opt-out; i.e., signed opt-out forms, through a streamlined reconsideration process and CDE will also allow districts whose ratings dropped due to widespread opt out among proficient and advanced students and/or other reasons to request "Insufficient State Data" ratings, if there is evidence that the students who tested do not reflect the enrolled student population.

We understand the frustration in the field and trust that CDE is working to find a viable solution that will minimize administrative burdens and allow districts to address (at least some of) the inequities and/or inadequacies built into the system. We will continue to monitor the rating and reconsideration processes and work with our state partners to determine the best path forward to address our shared concerns.

Legislative Platform/Priorities. At their meeting last month, the Alliance board began the work of identifying our 2016-17 legislative platform and priorities. On the table for discussion are a broad range of issues including: PARCC, ESSA flexibility including assessments, accountability, UIP and licensure; BEST; exemptions from CDHS oversight for district run preschools; broadband; concurrent enrollment and rural economic development.

We will be reaching out to membership for input on all these issues (and more) and will present the priorities for feedback at our **Annual Breakfast meeting at the Broadmoor on Friday, December 9, 2016.**

