



**Internal Literacy Action Plan
For the Office of Lieutenant Governor
Joseph A. Garcia**

*Presented to the Education Leadership Council
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PURPOSE FOR THE LITERACY ACTION PLAN

This document serves as an internal working document for members of the Lieutenant Governor’s Office, Colorado Department of Education, Serve Colorado – Governor’s Commission on Community Service, Mile High United Way, and other community partners. As a guide for coordinating the efforts of these partners, the literacy action plan outlines the overarching goal and outcomes for the collaboration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Literacy in Colorado

Our goal is to ensure that all Colorado children are reading at grade level or beyond by the end of third grade. In 2011, 27 percent of Colorado third graders scored either partially proficient or unsatisfactory on Colorado Student Assessment Plan (CSAP)¹. This means that slightly more than 16,000 Colorado children are not reading at grade level and are now more likely to drop out of high school. It is time for Colorado to strengthen and expand efforts to improve early childhood and elementary school literacy.

This *Literacy Action Plan* outlines how state leadership will guide a literacy initiative across multiple public and private sectors to ensure that all Colorado children read successfully. This initiative will be divided into three strands – *Community Conversations*, *Civic Engagement*, and *Policy Action* – which address outreach for building public awareness and support, engaging communities in volunteer opportunities and developing policy reforms.

Community Conversations

Colorado's literacy initiative begins at a grassroots level with conversations about early literacy in communities across the state. This outreach will develop public awareness and understanding of the current successes in early childhood literacy within the state and across the nation, as well as the challenges facing schools, families and children. Additionally, these meetings will highlight the value that community engagement and involvement bring to early learning for children.

Civic Engagement

In tandem with community partners, the Mile High United Way and Serve Colorado - Governor's Commission on Community Service will help build an infrastructure to mobilize volunteers, donors, businesses, and community members through evidence-based programs to make a strong impact throughout the state in grade level reading benchmarks. Furthermore, the Mile High United Way will increase capacity, technical assistance, evaluation, and dissemination of information through Mile High United Way's network to help increase access to these high-quality programs.

Policy Action

Policy development will begin with internal policy experts evaluating research and best practices in policy. The policy agenda will be refined in the fall through further input by state and national experts as well as local feedback resulting from the fall *Community Conversation* process. A final policy plan, the *Governor's Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success*, will include a detailed timeline, goals, objectives and outcomes.

Conclusion

Colorado is not approaching challenges in childhood reading proficiency with quick-fix solutions; instead, this literacy action plan represents the start of a statewide initiative to improve early literacy success through more extensive policy reforms.

¹ www.cde.state.co.us

Both state and community policy action will be required if Colorado is to ensure that all our third grade students are reading at grade level. The state recognizes that this *Literacy Action Plan* is not a solution to the problem, but is instead a beginning to the conversation. We are looking forward to determining where Colorado has opportunities to improve early childhood literacy and to move the state forward so every child in Colorado is reading at grade level or beyond by the end of third grade.

OVERVIEW OF LITERACY IN COLORADO

Reading Success Matters in Colorado

The path to early childhood literacy success starts at birth. A child's vocabulary at age three and school readiness at kindergarten are among the most important predictors of reading ability by third grade. There is also significant research that shows successful third grade readers are more likely to graduate from high school and be productive citizens.² The third grade is a pivotal point in reading development. Up to third grade, students are learning to read; after third grade students are reading to learn. Third grade reading is a critical launch point for academic achievement and success.

Vision and Goal

It is our vision for Colorado to lead the nation in early childhood literacy success with the implementation of an integrated literacy initiative. Our goal is to ensure that all Colorado children are reading at grade level or beyond according to the state reading assessment by the end of third grade.

The Colorado Paradox

Colorado has one of the most highly educated workforces ranking third in the country in the percentage of adults (age 26-64) with an Associate's degree or higher at 45.8 percent. However, the college going rate for recent Colorado high school graduates is lower than the national average at 62.6 percent (27th in the nation). Moreover, Colorado ranks only 33rd in the country in term of young adults (ages 18-24) that are enrolled in college at 34 percent³. This phenomenon is known as the Colorado Paradox.

² *Kindergarten competencies as predictors of third-grade classroom behavior and achievement.* Perry, Joseph D.; Guidubaldi, John; Kehle, Thomas J. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol 71(4), Aug 1979, 443-450.

Early Childhood Research Quarterly. Volume 21, Issue 4, 4th Quarter 2006, Pages 471-490. *The impact of kindergarten learning-related skills on academic trajectories at the end of elementary school.* Megan M. McClelland, Alan C. Acock^a and Frederick J. Morrison Oregon State University; University of Michigan

Lloyd, D.N. (1978). *Prediction of School Failure from Third-Grade Data.* *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 38, 1193-2000.

Reported in America's Promise Alliance (2010), *Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*, Washington D.C. America's Promise Alliance.

Hart, Betty, Risley, Todd R. "The Early Catastrophe. The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3". 1995.

³ *College Completion in Colorado: And the Impact on the Workforce and Economy* (2011). PowerPoint presentation prepared by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Center for Higher Education management Systems (NECHEMS). Data source: NCES, Common Core Data, IPEDs Residency and Migration Survey, as well as, IPEDs Enrollment Survey and U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates.

“Poor reading ability in the early grades is clearly linked to high school dropouts.”⁴ As highlighted in various studies, students who do not read proficiently in the early grades typically do not catch up as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Once this transition occurs, students who are behind find schoolwork more challenging, which can lead to course failure, disengagement from school, and the potential to dropout. Research shows that 75 percent of children entering fourth grade reading at a first- or second-grade level never catch up, putting these students in danger of failing to graduate from high school.⁵

Without significant reform, starting with early literacy, Colorado will continue to add to the legions of high school dropouts. In the 2009-10 school year, 28 percent of Colorado’s fourth graders scored “Below Basic” on the reading section of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and 29 percent scored “Unsatisfactory/Partially Proficient” on third grade reading on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP).⁶ In other words, more than a quarter of the Class of 2017 is already in the dropout pipeline.

Research shows that communities can predict which students will drop out with a high degree of reliability years before they reach high school. Ensuring that all our children are reading at grade level or beyond by the end of third grade is critical. The *Literacy Action Plan* is in response to this deeply concerning public issue. In alignment with the rest of Colorado’s education agenda and the Colorado Department of Education’s State Literacy Plan, this plan will promote changes that are not piecemeal and temporary, but rather systematic and permanent.

With the Governor’s Office in an agenda-setting role, to be led by Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia, Colorado is poised to deliver on the strong movement for reform by emphasizing coordination and communication among the stakeholder groups for whom the educational status quo is no longer an option. This commitment to cross-sector reform efforts will ensure that the burden—and the benefits—of this necessary capacity-building will be embraced across the state.

⁴ Jerald, C., (2006). Identifying potential dropouts: Key lessons for building an early warning data system. A white paper prepared for Staying the Course: High Standards and Improved Graduation Rates, a joint project of Achieve and Jobs for the Future, funded by Carnegie Corp. of New York.

⁵ Ibid. U.S. Department of Education, America Reads Challenge. (July 1999). *Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader*. Available at www2.ed.gov/pubs

⁶ Ibid. http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_2007/r0003.asp

THE LITERACY ACTION PLAN

This initiative will be divided into three strands – *Community Conversations*, *Civic Engagement*, and *Policy Action*. During the *Community Conversations*, initiative leaders will reach out to community stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities accompanying early reading success in their communities. These conversations will include celebrations of literacy success, opportunities for improvement and/or barriers to success and assessments of current programs.

Community Conversations will begin in the fall of 2011 with a school bus tour across the state to generate community awareness, civic engagement, and build support for improving early childhood literacy. The Lieutenant Governor, Mile High United Way and key stakeholders from across the state will partner with educators, community organizations, businesses, foundations, faith-based institutions, volunteers, parents and others to underscore the importance of early childhood literacy.

The *Civic Engagement* strand will be a statewide volunteer effort that will leverage thousands of citizens as reading champions for literacy. These volunteers may participate in the classroom as well as out, in after-school programs, early childhood and other settings. Volunteers will work with all primary grade school children as well as pre-readers in schools, faith-based institutions, libraries, recreation centers, etc.

This initiative will underscore the importance of community involvement in the education of all children. The first two phases of the literacy initiative will increase literacy skills, strengthen connections to children and families in communities, and create greater respect and support for literacy efforts. The *Governor's Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success* will outline specific policy needs to achieve our vision of all third grade students in Colorado reading at grade-level proficiency or beyond.

The *Literacy Action Plan* includes these specific strategies and tactics:

- Understand where every Colorado school community currently performs in regards to early childhood literacy
- Host community conversations around the state to develop public awareness and understanding about the importance of the third grade reading milestone and gather input regarding the challenges and issues facing early literacy achievement
- Create a communications and marketing plan in conjunction with the community conversation process to successfully promote this collective effort for children
- Help communities better understand the importance of childhood literacy with the goal of reducing the acceptance of social promotion
- Collaborate with early learning councils, early childhood educators and K-12 educators across the state to engage volunteers in this important effort and improve community supports for reading success
- Utilize the “Parents as Teachers” approach to learning at home and underscore its importance

- Collaborate with the Colorado Department of Education on implementing the State Literacy Plan that will provide a framework of research based strategies to support childhood literacy
- Encourage communities and schools to give the most intensive support to those children with the greatest learning needs
- Use data from ongoing assessments to inform this *Literacy Action Plan* and the *Governor's Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success* to improve childhood reading success

The work outlined in this *Literacy Action Plan*, along with the successful implementation of the literacy plans of the partnering agencies, will produce a systematic change in how Coloradoans approach early literacy success. The Lieutenant Governor's Office will coordinate programs and providers serving children, from birth through the third grade, toward a shared vision of early literacy proficiency and a standardized set of outcomes. This effort will be accomplished with public input from key stakeholder and community conversations. From this dialogue, the partners will recruit and train volunteers and complete planning efforts to address all community supports for reading. The state's leadership in this area will result in the replication and expansion of evidence-based programs for early childhood literacy and the development of significant policy action.

The Offices of the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's implementation of the *Literacy Action Plan* will be assisted by many partners including the Colorado Department of Education, Colorado's 16 United Ways network, Colorado's school districts from pre-K to higher education institutions, Governor appointed statewide commissions, Serve Colorado - Governor's Commission on Community Service, the Education Leadership Council, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, the Colorado Nonprofit Association, Early Learning Ventures, Executive Partnering to Invest in Children, the Colorado Association of Funders, the 30 Early Childhood Councils throughout the State of Colorado, the State Council for Educator Effectiveness, and local and national service organizations among many other documented partners.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: DEVELOPING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Colorado’s literacy initiative begins at a grassroots level with conversations about early literacy in communities across the state. This outreach will develop public awareness and understanding of the current successes in early childhood literacy within the state and across the nation, as well as the challenges facing schools, families and children. Additionally, these meetings will highlight the value that community engagement and involvement bring to early learning for children.

Community Profiles

Central to these conversations will be the utilization of profiles that identify both what is working well in communities as well as the risks for poor early reading outcomes. Profiles will also show community-specific programs, supports, and services that are known to support strong development and early pre-literacy and literacy progress, including:

- A medical home for children
- The use of developmental screenings and assessments
- Availability of high quality early learning settings that use ongoing assessment to evaluate children’s developmental benchmarks from birth through age eight
- Summer and out-of-school programs
- Availability of full-day kindergarten
- Use of school readiness evaluations and student plans
- Other valuable services such as library programs, family support and parent education that promote early literacy development

The Community Conversation Toolkit

Initiative leaders will use conversation toolkits to facilitate productive conversations on the topic of early childhood literacy. These kits include:

1) Educational Brochure

This will be a go-to document for community partners/leaders/educators with an in-depth overview of early learning success in the state of Colorado, Colorado Basic Literacy Act, best instructional practices and successes, challenges, etc. This brochure is to help communities successfully engage in conversations about literacy.

2) Communications Plan with Key Messages

The messaging for these conversations communicates **three** essential and factual statements that create a compelling need for community action, **two** specific and actionable steps to involve community members and **one** clear vision for early reading success.

Aligned with current research, the first three statements focus on the importance of early literacy to future learning success, the key indicators necessary for third grade literacy achievements, and the state’s commitment and dedication to the children of Colorado.

- Establish the importance of third grade literacy. Sample key messages may include:

“Successful third grade readers are more likely to graduate from high school.”
“The ability to read by third grade predicts future academic success.”
“By third grade, students learn to read. After third grade, students read to learn.”

- Identify the key school readiness indicators for third grade literacy success. Sample key messages include:

“Preparing students for third grade reading success starts at birth.”
“Kindergarten readiness is critical to successful reading achievement by third grade.”

- Establish Colorado’s commitment to the initiative. Sample key messages may include:

“Reading success matters in Colorado.”
“Reading success today makes for a brighter Colorado tomorrow.”
“Colorado is committed to helping every student read.”
“Every student in Colorado deserves a brighter future.”

The second two messages identify easy and straightforward steps for community engagement by localizing the issue (i.e. creating the “We can do it here” mindset) and emphasizing how volunteers can make a difference in education:

- Learn the facts and understand more about early learning needs and the importance of third grade literacy. Sample key messages may include:

“Take a seat at the table and learn what you can do to impact early childhood reading success.”
“Learn more about the importance of school readiness and third grade reading.”
“Join the community conversation on early childhood reading success.”

- Get involved by giving time and talent. Sample key messages may include:

“Volunteer 15 minutes and make a difference in the life of a child.”
“Share a book – read with a child.”
“Volunteer to read with a child.”

The community conversation plan makes clear the vision for the future of literacy for children:

“All Colorado children will be reading at grade level, or beyond, by the end of third grade.”

3) Community Outreach Materials

A complete toolkit for local community partners/educators to use will be designed to help community partners and their teams reach out to community audiences, including:

- Tips for delivering a successful presentation
- National literacy fact sheets – include indicators
- State and Local literacy data/fact sheets – from school district and individual school perspectives
- Customizable parent hand-out – “Did you know? And what you can do NOW!”
- Customizable posters, hand-outs, buttons, bookmarks, etc.
- A sample community/business group invitation and outreach letter
- An audience quiz and/or survey
- A sample presentation (PowerPoint and/or Video) that can be customized and adapted for a variety of uses
- Information on facilitating conversations with cultural competence

4) Media Outreach

- Advertising
- PSA Placement
- Press Releases
- Letters to the Editor
- Event coverage
- Online Community Forums
- Social Media

5) Follow-up and Evaluation

- Electronic, telephone, mail, and/or face-to-face surveys
- Group and individual interviews
- Community meetings
- Focus Groups (including communities of color, English Language Learners, and Learning Disabled communities).

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In tandem with community partners, the Mile High United Way and Serve Colorado - Governor's Commission on Community Service will help build an infrastructure to mobilize volunteers, donors, businesses, and community members through evidence-based programs to make a strong impact throughout the state in grade level reading benchmarks. Furthermore, Mile High United Way will increase capacity, technical assistance, evaluation, and dissemination of information through Mile High United Way's network to help increase access to these high-quality programs.

- 1) Work with parents of school age children to create family-school-community partnerships that increase family engagement in school and in their children's education.
 - Convene and facilitate community organizations, schools, and parents to develop and implement a comprehensive family engagement plan for elementary schools with low reading scores.
 - Work collaboratively with the business community and schools to advocate for state legislation that permits parents to attend education related activities during work hours.
- 2) Empower parents to help their children read and learn. In partnership with schools and the medical community, develop a system that includes literacy as part of the developmental assessment of young children during their visit with the doctor.
 - Engage and convene the medical community to acknowledge and leverage their role as trusted advisors to parents in the early years and create efficient and effective literacy strategies for use by the physician during the visit with the parent and child.
 - Advocate for the use of developmental screeners by the medical community that include literacy as part of the assessment.
- 3) Provide support to students struggling with reading in the primary grades. Attract, screen, train, retain and increase the number of high-quality volunteer mentors and tutors using evidence-based practices to support struggling readers in concert with parents, classroom teachers, school curriculum and school leadership to ensure that children receive early intervention.
 - In partnership with schools and in concert with classroom teachers, recruit and provide evidence-based training for volunteer tutors and mentors to work with students who require additional one-on-one reading assistance.
 - Partner with community-based organizations and the Corporation for National and Community Service to provide research-based tutoring interventions to students struggling with reading.

- 4) Improve the availability, accessibility and quality of reading programs offered outside of regular school hours and in the summer so that they include strong research-based language and literacy components that are aligned with school curricula.
 - Develop and create collaborative complimentary reading programs (outside of regular school hours) that intentionally and seamlessly connect reading help to school curriculum.
 - Broker relationships between schools and existing community reading programs to assure the exchange of data around student outcomes and the connection of the program with school curricula.
 - Create funding incentives for community reading programs that use best practices and research, have strong student outcomes and work in concert with the schools and school curricula.

- 5) Strengthen schools to ensure students are engaged in learning. Work collaboratively with schools to strengthen and use early warning systems to assure the assessment of reading levels of all early grade readers; identify chronically absent students and students struggling with reading; ensure the availability of research-based reading curricula; and provide professional development for teachers and principals in the area of reading.
 - Advocate for early and frequent research-based reading assessments for all students and advocate for the use of research-based curricula and ongoing professional development for teachers that focuses on reading instruction and intervention.
 - In partnership with schools, develop and create an effective early warning system that identifies students struggling with reading and students who are chronically absent.
 - Provide funding for professional development for teachers and principals in the area of early grade reading.

United Way will issue calls to action that align with and accelerate the high-impact approaches and high-opportunity roles. The education-related calls to action will be integrated across the three education focus areas: Volunteer, Give and Advocate.

POLICY ACTION: GOVERNOR’S POLICY AGENDA FOR EARLY LITERACY SUCCESS

State policy action is necessary for Colorado to make progress ensuring that all of our children are reading at grade level or beyond by the end of third grade. The policy agenda will include:

- Specific state and community policy action necessary for major gains in early literacy access and success in Colorado
- Metrics to evaluate progress on completing the policy agenda and gains in early literacy
- A timeline including necessary executive, legislative, and other stakeholder action

Policy development will begin with internal policy experts evaluating research and best practices in policy. The policy agenda will be refined in the fall through further input by state and national experts as well as by local feedback resulting from the fall *Community Conversation* process. A final policy plan, the *Governor’s Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success*, will include a detailed timeline, goals, objectives and outcomes.

The goals of this *Policy Action* are:

- Execute an early education policy agenda from the Governor’s office, to be led by the Lieutenant Governor, that supports the state’s early literacy initiative and includes specific preschool and professional development programmatic goals
- Implement a communications strategy that targets relevant grassroots groups and stakeholders and includes communication with the *Community Conversations* strand to generate grassroots support for the policy agenda
- Create opportunities for the Governor to raise the profile of early education and move necessary policy to support literacy at both the state and federal level

Several potential areas of action have already been identified based on research and best practices in other states. The following items will be considered during the policy development process of the *Governor’s Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success*:

- 1) **Encourage and enable parents, families, and caregivers to play their indispensable roles as their child’s first and primary reading teacher.** There is no substitute for the parents’ role as a child’s first teacher; positive parent-child interactions and parent engagement in school are major predictors of academic success. Use a public engagement campaign, new technology and social networking to increase parent engagement and teaching skills. Evaluate how current parent engagement programs and other publically-funded supports and services can boost parent engagement.
- 2) **With the goal of increasing the number of kids developing on-track, ready for school, and reading at third grade, develop an early warning system so high risk children get correct services immediately and with continuity.** Building off the improvements being made to the statewide longitudinal educational data system (through a \$17.5 M federal grant), flag children most-at-risk in their earliest years and provide targeted effective interventions. Implement

- a cohesive statewide approach to the assessment of child development and learning. Develop a unified set of child development and learning guidelines and promote the use of assessment, referral and intervention in all appropriate settings touching children. This includes use of developmental screeners by the medical community, the use of appropriate assessments in child care settings, and regular and ongoing, developmentally appropriate assessment to guide instructors in early learning settings from preschool through third grade.
- 3) **Revise the state’s current early childhood licensure and quality rating system.** Move Colorado from the bottom five to the top 10 in quality standards for child care and other early childhood settings. Learning begins at day one and all places serving young children should focus on learning and development in order to increase developmental gains and school readiness.
 - 4) **Focus early childhood governance work on the important outcomes for children - on-track development, school readiness, and third grade literacy.** *The Governor’s Early Childhood Change Management Project* has been successfully launched through the Early Childhood Leadership Commission. The Commission has agreed that child success at the end of third grade in core academic subjects should be a guiding force of any recommendations around consolidated and more efficient and effective state systems.
 - 5) **Increase the impact of early childhood professionals through the training for and tracking of effectiveness in outcomes like reading.** The effectiveness of early learning professionals is a significant predictor of child outcomes. A preschool through third grade professional development plan is already underway that complements the implementation plan for Senate Bill 191. Institutions of higher education will play an important role in teacher training focused on specific competencies that generate better reading outcomes for kids. Explore opportunities to work with key colleges and pilot teacher training models that would incorporate literacy-teaching techniques and data-driven decision-making into teacher preparation curriculum. Explore opportunities to ensure that all of Colorado’s educator preparation programs teach their candidates all five scientific components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension, and the new P-3 common core standards. The state should examine both requirements and incentives for education preparation programs to incorporate the five components of scientifically based reading research and instruction into their course sequences, curriculum, textbooks, and areas of faculty expertise. Colorado should also identify opportunities to partner with the Florida Center for Reading Research to disseminate the best practices of scientifically based literacy instruction and intervention to Colorado teachers through ongoing professional development.
 - 6) **Ensure all expanded learning opportunities have a focus on reading.** Summer learning loss is one of the most significant contributors to the underachievement of low-income children. Children need more time – through expanded learning

opportunities like after-school, summer programs, and extended day programs – to solidify reading skills. Explore opportunities to offer online literacy support during the summer to every student in the state.

- 7) **Expand response to intervention/classroom-based technology and data-driven approach to reading.** Implement a research-based volunteer reading initiative. There are proven methods to identify and address academic problems in reading before students fail (e.g. Response to Intervention). Such programs emphasize read-time, data driven interventions that track progress and target areas of weakness before students fail.
- 8) **Implement the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) State Literacy Plan for Children 0-18 years.** In partnership with literacy experts from across the state, CDE is developing a state roadmap for literacy, birth through 12th grade, to ensure all Colorado children have the literacy skills needed for the 21st century. In addition, CDE submitted a Striving Readers grant in May 2011 with the hopes that a full grant will be awarded for statewide implementation by September 2011.
- 9) **Honor the intent of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA).** The CBLA state statute was enacted in 1997 to ensure that all students by third grade have the literacy skills essential for success in school and life. CBLA calls for local school districts to identify students who are reading below grade level and initiate the necessary reading interventions. Colorado’s State Literacy Plan for children starting at birth will include appropriate monitoring and community support such as ongoing developmentally appropriate assessment and intervention before kindergarten and into the early school years. This initiative will implement a literacy support policy that transforms school culture whereby students that score below proficient on the state third grade reading assessment are given time to develop the literacy skills they need to succeed before being promoted to the fourth grade. Any such policy relies on additional support and a laser-like focus on reading instruction from early childhood through third grade.
- 10) **Make early literacy success a central focus of two state-level policy bodies.** The Education Leadership Council was established by Governor Hickenlooper to provide a meaningful forum through which the state’s leadership can examine the current status of education policies, analyze the systems’ near-term opportunities and challenges, and make recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and governing boards regarding potential long-term improvements to the state’s education systems. The Early Childhood Leadership Commission, established in statute in 2010, is focused on improving outcomes for young children and their families by advancing the alignment, coordination, and efficiency of programs and services. Both bodies have a goal of closing achievement gaps in schools (including those gaps found in early reading success) to ensure that teacher preparation programs are using evidence-based curricula to teach the teaching of reading, and to identify best practices and successful evidence-based literacy models in order to replicate and bring to scale.

The *Governor's Policy Agenda for Early Literacy Success* will be informed by the *Community Conversations* and *Civic Engagement* strands of the *Literacy Action Plan*. Working together we can help all our children to read.

EVALUATION PLAN

The Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) or Senate Bill 08-212 set forth a common purpose to prepare all students for postsecondary and workforce readiness. A significant step toward achieving that goal was adopting new state academic standards that are fewer, clearer and higher. The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) will be administered for the final time in 2011 and the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) will be administered in 2012. The TCAP will assess the same content areas and grades as the CSAP and will include assessment items that are common to both the prior and new academic standards. In 2013, students will be given both the TCAP and a pilot version of a new summative assessment, slated for statewide adoption in spring 2014. Also in 2014 the state will introduce a statewide multi-domain, formative kindergarten readiness assessment, as well as the use of formative assessments in first and second grade. These new assessments for the lower grades will include an evaluation of literacy as well as an evaluation of other skills and domains known to be essential in learning (e.g. social-emotional competencies). The expanded assessments into kindergarten, first, and second grade will be vital to enabling communities to more closely monitor their students' early literacy progress and make corresponding revisions to the community literacy action plan.

Finally, the state will continue to evaluate statewide progress through the assessment of fourth grade reading skills by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP is a uniform assessment conducted on a representative sample of students from each state, allowing comparisons between states. NAEP does not provide scores for individual students or schools. Thus, while NAEP scores cannot be used to evaluate individual community progress on increasing literacy skills, it is an additional useful check on the state's overall literacy skills in comparison to other states.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: LITERACY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Office of the Lieutenant Governor would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions to the development of this Literacy Action Plan:

Name	Role
Bruce Atchison	Director, Colorado Early Learning Partnership
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Key staff and roles

- Jamie Van Leeuwen will serve as the initiative leader from the Lieutenant Governor’s office.
- Jenna Hansen will coordinate the Serve Colorado efforts.
- Heather Tritten will lead policy research and development.
- Julie McCluskie will coordinate the community conversation plan.
- Lindsay Morgan Tracy will serve as the United Way representative and the civic engagement organizer.

CONCLUSION

Colorado is a resource rich state and its most vital resource is its people. To be competitive in the global marketplace, Colorado's businesses and industries require increasing numbers of highly skilled employees. The state's economic competitiveness, prosperity and quality of life depends on the universal excellence and competitiveness of its public education system.

Colorado is not approaching challenges in childhood reading proficiency with quick-fix solutions; instead, this literacy action plan represents the start of a statewide initiative to improve early literacy success through more extensive policy reforms.

The state recognizes that this *Literacy Action Plan* is not a solution to the problem, but is instead a beginning to the conversation. We are looking forward to understanding where Colorado has opportunities to improve early childhood literacy and to move the state forward so every child in Colorado is reading at grade level or beyond by the end of third grade.

APPENDIX A

EVIDENCE-BASED LITERACY PROGRAMMING

The following are a sample of programs with documented success in advancing pre-literacy skills, school readiness and literacy success in kindergarten through third grade. Other programs have similarly strong outcomes but could not all be highlighted. This initiative will work to document the availability and success of such programs and strive to provide better access to those programs and supports needed by communities to ensure Colorado leads the nation in early literacy success.

- 1) Results of quality early childhood programs influence changes in school readiness. Examples of some highly effective programs include:
 - Educare: Children who begin the Educare program earlier in life score better on measures of school readiness. This pattern persists even after controlling for risk factors such as maternal education, race and teen parent status. Children who spend more years in Educare emerge better prepared for kindergarten. Kindergarten-bound Educare children score better on measures of vocabulary than most low-income children in other large studies of early achievement. (*The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*)
 - Colorado Preschool Program (CPP): This program reduces the need for intensive intervention for children scoring “unsatisfactory” on CSAPs while closing the achievement gap with durable effects beyond preschool and into third grade. This results in saving taxpayer money by reducing the number of children held back in third grade. (*Colorado Department of Education*)
 - Reach Out and Read: This program is a comprehensive, evidence-based intervention that serves over 68,000 children in Colorado alone. Research proves that children served by Reach Out and Read show significant developmental gains in language and a six-month developmental edge over their peers in the preschool years and score higher on vocabulary tests and school readiness assessments. Parents served by Reach Out and Read are up to four times more likely to read aloud to their children- a valuable factor contributing to young children’s reading success. (*Reach Out and Read*)
 - Tools of the Mind: This program teaches children to successfully function in school and beyond, by teaching children to master a set of mental tools—tools of the mind. The concept of "Tools of the Mind" comes from the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. He believed that just as physical tools extend our physical abilities, mental tools extend our mental abilities to enable us to solve problems and create solutions in the modern world. (*Metropolitan State College of Denver*)
- 2) Response to Intervention (RtI) reduces the number of children receiving remedial assistance in a child’s later years and contributes to school readiness.

- There is emerging evidence that a tiered early intervention approach can improve the academic performance of struggling students.
- The number of kids in special education drops because staff members intervene before, not after, the student falls too far behind.
- Contributing factors to successful RtI programs include:
 - Extensive, ongoing professional development
 - Administrative support at the system and building level
 - Teacher buy-in and willingness to adjust their traditional instructional roles
 - Involvement of all school personnel, and
 - Adequate meeting time for coordination

(National Conference on State Legislators, Issues and Research)

- 3) Extended Learning Opportunities can help close the opportunity gap and school readiness gap. There are several programs that constitute as extended learning opportunities (ELOs):
- Before and After School programs
 - Summer programs
 - Saturday/Weekend programs
 - Extended Day/Year initiatives programs

These ELO programs have been proven to:

- Reduce summer learning loss
- Offer credit recovery options for students to achieve on-time graduation or matriculation to the next grade level
- Provide academic assistance in addition to community-based enrichment activities, mentorship programs, and character education
- Decrease drop-out levels
- Reduce stress on working parents

(National Education Association, Education Policy and Practice Department)

- 4) Quality tutoring provides methods of not only literacy development, but character education and mentoring. Some successful tutoring programs include:
- Minnesota Volunteer Reading Tutor Initiative- serves children ages three to grade three in reading proficiency. This initiative is a scalable model for enhancing individualized data driven instruction by harnessing the power of AmeriCorps to deliver accelerated results. Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) is a statewide AmeriCorps program that provides trained literacy tutors (members) for children age three to grade three. Some MRC members work with preschoolers and focus on integrating talking, reading, and writing into all classroom activities. Other members provide supplemental literacy skills tutoring for children in kindergarten to third grade. Still others recruit, train, and manage community volunteers to expand the capacity of the program.

- The Florida Mentoring Partnership: Spearheaded in 1999 as the Governor’s Mentoring Initiative, the Florida Mentoring Partnerships works with government agencies, mentoring organizations, and the for-profit community to promote mentoring as an effective means to address the needs of Florida’s youth.
- Experience Corps: The volunteer trained tutors improve young students’ reading comprehension, one of the toughest skills to affect for struggling readers. Students who work with Experience Corps tutors for a single school year experience more than 60 percent greater gains in two critical literacy skills—sounding out new words and reading comprehension—compared to similar students who were not served by Experience Corps.

APPENDIX B
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT STAKEHOLDERS

The below list is a draft of stakeholders who we could work with as they either have similar programs in their communities or could have a vested interest in helping to launch a ground swell of support for the importance of this initiative. Some of the below stakeholders would be best served with a liaison in the Governor's Office, a representative from CDE, a personal connection from a member of the literacy work force group or from an individual from Mile High United Way.

- Schools
 - Teachers
 - Retired teachers
 - Former teachers
 - PreK-3 teachers
 - Principals
 - Administrators/District employees
 - Superintendents
 - Literacy personnel at each district
 - Public
 - Private
 - Charter
 - Home Schools
- Parents
 - Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)
 - Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO)
- Statewide Organizations
 - Colorado Department of Education
 - Teachers Union
 - Colorado Education Association
 - The United Way network across the state
 - Serve Colorado (Governor's Commission on Community Service)
 - Early Learning Ventures
 - Education Leadership Council
 - Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy
 - Literacy Organizations
 - Early Childhood Councils (30 across the state)
 - Education Groups/Education Advocacy Organizations
 - Get Smart Schools
 - Stand for Colorado
 - Colorado Succeeds
 - Parents as Teachers
 - Great contact list on their page for Colorado (36 statewide contacts)
 - See addendum
 - Foundations

- AmeriCorps
 - Statewide
 - Federal

- 55+ Community
 - Boomers Leading Change at Rose Community Foundation
 - Senior Centers
 - RSVP
 - Retirees
 - Retirement Communities
 - AARP

- Colorado College and Universities
 - Presidents
 - Colorado Leadership Alliance
 - Fraternities and Sororities
 - Latino/Latina/Black Student Union

- High Schools
 - Civic course community service hours

- Government Constituencies
 - Mayors
 - County Commissioners
 - Legislators

- Faith-Based Organizations

- Refugee Organizations

- Mentoring Organizations
 - Big Brother/Big Sisters
 - YWCA/YMCA

- Businesses
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Economic Development organizations
 - Children's Museums
 - Recreation Centers
 - Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC)

- Veterans/Returning Veterans
 - Veteran's Helping Veterans NOW
 - Troops to Teachers

- Service Organizations
 - Lions
 - Kiwanis
 - Optimist clubs
 - Rotary
 - Sertoma
 - Women's Clubs

- Other groups (e.g. - - to be expanded)
 - Returning Peace Corps Volunteers
 - Disability community
 - FRESC – Union organizers/mobilizing factions
 - CIRC (Colorado's Immigration Rights Coalition)
 - Colorín Colorado

- Individuals

- Animal Assisted Reading