



AGILITY EXPLAINED: Achieving Vision 2030 Through Policy

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Background

In 2017, Colorado Succeeds launched the Vision 2030 framework – our north star for the state. Since then, we’ve built on this Vision by engaging with numerous leaders and practitioners representing K-12, postsecondary, students, alternative learning providers, employers, policymakers, and the intermediaries that knit them all together. The result of those activities culminated into a report, released in May 2019, called “Agility Explained: Achieving Vision 2030,” which was an evolution of how business, education, and government can work each day to achieve Vision 2030.

The report provided a framework and path for how Colorado Succeeds ensures that all of Colorado’s children are educated to their greatest potential and that all of Colorado’s businesses have the talented and innovative homegrown workforce they need. The May report provided the framework but not how Vision 2030 specifically translates into policy. In order to answer that challenging question, Colorado Succeeds worked with Gretchen Morgan and Georgia Hayward, with the Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) to develop a series of policy prototypes that would help us answer the question: What does agility look like in policy?

Building on ideas laid out in our Vision 2030, we focused on innovative policy ideas that support work-based learning. Work-based learning and other stages of the career-connected learning continuum prepares agile learners for changes expected in the economy and in society. Work-based learning experiences broaden the view young people have of possible careers and promote postsecondary success. The expansion of quality, work-based learning also encourages cooperation and alignment across K-12, 2-year, and 4-year institutions. We implemented a three-phase process to develop and test policy ideas:

- researched policy and practice in Colorado and nationally;
- sought feedback about individual policies and combinations;
- and built policy prototypes and took them out to the broader field for testing. *The testing has begun and will continue through 2020.*

Across the research and interviews, several policy themes emerged as front runners. In addition to full issue briefs, see below for a high-level summary of each policy idea, together with an overview of short-term next steps and long-term strategies.



1 Rethinking How to Fund High School:

- **Challenge:** Preparing students for postsecondary education and the workforce means encouraging more learning outside of the traditional classroom. Apprenticeships, capstone projects, and other opportunities designed to support students in building and demonstrating transferable critical thinking and problem-solving skills is critical, but our outdated funding system was not built to support these opportunities.
- **Summary:** This policy brief considers three potential policies to improve how we prepare students by addressing our antiquated high school funding model. Students who are engaged in learning outside of the traditional classroom setting should not be considered part-time or require onerous tracking of hours for purposes of Colorado’s school finance law or rules. Further, funding methodologies for P-TECH and early college could be modified to promote the expansion and growth of those innovative models.
- **Short-term Next Steps:** Opportunities to scale a pilot that Colorado Succeeds helped champion during the 2019 legislative session to eliminate seat-time requirements for students participating in work-based learning could be considered next session. Additionally, in support of over 100 school districts on a four-day school week schedule, opportunities to support more out of school learning opportunities could be piloted as early as the 2020 legislative session.
- **Longer-term Initiatives:** A longer-term objective would be to adjust state higher education aid funding rules to enable community college partners to receive financial aid for students in both early colleges and P-TECH schools enrolled in college-level coursework, using free and reduced lunch qualification to determine eligibility.

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2 Blurring the Lines between High School and Postsecondary Course Credit Options:

- **Challenge:** The world is moving to a place where the lines between high school and postsecondary education are becoming blurred – where developing competencies and real-world, authentic experiences in a particular area of study are valued. Students need the chance to build more relevant, rigorous and transferable skills in high school through work- and community-based learning opportunities. And yet, while students are starting to have more and more opportunities for work- and community-based learning, they also need to be able to earn both high school and postsecondary credit for such experiences.
- **Summary:** This policy brief considers potential policies to enable students to earn high school and postsecondary credit for work-based learning experiences. Under current Colorado law, course credit for work-based learning such as apprenticeships or community-embedded learning is currently managed by the district or school where a student is enrolled. The first policy idea is providing a state entity with the authority

to license nonprofit entities as credit issuing education service providers. The second policy idea suggests that it is time that a Colorado endorsed diploma enables students to receive more credit for work-based learning experiences. The third policy focuses on implementing a Colorado statewide plan to award postsecondary academic credit for prior work and learning experiences. And, the fourth policy outlines new ways to measure student success. For example, the state could consider two layers of assessment. The first layer would be comprised of basic measures for the purpose of identifying fundamental quality or equity issues. The second layer would be unique measures based on local goals and could require at least one locally identified goal related to career exploration and preparation.

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- **Short-term Next Steps:** Legislation is expected to be reintroduced in the 2020 session that did not pass in 2019 that

would allow members of the current workforce to receive postsecondary credit for demonstrating competencies gained through work-related experiences, work-based learning and apprenticeships.

- **Longer-term Initiatives:** Granting organizations the authority to award high school course credit for work-based learning experiences is a longer-term initiative worth considering. It would likely necessitate changes to Colorado’s funding structure.

3 Improving Opportunities for Students in Rural Communities:

- **Challenge:** According to the Colorado Department of Education, 80% of the school districts in Colorado are rural, comprising over 15% of the total student population in the state. Yet students in rural Colorado have limited access to both career and technical (CTE) educators and higher education institutions and deserve the same access as their counterparts in Colorado’s urban population centers.
- **Summary:** This policy brief discusses three policies that could help expand opportunities for students in rural communities. First, teacher licensure requirements can act as a barrier to having more CTE educators in the rural classroom. To address this challenge, an opportunity might exist in Colorado’s teacher waiver laws so that more industry experts could teach CTE classes to rural students. A second policy that would benefit students in rural areas is incentivizing more content area expert teachers to teach concurrent enrollment courses in rural districts. A final policy that could provide rural students access to direct CTE instruction would involve allowing more employer job sites to count as the CTE “lab” course credit

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component. Students could be taught by designated employees at a job site where the students are working.

- **Short-term Next Steps:** Because the CTE licensure changes do not necessarily require legislation, discussing ways to modify the licensure requirements could be addressed soon. Implementation of the concurrent enrollment pilot program adopted by Senate Bill 19-176 and the loan forgiveness program instituted by Senate Bill 19-003 should be monitored closely in the near term.
- **Longer-term Initiatives:** Expanding broadband technology to rural Colorado to narrow the current gap in access for greater course choice for students between rural educators and their urban counterparts.



Through Vision 2030, Colorado employers identified the most important student competencies, experiences, and system changes needed for our state to thrive.

Vision 2030 is just that – a vision for the future of education in Colorado. The policies in this report provide the specific strategies and policies needed to move this vision forward.


These policy prototypes are designed to start the conversation and will need further refinement as we build a coalition looking to advance this agility agenda. We will involve legislators, the Governor, the State Board of Education, other education stakeholders, and our members. We will continue to convene small groups in 2019 to build out these ideas and inform the policy agenda for 2020 and beyond.

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Questions?

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