**Key moments in Lobato vs. Colorado**

**June 2005:** Lawsuit filed claiming Colorado’s underfunding of schools violates constitutional mandate for a “thorough and uniform” system of public education.

**March 2006:**Case thrown out of district court.

**January 2008:** Appeals court upholds district court’s decision.

**October 2009:** In a 4-3 decision, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that the case could move to trial.

**December 2011:** Plaintiffs won a district court ruling that finds the state’s school funding system unconstitutional. The state appealed.

**March 2013:**Oral arguments were heard in the Colorado Supreme Court.

**May, 28, 2013:** Supreme Court overturns district court ruling on a 4-2 vote and finds the state’s school funding system constitutional — effectively ending the case.

**Articles from Huffington Post**

**Taylor Lobato, Plaintiff In Education Funding Lawsuit Gets Her Day In Court After Five Years**

Posted: 08/04/2011 3:31 pm EDT Updated: 10/04/2011 5:12 am EDT

The Colorado student at the forefront of the education funding battle finally got to have her say in Denver District Court yesterday, five years after filing the lawsuit, [Lobato v. State of Colorado](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/29/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_913698.html).

Taylor Lobato, now 19 and a student at the University of Denver, is a graduate of Center High School in the San Luis Valley over 200 miles southwest of Denver. Her mother, father and sister Alexa are all plaintiffs in the case that includes other parents and 21 school districts in the state who argue that the state's public education funding system is unconstitutional and underfunded by at least $3 billion.

“[I am doing this] for my sister, because she deserves a better education than I got, and for all the other students in Center and the state, I just believe that they deserve an adequate education and they’re not getting it,” Lobato said in court. "This is bigger than me, bigger than my family."

Lobato went on to say that there were not enough books for everyone in her school, alleging that students often had to do homework while still in school and that no AP classes were offered.

The [Denver Post just reported yesterday](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_18591738) that some school districts, including Denver, will begin enforcing some textbook costs on parents and students this year. Colorado's Constitution in fact, says it's legal though it raises doubts that the state is providing a free public education.

When the lawsuit was filed in 2005, the state argued that education funding was a matter for the General Assembly and voters only, and [filed a motion for the court to dismiss](https://www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/2005%20MOTION%20TO%20DISMISS.pdf). Both the district and appeals court sided with the state, but in 2009 the Colorado Supreme Court reversed the decisions and ruled that school districts and other participants should have their say in court and challenge K-12 funding. The Supreme Court then sent it back to trial court, where the case is being argued now.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs have said that they do not seek a precise amount of per-pupil funding, and that they just want the court to rule the state's system of public education funding unconstitutional. The state however argues that it already pays close to two-thirds of public education costs and that the lawsuit is ["constitutionally irrational"](http://www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/2011%2007-25%20TRIAL%20BRIEF.pdf) because "all parties agree that improving the quality of educational opportunities of the state’s young people is of vital importance".

# Lobato v. State Of Colorado Case:

The Huffington Post  |  By [Andrea Rael](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andrea%20rael/)

Posted: 08/17/2011 12:25 pm EDT Updated: 10/17/2011 5:12 am EDT

Lobato v. State of Colorado may be one of Colorado's most provocative education lawsuits in history. It raises the question: Is the state's system of public education funding constitutional?

And it is anticipated that the answer will only raise more provocative questions.

The lawsuit argues that [Colorado is flunking its own constitution](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/29/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_913698.html), and by extension, its own students. The state's constitution calls for a "thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state" but, plaintiffs argue, students are not receiving that throughout the state. The lawsuit therefore seeks more money for public education, but lawyers representing the plaintiffs say they aren't looking for a specific number.

The state however is already spending about 40 percent of its $7 billion General Fund budget on education. Allocating more money may cost the state elsewhere, and redistributing funds may cause more claims of inequality from taxpayers.

The court then is charged with making a careful interpretation of what the constitution's drafters meant by the "thorough and uniform" clause, and whether or not it's the court's role to declare a ruling about it being constitutional or not.

**[Closing Statements Wrap Up, and Judge Sheila Rappaport Says A Ruling Will Be Made In 45 Days](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html" \l "31_closing-statements-wrap-up-and-judge-sheila-rappaport-says-a-ruling-will-be-made-in-45-days)**

9:03 PM – 09/ 2/2011

[The State Makes Their Closing Arguments](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html" \l "30_the-state-makes-their-closing-arguments)

"Behind all of this testimony, there is a debate about the fundamental question of whether more money will improve (achievement rate) of schools," the Defense began, arguing that they plaintiffs didn't get the funding they want, "so they've come to your courtroom".

The Defense argued that Colorado's constitution does not require the best possible education scenario for public school finance. That it, like the Constitution drafted by the Founding Fathers, is meant to be a flexible document that leaves many specific issues like funding up to the Legislature.

The one concise theme that you've heard is that what plaintiffs want...is a utopia. A perfect outcome for all students. That the education system cannot be rational without solving societal problems first. If a student fails to reach proficiency, then that system has failed.

But what about students with multiple needs and multiple gifts? Where does it end?

If you believe that the human potential is unlimited then it never ends...there will always be more innovative technology, more that needs to be taught, and (a need for) newer buildings.

Lt. Gov. Joe Garcia told you that education was paramount to the state of Colorado but the Colorado Constitution does not require a system that can be fully seen or fully realized. We all may aspire to this utopia, but the constitution simply does not require it.

The court's role in this case, the State argued, is to determine whether the system passes "Constitutional muster", not whether a better system could be realized. More money may lead to better education, but, the State cited Harrison School District's ability to make progress despite spending cuts. They argued that the majority of school districts are meeting the state's requirements to be academically proficient, including many plaintiffs in this case.

"Districts, not the State, are responsible for how they want to educate their children...North Conejos School District built a new building instead of implementing new programs...that wasn't the State's choice, that was the district's choice."

The State also cannot mandate an English language program, the Defense argued, and it is the districts who decide how much to pay their teachers.

"Harrison Superintendent (Mike) Miles treats his teachers like true professionals. He expects them to continue their training while employed."

The districts also have the ability to ask their leaders to do something about the mill-levy overrides, the Defense argued.

In discussing Boulder Valley School District, the State pointed out that they exceed the State's requirement in proficiency but that their achievement gap (achievement levels between minorities and white students) is one of the worst in the State. The State said that during testimony, it was admitted that that achievement gap "was not because of a financial problem".

The State then pointed to ineffective education funding increases in Wyoming and New Jersey saying that more money there "just hasn't worked" and that "there's no reason to think this will play out any differently in Colorado."

The Legislature functions to serve districts' concerns, and they devote time to doing so, the Defense argued. The courtroom is not the appropriate place for this argument, the Defense argued.

"Sen. King said that education gets .45 of every dollar. If it's more state funding that Plaintiffs and Plaintiff-Intervenors want, then that's what they've got. The school finance system is reasonable and rational...What you've heard is a public policy debate--a debate the Legislature has already heard and continues to hear. The Plaintiffs just don't like their answer."

[MALDEF Makes Their Closing Argument](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html" \l "29_maldef-makes-their-closing-argument)

MALDEF, the Latino legal voice for civil rights, made their closing arguments next.

Attorney David Hinojosa stressed that the Lobato case was about lost opportunities and challenges many minorities have had to face alone--a prospect, Hinojosa argued, that isn't just detrimental to the individual student but also to the state at large.

"You heard no testimony from the parents or superintendents saying they didn't want their children to be challenged (in school with the state requirements)," Hinojosa said. "The piece that's missing is funding."

Likening Colorado's lack of public school funding and educational expectations to "building a house to withstand 100 miles per hour winds" with straw, Hinojosa argued that the current educational finance structure cannot be sustained.

Hinojosa also argued that Colorado's Legislature has already defined what a "thorough and uniform" education means in its Department of Education's postsecondary and workforce readiness report.

Sheridan School District, Hinojosa said, has a growing population of homeless children.

"These children don't look forward to the holidays because they'll be without a roof over their heads and without two meals a day...Greeley has a growing immigrant and refugee population and is faced with a dilemma: do they try to further the education of their gifted and talented students? Or help the English language learning students? That's a decision that no superintendent should face."

English language learners have to become academically proficient in that language, not just learn it, Hinojosa said. According to earlier testimony, it takes English language learners four to seven years to become academically proficient despite the fact the state expects them to catch up in two.

"It makes absolutely no sense that you can increase standards, make them more rigorous and challenge teachers with those standards--because they have to master those standards too--but the state doesn't want to provide the money necessary."

Furthermore, Hinojosa argued, the state caps at-risk students (aka students who qualify for free or reduced lunch) to 20,160 "for no explainable reason (and) meaning that at least 13,000 students are being denied".

Hinojosa then showed the courtroom photos of some Colorado school buildings in disrepair and asked, "How can any definition of a good system of public schools not include the schools themselves?"

[Continuation of Plaintiff Attorney Kenzo Kawanabe's Closing Statement](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html" \l "28_continuation-of-plaintiff-attorney-kenzo-kawanabes-closing-statement)

Henry Levin (a previous plaintiff witness from Teachers College, Columbia University who produced a study entitled, "The Fiscal and Social Burden of Inadequate Education in Colorado") said in his testimony that there are economic consequences felt by everyone--and especially taxpayers--when students are given an inadequate education. High school dropouts have a greater probability of going to prison--though it also affects victims of crime, being on welfare, being uninsured, and making less money in their lifetime.

From Henry Levin's Plaintiff-commissioned study:

High school graduates receive almost exactly half as much and college graduates less than one-tenth that amount...These differences in earnings by education level mean that there will be differences in tax contributions at both the state and federal level. As the largest proportion of taxes are paid to the federal government, the main fiscal benefit of having a more highly educated population is accrued nationally, not in Colorado.

If we want higher achievement we need more class time and more funds. As Cindy Stevenson (Superintendent of Jefferson County) said, because 'Everything touches the classroom'...

Defendants have brought two examples of success, but they are islands of success.

Your honor, there is a consensus, and it's the vital importance of education...We know what works. Our superintendents in our schools know what works but they can't afford to implement them because of a lack of resources. Our system does have its successes, but it's because of heroes.

"Heroes" like teachers who have bought their students school supplies out of their own pockets, Kawanabe said, cautioning that those "heroes" might not stick around if resources continue to be cut. Kawanabe re-stated testimony from a witness in Cherry Creek who said that, "increased standards mean increased costs".

The state has requirements, not aspirations, Plaintiffs argued, adding that the court has heard former members of the Legislature admit that "they have never conducted a study to determine the costs of education mandated in the Legislature," that "there is no basis for the base per pupil funding, (and) it was simply an afterthought."

[Closing Statements begin with Plaintiff Attorney Kenzo Kawanabe](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html" \l "27_closing-statements-begin-with-plaintiff-attorney-kenzo-kawanabe)

The courtroom is completely packed for closing statements with a 7 News camera crew, and the Lobato family.

Over 100 witnesses and thousands of hours in legal work later, the arguments begin with Plaintiff Attorney Kenzo Kawanabe.

Kawanabe argued in his closing remarks that Colorado does not establish a rational relationship between its funds and education requirements. Providing a public education, Kawanabe said, was a requirement for Colorado to establish its very statehood.

"Over these past five weeks, the plaintiffs have proved their Constitutional claims...(Thorough and uniform) are constitutional mandates," Kawanabe said.

He continued, reviewing testimony from over the past five weeks:

Professor Bruce Baker from Rutgers University gives Colorado an "F" for funding fairness.

The result includes 70-75 percent graduation rates, 29 percent remediation rates (not ready for college), and 30 percent achievement gaps.

In fourth grade reading, Colorado students are 40 percent proficient, but if you're hispanic it's 17 percent, and 18 percent if you're black...if you are a special education student or if you are poor, you have a 50 percent chance of graduating from the state of Colorado.

Our superintendents consistently describe a lack of resources to implement state requirements, and must use local funds to try and fill in the gaps.

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond from Stanford University states that effective teachers are most important...

Rural school district teaching salaries are $30 ,000-50,000.

Districts are not able to meet state standards.

In middle school in Center Colorado, all proficiency levels were below 50 percent.

We are failing our students...we are using textbooks that are 10, 20, 30 years old.

# Colorado Education Underfunded By 'Unconscionable' Billions, Judge Rules

Posted: 12/12/2011 12:31 pm EST Updated: 02/11/2012 5:12 am EST

* + Supporters of an education lawsuit against the state of Colorado celebrated this weekend after a district judge ruled that the state severely underfunds public schools and provides inadequate resources to its disabled, poor and minority students.

In a 183-page ruling in favor of the plaintiffs Friday, Denver District Judge Sheila Rappaport concluded that Colorado's education funding is "irrational and inadequate" and violates the state constitution's pledge to provide a "thorough and uniform" education system.

"There is not one school district that is sufficiently funded," Rappaport writes in the report. "This is an obvious hallmark of an irrational system."

Rappaport's ruling concludes a five-week trial in one of the [most provocative education lawsuits in Colorado's history](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html?ir=Education). Lobato v. State of Colorado was filed in 2005, arguing that the state's education system is unconstitutional, by failing to comply with a clause in the state constitution that calls for a "thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state."

"The finance system must be revised to assure that funding is rationally related to the actual costs of providing a thorough and uniform system of public education," Rappaport writes. "It is also apparent that increased funding will be required."

Rappaport's ruling also notes that the court will not determine what the proper amount of funding required will be, and is instead up to the state legislature to fund and implement a system that provides students with the skills and knowledge needed for higher education, citizenship and careers.

"[It means that we're finally going to have to answer the questions of what are we expected to do](http://www.kktv.com/home/headlines/Lobato_Ruling_Changes_to_School_Funding__135381163.html) and what are you going to give us to do that with," Jan Tanner, board president of Colorado Springs District 11, told KKTV. "There's no connection right now with those requirements and seeing that we have the resources to make sure it happens."

The plaintiffs don't seek dollar figure claims, but consultants hired for the case estimated that Colorado is underfunding public schools by $4 billion. The latest developments in the case could drastically affect the state's budget for the coming year, as Colorado already spent [more than 40 percent, or about $3.2 billion, last year on public schools](http://www.denverpost.com/legislature/ci_19513992) -- of its nearly $7 billion general fund, according to the Denver Post.

The state is expected to appeal the decision to the Colorado Supreme Court, but if Rappaport's ruling holds, the state would be forced to make draconian to other sectors like transportation and health care since Colorado voters last month [rejected a measure that would have increased sales and income taxes](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/03/colorado-tax-defeat-a-sig_0_n_1073414.html?ir=Education) to shore up $2.9 billion for public education over four years.

"[Paying for quality education for our children has always been a priority](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/10/us-colorado-education-ruling-idUSTRE7B905H20111210). The challenge in front of us now is providing a quality education in the face of ever increasing entitlement spending," Republican state House Speaker Frank McNulty said in a statement Friday, according to Reuters.

Rappaport's decision also comes as the state faces a large budget deficit. Gov. John Hickenlooper is proposing a total $679 million in cuts for the following year, [$89 million of which will be from K-12 funding](http://www.aurorasentinel.com/email_push/news/article_36c3d5b2-24d0-11e1-9c8c-001871e3ce6c.html), the Aurora Sentinel reports.

All this calls into question whether complying with the ruling while also adequately funding other state programs is feasible -- And what would happen if voters, like in November, reject another possible proposal for tax increases.

But for now, "[the voters can't ignore a court order](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/12/12/29795-ruling-a-clean-sweep-for-lobato-plaintiffs)," the plaintiffs' lawyer Kathleen Gebhardt said in a news conference Saturday, EdNews Colorado reports.

November's voter rejection came after lawmakers cut school funding by $200 million earlier this year, leading to increased class sizes and rounds of teacher layoffs. Now, Rappaport's ruling for increased school funding also draws on issues of financial resources with respect to class sizes and student performance -- and whether funneling billions more into Colorado's education system will visibly and effectively improve the state's quality of education.

Since the onset of the recession, class sizes surged -- [following a general decline over nearly four decades](http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28), according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. Education activists have repeatedly pointed to data showing that education expenditures have soared as student performance on exams have plateaued.

Still, the debate over funding, class sizes and the perhaps consequent student achievement remains complex. A study from the 1980s showed that smaller class sizes were more effective in early years, but less so in later grades.

"Where you're dramatically reducing class size, in low-advantage communities in lower grades [when kids are learning things like how to read, that's been beneficial](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/05/class-size-fight-overcrowding_n_997052.html)," Duncan told The Huffington Post in October. "We've done it elsewhere, spent billions of dollars on class size without any demonstrable benefit. We need to talk about class size, and quality."

# Lobato v. State Of Colorado: Resolution Gives Little Guidance For The State To Remedy (UPDATE)

Posted: 12/22/2011 1:27 pm EST Updated: 12/27/2011 5:01 pm EST

It's official. Gov. John Hickenlooper announced Wednesday morning that the state will be appealing the judge's ruling in the Lobato v. State of Colorado education funding lawsuit.

**UPDATE:**

[Education News Colorado reports](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/12/26/30409-the-churn-try-one-more-time) the Colorado State Board of Education voted 4-3 Tuesday morning to appeal the Denver District judge's ruling against the state.

**EARLIER:**

"It is clear after closely reviewing the judge's decision in Lobato v. Colorado and consulting with Attorney General John Suthers that a final resolution of the constitutional and legal issues involved in the case require an appeal to the Colorado Supreme Court," Hickenlooper said in a press statement.

In his statement, Hickenlooper also said that there were "more appropriate venues" for a public debate about the state's school funding and that the judge's decision gave "little practical guidance on how the state should fund a 'thorough and uniform' system of public education."

In a [report by Education News Colorado](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/12/21/30355-wednesday-churn-lobato-day) however, the State Board of Education adjourned their executive session meeting without voting yet on the appeal. Their next scheduled meeting is set for Dec. 27.

Kathy Gebhardt, the executive director of Children's Voices and the lead attorney on Lobato v. State of Colorado issued a statement yesterday to [the Berthoud Recorder](http://www.berthoudrecorder.com/2011/12/21/state-plans-lobato-appeal-to-colorado-supreme-court/):

We are disappointed by the governor’s announcement today that the district judge’s ruling will be appealed. We call on the legislature to act during the upcoming session as kids are continuing to go to school in failing facilities, with outdated textbooks, and in overcrowded classrooms.

Our children have been in these conditions for decades and should the legislature not act, these conditions will continue to exist. Justice delayed is education denied. We continue to invite the state to a robust discussion on how we solve this funding emergency, which will not change as long as the current funding system is in place. Significantly absent from Governor Hickenlooper’s comments is any defense of the current system.

Colorado has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda. This action assures that the state will continue to expect reform to proceed without sustainable resources.

An appeal would allow the legislature more time to keep the state's education funding system status quo, even though the funding outlook has gotten slightly more positive.

The Lobato lawsuit estimates that the state is shortchanging education by $2 to $4 billion a year, and just the day before the announcement about the state's intentions to appeal, Hickenlooper also announced that the state's revenue forecast was higher than expected. As a result, the need for an $89 million cut to K-12 education has been eliminated, and an extra $22 million could be granted to schools for enrollment increases.

# Back To School: Colorado Board Of Education Representative Elaine Gantz Berman Describes The State's Educational Landscape

The Huffington Post  |  By [Andrea Rael](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andrea%20rael/)

Posted: 09/12/2012 2:42 pm EDT Updated: 09/12/2012 7:57 pm EDT

Some of the biggest and best news in Colorado this year is that [education funding isn't being cut](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_20344400/no-state-budget-cuts-colorado-schools-this-year) in the state's budget for the first time in years.

Colorado has held onto its average per pupil funding at $6,474 with the lowest per pupil funding at $6,058.86. To help put this good news in perspective however, the [most recent U.S. Census Bureau data](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/finance_insurance_real_estate/cb12-113.html) shows that Utah spent the least on per pupil funding, out of all 50 states and D.C., at $6,064.

With the number of students attending Colorado schools slated to surpass 817,000 this year, educators in the state continue to face challenges that are often summed up as "doing more with less." Last year the state made education news as a judge ruled during the [Lobato v. State of Colorado](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/17/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_929344.html) case that Colorado is not upholding its own constitutional education standards of providing a "thorough and uniform system of free public schools throughout the state." That decision will likely continue to forge Colorado history as lawmakers and state board of education members seek an appeal and those in agreement with the ruling have to stay on legislators because there was [little to no guidance in the ruling](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/21/lobato-v-state-of-colorad_n_1164440.html) as to how to achieve a more thorough and uniform education system throughout the state.

Colorado State Board of Education member [Elaine Gantz Berman (D-Denver)](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeboard/Elaine_Gantz_Berman.htm) took time out of her busy schedule to talk with The Huffington Post about what the state's educational landscape looks like now.

**You have said publicly that you voted against appealing the Denver District Court’s Lobato decision in an op-ed published in EdNewsColorado.org saying,** [**“I cannot come up with any reasonable rationale to defend the status quo of how we fund schools.”**](http://www.ednewscolorado.org/2011/12/27/30419-opinion-why-i-voted-no-on-lobato-appeal) **What do you think would be an appropriate or ideal way to add funds to schools? In other words, what would you like to see happen?**

Colorado has unusually low property taxes. People who move here from other states are stunned with how little we pay. The idea of raising taxes is far from a popular solution but if (we) believe we need to reinstate the billion dollars which have been cut from schools over the (past) four years, I'm not sure we have much choice.

The $1 billion cut from schools over the past 4 years are due to a combination of factors: districts have not received funding for increases in students, the state has cut funding to schools, and property values have declined cutting revenues received from property taxes.  
  
**What are the problems you see with the current school finance formula? Where is it falling short of school's needs, and do you think it is meeting them in any school?**

The intent of the current school finance formula is to distribute funds equitably across the state. For those areas of the state that are poor, they do not and cannot generate the same amount of revenue even though their mill levies from their property taxes may be the same. For example, a one mill tax increase in Agate, Colorado will generate considerably less than a one mill tax increase in Denver. This means that many rural districts are in worse shape financially than districts like Boulder, Douglas and Denver. We need to develop a new school finance formula that takes into account the capacity for local districts to generate revenue through property tax. We also need to direct resources into proven programs which will impact the unacceptable achievement gap between anglo students and students of color.

**What are some examples of things Colorado schools still desperately need?**

If you were to ask any teacher in any classroom in Colorado, I would venture to say they all spend their own money on school supplies. Some schools are still using antiquated text books when the Soviet Union still existed. Many schools are desperate for air conditioning and have delayed the opening of school to later in August. DPS did just this because of the unbearable heat last summer. More than 1/3 of all districts in the state have moved to a four-day school week to save money on heating in the winter and the high cost of fuel for their buses.

If we want our students to be prepared for jobs in all sectors, they need computers and access to the internet. We take this for granted in the Denver-Metro area, but it is not the case in many parts of the state.

Many small and rural districts have struggled to provide their schools the high-speed broadband connections necessary for 21st Century learning to take place. One example is Silverton School District which is a small remote school district in the south west part of the state that has struggled to get high speed broadband in their school district for many years.

**Are there any new tools being integrated into schools this year? For example, in El Paso County there's talk of utilizing iPads as a learning tool. Or how else are Colorado educators being innovative?**

There are many new approaches to school this year. There is a great deal of attention being paid to expanding the school day, the school week and the school year. The Colorado Legacy Foundation has issued a request for proposal for schools interested in piloting more time, more technology, and more community partnerships. People interested in learning more about the expanded learning opportunities RFP, should check out the Legacy Foundation website. There is also growing excitement around a new approach to teaching called "blended learning"- this combines the more traditional "teacher in the classroom" with the use of technology and computers with the teacher as a resource.

Too much screen time or use of the computer for students is not optimal. But the combination of teacher-led classes and the use of technology could be ideal. Students (and adults) of all ages are hooked onto iPads, PDA's and computers. The education system needs to keep pace with the direction students are moving -- because today, in 2012, they are leading the way, not the educators.

**Manual High School started class much earlier this year to provide more time for their students and is looking for ways to give them more opportunities for hands-on learning. Do you think this approach is one that other Colorado schools may seek to emulate?**

Yes, the U.S. has an unusually short school year. It makes no sense that our students are out of school for three consecutive months. They forget over the summer and time then has to be spent reviewing what was learned the previous year. Our school calendar is way, way out of date and needs to be changed.

**What are Colorado schools doing to close the achievement gap? Please give us an example of some of the strategies being utilized.**

The achievement gap in Colorado is alarmingly wide. We seem to be doing a reasonable job educating middle class students but there is much room for improvement when it comes to educating our low-income students, many of whom are children of color. Schools that are seeing success use tutors for students who are not at grade level and need additional assistance; after-school and Saturday programs; providing rigorous courses and expecting the student will succeed -- failing is not an option.

**How does Colorado measure student success?**

We measure individual student success by a number of different measures:   
1. Through the state test, which previously was called the CSAP, and now called the TCAP, we measure individual growth from one school year to the next. The expectation is all students will gain a minimum of a year's worth of growth in a subject area.   
2. Through graduation rates -- the expectation is that every student will graduate high school ready to enter the work force and college.  
3. College acceptance rates -- the expectation is that all interested students apply and are accepted to college and, that once attending college, will not need remediation classes to keep up with college-level courses.   
4. All students will become good citizens and contribute back to their community and vote in all elections!