

Colorado Coalition of Cyberschool Families

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THE COLORADO COALITION OF CYBERSCHOOL FAMILIES STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

The Colorado Coalition of Cyberschool Families is the voice of the families who have chosen full-time public online schools as the best education option for their children. Together with our fellow parents, families and friends, we strive to educate policy makers and others on why we chose an online public school for our children; how those schools work; the close working relationship we have with our teachers and administrators; and much, much more.

We have a passionate commitment to ensuring full-time online education remains a vibrant part of the public education system in Colorado and that our schools and our children have a fair chance of achieving their fullest potential. As the REAL guarantors of our children's education, we parents have certain principles regarding cyberschools that MUST be incorporated in any reform or revision of the regulation of cyberschools in Colorado.

Our "PARENTAL PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC CYBERSCHOOLS"

CHOICE: In order to make the choice of an online public school truly available to all Colorado families, the Coalition advocates that restrictions on access to online public schools -- like requiring students to complete a semester in a traditional brick and mortar school before enrolling in a online public school -- should be removed. There are no restrictions or needless hurdles for new students to attend brick and mortar schools; it should be no different for online public schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY: We want to ensure that our schools are doing the absolute best job possible for our children. Our schools are not just accountable to the taxpayers, they're accountable to us, as parents. We believe that the current accreditation system and academic accountability regulations under state and federal legislation and rules are sufficient for our schools, just as they are for any other public school student, if applied fairly and consistently. If online public schools are not performing according to appropriate standards, the CDE should have the ability to impose penalties. Since the CDE has seemingly not lived up to their oversight responsibilities for online schools and their families, then the legislature should consider a statewide authority, like the Charter Schools Institute, which would be accountable to both cyberschool families and the taxpayers.

EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION: As parents, we have chosen full-time online public schools for our children because of their commitment to excellence and innovation in education. This must continue, and the state needs to be able to measure these qualities so that all Colorado parents and taxpayers can examine them. This should consist of the following two items, at a minimum:

TEACHERS: Our parents are understandably very passionate about their children's teachers. The teachers of online schools are as indispensable as teachers in traditional schools. They are dedicated professionals who play a critical role in our children's academic success and growth. This needs to be recognized in any state regulation and assessment.

ASSESSMENT: Value-added testing should be utilized in addition to CSAPs in order to assess and ensure academic achievement for these schools that often serve the most at-risk students.

FUNDING: We are adamant that our children in online public schools deserve the same funding as any other child in any other public schools. Full-time online public schools already receive less funding than traditional public schools, so it is essential that their funding be fair and stable. Any funding difference between online public schools and brick and mortar schools would directly and negatively impact our children's education.

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE THAT THEIR FULL-TIME ONLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE SUPPORTED AND ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE THEIR EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION. WE URGE ANY POLICYMAKERS WITH AN INTEREST IN IMPROVING ONLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO HEAR OUR VOICE AND TO PROTECT OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.