

CASB BRIEF - January 28 Vol. 23



Advocacy Newsletter

Education Reports Stack Up at Capitol

Lawmakers love to create task forces, commissions and study groups to dig into policy issues and write reports about what they found. Education is a favorite subject for legislators, and in recent sessions several education studies have been launched.

Studies are often commissioned as a substitute when lawmakers aren't ready – or able – to pass substantive legislation on a given issue. When the completed studies make their way back to the Capitol there's generally no requirement that lawmakers do anything with the recommendations, although committees often hold hearings to be briefed on reports. No proposed legislation stemming from the current set of reports has surfaced yet this session.

The most prominent of the new batch are two professional examinations of whether Colorado school funding is sufficient for schools to meet student achievement goals and requirements.

Those studies concluded that school funding should be from \$3.5 billion to \$4.1 billion more per year than the current \$9.7 billion. (There's virtually no chance the 2025 legislative session will take any action to increase K-12 funding beyond what's already required by Amendment 23 and the new funding formula passed in 2024).

The legislature faces a shortfall of \$650 million to \$1 billion shortfall in the 2025-26 budget, and the Joint Budget Committee is struggling to figure out where to cut state spending.

The House and Senate education committees were briefed on those funding reports on Friday, Jan. 24.

Here's a rundown on the other education-related reports that were submitted before the 2025 session convened:

Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force

- [Panel webpage](#)
- [Report executive summary](#)
- [Full report](#)

The state's system of student assessments and district and school ratings has been the focus of debate and controversy ever since the system's first elements were launched in 2008.

In 2021 the legislature required the state auditor to do a performance audit of the accountability system. The audit was released in December 2022 and concluded the system was performing as required by law. (See the audit [here](#)).

That wasn't enough for legislative critics of the accountability system, and a 2023 measure, HB 23-1241 created a 26-member task force to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system. The report was submitted last Nov. 15.

The group recommended major reform of the system, including:

- Changing how schools and districts are rated to more accurately reflect the achievement levels of various student groups.
- Creation of better and additional measures of growth, achievement and postsecondary readiness.
- Modernization of statewide tests that can adapt to student needs, include multilingual options and provider quicker results.
- Improved data reporting through a state dashboard that would provide easy-to-understand data on school performance.
- A strengthened system for supporting schools and districts that need improvement.

School Transportation Modernization Task Force

- [Panel webpage](#)
- [Full report](#)

A 2023 law created the School Transportation Modernization Task Force to study issues facing school transportation programs. Part of the concern about this issue was sparked by bus driver shortages that grew during the pandemic. The panel was assigned to make recommendations to improve school transportation in order to better meet student needs and reduce burdens on districts. The study was due Dec. 1.

Working Group on Justice Engaged Students

- [Panel webpage](#)
- [Full report](#)

This group was authorized in 2024 and assigned to make recommendations to the Department of Education and the education committees of the House and Senate no later than Dec. 1, 2024.

According to the panel's final report,

"Although the primary task assigned to the group were straightforward, the initial discussions quickly highlighted the challenges both to collecting or sharing data based on information collected by the state about this population of students. ... [But] it became clear that many of the ideas would require a multi-year, multi-faceted approach to changing agencies and systems."

The group made a detailed list of suggestions for the legislature and state agencies that basically boil down to the need for a statewide data system that would provide uniform information to schools and all other agencies that work with youth who are involved in the justice system.

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