We’re pleased to be in your inbox with our monthly Communication Matters newsletter, in which we highlight district successes, provide updates on relevant news, and pass along pertinent information to bolster your CASE membership.

With that said, we love hearing about innovation in your districts! Is your school or district doing something worthy of a shout-out? Be it a district-wide project, a school-specific milestone or even a staff member who goes above and beyond, we want to know! Be sure to contact CASE Communications Specialist Elisa Wiseman with your story or shout-out for a chance to be featured in a future Communication Matters. Email her at ewiseman@co-case.org. Click here to read past Spotlight stories.

**Judge Strikes Down Transportation Section of HB18-1306**

Late last week, CASE learned that Denver District Court Judge David Goldberg ruled in favor of the lawsuit brought by CASE and CASB, as well as five school districts and two individual taxpayers, that challenged the constitutionality of the transportation section of HB18-1306. As a result, that component (which pertained to transporting students across district lines) is “declared to be void and of no effect.”

This component would have deleted a longstanding section of state statute that required a school district consent to another district providing transportation to students. The lawsuit argued that this is invalid under multiple provisions of the Colorado Constitution, including the clear expression and single subject requirements. The bill’s other provisions, which pertain to school districts’ obligations to students in out-of-home placement, are not affected by this ruling.

This is outstanding news and represents a victory for local school districts. CASE is very appreciative of the leadership from our partner organizations and superintendents on this issue, including the Poudre School District, Englewood Schools, the Sheridan School District, Cheyenne Mountain School District, Monte Vista school District, and Jeffco Public Schools.

Please feel free to contact CASE at 303-762-8762 if you have any questions about the ruling.

**Spotlight On: St. Vrain Valley School’s New Innovation Center**

Submitted by St. Vrain Valley Schools

This past fall, St. Vrain Valley Schools proudly celebrated the grand opening of their new 50,000 square foot, Innovation Center. The new building, which reflects the striking,
cutting-edge learning the flourishes across St. Vrain, was made possible through strong community support in passing the 2016 bond initiative, alongside time and resource investment from the St. Vrain’s many industry and community partners.

The Innovation Center of St. Vrain Valley Schools began in 2012, when St. Vrain received a prestigious $16.6 million Race to the Top grant. At the Innovation Center, students access advanced STEM and design coursework in focus areas that include robotics, computer science, information technology, aeronautics, entrepreneurship, media, and STEM curriculum. Many of the programs can lead to industry certifications such as Apple Certified Technician, CompTIA, and TriCaster Certification, among others.

St. Vrain Valley School's Innovation Center

Through extended learning and mentorship opportunities, students gain invaluable real-world experiences and many join after-school teams where they receive paid employment to work on projects for business and community partners. Past project examples include partnering with the Denver Zoo to engineer an underwater robot to study endangered frogs in Peru, building a device to measure sharks for the Ocean First Institute, and developing many apps, websites, and videos for a variety of organizations and causes.

The new facility includes an aeronautics division, where students build and learn to pilot unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and learn through newly donated flight simulators. The district plans to add a 250 square foot landing pad to continue extending student opportunities in this growing field. The Innovation Center is also home to an entrepreneurial zone, designed to build a collaborative culture for students, staff, and the community. The space includes a ‘Pitch Room’ and many different collaboration and media areas for student work. Everywhere are state-of-the-art classrooms, science labs, and other spaces for hands-on learning and exploration.
Alongside its many opportunities for students, the new Innovation Center also provides programming options for teachers, administrators, and the community-at-large. This fall, St. Vrain’s Office of Professional Development relocated to the new building to have access to more space for professional development courses and build stronger connections to learning technology and classroom work. “Part of this new space really affords us the opportunity to learn by doing for all of us,” says Assistant Superintendent of Priority Programs Diane Lauer.

"Learning at Innovation Center transcends the traditional classroom and provides experiential opportunities that are developing today’s students into tomorrow’s leaders, innovators, and changemakers,” says Patty Quinones, Assistant Superintendent of Innovation. "That really is the essence of what we are doing, and it certainly extends beyond our walls to staff, teachers, and our whole community."

**Adams 12 Five Star Schools Superintendent Chris Gdowski Named Most Admired CEO**

Congratulations to Superintendent Gdowski, who was named one of Metro Denver’s Most Admired CEO’s by the Denver Business Journal! Gdowski is one of 15 executives being honored out of over 100 nominations, and the only education leader selected. Awardees were selected based on company success, civic engagement, and innovation.
Gdowski is a longtime CASE member and former chair of the CASE Legislative Committee.

Read the Business Journal’s Q&A with him on turnaround, Latino students, and the skills gap here.

**Don’t forget to register for the 2019 CASE Winter Leadership Conference!**

There are fewer than 75 spots left for the 2019 CASE Winter Leadership Conference (February 6-8, 2019 at the Westin Hotel in Westminster). Our discounted room block at the Westin is full, so CASE has secured a discounted room rate at the Denver Marriott Westminster, which is less than one mile away from the Westin. [Click here](#) to reserve your lodging at the Marriott for the same rate as the Westin ($149/night).

**Save the Date for CASE Member Day at the Capitol**

![CASE Member Day at the Capitol](image)

**2019 CASE Member Day at the Capitol**

January 25, 2019
8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

You’re invited to join your colleagues and members of the CASE advocacy team at the Colorado Capitol!

This is a great opportunity to connect with state policymakers and gain a deeper understanding of the K-12 issues being considered during this 2019 legislative session.

Please RSVP by emailing CASE Director of Communications, Melissa Gibson at mgibson@co-case.org.

More details to come soon.
Call For Nominations for Secondary Principal of the Year

CASE and the Colorado Association of Secondary School Principals are now seeking nominations for the 2019-20 Colorado Middle Level and High School Principals of the Year. The program is meant to recognize outstanding secondary principals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and are considered strong leaders by their colleagues. The people you nominate do not have to be employees of your school or district, but must meet the award program’s eligibility criteria:

- Nominee must be a current member of CASE/CASSP and NASSP;
- Must have been a principal at one or more middle level of high schools (grades 6-12) for a minimum of three full years;
- Must complete the online NASSP National Principal of the Year Award application;
- Must be a middle level or high school principal at the time of interviews and the selection as a Colorado secondary Principal of the Year (March 29, 2019)

Successful candidates must be middle or high school principals throughout the year of their Colorado award terms (2019-20). The deadline for submitting a nomination is January 31, 2019. Please click here for a 2020 Nomination Form, and please share the form with any colleagues or fellow education professionals who might know of potential candidates. Contact Karen Ryan at 303-762-8762 or kryan@co-case.org with any questions.

In The News

- A great read from Chalkbeat about the research proving the importance of education funding:
  - Does money matter for schools? Why one researcher says the question is ‘essentially settled’
- Obama-era discipline rules should be scrapped, Trump school safety commission says (Chalkbeat)
- Why more Denver students will now qualify for free public bus passes (Chalkbeat Colorado)
- Lawmakers pledge to ‘put some legs’ to new Colorado education plan (Chalkbeat Colorado)
- Colorado education organization hopes state doesn’t regress as Trump’s safety panel seeks to revoke school discipline rules (The Denver Post)