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Future Forward Colorado Launches to Engage Business Community in the Colorado Academic Standards

Local Business Leaders Support Higher Expectations to Ensure Students Are Better Prepared for Colorado's Jobs

DENVER, CO - March 14, 2014 – Future Forward Colorado, created to show the business community's support of high expectations, transparency, and accountability for our students, educators, and schools, announced its launch today. The coalition's goal is to raise awareness and understanding of the Colorado Academic Standards, which include the real world skills needed to succeed in today's highly skilled workforce. Our state's future economic growth depends on Colorado's kids being prepared for Colorado's jobs.

The Colorado Academic Standards currently are being implemented in Colorado's public schools. These standards require students to learn at much higher levels than in the past and are designed to better prepare students to succeed in both postsecondary education and the workplace. The Colorado Academic Standards comprise 10 high academic content areas and include the English Language and Mathematics Common Core State Standards.

Business leaders from the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Succeeds, Colorado Forum, Colorado Concern, and the Colorado Competitive Council have partnered as the Future Forward Coalition to ensure that Colorado's students have the academic preparation necessary to succeed in Colorado's highly skilled jobs.

"Colorado has been at the forefront of education reform nationally, but our schools can and must do a better job of educating our kids," said Kent Thiry, Chairman and CEO of DaVita. "Tougher and more career-focused standards are an essential step in better preparing our students for the workplace and for college."

"Kaiser Permanente and other Colorado businesses have a vested interest in the development of a local, educated workforce," said Donna Lynne, DrPH, President of Kaiser Permanente Colorado. "If we want Colorado's kids to be the best and brightest, we need to make sure they are set up to succeed academically. The Colorado Academic Standards are a step in the right direction. I encourage businesses and their employees to check out Future Forward Colorado and learn more about these rigorous academic expectations that will positively affect all Colorado families."

By 2020, 74% of Colorado jobs will require some postsecondary education. Currently, only 22 of every 100 high school students end up with that credential. As a result, Colorado schools currently are producing less than half of the workers needed to fill the top 30 occupations with the

largest projected openings. Our students need a strong base of academic preparation to give them the skills and confidence they need to compete in Colorado's highly skilled workforce. If our schools do not rapidly improve academic performance, Colorado's workforce challenges will increase.

Due to this leaky workforce pipeline, Colorado employers do not have an adequate supply of local talent and are forced to import college-educated workers from other states and countries.

"The Colorado Academic Standards are rigorous, relevant, and better prepare students for the realities of post secondary education and the 21st century workforce. They challenge students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, and problem solvers," said Scott Laband, President of Colorado Succeeds. "This raises the bar for Colorado's students and results in a more valuable education for our children."

The Colorado Academic Standards are aligned with rigorous international benchmarks to prepare our students to succeed in the 21st century global economy. These higher expectations build in complexity from grade level to grade level to eliminate skill gaps and ensure students are prepared for graduation. The standards establish what students need to learn but do not tell teachers how to teach. Teachers and school leaders will determine how the standards are to be taught and will establish the curriculum, as they currently do, allowing for continued flexibility and creativity.

Visit www.futureforwardcolorado.org to learn more about Colorado Academic Standards, access resources such as an employer toolkit, and show your support for this important education initiative.

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