



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER DENVER

Category: Campaign Leadership

The state of Colorado is committed to grade-level reading and has focused its work in Denver. The level of alignment and integrated, continuing leadership between the city and state is a model for how states can support literacy work on a local level.

Last year, more than 16,000 third graders statewide were not reading proficiently, according to assessments. To give these children the best opportunities for life-long success, Denver and the state of Colorado are strengthening early childhood systems and literacy programming.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) has been working to increase the quality of the early childhood workforce and childcare centers, establish early learning and development standards and implement a system-wide kindergarten readiness assessment.

Gov. John Hickenlooper, the former mayor of Denver, recently created the Office of Early Childhood. This will improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of early childhood programming and data collection in the state by co-locating many programs within one agency and strengthening interagency partnerships and collaboration.

Last fall, Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia embarked on a Literacy Matters tour, traveling to more than 30 communities across the state to talk to education and early childhood professionals, parents, community leaders, business leaders and students about early literacy challenges and successes within their communities.

The Governor's office has also created Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative, a blueprint for both state and community action around early literacy. The initiative lays out a plan to tackle children's literacy issues around health and development risks, early learning program quality, the early childhood workforce and access to high quality preschool programs and full-day kindergarten.

Colorado has also announced several innovative community-based initiatives to increase early literacy: Colorado Reading Corps, which will deploy 20 AmeriCorps volunteers around the state to teach reading; the 2012 Colorado Summer Reading Program, which challenges children to read 2.75 million pages this summer; and Mile High United Way's Social Innovation Fund grants, which awarded \$2.5 million to programs serving at-risk youth and English learners in many of Colorado's high-risk, high-need counties. Additionally, business and civic organizations, including Executives Partnering to Invest in Children, Junior League of Denver and Children's Hospital Colorado, have pledged to educate thousands of business and community members about the importance of early literacy.

STRATEGIES

- **Prioritized strengthening the early childhood system and better integrating it with the K-12 system**
- **Created the Office of Early Childhood to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of early childhood programming**
- **Governor's office created Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative**
- **Announced several innovative community-based initiatives to increase early literacy**