January 24, 2023 | 2:00 pm

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My top priority as Governor is keeping the people of our state safe. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has been hard at work to detect and contain COVID-19 and has been partnering with federal and local health departments.

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Governor Polis Announces Millions More in Education Grants for Colorado

MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021

COLORADO - Today, Governor Polis announced the second round of Response, Innovation, and Student Equity (RISE) Fund awardees to innovate and transform public education. In November 2020, Gov. Polis shared the first round of RISE grantees, following his September 2020 announcement of the RISE fund, which supports innovation in high-needs school districts, charter schools, and public institutions of higher education to address the learning challenges related to the economic, social, and health impacts of COVID-19 in a manner that creates sustainable innovations that improve student learning, close equity gaps, and enhance operational efficiency for pre-K-12 through higher education. These grants bring the total amount awarded through RISE to over $40 million.

As before, all of the recipients were chosen by a group of parents, students, and education leaders.

“Every Colorado student should have access to a quality education and these amazing ideas and innovative programs from improving early childhood education to increasing apprenticeship opportunities for high-schoolers will help improve our schools and build back stronger than before the pandemic,” said Governor Jared Polis. **“I’ve spent the majority of my life pushing for innovation and excellence in education and these focused investments will make a transformative positive impact on the lives of Colorado’s kids and families today and for the future.”**

Thanks to the generous support of funders, including the Gates Family Foundation and Gary Community Investments, almost half of the grantees received resources and strategic design support for the RISE fund earlier this year. This planning and design support opportunity helped potential grantees conduct strong community engagement efforts and strategic design processes. This opportunity allowed the RISE fund to reach grantees from every geographic region in the state.

In addition, the state has partnered with the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab, to conduct rigorous evaluations of the RISE grantees so the rest of the state and country can learn from what works. The goal of this process is to ensure that school districts, schools, institutions of higher education, can learn from the best practices developed through these innovative projects.

“Today was a very blessed day for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe,” said Chairman Manuel Heart. **“We received word that we were awarded the RISE grant from the State of Colorado through Governor Polis. This is what a true government to government relationship should be through a partnership of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the State of Colorado. Education is a priority for the future of our Ute children, especially during this challenging time of COVID-19. We must continue to strive every day to educate our children of our rich history but also to look toward the future endeavors that they will each face in their lifetime.”**

“Northeastern is very excited about the opportunities now available to the college through the receipt of the RISE Grant. Closing equity gaps and serving a more diverse population has been a long term goal of the college and this funding will go a long way in helping us reach our student success and community service goals,” said Jay A. Lee, President, Northeastern Junior College.

“St. Vrain is honored to be selected as a RISE Grant recipient and we look forward to collaborating with several other Colorado school districts. This excellent opportunity will greatly support our commitment to advancing academic foundations through innovative design and increasing student achievement in literacy. The RISE Grant will further support our students in developing a strong, competitive advantage necessary to succeed in our highly competitive, global environment,” said St. Vrain Valley School District Superintendent Don Haddad.

"As one of 11 Denver based charter schools working together to serve the unique needs of their communities of students, I was thrilled to take Governor Polis' call Friday, informing us we had been awarded the RISE grant,” said Becky McLean, MPH, School Director, Academy 360 Public Charter School. **“COVID-19 has impacted not only our students' academic experiences but also their social emotional health and extracurricular opportunities. These funds will allow us to offer all of these things, setting students up for success in the fall and beyond. We are ready to get to work."**

“Adams State University is excited to lead the efforts of the San Luis Valley Collaborative to reduce the inequities in access to education and employment in our communities, and ease the impacts of COVID-19. RISE support and the formation of the SLV Collaborative of P-20 educators and community partners present a rare opportunity to improve the futures of our students, especially those who are furthest from opportunity, and our region’s vitality. Youth development, expanded capacity in Career & Technical Education across seven school districts, and paid internships for high school students will energize and inspire our youth and begin to develop the skilled workforce the San Luis Valley needs,” said Dr. Cheryl Lovell, President, Adams State University.

"We are so excited in West Grand to move forward with this focus on early childhood education. While we have begun the initial steps, the RISE grant will allow for exponential growth to our programming and support,” said West Grand School District Superintendent Darrin Peppard **“We know the impact that quality, affordable early childhood learning has on students, but we are very excited to see the short and long term impacts on the Kremmling community."**

"This is a significant milestone for Adams 14," Adams 14 School District Acting Superintendent Don Rangel stated. **"By expanding Career and Technical opportunities, engaging with industry partners, and implementing a P-Tech Model, we increase learning relevance that will lead to higher graduation rates, and increase the likelihood that students in the Adams 14 school district graduate with the skills and knowledge necessary to have post-secondary choice and the ability compete with graduates across the state.”**

“The Bennett, Strasburg and Weld Central School districts are honored to receive the Governor's RISE grant to create a lasting student-centered mental health model of learning. Our schools must adapt and innovate to respond to the mental health repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic among our students, staff, families and rural communities.We believe it is crucial to build the capacity of rural districts to provide school-delivered mental health services to address the immediate and the long-term effects rendered during these challenging times,” said Bennett School District Superintendent Robin Purdy.

“We are extremely excited to have the opportunity to receive the funding that will allow our district to focus on authentic learning by implementing real world problem-based learning through entrepreneurship and service learning,” said Campo School District Superintendent Nikki Johnson. **“Our community will witness first-hand the amazing results of motivated students having the resources and support needed to apply what they are learning in unique and creative ways.”**

“On behalf of our communities, students, and partners, the Santa Fe Trail BOCES and its districts are grateful to be awarded the RISE grant! This grant provides us with the ability to continue creating opportunities to ensure all of our students are college/career ready through our Pathway to Prosperity program in the wake of COVID,” said Sandy Malouff, Director, Santa Fe Trail BOCES. **“This investment will strengthen and formalize linkages between K-12 education, local employers, and higher education to increase equity in our rural area and prepare students with the skills needed to thrive in their pathway of choice.”**

“I am thrilled to have this opportunity to further partner with other HSI community college

colleagues and the various school districts serving rural southern Colorado to enhance teaching and learning opportunities for all students," said Dr. Patty Erjavec, President, Pueblo Community College. **"This collaboration is sure to align both our financial and human resources in providing pathways of study that would not have been made possible otherwise. Student success is at the heart of all we do, and as such, look for great things to come."**

"The League is humbled and grateful for the opportunity to put kids first by supporting high-quality public charter schools in their efforts to increase achievement for students most impacted by Covid-19," Dan Schaller, President, Colorado League of Charter Schools. **"Our cohort of 14 schools from across the state will be undertaking critical work to better serve diverse learners by increasing their engagement and success. We're so grateful to Governor Polis, the Gates Family Foundation and Gary Community Investments for all their support."**

"The central mountains and far northwest region of Colorado are incredibly beautiful and attract visitors from across the globe," stated Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser, President & CEO of Colorado Mountain College. **"These same communities are also particularly susceptible to economic downturns and natural disasters such as the devastating wildfires of this past summer,"** she added. **"With funding from RISE, CMC is pleased to aid in the region's economic recovery by partnering with Colorado Northwestern Community College, 17 school districts and 54 rural high schools to restore concurrent enrollment programs toppled by the pandemic, build the state's most extensive network of technology-enabled classrooms, and dramatically expand access to college courses for students in western Colorado."**

"Before the pandemic, innovation in education was important; however, with the pandemic and its effects on so many students (especially our most vulnerable students) innovation is now vital," said Steven Bartholomew, Executive Director, New Legacy Charter School. **"Engaging students through real world learning and supporting their social-emotional development will not only get them "back on track" but get them ready for life after high school. The RISE grant will allow our school to support students in this important work."**

"You have no idea what this grant means to our small district! Being innovative has been something required from us each and every day this year just to keep our doors open," said Park County School District RE-2 Superintendent Cindy Bear. **"It is an enormous gift to be awarded this grant to keep us moving in that direction and to be able to support our families by staying open."**

"Cripple Creek-Victor School District is incredibly grateful to Governor Polis for releasing the RISE Grant and to the panel of reviewers for recognizing our passion," said Cripple Creek-Victor School District Superintendent Miriam Mondragon. **"This endeavor isn't just about a CTE program, it is a shift in how we educate our youth and strengthen our community."**

"We are thrilled by this, and know that the hard work is only beginning. This grant will help us bring a new approach to education to our students and offer significant opportunities to our community at large," said Dan Cummings, Secondary Principal, Cripple Creek-Victor School District. **"We are excited to get moving on things, and look forward to deepening partnerships with families, community members and local businesses!"**

"As small rural communities in Northwest Colorado, providing and sustaining access to high-quality innovative learning experiences as well as diverse economic opportunities has been a well-known challenge," said Hayden School District Superintendent Dr. Christy Sinner. **"Support from the RISE Education Fund allows us to revitalize the region's agricultural roots and build sustainable pathways of the future through regional collaboration and an investment in the next generation of students who will take the Yampa Valley to and through the unknown future that lies ahead. Hayden and South Routt School Districts, its students, families, and local partners deeply appreciate this support through which we can realize our shared vision for the future of the Yampa Valley."**

"Plateau Valley School District will be able to take our agriculture program into realms of the industry that we only dreamed of being able to share with our students," said Plateau Superintendent Michael L. Page. **"We had a great team that worked tirelessly on this grant and they deserve all the credit. The grant will empower our students to develop competencies in the most up-to-date technologies in the regions' most employable agricultural industries. The entire school community is very grateful to the Governor's Office and to the RISE Committee for this unbelievable opportunity."**

"We are very excited to be chosen as one of the Colorado districts to be awarded the Governor's RISE grant," said Cortez School District Superintendent Lori Haukeness. **"Through the grant the district will be able to more effectively address the students' needs at the secondary level by strategically aligning the counseling services at the secondary level to better meet the social emotional needs of our students. The grant will support the creation of the high school's graduation pathways which will include post-secondary readiness skills and a mentoring program aligned to the M-CHS Profile of Successful Graduate. Through the systemic work the high school will be able to provide personalized graduation pathways with dynamic course scheduling and hybrid classes to allow students to further personalize internships and maximize concurrent enrollment opportunities."**

Recipients include:

- **St. Vrain Valley Schools:** $2,793,637 for the development of a full-time summer literacy program for K-5th graders at schools with lower performance across the Cheraw, Estes Park, Las Animas, Montezuma-Cortez, and Sheridan school districts.

- **Plateau Valley High School:** $283,485 for an internship and capstone program that teaches students the basics of coding, crop sensor use, data analysis, and comprehensive skills associated with agriculture production.

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Adams State University: $2,581,747 to create a robust program across all 14 San Luis Valley School Districts, in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of San Luis Valley to prepare San Luis Valley students to be a resilient and skilled workforce ready to meet rapidly changing industry demands that fuel the region's economic growth and vitality.

- **Hayden School District:** $1,050,500 for a cross-district program between Hayden and South Routt School Districts with a PK-12 s hands-on curriculum and community engagement around the local food system and agricultural/energy production sustainability to help prepare students for careers in the Yampa Valley.

- **Montezuma Cortez School District RE-1:** $257,138 to expand and create cohesion across counseling and advising supports for students from grades 6 - 12, with particular attention to students who are most at risk of academic failure. This program will help students develop skills through flexible schedules, internships, and personal pathways, in collaboration with local employers, to postsecondary success.

- **Northeastern Junior College:** $1,937,177 to enable the institution to better meet the needs and demands of its community by expanding Spanish language programs, outreach, and adult basic education, career programs in nursing and solar energy, and helping to remove barriers for non-traditional students.

- **West Grand School District:** $792,998 to support families by expanding early childhood education and programming, growing the early childhood education workforce through high school initiatives, and supporting families who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

- **Bennett School District 29J:** $2,207,625 to create a cross-district program for Bennett, Strasburg, and Weld Central to provide training, resources and implementation support to improve student mental health across the region.

- **Academy 360 Charter School:** $595,700 for eleven charter schools in the Denver Metro area to extend the school year to address the impacts and learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic for high-needs students.

- **Charter School Innovation Consortium:** $1,482,800 for a cohort of 13 charter and innovation schools to create the IDLEA (Increase Diverse Learner Engagement and Achievement) Project, which will deliver strategy and tools to increase engagement for students with disabilities, English language learners, gifted and talented students, and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and to share resources.

- **Campo School District RE-6:** $295,000 to provide entrepreneurship and service learning for students in areas such as commercial sewing, jewelry manufacturing, engineering, photography and metal/wood manufacturing.

- **Colorado Mountain College:** $2,957,466 to rebuild, dramatically grow, and sustainably scale concurrent enrollment opportunities for high schools and local institutions of higher education in rural communities.

- **Park County School District RE-2:** $343,091 to expand outdoor science school, remove barriers for K-5th graders, and create mobile early learning services to provide vision, hearing, developmental screenings and services for families in remote areas.

- **Ute Mountain Ute Tribe*:** $2,775,000 for the creation of a comprehensive Science, Technology, Engineering, (Native) Arts, and Math (STEAM) program integrated with Ute arts, language and culture that can serve as a model for other American Indian and indigenous communities in CO and beyond seeking to embed their culture, history, and traditions in educational experiences for their youth and provide wrap around services that support the academic, social emotional, and basic needs of students and families.

- **Adams County School District 14*:** $2,159,000 to create the Adams 14 Pathway Alliance, a progressive union between Adams 14 schools, a variety of industry partners, the community (including parents, students, and community members) and higher education institutions to create expanded partnerships with industries and connect secondary students with postsecondary/career opportunities through career and technical education opportunities.

- **Cripple Creek-Victor School District*:** $1,491,200 to create a community wide “skills to employment” program for both youth and adults that combines relevant, purpose-driven classroom instruction with paid workforce training linked directly to immediate employment opportunities with the goal of skilling and reskilling the population for livable-wage, in-demand jobs that will also support general economic development and to lift the community out of poverty.

- **New Legacy Charter School*:** $250,000 to expand its programming to address students’ social-emotional needs and trauma by implementing restorative practices and helping to ensure all students graduate from high school with a certification, internship, and/or college class to increase employability after high school.

- **Santa Fe Trail BOCES*:** $365,000 to create a Pathways to Prosperity program in (Cheraw, East Otero/LaJunta, Las Animas, Rocky Ford, Swink, and Wiley) to transform the career and college readiness approach to meet the current moment with online response and alternative delivery.

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Pueblo Community College*: $2 million to develop an innovative approach to distance learning for low-income individuals living across primarily rural areas in Colorado. Pueblo Community College will lead a consortium of several Hispanic-Serving Institutions to enable course-sharing across institutions and to train instructors in online teaching practices.

RISE award winners represent a wide range of eligible applicants, including small and mid-size school districts, BOCES, charter schools, and mid- and large-size public institutions of higher education.

*Due to additional resources for GEER from the federal government, grant amounts are subject to additional negotiation with the Governor's office with an updated end date of September 2023.

RISE Committee members include Mike Johnston, Dr. Tara Raines, Josh Scott, David Olguin, Maurice Robinson, Marty Guitierrez, Elizabeth Thompson-Barrett, Ernest House, Nina Lopez, Pat Chlouber, Dan Baer, Kelly Latterman, Jill Anschutz, Jeff Durbin, and Allie Kimmel.

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