



## BriefCASE

A legislative and advocacy newsletter  
from The Colorado Association of School Executives

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*We're off and running! The 2023 Colorado legislative session kicked off earlier this month, and already CASE is tracking and/or lobbying more than 30 bills pertaining to K-12. Public education is always a key area of focus for policymakers, and with so many brand-new lawmakers who were elected into office in November 2022, that is especially true this year.*

*CASE anticipates some big-ticket legislation this session, including on accountability, school finance, human resources issues, student discipline and much more. Input and engagement from members on legislation is a critical component of our ability to be successful at the Capitol, and we encourage you to be involved in our advocacy work. CASE Legislative Committee meetings are open to all active and affiliate members to attend, and offer a great opportunity to share your experience and insights on important policy issues. Those meeting dates and additional details are at the end of this communication. We're so grateful for the input and guidance from our Legislative Committee members and the role they play in helping to shape our advocacy strategy.*

*Please know that CASE is very aware of how hard you're working every day to support and serve students. One of our main priorities when it comes to advocacy is to help legislators understand everything educators and leaders are already doing, and the challenges you face in your schools and districts.*

*Thank you for your involvement in CASE! Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at any time with questions by emailing [bmiles@co-case.org](mailto:bmiles@co-case.org).*

*- Bret Miles, CASE Executive Director*

## Governor Polis proposes investments in K-12

During his State of the State address on January 17, Governor Polis outlined his supplemental budget proposal and vision for investment in K-12. Highlights that we want to be sure CASE members are aware of include:

- **An increase in per pupil funding by an additional \$948/student.** This is a greater increase than what he included in his November 2022 budget proposal (\$861/student), and would result in a per pupil funding level of \$10,508.
- **Buy-down of the budget stabilization factor.** Polis is proposing buying down the budget stabilization (BS) factor by \$120 million, which would bring down the total BS factor to \$201 million. At its peak in 2009-10, the BS factor was more than \$10 billion, and the governor stated in his speech that his goal is to fully eliminate it during his second term of office (meaning over the next four years). He did note that continued buy-downs are contingent on strong economic conditions moving forward.
- **Property tax reduction plan.** There is a direct connection between property tax revenue and the amount of funding available for schools. When property tax revenue comes in low, the local share of school funding is consequently also low. That means that the state makes up the difference and backfills whatever isn't covered.

Governor Polis outlined his desire to reduce property taxes (both residential and commercial), while at the same time ensuring school funding is not adversely affected. Key Democrat lawmakers believe that's doable and that both are high priorities.

- **New investments in math.** Polis is proposing a one-time \$25 million investment in after-school math tutoring and \$3 million in one-time funds for new math curriculum. This stems from lower student test scores in math as compared to reading since the pandemic hit in 2020.

It's important to note that the above items are proposals only, and not a sure thing. The Legislature must wait until the March economic forecast to begin to make final funding decisions, a process that kicks off with work at the Joint Budget Committee (JBC).

In other funding news, the work of the Interim School Finance Committee wrapped up and this morning they recommended legislation for this session to put \$40 million into Tier B special education funding.

CASE is encouraged to see the proposed levels of investment in K-12 and we're advocating strongly for every dollar possible for K-12. We will keep you posted as conversations move forward.

## The return of student discipline legislation

For the past several years, student discipline and safety has been a hot topic at the Legislature. Lawmakers have introduced legislation that addresses things like disproportionate discipline rates among different student groups, increased data reporting requirements for districts, increased information about discipline rates available to the public and more.

Last fall, CASE created a Student Discipline Work Group to dive into these issues and to provide specific feedback on legislation. The level of member interest in serving on this group was greater than what we were able to accommodate and we're so appreciative of the strong interest in getting involved in this critical area of our advocacy work. About thirty CASE members were selected to serve on the group, and met four times from November 2022 through January 2023. They provided CASE with invaluable feedback on legislation that has helped inform our overall association position on student discipline issues, and their work is continuing now that the legislative session is underway. There are already a handful of bills that we have asked them to weigh in on, and our lobbyist Elisabeth Rosen is using stories and examples from our members to help illustrate our concerns.

### **Two of these bills are:**

**Senate Bill 29: Addressing Disproportionate Discipline in Public Schools.** This bill requires districts to review their disciplinary data and if it's found to be disproportionate, to develop an improvement plan to address it with input from the community. Schools are further required to document in a student's record what alternate discipline measures were used prior to suspension or expulsion.

CASE has a lot of concerns with Senate Bill 29, and have been coordinating our education partner organizations to address them with the bill sponsor. We're so appreciative of the member feedback we received on this bill, and the bill sponsor opted to postpone its consideration in the Senate Committee hearing that was scheduled for Monday, January 30.

Click [here](#) to read bill.

If you have feedback on either of these two bills, please email CASE Deputy Executive Director Melissa Gibson at [mgibson@co-case.org](mailto:mgibson@co-case.org).

### **Work underway to improve state accountability system**

One of CASE's highest priority bills this session is around taking steps toward improving our state accountability system. As we've shared you, legislation in 2021 called for an audit of the system, and the audit report was released in December. The report is lengthy, and as CASE had anticipated, it finds that the current system is working as it was intended to and is "reasonable and appropriate."

CASE believes that there's great opportunity for us to make changes to this fourteen-year-old system and that "reasonable and appropriate" should hardly be the end goals we're aiming for. So much of what we do as education leaders is grounded in the concept of

continuous improvement, and that's the lens through which we're viewing this work. There are important conversations to be had around things like how useful and actionable the data is, whether it is as valuable to parents as it should be, if there are biases innate to the system unfairly affecting different student groups, and so much more.

This session, CASE will be bringing forth legislation to create a task force that will make recommendations about how we can improve the accountability system. We believe that educators and K-12 leaders are best suited to do this work and know that for years, CASE members have been talking about system areas that need to be revamped.

CASE has convened a small group of superintendents and assessment and accountability experts to help us bring forward this legislation, and we'll have more updates for you as these conversations and planning moves ahead.

### **CASE support for UPK implementation**

Launch of the new universal preschool program (UPK) is underway, and for many districts, it has been a bumpy start. CASE is strongly supportive of a successful UPK program and the potential for what's possible, and we also know that many districts have outstanding questions and concerns about different elements of the program.

CASE is committed to bringing your questions and concerns to CDE and the Department of Early Childhood (DEC), as well as providing you with bi-weekly updates on new information and/or the latest clarifications/changes that we learn about from CDE and DEC. If you would like to receive these updates and haven't received our last few UPK communications, please email Melissa Gibson at [mgibson@co-case.org](mailto:mgibson@co-case.org) and we'll be sure you receive those.

### **Join us at a CASE Legislative Committee meeting**

We'd love to see you at an upcoming meeting of our CASE Legislative Committee, which are held via Zoom and open to any active, affiliate or emeritus members. They provide an outstanding opportunity stay in the know about K-12 policy issues, and to weigh in on bills impacting public education. Send us an email and we'll add you to the invitation list! 2023 meeting dates are below:

#### **Friday, February 3, 2023**

12:00pm-2:00 pm  
Zoom

#### **Thursday, February 23, 2023**

At conclusion of WLC, approximately 12:00 pm  
WLC, Embassy Suites, Loveland

**Friday, March 24, 2023**

1:30pm-4:00 pm

Zoom

**Friday, April 14, 2023**

1:30pm-4:00 pm

Zoom

**Friday, April 28, 2023**

10:30am-12:00 pm

Zoom

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Visit: [www.co-case.org](http://www.co-case.org)

The logo for CASE, featuring the word "CASE" in a bold, serif font. Above the letters "A" and "S" is a white silhouette of a classical pediment or roofline. The logo is set against a blue background that shows a faint image of a classical building with a dome, likely a state capitol building.