



**COLORADO**  
Department of  
Higher Education

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Expanded state programs support rural Colorado educators, students**

**DENVER — Dec. 29, 2014** - The Colorado Department of Higher Education is expanding initiatives aimed at supporting and enhancing educational opportunities for schools and students throughout rural Colorado.

Of the 178 public school districts in Colorado, 85 percent are considered “rural” (fewer than 6,500 enrolled students) and 64 percent are “small rural” (fewer than 1,000 enrolled students).

“Schools in rural parts of the state often struggle with inadequate resources and the related challenges of paying for technology and attracting teachers and other qualified personnel,” said Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia, who oversees the Department. “We value the hard work of educators in these areas and want to support them through a range of collaborative efforts aligned to our shared goal of ensuring students are career- and college-ready when they graduate.”

Here are five new programs targeting rural Colorado:

**Improving Teacher Quality grants** - The Department administers this U.S. Department of Education-funded grant. In 2014-15, \$633,000 was made available for programs that supported STEM education, development and retention of diverse educators and/or promoting professional development for educators in rural regions. The Department, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education, awarded three grants of \$211,000 each to the following programs:

- *Northern Colorado STEM Collaboration* - University of Northern Colorado (serving Weld County RE-1, Brush RE-2J, Morgan County RE3, Weld County RE-3J, Weld County RE-9, Weldon Valley, Wiggins RE-50J, Platte Valley, Weld County RE-12/Pawnee, Estes Park R-3, Eaton RE-2, Weld County 6);
- *Enhancing Professional Development Among Math Instructors in Rural Mountain School Districts Through Specialized Professional Development Using the Colorado Academic Standards* - Colorado Mountain College (Garfield RE-2, West Grand 1-JT,

DeBeque 49-JT, Garfield 16, Aspen, Eagle County, East Grant, Garfield RE-1, Lake County, Salida, Summit RE-1); and

- *Empowering Rural Elementary Teachers in STEM Subjects* - Adams State University (Alamosa RE-11J, Centennial R-1, Center 26-JT, Moffat 2, Monte Vista-C8, Mountain Valley- RE1, North Conejos RE-1J, Sierra Grande R-30, South Conejos RE-10, Huerfano RE1).

**Roundtable meetings** - Beginning in early 2015, a series of roundtable meetings will be held featuring leadership of rural school districts, faculty and administrators from colleges and universities that provide educator preparation, representatives of CDE and CDHE and members of the alternative educator certification community. Many rural districts struggle to find qualified educator applicants, particularly in the fields of secondary math and science, special education and bilingual education. The goal of these meetings is to develop and support the educator pipeline.

**Concurrent enrollment professional development** - Concurrent enrollment numbers continue to rise in Colorado, with nearly 98 percent of all public school districts in the state participating. However, teachers need additional credentials to teach these courses and some districts face challenges finding enough instructors. To support teachers interested in teaching concurrent enrollment courses, the Adams State University Foundation plans to provide scholarships to teachers interested in obtaining 18 hours of graduate credit through Adams State's online master's program in U. S. history. With a grant from the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative, 15 high school social studies teachers from rural and high-need districts around the state will become qualified to teach concurrent enrollment courses. [Learn more about concurrent enrollment.](#)

**Career exploration through Colorado GEAR UP** - The GEAR UP program provides specialized support to students from low-socioeconomic and first-time college families across the state. The Department is now working with GEAR UP faculty and students in Lamar, Greeley, Alamosa, Pueblo and La Junta to provide them insight into potential careers in education as a way to meet local workforce needs and diversify the educator pool. [Learn more about Colorado GEAR UP.](#)

**Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative** - Gov. John Hickenlooper and Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia in recent weeks announced the award of \$3.4 million in grant funds aimed at supporting Colorado students - especially those from low-income and/or underrepresented backgrounds - on the path to and through college and into the workforce. Several of these grant awards will benefit rural Colorado. [Learn more about the grant awards.](#)

Several of these initiatives emphasize the importance of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills. The demand for these skills is on the rise in Colorado, with numerous projections showing that the state will show above national average growth in STEM occupations. [Learn more about Colorado's STEM Education Roadmap.](#)

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