

# Supporting Rural School Districts

## Overview of the Colorado Rural Education Council

The Colorado Department of Education is committed to ensuring that *ALL* students receive an education that prepares them for success in college and career. With 80 percent of Colorado's school districts recognized as rural, the Rural Education Council was created to provide the commissioner of education advice and counsel on issues unique to rural school districts.

### Background

Colorado's rural districts include 147 of the state's 178 school districts yet only comprise 20 percent of the total student population in the state. While these rural school districts often have small student populations, they represent critical aspects of Colorado's education system.

The Colorado Department of Education commissioned the Rural Needs Study in 2010-11 looking for ways to improve services to rural school districts. The chief recommendation from the study was for the creation of an advisory group that would provide the commissioner of education with delivery and support recommendations for rural school districts. The Rural Education Council was formed in 2011 and has since served as an active forum for the Colorado Department of Education to engage with and support rural school districts.

### Rural Education Council Members

The Rural Education Council is comprised of superintendents representing each of the eight regions in Colorado; a rural principal; a rural teacher; representatives from the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives and the Colorado BOCES Association; two rural board of education members and the Colorado Rural Schools Alliance.

Colorado's Commissioner of Education and Rural Liaison work closely with the council. The rural liaison oversees the council including scheduling meetings, determining agendas, facilitating meetings and advocating for the council's recommendations.

### Rural Definition & Fast Facts

In January 2013, the Rural Education Council helped to develop a revised definition for rural school districts in Colorado.

#### Revised Rural Definition:

*A Colorado school district is determined to be rural based on the size of the district, the distance from the nearest large urban/urbanized area, and having a student enrollment of approximately 6,500 students or fewer. Small rural districts are those districts meeting these same criteria and having a student population of fewer than 1,000 students.*

#### Rural Facts:

- 178 school districts (total)
- 109 of the 178 are *small rural*
- 38 of the 178 are *rural* districts
- Approx. 130,500 rural students
- 14 districts with less than 100 students
- 53 districts with less than 250 students
- 85 districts with less than 500 students
- Approx. 60 districts are at one K-12 site and/or one K-12 building

### Where can I learn more?

- CDE Rural Education Council: [www.cde.state.co.us/ruraledcouncil/index.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/ruraledcouncil/index.asp)
- CDE Rural Liaison: Tina Goar [goar\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:goar_t@cde.state.co.us)
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: [www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs](http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs)