

## **PREAMBLE**

All children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential – the kind of opportunity that is only made possible by a great education. In order to achieve this goal, the state must put students at the center of each policy decision and promotes high academic achievement for all students, particularly for low-income students and students of color.

We know that educators play a critical role in improving student outcomes and we are grateful for their passion and dedication. As business leaders, we are committed to scaling their great work and clearing away obstacles to a better education system so that improvements and innovations can take hold and flourish.

To help ensure the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) supports ongoing efforts to improve public education across our state, the business community will continue leading the call for fair, rigorous, and comprehensive school and district accountability. The following priorities should guide Colorado's implementation of ESSA.

## **PRIORITIES FOR ESSA IMPLEMENTATION**

**Colorado must maintain high expectations across the board.** All schools should deliver education that meets *challenging academic standards* and prepares all students to succeed in whatever path they choose to take after high school. Educators, administrators, and schools must meet *ambitious goals* for serving all students and supporting them in achieving to their full potential.

**Measures should capture most factors that make a school successful.** Any rigorous and fair accountability system must be based on *outcomes—not inputs*. While academic progress of students should be the primary indicator of school performance, school accountability measures in Colorado should reflect our *broader understanding of school success* and encompass as many students as possible.

**Every component of accountability should be aligned with the next.** Colorado's public education system should follow a continuum from early childhood through post-secondary education. Likewise, an aligned school accountability framework should delineate a *coherent path between outcomes* we expect students and schools to achieve, *incentives* to act and drive continuous improvement, *and interventions* triggered as consequence for failing to make progress.

**Accountability should empower school and district leaders, while driving them toward better outcomes.** Educators and school leaders are who know their schools best and are committed to transformative change are best positioned to lead school improvement. Colorado's accountability system should *empower district and school leaders with flexibility and choice* among rigorous interventions. At the same time, in those situations where school and district leaders do not step up, the *state must be prepared to intervene* and drive the change that is necessary.

**Information must be accessible, transparent, and actionable.** State accountability should drive decision-making of district and school leaders, as well as parents. Performance *information should be disaggregated* by student demographics so educators and administrators can *target resources and interventions* to meet the needs of their students in a timely way. Results should be reported publicly in an easy-to-understand format, with *straightforward ratings* that clearly communicate the progress made by schools and districts in enabling all students to succeed and ensure parents and community members understand how well a school is serving all its students.