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Blueprint for Opportunity

No. 4

Implementation Memo

TO: Governor-elect Ritter
Members of the 66th Colorado General Assembly

FROM: The Bell Policy Center – Frank Waterous, Senior Policy Analyst

DATE: January 4, 2007

**RE: Implementing Bell's Blueprint recommendation No. 4
to address social and economic factors that affect student performance.**

In the 2006 Blueprint for Opportunity, the Bell Policy Center recommends:

Address the social and economic factors that affect student performance.

Colorado should launch an all-out effort to tackle the social and economic problems that contribute to the performance gap in schools.

Some can be addressed in cooperation with schools, for instance, expanding after-school and summer programs; providing health, sight, hearing and dental screenings in schools; offering family literacy programs; and better coordinating between schools and community support services (*see Blueprint, pages 9 and 10*).

This memorandum briefly discusses the issues surrounding this proposal, describes steps for implementing it, outlines some of the factors to consider and lists sources for additional information and resources.

If you are interested in pursuing this issue further, we are prepared to work with you. Please contact the author of this memo directly at (303) 297-0456 or waterous@thebell.org, or Rich Jones, director of policy and research, at (303) 297-0456 or jones@thebell.org.

Overview of the issue

Colorado has a large, persistent achievement gap between students of different racial and economic backgrounds. This achievement gap is complex. No single problem causes it and no single solution will close it. Research shows that both the school environment and the social and economic conditions confronting students outside of school impact student achievement.¹ The achievement gap is a critical issue that must be resolved if we are to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to succeed.

Research on the racial and economic gap in student achievement is extensive, and clearly shows that our schools cannot and should not be

expected to close the state's performance gap on their own. Along with education policy approaches, a wide range of social and economic factors must also be addressed by the broader community if we are to succeed in this important goal. Other necessary actions include offering adult and family literacy programs, increasing the minimum wage, expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, improving affordable housing options and attacking homelessness. These issues are covered in other Bell Policy Center Blueprint implementation memos.

Because solutions for the achievement gap require actions in such a broad range of policy areas, one key element needed for success is a coordinated, high-level, statewide commitment to



making this issue a priority and to targeting significant resources on it. Further, the state needs to better support the types of programs shown by achievement gap research to be effective. For example, nationally-recognized expert Richard Rothstein has identified several specific policy actions to help address the achievement gap. Among these are increased access to quality after-school programs for students from low-income families, and increased availability of medical services and treatment for these students through school-based health centers.²

The Colorado Trust estimates that 250,000 Colorado youth between 5 and 17 go unsupervised in some portion of the hours after school, and the Afterschool Alliance reports that only 11 percent of Colorado's K-12 young people participate in after-school programs. After-school programs contribute to student achievement and can also help students avoid problems such as truancy, stress and substance abuse.³

State funding for after-school programs currently includes the Department of Education's categorical Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant program and the Department of Public Health and Environment's Tony Grampsas Youth Services program.

For FY2006-07, the Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Grant program received an appropriation of almost \$6.3 million and the Tony Grampsas Youth Services program was appropriated almost \$3.5 million.⁴ A bill intended to provide additional funding for after-school programs — HB06-1363, sponsored by Rep. Debbie Benefield — passed the legislature in 2006 but was vetoed by the governor. (*See full discussion under "Factors to consider."*)

Low-income students have more vision, hearing, dental and nutrition problems than their higher-income peers. School-based health centers provide services and treatment for these students, which in turn increases their ability to achieve academically.⁵ The Colorado Association of School-Based Health Care estimates that about \$5 million is spent annually on school-based health centers in the state. Most of these costs are covered by insurance, fees and in-kind contributions.⁶

“Low-income students have more vision, hearing, dental and nutrition problems than their higher-income peers. School-based health centers provide services and treatment for these students, which in turn increases their ability to achieve academically.”

Despite this spending, only about 11 percent of Colorado students currently have access to school-based health care.⁷ To help address this problem, in 2006 the legislature provided \$500,000 in state funding for such centers through a grant program established by HB06-1396, sponsored by Rep. Andrew Kerr (see link below). The program provides funds for the establishment, expansion or on-going operations of school-based health centers.

Implementation steps

In order to address the social and economic factors that affect student performance and to help close the state's student achievement gap, a number of policy steps could be taken.

On a broad policy level:

- **The governor and the legislature should explicitly set narrowing the achievement gap as a top policy and funding priority for the state.**
- **The governor should either designate a specific person within his administration or create a cabinet-level interagency task force/commission to develop and implement coordinated state policies intended to close the achievement gap.** If a task force or commission is established, it should explicitly not be another study group. Rather, it should focus on strategies and approaches for statewide action.

In regard to specific policy approaches, the legislature and governor should:

- **Appropriate an additional \$9.8 million through the 2007-08 Appropriations Bill (Long Bill) for the Expelled and At-Risk Student Grant program and the Tony Grampsas Youth Services program.** This additional amount represents a doubling of the current state appropriations for these two programs: \$6.3 million and \$3.5 million respectively.
- **Direct the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health and Environment to take all necessary steps to leverage these state after-school program appropriations in order to attract as much federal, local, and private funding as possible.**
- **Consider ideas for, and enact legislation related to, innovative funding mechanisms** for after-school and other programs proven to help close the achievement gap (See, for example, HB06-1363 discussed below).
- **Appropriate at least an additional \$500,000 for 2007-08 to the state's school-based health center grant program,** established through HB06-1396, in order to double the amount of state support for this program and bring its total state funding to \$1 million or more.

[!\[\]\(cbe80b694ebd74fcfe136a095b608235_img.jpg\) HB 06-1396 bill text](#)

[!\[\]\(a03a7eb2f4046e1d3c76772003e549ea_img.jpg\) HB 06-1396 final fiscal note](#)

Factors to consider

HB06-1363, sponsored by Rep. Debbie Benefield, was an effort to increase funding for after-school programs. The bill passed the legislature but was vetoed by the governor. It would have created the Colorado Student Delinquency Prevention Program within the Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program, and levied a surcharge against those convicted of certain crimes in order to help fund after-school programs.

The final fiscal note on the bill projected that \$1.9 million would have been made available in FY06-07 and \$2.8 million in FY07-08 had the bill been signed into law.

In his veto letter, Gov. Owens noted that while he supports after-school and other juvenile diversion programs, he believed that singling out an unpopular group such as convicted criminals for a tax to support a narrow range of programs would set a dangerous precedent.

[!\[\]\(870f5d5e9c0d57485634be3ecf52f3ca_img.jpg\) HB06-1363 bill text](#)

[!\[\]\(4fe57c3593bf1b21d272ae7ac8dfaf77_img.jpg\) HB06-1363 final fiscal note](#)

[!\[\]\(0d5ec72f61334709c3fc9450209b754f_img.jpg\) Gov. Owens's veto letter](#)



Information and resources

- 🔗 [Expelled and At Risk Student Services Grant: Summary Report for 2003-04 School Year](#), August 2004, Colorado Department of Education.
- 🔗 [Quick Facts: The Expelled and At-Risk Student Services Program, Data for School Year 2003-04](#), Colorado Department of Education.
- 🔗 [Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program, 2004-05 Annual Report](#), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Feb 1, 2006.

End notes

- ¹ Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, Economic Policy Institute, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2004;
Jennifer Sharp Silverstein, Andrew Hartman, Angela Frye and Rich Jones, [Understanding Colorado's Achievement Gap](#), The Bell Policy Center, August 2005.
- ² Richard Rothstein, [Reforms that Could Help Narrow the Achievement Gap](#), WestEd Policy Perspectives, 2006,
- ³ 🔗 [After-School Programming in Colorado. Needs Assessment Highlights](#), The Colorado Trust, 2005.
Publications from the Afterschool Alliance:
🔗 [A Preview of Colorado Data from the America After 3 PM Household Survey on Afterschool.](#)
🔗 [The State of Afterschool in: Colorado](#)
🔗 [Afterschool Funding At A Glance.](#)
🔗 [State Afterschool Profiles: Colorado](#), Afterschool Investments Project,
🔗 [After School Programming: A Pressing Need, A Public Policy](#), Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, Sept 2004, Fourth edition.
- ⁴ [FY2006-07 Long Bill Narrative](#), Colorado General Assembly, Joint Budget Committee, March 27, 2006.
[House Bill 06-1385, "Long Bill" General Appropriations Act](#), Colorado General Assembly, Sections on Education and Public Health and Environment.
- ⁵ Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools*.
- ⁶ [Colorado's School-Based Health Centers: Healthy Kids Learn Better](#), Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care, 2005.
- ⁷ Ibid.