Meeting Logistics & Desired Outcome

Meeting: ESSA Committee of Practitioners

Date & Time: Tuesday, April 15, 2025; 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 pm

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Meeting Leads: Laura Gorman (Elected Co-Chair), Alan Nall (Elected Co-Chair)

Rachel Temple(CDE Lead), Nathan Hickman (CDE Lead)

Objective: To allow the Colorado Department of Education the opportunity to provide updates to and elicit recommendations from the Colorado Committee of Practitioners regarding relevant and timely issues related to CDE’s responsibilities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA).

Agreed Upon Norms:

* Be present and engage fully.
* Let everyone have a voice and be heard! Don’t talk over each other.
* When not talking, turn off mic on your computer/phone to minimize background noise.
* Begin and end meetings on time. Stick to times allotted for topics, to the extent possible, or develop next steps for moving the work forward if running out of time.
* Use time productively.
* Assume positive intent and ask for clarification when something lands wrong.
* Come prepared.
* The chair of the meeting should enforce the norms.
* A minimum of 6 members must plan to attend in-person to proceed with a hybrid meeting; if less than 6 members indicate that they will attend in-person, the meeting will be fully virtual.
* In the event of unsafe travel conditions due to weather, CDE staff will consult with the CoP co-chairs to determine whether to cancel the in-person option.

Agenda Items and Next Steps

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Headline**  **Time**  **Presenters** | **Agenda Item** | **Summary/Notes** |
| **Committee Business: Welcome, Meeting Overview, Approve Minutes**  10:00-10:10 (10)  *Rachel T., Nathan,*  *Co-chairs: Laura, Alan* | * Welcome * Meeting logistics * CoP members will vote on the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting and review the agenda for the meeting | * Meeting minutes approved. |
| **FPSU Updates & Listening Session**  10:10-10:40 (30)  *Nazie*  Informational | Guiding Questions:   * What Hot Topics are on your mind? * How is ESSA implementation going for you?   + What is going well?   + What is challenging? * What questions do you have for our team at this time? | Presentation Highlights:   * Remaining ESSER III funds (letter of 3/28/25) * EDFlex Renewal Application (Submitted 4/11/25) * ESSA Amended State Plan * ESSER reporting cancellation * April 3 certification and Colorado decision * LEAs with ESSA identified schools - boost in EASI funding if submitted an intent to apply * Cons App   + Cross program open; remainder after allocations   + Virtual GAINS training and in-person work sessions in May   CoP Feedback:   * Commissioner emails: Some of those links don't always work -- recognize you don't put them together, but just an FYI -- we got one from the Finance unit today & links didn't seem to work at least for us * Re. certification, no one knows how the Feds will respond to states that won’t sign. We don’t know what the response will be. Recent situation with Maine showed an aggressive response in regard to DEI enforcement. The biggest question for all of us: *Will the funds be there?* We continue to work through budgeting and hiring. We're assuming funds will be there; if not, we’ll be in a bind. * While it may be illegal, we are questioning whether they will hold up funds if the matter is in litigation. * We’ve seen multiple things—not just in education—that are technically illegal but are still being pushed forward and are left for the courts to decide. In the meantime, while all of that is being sorted out, will the funds be on hold? While the courts have responded fairly quickly in some cases, we’re wondering what happens in the interim. Especially with Title funding and IDEA—there are salaries and positions tied to those funds. That’s our number one concern. * We have been planning for flat funding since the Bruman training, but now there’s definitely fear of possibly *no* funds—at least for preliminary allocations. * We’re put in a tight spot with only 10 days to respond. Would this have been the type of thing that warranted an emergency meeting with the CoP to get leadership’s ear? Appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback now, but heading into the situation—there’s risk to the district. We need to prepare for that and be able to explain it to stakeholders. In the future, can we band together in advance? * We have been waiting to hear what’s coming from the Attorney General. Our attorneys are not going beyond that regarding signing the certification. We’re waiting to see if the state makes a move that requires us to take action. * Prior to the state not signing, we were having discussions and were prepared to sign. There was nothing in there that we were out of compliance with. We were prepared to punt the battle down the road, but now it feels more immediate. * Our understanding from the Commissioner’s email was that you’re not collecting and we’re not required to sign or not sign. Now I’m interpreting that it’s up to the district to make that decision one way or the other. * Same interpretation—by the state saying they’re not signing, we assumed all districts weren’t signing. Before, we were considering what would happen if APS or Jeffco didn’t sign. Would it affect all funding? Once the state’s position came out, we assumed that was where districts stood too. * If the state chooses not to require, collect, sign, or send certifications, does that mean the state won’t get any of that money? If the LEA signs, does that make them eligible to receive funds? We don’t understand the process for us. In the end, this will hurt kids. * We’ve been getting updates from the Commissioner, but I didn’t get that it was the LEA’s decision to sign or not. Nor have I received that from the Superintendent. The communication loops aren’t nuanced or effective; updates are just bullet points. No robust communication has taken place. * Different communication channels are happening, but we’re not fully in the loop. That puts us in a hard spot. Clarity would be helpful. * The deadline is April 24, correct? That does not give us much time to connect with stakeholders. Not having this information earlier puts schools in a bind. * One of the biggest reasons not to sign—if we sign and then someone does something illegal in the state, then *we* may have to pay the money back. But if we don’t sign, do we not get the money? If that’s the case, why aren’t we signing and ensuring compliance? * If the certification is deemed “illegal” by the Attorney General, why would a district sign something illegal? Are you saying we should only sign if our legal team says it’s not illegal? * We still don’t know how much funding is or isn’t tied to this. If the state doesn’t sign and doesn’t get funding, does that mean the district won’t either? * We’d like to be in a meeting with the Attorney, Superintendent, and Board President—with the option to set up a virtual meeting with CDE to help us better understand. It’s a big decision either way. * Re. work sessions, are the dates set in stone even if we don’t receive preliminary allocations? If not, we’re unsure how valuable those sessions will be. * Several of us attended the Bruman session. As we understood it, under the continuing resolution in the budget, there were designated line items for Titles I and IV, but no specific allocation for Titles II and III. Those may have been rolled up into the omnibus bill, raising questions about whether funds for Titles II and III will even be available. Any clarity? * When you attend the Bruman call tomorrow, can you share updates with the field? Given how many unknowns there are, sharing timely information—outside of just Office Hours—would be extremely helpful. There are a lot of questions right now. * Was there a solution for budgeting carryover in GAINS?   + Carryover will be added to each LEA’s application after the Final Expenditure Report (FER) is submitted in GAINS. * Will that be in fall?   + It depends on when the district submits the FER. FERs are due by September 30. It’s up to districts to decide when to close their books. Once submitted, carryover will be pushed into the new application. * Is there potential to do an estimated one in spring, since we’re allocating line items now, rather than waiting until fall?   + We are not doing estimated carryover in the application anymore. When you complete the FER, if you have a receivable on the books, the system will automatically generate a payment to the district. * Is there a possibility to put in estimates like last year? We are carrying over $2 million; not calculating for that in spring makes our application inaccurate. It’s a huge issue and limits what we can do to create an accurate spring application. * It makes it hard to get final approval for the application if those funds are added later while we’re still working on current activities. It adds another step that has to be communicated with districts/schools. * It’s a major limitation in the system not to be able to estimate like we have historically done. This will cause major budgeting issues for districts. * Is it correct that if there’s no Title II or III allocation, we can still use any carryover for activities in those Titles in the coming year? I think I asked this before and the answer was yes—just confirming.   + Based on what we know now, that is correct—for the full 27-month period. * There’s been a gray area around having two simultaneous applications open and being able to draw down from the older one when appropriate—that helps relieve some of the heartburn. * If you have an activity that starts July 1 (even though the current fiscal year ends June 30), and you have carryover, are you drawing from 24–25 funds? Because the system draws the oldest funds first?   + Yes, the system will always pay from the oldest money first. Any 25–26 activities cannot be drawn down until the application has final approval. * The inability to estimate carryover is going to create a heavy revision load for Federal Programs teams. All districts will submit an initial application and then have to submit a revised one to account for and budget carryover funds. * I don’t recall getting a message from GAINS that final allocations were available. It may be that districts simply aren’t aware. * Will it be allowed, given the carryover situation, to put in a $1 line item to get substantial approval and be able to draw down funds? We’ll have set-asides from Title I missing until carryover goes in. Technically activities will start in July. Will I be able to obligate and put them in the budget, or how does CDE want to see that? * If we’re budgeting a lower amount for interventionists now, knowing it will actually cost more once carryover is available, how can we make the entry look more realistic? What is a consistent way to describe this in the budget narrative so reviewers understand it’s tied to anticipated carryover? We’d prefer to avoid repeated explanations about why the amount appears low. It would be helpful to provide standardized language districts can use in these situations—ideally shared proactively, not just during training, perhaps when preliminary allocations are released. |
| **Monitoring Updates**  10:40- 11:10 (30)  *Tammy* | Guiding Question:   * What format works best for sharing information about monitoring? * Which format for the program requirements would you recommend for use in 2025-2026? | Presentation Highlights:   * Concurrently writing reports and supporting corrective action plan implementation for the current year and prior years * Completing annual review of the Program Requirements and the Program Monitoring Self-Assessment for use in 2025-2026 monitoring   + Incorporating updates from recently released guidance documents   + Revising based on feedback from LEAs   + Adding program requirements for Stronger Connections Grant and Section 1003   + Making format changes for accessibility * Members asked to provide [feedback](https://forms.gle/UNidU22mvxd2PAd86) on accessibility options.   CoP Feedback:   * When does that cycle through again?   + We will start a new cycle with the 2027–28 school year. We will bring that back to the CoP to discuss what that will look like. * For districts that submitted information and have not received any communication since September—at this point, can districts assume they will not be asked to submit additional information? That request should have come during the December timeline, but it’s now May.   + Once districts receive the report, they will have the opportunity to make revisions if needed. If there is more current evidence available, we will use that. * If you come back to districts and ask for more information, how long will they have to respond? When we initially submitted, we were given about 90 days. Now CDE has had it for over a year. If you come back and give districts 30 days to respond, that will not go over well—especially considering the timing. Please consider this when setting the response window. * If you’re trying to release it by the end of the school year, you can’t expect a 30-day turnaround. That would land at the end of July, which is unrealistic—staff are out. If it's sent in June, when people are managing the consolidated application and also on break, it will be difficult to respond. Even now, people are wrapping up the year and are very busy. * Recommendation to send communication to those involved in the process to say you’re behind and working on it as soon as possible. We haven’t heard anything and were hoping to use the information to inform practice. * Re. the proposed format, I like that "demonstration of compliance" and "evidence" are at the top. That’s what most people look for first. * No problem with the new format. * I like the new format. It seems well laid out—same information, just clearer. I appreciate having the "what to demonstrate" section at the top. |
| **Title III, Immigrant Set Aside Percentage: Next Steps**  11:10- 11:15 (5)  *Rachel T*  Informational | * Deeper dive into data, analysis, potential impact | Presentation Highlights:   * CDE is taking a deeper dive into data, analysis, and potential impact and will revisit the topic with members at a later date.   CoP Feedback:   * With the new administration, I’m concerned about the fact that districts are collecting new information on immigrant students. That raises serious concerns. If possible, we should consider reducing the ISA allocation and shifting more into Title III. This type of data collection has the potential to be used as a scare tactic by federal authorities. |
| **Membership Discussion**  11:15 - 11:30 (15)  *Nathan*  Discussion | * Conversation and next steps for nominating a co-chair. | Presentation Highlights:   * Alan Nall stepped in to carry out the remaining year on Mitzi Swiatkowski’s term as co-chair. * CoP needs to elect a new co-chair for a two year term. * Please use [this form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfeOc27m3CYaP_9Y7Ux3c79chRecVfPVCR6M-AKobomCv0xVA/viewform?usp=sharing) to nominate candidates by April 25th and we will vote at the May meeting. |
| **Closing and Next Steps**  11:30 - 11:40 (10)  Nathan |  | Presentation Highlights:   * Next meeting: Thursday May 8, 2025 (virtual) * Members are asked to come prepared in May with preferred 25-26 meeting dates. |

*Feel free to share your agenda topic submissions through the* [*submission request form*](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/80d4a142008c43ef9fd51be7e7e25346)*. Please let us know if you have any questions.*