

K-12 Education

School Finance, Financial Policies, and Procedures

SB 13-002 (Enacted)
Designate BOCES as Local Education Agencies

SB 13-069 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Income Tax Credits for Nonpublic Education

SB 13-108 (Enacted)
Mid-year School Finance Adjustments

SB 13-112 (Enacted)
Cap 2012-13 School Land Revenue Transfers

SB 13-131 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Tax Credit for K-12 Supplemental Education Services Provided to Children

SB 13-139 (Enacted)
Supplemental On-line Education Services

SB 13-143 (Enacted)
Institute Charter School Assistance Fund

SB 13-213 (Enacted)
Future School Finance Act

SB 13-214 (Enacted)
BEST Program Oversight and Funding

SB 13-260 (Enacted)
Financing of Public Schools

HB 13-1176 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Income Tax Credits for Nonpublic Education

Wellness, Safety, and Activities

SB 13-138 (Enacted)
School Resource Officer Programs in Public Schools

SB 13-279 (Enacted)
K-12 School Energy Resource Efficiency

HB 13-1006 (Enacted)
K-12 Breakfast After the Bell Nutrition Program

HB 13-1047 (Enacted)
Extracurricular Participation Across School Districts

HB 13-1095 (Enacted)
Home School Students Participation in Activities

HB 13-1171 (Enacted)
Emergency Use of Epinephrine Injectors in Schools

Early Childhood Learning and Parent Involvement

SB 13-193 (Enacted)
Increasing Parent Engagement in Public Schools

HB 13-1007 (Enacted)
Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission

HB 13-1291 (Enacted)
Colorado Early Head Start Grant Program

Academic Acceleration, School Completion, and Instruction

SB 13-031 (Enacted)
Tuition for Dropout Recovery Program Students

HB 13-1021 (Enacted)
Improving School Attendance

HB 13-1023 (Enacted)
Academic Acceleration School District Policy

HB 13-1056 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Advanced Placement Incentives Pilot Program

HB 13-1081 (Enacted)
Comprehensive Human Sexuality K-12 Education

HB 13-1211 (Postponed Indefinitely)
English Language Proficiency Programs

Educators and School Boards

SB 13-015 (Enacted)
Local Board of Education Meeting Electronic Participation

SB 13-017 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Opt-in Opt-out Option Teacher's Union Membership

SB 13-141 (Postponed Indefinitely)
School Employee Participation in Labor Unions

SB 13-164 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Repeal Residency Requirements for School Boards

SB 13-168 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Public Employees and Labor Organizations

HB 13-1073 (Postponed Indefinitely)
Portability of Nonprobationary Teacher Status

HB 13-1220 (Enacted)
Confidentiality K-12 Educator Performance Data

HB 13-1257 (Enacted)
Developing Local-level Educator Evaluation Systems

K-12 Education (Cont.)

Accreditation and Statutory Changes

SB 13-217 (Enacted)

*K-12 Accreditation Criteria Alternative
Education Campuses*

HB 13-1172 (Postponed Indefinitely)

K-12 Public School Accountability

HB 13-1219 (Enacted)

Statutory Changes to K-12 Education

Task Forces and Advisory Committees

SB 13-148 (Enacted)

*Sunset Colorado Youth Advisory
Council*

SB 13-153 (Enacted)

*Sunset Farm-to-School Coordination
Task Force*

HB 13-1244 (Postponed Indefinitely)

*Continuation of Educational Success
Task Force*

The General Assembly considered a variety of K-12 education-related legislation during the 2013 session. Major topics addressed include: school finance, financial policies, and procedures; wellness, safety, and activities; academic acceleration, school completion, and instruction; early childhood learning and parent involvement; educators and school boards; accountability, accreditation, and statutory changes; and task forces and advisory committees.

School Finance, Financial Policies, and Procedures

School finance. Three bills concerning the financing of Colorado's K-12 public education system were passed during the 2013 legislative session. **Senate Bill 13-108** makes mid-year adjustments to the 2012 School Finance Act. The initial appropriation for school finance is based on annual estimates of the funded pupil count, the number of at-risk students, and the availability of property and specific ownership tax revenue. By January of each year, this data has been finalized by schools districts and compiled by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The CDE then submits a supplemental request to make mid-year appropriation adjustments based on the actual data. SB 13-108 increases the minimum level of total program funding for FY 2012-13; sets a minimum level of funding for FY 2013-14 and beyond; and caps the number of funded Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) students in any fiscal year at a level approved by the General Assembly.

Senate Bill 13-260, the annual School Finance Act, changes the "Public School Finance Act of 1994" by modifying the funding for K-12 public schools in FY 2013-14. The bill increases the base per pupil funding from \$5,843.26 to \$5,954.28 to reflect a 1.9 percent inflation rate. The bill also makes changes to the calculation of total program funding, by:

- establishing a minimum funded pupil count of 50 for each school district;
- increasing the number of slots in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) by 3,200; and
- increasing total program funding by \$51.8 million by reducing the negative factor.

The bill also modifies the funding for other public school programs in the following ways:

- increases charter school capital construction funding by \$1 million in FY 2013-14 and beyond;

- refinances supplemental at-risk aid for charter schools, school districts, and the Charter School Institute (CSI) from audit recoveries to the State Education Fund;
- refinances the Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act to change the funding source from the Public School Fund to the State Education Fund;
- increases the annual amount transferred from the Public School Fund to the State Public School Fund from \$11 million to \$16 million;
- transfers \$200,000 from the State Education Fund to the Great Teachers and Leaders Fund in FY 2013-14 only;
- increases the special education appropriation by \$20 million and requires that this money be used for Tier B special education funding;
- requires that 75 percent of the FY 2013-14 General Fund surplus be transferred to the State Education Fund;
- provides additional funding for facility school students; and
- increases the appropriation from the State Education Fund for Nationally Board Certified Teacher stipends by \$1,339,200.

Additionally, the bill requires the CDE to contract with up to two vendors to create a quality teacher recruitment program, to assist in recruiting, training, and retaining highly qualified teachers for schools and districts with historic difficulty in retaining quality teachers. School districts that want to work with the vendors to place teachers must apply to the CDE. The vendors selected to operate the program must submit an annual report to the CDE that includes specified data and performance metrics.

Senate Bill 13-213 creates a new school finance act, dependent upon voter approval of a statewide ballot measure to increase state tax revenue for public education by a specified amount. The new act will take effect in the second budget year following voter approval of the measure, at the earliest in FY 2015-16. Under current law, funding for school districts is set by a statewide base per pupil amount which is modified to provide additional funding to school districts for various factors such as cost of living, enrollment, and percentage of at-risk students. SB 13-213 provides a new funding formula for school districts and the CSI, and changes how pupils are counted for funding purposes. Among the bill's other provisions:

- funded pupil count is based on average daily membership throughout the school year, as opposed to a single count day;
- full day kindergarten and half-day preschool is funded for all three-, four-, and five-year-olds who are eligible for and enroll in the Colorado Preschool Program;
- the funding formula for at-risk, English Language Learners, ASCENT students, and online students is adjusted;
- funding for teacher and leadership investment is added;
- allowable mill levy increases are adjusted;
- if a district's state funding is reduced to less than what would have been received under the current formula, the district will receive state-share hold-harmless funding equal to the difference in the district's state funding before and after the recalculation, plus 2 percent of the district's total program funding;
- at-risk funding is increased for school districts under certain circumstances;
- mill levy override limits are adjusted; and
- CSI school funding is modified.

Income tax credits for education expenses. Three bills concerning income tax credits for education expenses were considered, but postponed indefinitely. As introduced, **Senate Bill 13-069** and **House Bill 13-1176** would have provided income tax credits for individuals who enroll their dependent child in a home-based or private school, and for individuals who offer a scholarship to a child who enrolls in a private school. **Senate Bill 13-131** would have provided an income tax credit to residents of Colorado who incur expenses related to their child or dependent's supplemental education. Supplemental education service is any educational or academic service used to enhance a student's school education.

State school lands. Two bills concerning state school lands were passed during the 2013 session. Colorado's school trust lands and the Public School Fund, which is supported by proceeds from the school trust lands, were established in the state's enabling act as an inter-generational endowment to support the state's public schools. In FY 2012-13, **Senate Bill 13-112** caps the transfer to the State Public School Fund of royalty revenue earned from state public school lands at \$27 million, and caps the transfer of interest earned from the Public School Fund at \$9 million. The Public School Fund receives revenue resulting from the sale of state school lands, and interest earned by the Public School Fund supports Colorado's public schools. Under existing law, in FY 2012-13, 50 percent of gross income from the lands is transferred to the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program; \$9.1 million supports State Land Board operations; and the remainder is transferred to the State Public School Fund for appropriation through the School Finance Act. The caps imposed by the bill result in an estimated \$24.8 million reduction in the amount that would have been available for appropriation from the State Public School Fund in FY 2013-14.

Senate Bill 13-214 concerns legislative oversight of the funding of P-12 public school capital construction projects that receive funding under the BEST Act. The BEST program was established in 2008 to provide grants to public schools to rebuild, repair, or replace the worst of the state's P-12 education facilities. BEST awards two types of grants to qualified projects, including: cash awards; and long-term borrowing in the form of lease-purchase agreements called certificates of participation (COPs), or Qualified School Construction Bonds. The Public School Capital Construction Assistance Fund (assistance fund) is the source of state funds for cash awards, and to repay long-term borrowing and make annual lease payments. The assistance fund collects revenue from the following sources:

- moneys earned from state public school lands in the form of rental income and mineral royalties in the amount of the state share of annual lease payments for the BEST program or 50 percent of the annual rent and royalty earnings, whichever is greater;
- a portion of lottery proceeds; and
- interest earnings on the assistance fund.

The bill requires the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Board (assistance board) within the CDE to ensure that by June 30 of each year, the balance of the assistance fund is equal to the total amount of the state share of annual lease payments for the BEST program. The bill also grants the Capital Development Committee (CDC) limited oversight of the BEST program including the authority to approve or disapprove certain projects recommended by the State Board of Education (SBE), adjusts the time line for review and consideration of capital projects to be financed through lease-purchase agreements, and adds to the assistance board's existing reporting requirements.

Charter schools. Senate Bill 13-143 changes the way that money is transferred to the Institute Charter School Assistance Fund (assistance fund), increases the discretion of the CSI when allocating grant money from the assistance fund, and changes the conditions for refunding excess money retained by the CSI to institute charter schools.

Under current law, the CSI is permitted to retain a portion of the funding for CSI schools in an account in the state Charter School Institute Fund (CSI fund) to cover a portion of CSI administrative costs. At the end of each budget year, if the remaining balance in the fund exceeds 10 percent of total adjusted per-pupil funding, the CSI must refund the excess to institute charter schools on a per-pupil basis. Under the bill, if the remaining balance in the CSI fund exceeds 20 percent of the amount retained for administrative purposes in the current budget year, the excess is transferred to the assistance fund.

Current law provides that in any year in which state funding for public schools is not reduced by the negative factor, the CSI retains a separate portion of institute charter schools' per-pupil funding and transfers that portion to the assistance fund. The bill repeals this provision and limits the annual fund balance in the assistance fund to \$750,000. When the year-end fund balance exceeds this amount, the excess is allocated to institute charter schools on a proportional per-pupil basis.

Also under current law, an institute charter school may apply for grant funding or interest-free loans from the assistance fund for facility needs or to assist with special education services. The bill permits institute charter schools to apply for grants from the fund to address reasonable funding emergencies, and authorizes the CSI board to adopt rules defining what constitutes a reasonable funding emergency.

Boards of Cooperative Educational Services. Under existing law, only school districts and the CSI are considered local education agencies (LEA). An LEA is the federal designation for the administrative unit responsible for receiving grant awards. **Senate Bill 13-002** allows a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to act as an LEA for the purposes of applying for and receiving state or federal grant money. A BOCES may apply for grant funding with the approval of two or more of its participating member school districts.

Senate Bill 13-139, which also addresses the authority of BOCES, was enacted during the 2013 session. Under current law, the Mountain BOCES has the exclusive authority to contract with a supplemental online education provider, track student performance, and report data about student performance to the CDE. Supplemental online education programs offer one or more computer based courses to K-12 students to supplement courses provided by a school district, charter school, or BOCES. Under the bill, the CDE is required to select a BOCES to contract with supplemental online education providers. Once designated, the CDE and the selected BOCES will develop a request for proposal process to solicit nonprofit providers of supplemental online course offerings, professional development for educators, and consulting assistance for schools wanting to use online and blended learning programs for their students. The designated BOCES is also responsible for collecting data on completion and passage rates of students participating in supplemental online and blended learning programs, and for reporting this information to the CDE.

Wellness, Safety, and Activities

Wellness. Recognizing the positive impacts of a safe and efficient school building on student learning and resource sustainability, the General Assembly passed **Senate Bill 13-279**. The bill requires that beginning in January 2014, new construction or substantial renovation of public school facilities be designed and constructed to the highest practicable energy efficiency standards. The bill also requires that the design for the new construction or substantial renovation receive third-party verification that it meets national standards for high performance schools. School districts, district charter schools, and institute charter schools may consult guidelines adopted by the Public School Capital Construction Assistance Board regarding the standards that should be met in the new building construction or renovation process.

House Bill 13-1006, which was passed by the General Assembly, creates the Breakfast After the Bell Nutrition Program to ensure that students have access to a nutritional breakfast each school day morning. The bill requires every school that has 80 percent or more students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the federal school lunch program, to offer free breakfast to each student enrolled in the school in FY 2014-15. The program is expanded in FY 2015-16 and thereafter, so that every school with 70 percent or more students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch is required to offer a free breakfast to each student enrolled in the school. Schools that fall below these thresholds for two consecutive years may opt out of the program.

Safety. School resource officers serve as an important bridge between public safety and school safety. To that end, the General Assembly passed **Senate Bill 13-138**. The bill expressly includes school resource officers as community partners for the purposes of school safety, readiness, and incident management. The bill requires that the School Safety Resource Center hire or contract for the services of an emergency response consultant who will, among other things, provide research support and guidance to school districts and schools seeking grants for school safety and emergency response assistance. Additionally, the School Safety Resource Center advisory board is increased from 13 to 14 members, to reflect the addition of a school resource officer.

Another bill that was enacted relating to student safety is **House Bill 13-1171**. The bill allows the governing authority of public and nonpublic schools to adopt a policy to authorize the school nurse or other designated school personnel to administer an epinephrine auto-injector, in accordance with standing protocol from a licensed physician, physician's assistant, or advanced practice nurse who has prescriptive authority, to any student that the school nurse or designated school personnel in good faith believes is experiencing anaphylaxis, regardless of whether the student has a prescription for an epinephrine auto-injector. The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules on the management of students with life-threatening allergies, and to train users of epinephrine auto-injectors. Finally, the bill limits the liability of a public or nonpublic school and a good faith user of an epinephrine auto-injector in emergency situations in school settings, when the school has adopted a policy on the use of such injectors in accordance with standing protocol.

Extracurricular and interscholastic activities. Two bills concerning extracurricular and interscholastic activities were enacted during the 2013 session. Under current law, if a K-12 student wishes to participate in an extracurricular activity not offered at his or her school of attendance, the student is permitted to participate at a different school in the district or at a school in a neighboring district. **House Bill 13-1047** clarifies that if a student chooses to participate in an activity at a public school other than his or her school of attendance, the school district chooses the

school at which the student will participate. The bill further clarifies current law which states that a student may participate in extracurricular activities at more than one school only if the original school of participation does not offer the activity.

Also related to student participation in extracurricular and interscholastic activities is **House Bill 13-1095**. Current law provides that if a K-12 student enrolled in a nonpublic, home-based school wishes to participate in an extracurricular or interscholastic activity not available at his or her nonpublic school, the student may participate at a different school in the district of residence, or at a school in a neighboring district. HB 13-1095 prohibits school districts from requiring that a home-school student enroll in or complete course credits as a condition to participate in extracurricular activities, unless the activity is an extension of a course.

Early Childhood Learning and Parent Involvement

Early childhood learning. The General Assembly considered and passed two bills related to early childhood learning. **House Bill 13-1007** reestablishes the Early Childhood and School Readiness Legislative Commission as a legislative study committee beginning in the 2013 interim. The commission previously operated as an interim committee between 2009 and 2012. The six-member commission is required to meet at least four times annually to study issues concerning early childhood and school readiness, including health care, mental health, parental involvement, family support, child care, and early learning. The commission repeals on July 1, 2018.

House Bill 13-1291 creates the Colorado Infant and Toddler Quality and Availability Grant Program in the Department of Human Services (DHS). The grant program will provide an increased rate of reimbursement for early childhood programs that receive funds through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). Early childhood programs receiving one of the top two ratings under the state's quality rating and improvement system, or accredited by a department-approved accrediting body, and Early Head Start programs meeting federal standards, are eligible for the increased reimbursement rate. The DHS is required to determine the application process, eligibility criteria, proposal requirements, and award criteria for the program, and to notify early childhood councils of grant availability.

Parent involvement. Recognizing that parent involvement in education is critical to student academic success, the General Assembly passed **Senate Bill 13-193**. The bill expands and coordinates the duties of school district accountability committees (DAC), school accountability committees (SAC), and the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE). SACPIE was created in 2009 to inform public education entities about best practices and strategies for increasing parent involvement in education. The bill requires SACPIE to work more closely with DACs, SACs, and the CDE to provide training and best practices in parent engagement, and to measure the level of parent engagement in public schools. Each school district board of education and the CSI must adopt a district policy for increasing parent engagement in public schools, including the charter schools of the school district. Under current law, if the SBE directs a public school or institute charter school to adopt an improvement plan, turnaround plan, or priority improvement plan, the school principal is required to hold a public hearing to review the plan. The bill instead requires that the SAC hold a public hearing to consider possible strategies to include in the plan. The bill also requires each school district and the CSI to identify an employee of the district or of the CSI to act as the point of contact for parent engagement and resources, and to serve as a liaison between the district or CSI, the DAC, SACPIE, and CDE.

Academic Acceleration, School Completion, and Instruction

Academic acceleration. Academic acceleration allows a student to progress through an education program at a faster rate, or at a younger age, than the student's peers. The General Assembly considered two bills related to academic acceleration. **House Bill 13-1023**, which was enacted, requires that all local education providers review their procedures concerning academic acceleration for students, and take into consideration procedures, that:

- ensure the fair, objective, and systematic evaluation of students being referred for acceleration;
- use a multi-person decision making process for accelerated placement;
- provide guidelines for the practice of academic acceleration including categories, forms, types of academic acceleration, and the award of credit;
- provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers to the use of acceleration as an educational intervention; and
- provide an appeals process for decisions related to academic acceleration.

Another bill concerning academic acceleration that was considered by the General Assembly, was **House Bill 13-1056**. The bill, which was postponed indefinitely, would have created the Advanced Placement Incentives Pilot Program in CDE to provide supplemental funding to rural schools that offer advanced placement courses.

School completion. Under current law, a school district and a community college may establish a dropout recovery program permitting a student who has dropped out of high school, or a student who is at risk of dropping out, to complete his or her high school requirements exclusively at a community college or district junior college. School districts are required to pay only for those courses that a student completes. **Senate Bill 13-031** changes the requirement for paying tuition, and mandates that school districts participating in the dropout recovery program pay the student portion of tuition for each class in which the student enrolls, not just those that the student completes.

The General Assembly also enacted **House Bill 13-1021** concerning school attendance. The bill contains measures to ensure that students comply with compulsory school attendance requirements and limits the length of detention that a court may impose to enforce those requirements. Under the bill, each school district board of education must adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning elementary and secondary school attendance, including policies and procedures for how to work with children who are habitually truant. A student is considered to be habitually truant if he or she has four unexcused absences from school in one month, or ten unexcused absences in a school year. The bill specifies that court proceedings to compel compliance with school attendance laws should be pursued as a last resort approach to address truancy, and only pursued if a child continues to be habitually truant after the school or school district has created and implemented a plan to improve the child's school attendance. The bill outlines the actions that the court may take once the school or school district has initiated court proceedings which may include a court order to attend school. If a child is found to be in contempt of court for failing to follow a court order to attend school, the court may issue sanctions that include a sentence for detention of up to five days in a juvenile detention facility. The bill also allows students who are under juvenile court jurisdiction to obtain a General Education Diploma (GED) if the judicial officer or administrative hearing officer finds it is in the student's best interest to do so, and specifies the minimum requirements for education services provided in juvenile detention facilities.

Instruction. The General Assembly considered two bills related to instruction. **House Bill 13-1081**, which passed, expands the criteria for developing content standards for human sexuality education in public K-12 schools, and creates a grant program to provide money to school districts choosing to implement sex education programs aligned with the provisions of the bill. The bill also establishes an oversight entity to assess available funding and to review grant applications and issue grant awards. For schools or school districts offering sex education as part of a program authorized under the Colorado Comprehensive Health Education Act, the bill requires that parents opt out by providing written notice to school districts in advance. Currently, parents are required to opt in to these programs.

House Bill 13-1211 was postponed indefinitely, but would have repealed and reenacted the English Language Proficiency Act to recreate a state program that provides supplemental funding to local education providers to implement English language proficiency programs. The bill would have also expanded the duties of local education providers in the areas of tracking English language learners' academic progress, reporting requirements, and providing assurance to the CDE that established English language learner programs are in compliance with state and federal laws.

Educators and School Boards

Educators and labor organizations. Three bills concerning educator participation in labor organizations were considered during the 2013 session; all were postponed indefinitely. **Senate Bill 13-017** would have allowed public school employees to join or quit membership in a labor organization at any time.

Senate Bill 13-141 would have allowed public school employees to direct their employers to commence or cease making wage deductions for labor organization dues within 30 days after an employee's request. The bill would have also required that an employer obtain written authorization from the employee in order to deduct labor organization dues. Similar to SB 13-017, this bill would have allowed public school employees to join or quit a labor organization at any time.

Senate Bill 13-168, also postponed indefinitely, included provisions both to allow public school employees to join or quit membership in a labor organization at any time, and to allow employees to direct their employers to commence or cease making wage deductions for labor organization dues.

Educator performance. The General Assembly considered three bills related to educator performance. **House Bill 13-1220**, which was enacted, clarifies that school districts, BOCES, the SBE, and the CDE may collect information concerning an individual educator's performance evaluation ratings and the student assessment results linked to the individual educator. The bill requires that data collected regarding educator performance remain confidential, and that such data may not be published in any way that would identify the individual educator.

Under current law, local boards of education and BOCES must have a performance evaluation system for licensed personnel, adopted in consultation with administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and a district's personnel performance evaluation council. Local boards of education and BOCES may adopt the state model performance evaluation system, or develop and adopt one internally that aligns with the state system. Through the passage of **House Bill 13-1257**, local boards of education and BOCES that develop evaluation systems for licensed personnel may

submit to data that is relevant to the evaluation system to the CDE for review. The CDE must determine whether the evaluation system is in compliance with statutory requirements, and approve the system. The CDE is also required to monitor the implementation of the system and conduct thorough reviews of school districts or BOCES that are unable to implement a compliant evaluation system. The bill also provides steps that must be taken by the CDE if the evaluation system is found to be noncompliant.

Also related to educator performance is **House Bill 13-1073**, which was considered, but not passed. Under current law, if a teacher who has nonprobationary status in one school district applies to teach in another school district and can show two years of positive effectiveness ratings on his or her performance evaluations, the new school district can hire the teacher only if it gives him or her nonprobationary status. HB 13-1073 would have allowed the teacher to waive this requirement so that the new school district may hire the teacher and return the teacher to probationary status.

School boards. With the passage of **Senate Bill 13-015**, local school boards and BOCES may adopt a policy enabling the electronic participation of members at regular and special meetings of the school board. The bill requires that board members sign an affidavit stating that they are aware of and will comply with confidentiality requirements and restrictions applicable to executive session meetings.

Current law requires that persons running for the position of school district director on a school board be a registered elector of the school district for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the election in order to run for the position. **Senate Bill 13-164**, which was postponed indefinitely, proposed to remove the requirement that a candidate be a registered elector of the school district.

Accreditation and Statutory Changes

Accreditation. The school accountability process results in accreditation, or certification, by the SBE that a district and the individual schools within the district meet the requirements established in the Education Accountability Act and all related rules adopted by the SBE. The SBE annually reviews the performance of schools and districts in the state, and based on the levels of attainment on four performance indicators, enters into accreditation contracts with the districts based on the five following categories:

- *Accredited with distinction* means the district met or exceeded state expectations;
- *Accredited* means the district met expectations and is required to implement a performance plan;
- *Accredited with improvement plan* means the district has not met expectations and is required to implement an improvement plan;
- *Accredited with priority improvement plan* means the district has not met expectations and is required to implement a priority improvement plan; and
- *Accredited with turnaround plan* means the district has not met expectations and is required to implement a turnaround plan.

The General Assembly considered two bills related to public school accreditation. **Senate Bill 13-217**, which was passed, authorizes the SBE to consider the unique circumstances of students at alternative education campuses (AECs) when making determinations about the accreditation category for an AEC or for the school district or the CSI in which the AEC is located. AECs are schools that serve special needs or at-risk populations, populations in which more than 95 percent of students have an individualized education program, or populations that meet the definition of high-risk students. High-risk students include those in juvenile detention, drop-out and expelled students, students with a documented history of drug abuse, teen parents, migrant students, homeless students, and other hard to educate populations.

Another bill that was considered but was postponed indefinitely, is **House Bill 13-1172**. The bill would have replaced the terms currently used for public school accreditation categories with letter grades A through D and F, and would have renamed the corresponding improvement plans for each accreditation category. The bill would have also allowed the parents of students in a public school that has been designated as low-performing for two consecutive years to petition the SBE to require the local board of education to take corrective action. Under current law, public schools are allowed up to five years of operation under the two lowest accreditation categories before the SBE is required to take corrective action; however, the local board of education may take action anytime during that period.

Statutory changes. **House Bill 13-1219** was passed and makes several changes to the areas of statute governing K-12 education. Among its provisions, the bill:

- clarifies that if a charter school applies for any non-formulaic state or federal grant, the school is considered the Local Education Agency (LEA) for the purposes of applying for the grant and determining eligibility, and may request that the CSI act as the grant manager;
- extends continuous spending authority to the CDE for the Educator Licensure Cash Fund;
- clarifies the commissioner of education's responsibility to assign and monitor a unique educator identification number and to assist the SBE in evaluating teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education;
- authorizes the CDE to develop a definition of course completion and to collect student-level course completion data from schools and districts; and
- aligns existing statutes concerning statewide assessments with the development and implementation schedule for new statewide assessments.

The bill also makes adjustments to the ASCENT program, including adjusting the number of students who may be eligible to participate, and eliminating outdated reporting requirements.

Task Forces and Advisory Committees

The General Assembly considered three bills related to education-focused task forces and advisory committees. The first bill considered and passed was **Senate Bill 13-148**, concerning the Colorado Youth Advisory Council (COYAC). COYAC was established in 2008 as a 44-member council charged with working with state and local youth groups to provide the General Assembly with youths' perspective on proposed and pending legislation. COYAC is also responsible for analyzing and providing information on youth-related issues to legislative committees, commissions, task forces, and state agencies. Under the bill, the work of COYAC is extended until

July 1, 2018, and several changes are made to the council's purpose, membership, duties, and reporting requirements. Among the changes are:

- the addition of several topics to the list of issues that the council may consider including skill development, economic opportunities, suicide prevention, and the prevention of bullying;
- a requirement that the five at-large members be selected to ensure the council's diversity and rural representation;
- expansion of membership eligibility to students enrolled in a charter school or approved facility school;
- the date by which the council's appointments must be made; and
- the date by which the council must submit its annual report to the General Assembly.

Senate Bill 13-153, which was passed, concerns the continuation of the Farm-to-School Coordination Task Force. The task force was created in 2010 as part of the Farm-to-School Healthy Kids Act, and is housed in the CDE. The mission of the task force is to increase the use of local farm and ranch products in school food service programs, improve child nutrition, and strengthen local and regional farming communities. Under SB 13-153:

- the task force is continued indefinitely;
- membership on the task force is increased from 13 to 15 members;
- the focus of the task force is expanded to explore statewide data collection systems to track farm-to-school activities; and
- the task force's reporting requirements are modified.

Lastly, **House Bill 13-1244**, concerning the continuation of the Educational Success Task Force (ESTF), was postponed indefinitely. The bill would have created the Educational Success Legislative Committee to oversee the work of the ESTF, and would have extended the work of both the ESTF and the legislative committee until July 1, 2018. The ESTF was created in 2011 within the CDE and its membership includes legislative and nonlegislative members. The purpose of the task force was to study and review relevant data, and make recommendations to education policy makers concerning strategies to prevent students from falling behind academically.