



**COLORADO**  
**Department of Education**  
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203-1799

April 27, 2020

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

I hope you are all staying healthy and managing to keep your head above water. I know this situation is unrelenting in its demand for our time, energy, creativity and patience.

As you will be seeing in the media over the next few days, the staff for the Joint Budget Committee have released their initial recommendations for balancing the 2020-21 budget, a task that has been discouraging and difficult. The bottom line is that, just like districts, the state cannot spend money it does not collect and that will mean painful cuts throughout the state budget. With the economic impact of COVID-19, there is simply much less revenue to fund the budget.

Remember, that JBC staff recommendations are just that -- recommendations to the elected Joint Budget Committee members and ultimately the full legislature. This is just the beginning of the conversation that will take place in May when the legislature reconvenes.

CDE's strategic plan and values, conversations with you, along with the State Board of Education, will guide me during my conversations with legislators and their staff over the coming weeks. Our priorities will be to close achievement and opportunity gaps and preserve funding that supports our most vulnerable students - children living in poverty, our English learners, young students struggling to read, and students with special needs, among others. I will also work to preserve the programs that help support schools in these unprecedented times while maintaining much of the current work on increasing literacy rates.

It is also important to remember that Colorado is receiving close to \$121 million from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. This funding will help support the extraordinary efforts you have taken to support students during the pandemic. We are working to create a feedback survey and other opportunities to gather your ideas on the portion of the resources that might have more flexibility.

We can talk more about the ESSER Fund and the state budget during the conference call on Friday. More details to come on that later this week.

Stay healthy,

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.  
Commissioner

