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Making Colorado the Best State for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Free Full-Day Preschool and Full-Day Kindergarten in Colorado

As Governor, I will bring together a winning coalition to establish universal full-day kindergarten and preschool in every community across our state within two years.

High-quality, full-day kindergarten and preschool promotes school readiness, closes achievement gaps, and supports the healthy development of all children. Improved access to preschool and kindergarten would also save parents money on daycare, and allow parents the flexibility to go back to work sooner if they choose, not only helping families pay rent and put food on the table, but also generating additional tax revenue for the state while decreasing reliance on public assistance programs.

Full-Day Kindergarten

Colorado will achieve universal full-day kindergarten by making state kindergarten funding full-time (equivalent to the full-day for 1st grade) for all students in public schools. Investing in giving our kids a comprehensive 21st-century education. Full-day kindergarten will give our kids a better opportunity to learn at a high-level earlier in their lives. This is critical in giving children the tools to succeed throughout school, and also when they enter the workforce. In fact, eleven states and the District of Columbia already offer full-day kindergarten to their children, and it's time for our state to be added to this list.

Currently, Colorado funds about 5,400 full-day kindergarten slots under the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) but only children who meet certain at-risk factors are eligible. The middle-class deserves a free, high quality, full-day kindergarten program, too, as a matter of simple fairness and to ensure that every child gets a strong start, and that's what my plan will provide for.

Full-Day Preschool

Structure and Quality

While any full-day kindergarten program would work through school districts, preschool incorporates a larger set of quality community providers. I will collaborate with school districts on

meeting their capital needs to be able to offer preschool themselves, as well as develop ways to ensure that today's early childhood workforce can get the training and skills they need to become professional educators. The fact is that the CPP is simply not currently meeting the needs of Coloradans, and my goal will be to invest in creating universal access to high-quality early childhood classrooms.

According to the new *Preschool Yearbook*, Colorado serves 23 percent of four-year-olds and eight percent of three-year-olds in mostly half-day programs (2.5 hours/day).

To achieve universal preschool in Colorado, I support creating a new program, the *Colorado Universal Preschool Program (CUPP)*, which would direct state funding to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide formula funding to any three-and-four-year old Colorado child whose parent wants the child in preschool. The program would direct CDE to allocate the amount of a full per-pupil-funding (PPF) to any high-quality preschool provider (such as a school district or community-based organization like Head Start) that a parent chooses, as long as the provider - after the first three years of the program - is rated at least a level 4 out of the state's 5-level rating under the Colorado Shines rating system. *CUPP* would be co-administered by CDE and the Colorado Department of Human Services.

CUPP would be an added layer on top of the existing Head Start and child care funding for low-income children, who are already served, to provide preschool access for all Colorado children whose parents want it. To transform the existing CPP into the universal full-time *CUPP* program, I would work with the legislature and relevant stakeholders to adjust funding to full-time PPF. CDE also provides funding for a limited number of slots for the Early Childhood At-Risk Expansion (ECARE) program, which has more flexible funding options that include full-day preschool and Kindergarten. This program would also be folded into the new *CUPP* funding system, as would other funding for early childhood education.

Local Early Childhood Councils

Local Early Childhood Councils would ensure quality in all early-care and education settings, including helping build supply and improvements, in addition to their current role as integrating entities and community hubs for all early childhood services and supports.

Specific Needs

The *CUPP* would have a special fund to invest in more facilities (using BEST funding, working with businesses/non-profits to leverage private capital); and greater workforce support, such as coaching, job-embedded professional development, evidence-based communities of practice, and scholarships to increase credentials and degrees. The state's Every Student Succeeds Act plan promotes the state's professional development information system (PDIS), which outlines workforce coursework competencies framework for birth-to-3rd-Grade educators, and is aligned with educator effectiveness.

This is the foundation for coursework in Colorado's community colleges, and we need to make sure that our educators are well-trained to meet the needs of young children and that they have career opportunities to support themselves and advance in their career.

Basic Standards

All *CUPP*-funded programs would be required to have at a minimum:

- Support for inclusive practices for children with special needs
- Support for dual language learners
- Family engagement
- Comprehensive services (health, mental health, nutrition, dental)
- Coordination among all early childhood education programs, including Head Start and school districts. Preschool policy must be connected with child care policy in every local region to ensure continuity of care for families with young children.

Other CUPP Provisions:

- *CUPP* would encourage shared services so that a network of early childhood programs could build shared organizational capacity
 - Small centers and child care providers could form alliances on fiscal management, data reporting, staff and human resources, and other overhead expenses to streamline administrative costs, strengthen quality, and shift dollars to serving more children with quality services.
- Innovative and diverse delivery systems to address the rural and frontier communities, such as mobile/modular/temporary classrooms to address barriers such as transportation.
- Fully implement the new Every Student Succeeds Act requirement for school districts to form agreements with Head Start and child care providers on key coordination issues, including joint professional development, records, transition issues, and parent communication and involvement.
 - *CUPP* will also require coordination on data, standards, curriculum, assessment, outcomes, recruitment, and retention efforts to support a Pre-K-3rd Grade alignment.
- Continuous development of *CUPP* policy and practice will draw on the successes and lessons learned from Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, implementation of the newly reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act, recently

released Head Start Performance Standards and the reauthorized Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Birth-to-Three

To expand the state's child development efforts during the peak years of brain development, I will fight for state investment in the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership to expand access to quality care for the state's most vulnerable infants and toddlers.

This federally-funded program aims to improve child care for infants and toddlers by bringing the quality components of the Early Head Start program into child development centers and homes. This expansion would be targeted to low-income children, children with special needs, and children experiencing homelessness. Together, we can ensure that all kids get the learning support they need in their most important early years.

While in some families, a parent can stay home full-time to support their zero-to-six year-old, in too many others that simply isn't a realistic option. That's why we need to bring full day kindergarten and preschool to every community across Colorado.

A Quality Education for Every Child in Colorado

We've all heard politicians tell us that giving our kids a good education is a Colorado value, but at the same time, our public school budgets have been slashed across the state, and our teachers are undervalued—and even vilified. It's time to stop talking about investing in our children, and actually start doing it.

I've been in, and won, fights at the ballot box to improve our schools and pay our teachers better before. As governor, I won't be afraid to roll up my sleeves and do it again so that our kids can get a world-class education that prepares them for the workforce.

As someone who has founded several non-profit schools, served on the State Board of Education, and fought for our kids as a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I've worked with teachers, parents, and administrators to take bold ideas and turn them into real results for our classrooms. I've put words to action in making our school meals healthier, and in reducing unnecessary standardized testing in our classrooms.

When I announced my campaign, I pledged that as Governor, within two years I will bring together a winning coalition to establish universal full-day kindergarten and preschool in every community across our state. Learn more about that plan by clicking [here](#). Making sure every child has access to early childhood education is one of the best ways to set our kids up for success, and we can make innovative improvements to our school system at every level to keep up the momentum!

Together, we can make Colorado the best state to have a child in a public school, and to be a teacher in the classroom. We can do this by paying teachers what they are worth as professionals, implementing school policies in collaboration with educators, administrators and students, and by making sure that a good education is within reach, no matter a child's zip code, readiness to learn, or family's income.

1. Ending our Teacher Shortage by Providing Student Loan Relief, and Building Affordable Housing

- Communities throughout our state are struggling with both a high cost-of-living and low teacher pay. As a result, it's very difficult to recruit teachers to these high-need areas, leaving our schools understaffed. That's not fair to kids in rural Colorado and in low-income communities. We can work to solve this problem by paying teachers well, providing student loan relief to those who serve in a high-need area, and thinking out of the box to help our teaching professionals have access to affordable housing.

Student Loan Relief for Colorado Teachers

- As Governor, I will work with local governments and the business community to help relieve student loan debt for teachers, especially for those that work in a rural, or high-need, area for a number of years determined by local school districts who want to participate.
- Student loan forgiveness for teachers who serve in our highest-need areas will be a key recruitment tool in our mission to end teacher shortages. This will increase take-home pay for teachers, and lower the bar for entry into the profession.
- Just as I have used my profile as a Member of Congress to strongly support the passage of local school funding initiatives by writing letters to the editor and opinion pieces, I will leverage the profile of the Governorship to support local district measures that provide for more resources to recruit high-quality teachers across the state.

Affordable Housing for Educators

- At a time when the cost of housing is rapidly outpacing incomes, we can recruit and retain teachers in our classrooms by raising the cap and finding new funding sources for the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program. If we do this, we can meet our capital construction needs and broaden BEST's mission to

include coordinating with local school districts to build affordable housing that will be available to educators in high-need areas.

- I've found creative solutions to solving our affordable housing crisis before. I was proud to pass legislation that required the federal government to sell 40 acres of land to Summit County for the development of over 400 units of affordable housing in Lake Hill. My administration will prioritize working closely with counties to leverage other available resources similar to Lake Hill to make sure teachers are able to live closer to their jobs.
- Consistent with the mission of the School Trust, we will work with local communities in zoning land under the jurisdiction of the State Land Board to be used for the development of affordable housing, and I will make sure that educators are well-represented as commissioners on the board. There is currently only one commissioner with any background in public education, and I will commit to giving teachers a voice on the State Land Board.

2. Paying Teachers What They're Worth

- Teaching is not an entry-level job. It's a skill earned through hard work and dedication, and I'm grateful for those who commit their lives to the classroom. It's time to honor that commitment by valuing it as a profession. Colorado's economic growth should benefit our classrooms and teachers, too.

Raising Teacher Pay

- Teachers are some of the most important people in our children's lives. When our economy is booming, it doesn't make sense for our classrooms to be underfunded and under-resourced, and for our teachers to be undervalued. Making sure that the best-qualified, and most talented, teachers leading our classrooms are treated as the professionals they are is the right thing to do for our kids and our economy.
- My administration will work closely with districts, educators, and the legislature to better anticipate our state budget, and make the necessary changes to public school funding to focus on improving the classroom experience for kids, and in paying teachers what they deserve.
- From local school funding initiatives to modernizing our state's budget constraints, paying teachers what they're worth requires a Governor who knows how to build winning coalitions that result in victory for our kids at

the ballot box, and responsible budgeting for our state. I'm ready for that challenge after successfully campaigning for and passing Amendment 23, which reversed the budget cuts that were plaguing our schools for years, and numerous local bonds and mill levys over the years.

- Making sure that the Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) is solvent for years to come is more than just smart budgeting: it's keeping our promise to those who serve our state. Any attempt to reform PERA on the backs of our teaching professionals will be rejected by me as Governor.

Creating Ladders of Opportunity for Teachers

- Teachers deserve meaningful opportunities to learn and grow in their work. As Governor, I will work with school districts to establish a strong career advancement pipeline for teachers who want to bring their talents and skills learned in the classroom into leadership roles and administrative positions.
- I believe that teachers who have served on the front lines in our classrooms can be effective administrators and teacher mentors if those who would like to do so are given more opportunities to collaborate with leadership in their schools.
- I'll fight to build strong growth opportunities for teachers by creating a commission of educators and administrators to provide school districts with a model to support teachers interested in taking on a mix of classroom, mentorship, and administrative responsibilities.

3. Giving Teachers a Voice on the Job

Teachers are professionals who have the best interests of students at the top of their minds. I'm proud to support teachers' right to collectively bargain for the benefits and pay they deserve, and for the tools they need to give students the best classroom experience possible.

Oppose efforts to eliminate collective bargaining

- As Governor, I will be an ally for teachers by continuing my support for the right to collectively bargain for benefits, pay, and the tools teachers need to give every child a great education. Students and families win when teachers have a strong voice at the table.

- We need to stop attacking teachers and the organizations that give them a voice on the job. My administration will push for collaboration with teachers and paraprofessionals and other school support personnel, not conflict.

Inviting Teachers to the Table

- My administration will encourage administrators to work closely with teachers in creating school and district policies that result in the best learning environment for our kids, and strongest working conditions for teachers. We will do this by ensuring teachers have stronger representation on the commissions and working groups that shape not only our education system, but other issues of importance to educators like transportation, infrastructure, and affordable housing.

4. Put Coloradans to Work to Build and Renovate Our Schools

Children and teachers deserve schools that contribute to a strong learning environment and do not serve as a distraction. From classroom improvement to modern plumbing and well-kept playgrounds, students deserve world-class facilities that parents can feel confident in sending their kids to, and we will use the best-qualified and trained workers in the state to make it happen.

- I'll challenge the legislature to improve the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program by seeking out new funding sources to make improvements to our school infrastructure, and by raising the cap on funding that can be allocated to high-need schools.
- When federal legal issues surrounding cannabis tax receipts are cleared up, I will advocate for bonding of school capital construction revenues from Amendment 64 and subsequent cannabis tax initiatives.

5. Increasing Collaboration with Teacher-Led Professional Learning Communities

- Students benefit when teachers have time to prepare for their lessons. As Governor, I will fight for schools to have increased time for teacher-led Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to help teachers analyze data, plan their lessons, collaborate with their colleagues, and be receptive to the needs of students.
- PLCs are most effective when teachers are put in charge of the process. By letting teachers take the lead in sharing their best practices, lesson plans, and

analyze student data, we can make sure our kids are getting the best education possible.

- Littleton Public Schools recently decided to provide weekly time for PLCs every Wednesday morning, giving parents scheduling consistency throughout the school year while making sure kids still get a full day of school, and giving teachers time to plan.
 - As Governor, I will work with school districts to make this a reality for more teachers, and will work with the legislature to incentivize districts to provide affordable childcare before and after the bell.

6. Preparing Kids for the 21st Century Economy

Our economy is rapidly changing, and the jobs of the future are going to require our students to compete in a global marketplace. Putting our kids on an early path to success is why I will be the strongest advocate in the state for full-day preschool and kindergarten, and we have to make smart adjustments at all levels of our education system. This means encouraging enrollment in trade schools and community colleges, apprenticeships, prioritizing dual and concurrent enrollment programs, and making sure the riches of a great education are available to every child regardless of their background and circumstance.

- **Whether a student wants to earn a liberal arts degree, or learn to be a diesel mechanic**, our schools should be pathways of opportunity for a diverse set of skills that will boost our economy, support entrepreneurship, and fill much-needed jobs in high-needs areas, like manufacturing and technology.
- **Dual and concurrent enrollment programs are giving high school students across the state a head start on getting their college degree or certificate.** In fact, just over 30 percent of Colorado students are in a dual enrollment program of some type. We will prioritize making sure that 100 percent of Colorado's school districts are able to offer dual and concurrent enrollment programs through an Associates Degree or professional certification, and work to boost enrollment in them. To further address the teacher shortage and diversify the educator workforce, we should also increase dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities around teacher preparation.
- **We have high expectations for our kids to succeed.** I will fight for Colorado to be a national leader in creating educational programming that reflects the increasing value of a diverse set of skills, reinforce social interaction, and put our students on a path to success in college and careers.

- **Colorado should expand access to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs to recognize the importance of art and design's role in shaping our economy.** Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) programs recognize the creative potential of students in building and shaping the world we live in to be more accessible, environmentally friendly, and durable to a changing economy. Colorado should lead the way in prioritizing creativity in our classrooms.
- **Every single student in our schools is uniquely suited with valuable skills that can contribute to Colorado's economy and way of life.** In Congress, I've fought to provide teachers with the tools they need to meet the needs of our gifted and talented students. I will work alongside parents and local districts to make sure every school in our state has the infrastructure and teachers necessary to accommodate every student with disabilities, and that district policies, as well as the policies of the Colorado Department of Education, are in the spirit of that goal.
- **Involving families in their child's learning both at home and at school is critical to educational success.** Student performance is improved when parents are engaged at home, and parent-teacher conferences aid in boosting collaboration and parental involvement. The Governor's office can play a critical convening role for districts, parents, and teachers interested in improving educational success and recognizing best practices around family engagement.