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## Charting the Capitol Legislative Updates - February 2, 2015

### The Pace Quickens

From the swearing in of newly-elected members to the Governor's inauguration and State of the State address, the first few weeks of the 2015 legislative session were given over to a number of ceremonial occasions. That all changed last week, however, as the much-anticipated results of the Standards and Assessments Task Force were released, setting in motion the discussion that many expect to define this year's education debate - that of testing and how the state's assessment system should be adjusted moving forward. The League will be engaging in this discussion very actively as we remain committed to working toward palpable changes to Colorado's assessment system that can be felt in charter schools and classrooms across the state.

Read on for further details on this and other legislative news of note, and please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org) or Jessica Johnson at [jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org](mailto:jmjohnson@coloradoleague.org) should you have questions or concerns related to any of these topics.

### Testing Task Force Releases Its Recommendations

The Standards and Assessments Task Force, created by HB14-1202 during last year's legislative session, released its testing recommendations before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Education Committees last Wednesday. Comprised of a broad cross-section of interests and individuals from across the state (including several influential charter voices), the group worked hard over the past several months to arrive at consensus as to how we might meaningfully and thoughtfully adjust our assessment system moving forward. And while they were unable to arrive at complete unanimity (one member did not sign on to the final report), they did reach broad agreement on a number of areas including:

- Eliminate state-required tests in 12th grade
- Eliminate state-required tests in 11th grade except for a college entrance exam like ACT
- Continue language arts and math tests in the 10th grade, as well as in grades 3-8 (to satisfy federal requirements)
- Consider whether to continue 9th grade testing (task force split)
- Consider whether to continue social studies in 4th and 7th grades (task force split)
- Reduce the overall amount of READ Act assessments that must be administered
- Create an accountability "timeout" for the 2015-16 school year in case significant numbers of students don't take tests this spring
- Make available pencil and paper tests at all levels beginning in 2015-16
- Create a newly-established advisory board to work on long-term recommendations partially out of recognition that there are limits to what can currently be done given existing federal requirements

[Click here for a copy of the Task Force's full report](#), and please keep in mind that, at least for now, these recommendations are just that - recommendations. It will require action by the legislature for any of these proposals to take official effect.

### **Other Testing Legislation Already in the Pipeline**

Prior to the Standards and Assessments Task Force releasing its recommendations, a number of other testing-related bills had already been introduced in both the House and Senate. To help you understand all of the details and differences of these various bills, we created a [spreadsheet](#) for your reference. We encourage you to take a look and let us know what you think. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these assorted approaches? We'd love to hear your thoughts, which can be sent to [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org).

### **Charter Networks Bill Introduced**

Many of you operate schools that may be considered part of a charter school network. While this arrangement has existed in practice in Colorado for a number of years, it has yet to be reflected in policy, which is why we're pursuing legislation this year that would codify the concept in statute and clear up any possible confusion that may exist around this structure.

Our efforts on this front took a big step forward in recent weeks when we successfully secured Representative Susan Lontine (D-Denver) as the lead House sponsor on the bill. We're hopeful that, with her support, we can move this proposal smoothly through the legislature. The official bill was introduced this past Friday. [Click here for full bill text](#) and a [brief one-page overview](#).

### **We Need YOU!**

Our charter school networks bill is but one of several priorities that the League will be pursuing this session ([click here for a complete rundown of our 2015 legislative agenda](#)), and we absolutely need your voice at the table to ensure the greatest likelihood of success. Unless the charter community comes out in force on many of these issues, we will have very little chance of getting them across the finish line. So please, if you are interested in helping with our advocacy efforts at the Capitol, contact us as soon as possible so we can discuss the best opportunities for you to engage. Colorado CAN (the Colorado Charter Advocacy Network) is one way that we distribute information and that allows charter supporters to have a voice. If you and your staff and families have yet to sign up for Colorado CAN, [please do so today by clicking here](#) so we can be sure to have you in the system when the time comes for immediate and forceful action.

### **FREE Parent Advocacy Training**

Speaking of advocates, the League recognizes that when it comes to issues of public education, no one's voice is stronger than a parent's. That's why we've coordinated a FREE Advocacy Training for Charter School Parents to take place on Thursday, February 26, from 9:00am-12:00pm at the Marriott Denver Tech Center (4900 S. Syracuse Street, Denver, CO 80237). The event is taking place in conjunction with the [2015 Colorado Charter Schools Conference](#).

Space is limited, so please encourage your school's parents to sign up TODAY! [Click here to download a flier and please distribute it to your school's families](#). Parents can register by [clicking here](#) and selecting "Charter Conference-Thursdays Kickoff Workshop Only."

The event will feature two national organizers - [Tyler Whitmire](#) and [Yannell Selman](#) - with extensive parent advocacy experience. Attendees will:

- Learn strategies for effective advocacy at both the state and local level
- Gain an understanding of the legislative process and how to develop relationships with elected officials and decision makers
- Learn how to build relationships and target optimal advocacy opportunities within their community
- Gain core content knowledge to be an impactful advocate for charter schools and other high-quality public school options

### **League Legislative Tracker**

As in previous years, if you're looking for details on other education-related legislation not highlighted

here, be sure to check out our [Legislative Tracker](#) for information on all current education bills. And if you'd like more background on any of this legislation, please don't hesitate to reach out and we'd be happy to provide further context.

We welcome feedback on these and any other areas of concern you might have, and invite you to send responses to [dschaller@coloradoleague.org](mailto:dschaller@coloradoleague.org) or call 303.989.5356 x105.

Sincerely,

The League Policy and Advocacy Team

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