

A Business Guide for Colorado's Next Governor

GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE SURVEY
#BESTSCHOOLSCO

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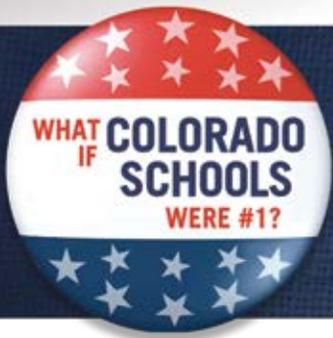


WELCOME

Colorado voters currently rank education as one of the most important issues facing the state, and education will play an important part of the debates and discussions among the 2018 candidates for governor.

This candidate survey explains where those gubernatorial candidates stand on key education issues and the strategies they support to make Colorado's schools the best in the nation.

Candidates were invited to participate in the survey at the end of March 2018. Responses were collected throughout April 2018. In instances where the candidates exceeded the 200-word limit, answers were cut short to honor word limits. Candidate responses are listed alphabetically.



GENERAL

1. If elected as Governor, what would be your top three education priorities for ensuring Colorado has the best schools in the country? (200-word limit)

MIKE JOHNSTON (D) :

1. Expanding access to high-quality Early Childhood Education and full day kindergarten;
2. Increasing funding for the K-12 system in order to provide more money for schools, increasing teacher salaries, investing in technology and ensuring better learning environments for all students; and
3. Keeping higher education accessible through affordable tuition and innovative post-secondary opportunities aligned to the changing workforce.

CARY KENNEDY (D) :

1. Compensating and supporting teachers as the professionals that they are. Studies show Colorado is one of the three least attractive states to work as a teacher because of low salaries, lack of support and insufficient professional development. We need to ensure a pipeline of talent into teaching and attract and retain top teachers.
2. Focus on equity and engage communities. Colorado's low income students, and students of color are continuing to perform significantly worse than their more affluent and white counterparts. This inequity threatens Colorado's ability to be a fair and just society and is holding back our state's economy.
3. Ensure that all Colorado kids have access to high quality Pre-K and full day Kindergarten. Research has clearly shown the important, and longterm benefits of high quality education in the first years of a child's life. High quality Pre-K and full day kindergarten are especially beneficial for students in high risk situations.



GENERAL

1. If elected as Governor, what would be your top three education priorities for ensuring Colorado has the best schools in the country? (200-word limit)

G R E G L O P E Z (R) :

1. Begin the difficult work of how to close the gap of the budget shortfall.
2. Review the way teachers - especially the best teachers - are being consistently rewarded to increase job satisfaction and retention.
3. Explore every avenue available to increase the level and accessibility of vocational and technical training options that best serve the students and parents of students, who choose to follow a path that makes a student job-ready and career-conscious on Day One after high school graduation.

D O N N A L Y N N E (D) :

Education is the ticket to opportunity in America. As a graduate of public schools, elementary through college, who used my education as a springboard to success, this is my story. If Colorado is going to succeed, we need a world class education system in all parts of the state. As Governor, I will work every day to ensure we have a comprehensive education approach, preschool through higher education, which prepares our children for a successful and vibrant future. I will do this by:

- Adequately fund our schools and higher education institutions and reform the way we distribute education funding.
- Attract, retain and support great teachers.
- Ensure stability for PERA.
- Support college and career readiness efforts for all Coloradans.
- Expand access to affordable, quality child care and early learning programs.
- Increase coordination across state agencies responsible for education.



GENERAL

1. If elected as Governor, what would be your top three education priorities for ensuring Colorado has the best schools in the country? (200-word limit)

J A R E D P O L I S (D) :

Universal full-day kindergarten and preschool will give our children a head start on their learning which will improve their academic performance throughout their education, and also prevent parents from having to choose between their job or taking care of their child. Studies have demonstrated that if we truly care about addressing the achievement gaps that exist along racial, geographic, and income lines, then early childhood education is the best investment we can make. I'm proud of the handful of districts leading in supporting additional preschool and kindergarten slots, but it's time for statewide action.

Paying our teachers a competitive wage will help us end the teacher shortage across the state. Additionally, I will partner with Colorado's business community, counties, and school districts to help provide affordable housing for teachers in high-need areas and pay down student loans for educators.

Finally, we must grow participation in dual and concurrent enrollment programs, and implement Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) education. Traditional pathways to a four-year college aren't for every student, and as governor I will also boost the role of apprenticeships, skills training, and financial literacy to prepare students for success.

D O U G R O B I N S O N (R) :

1. Expand parents' and students' educational options
2. Increase STEM & vocational education
3. Allow districts the flexibility to hire the right teachers for the right job



GENERAL

1. If elected as Governor, what would be your top three education priorities for ensuring Colorado has the best schools in the country? (200-word limit)

WALKER STAPLETON (R) :

1. School Choice: Increase access to school choice, we are for all the above education. Be it public, charter, private or homeschool, let's empower parents to find the best fit for their children to succeed.
2. Smarter Spending: We need to get more out of each dollar in our classrooms.
3. Empower Communities: 21st Century curriculum. Lets give the power back to the teachers, parents and administrators at the local level, and have the state help provide the best tools for them to customize educational outcomes. We need to make sure students are both college and career ready, acknowledging that different students will take different paths.



TALENT PIPELINE

2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

MIKE JOHNSTON (D) :

I launched my campaign with a policy called The Colorado Promise (mike4co.com/issues/colorado-promise) because I believe this is the most pressing issue our state will face over the next decade. Now, instead of thinking about 40-year careers in one place, an entire industry can emerge, grow and die in five years. This can make the path to security and prosperity hard to see.

In addition to (1) strengthening our K-12 system, and (2) aligning higher education to the changing demands of the new economy, the (3) Colorado Promise will ensure that every Coloradan – at any stage of their life – has access for up to two years of debt-free tuition for community college or training in exchange for providing meaningful service to the state. Nothing is free in Colorado – you have to work for it – but under the Colorado Promise, that work will allow every Coloradan to get the skills they need for the high-demand and well-paying jobs that are emerging. Those who need it most can also get additional funding for fees, books, and emergency expenses that keep too many struggling students from graduating.



TALENT PIPELINE

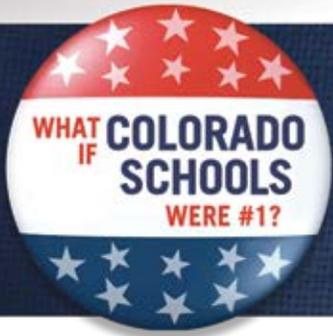
2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

CARY KENNEDY (D) :

We know what a great education system looks like: it provides universal high quality early education, recruits top talent into teaching and gives educators the tools and resources to meet the needs of each of their students.

In addition, there are specific strategies we can use to support students in completing high school and pursuing postsecondary education:

1. Increase Concurrent Enrollment. I helped develop Colorado's early dual enrollment legislation and we are a national leader in concurrent enrollment. All high school students should be offered skills-based courses like coding, emergency medical training and skilled trades, and the opportunity to participate in apprenticeship programs that build toward a postsecondary credential.
2. Expand Mentorship programs for first-time college students. Programs like Success Boston, which pair high school students with mentors from their community, have shown great success in increasing college acceptance and persistence rates.
3. NonTuition Costs. We need to also focus on the cost of housing and high rates of food insecurity if we are going to fully address the economic barriers facing our low and middle income college students and give them a better chance of completing their degree.

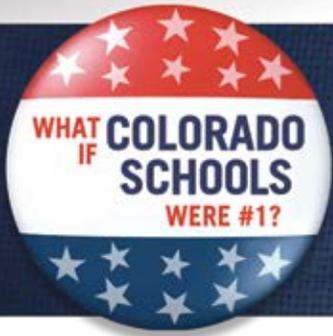


TALENT PIPELINE

2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

G R E G L O P E Z (R) :

1. Widen the “knowledge and skills” narrative to all parents-families-students that clearly outlines the definition of “workforce needs” across the state - as those needs include the skills of college graduates, as well as professional trades. I will be a Governor that emphasizes the value of every member our workforce, no matter the “color of their collar.” If a future member of the workforce so chooses, we will ensure high school graduates are job-ready the Monday after graduation, as well as college-ready if that is their chosen path.
2. With respect to graduation rates, we need to work closely with the school districts and “co-discover” why student performance markers may not match the “investment rate” Colorado taxpayers are putting into the school system – region by region. Even with the Education budgetary shortfall, we must find out if school districts are allocating tax dollars in a way that best serves teachers, student resources, local needs, and parents.
3. We need to determine the impact of Common Core on the future “scalability” of student performance. Much has gone into implementation of Common Core, but the camps divided over its effectiveness must be evaluated.



TALENT PIPELINE

2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

D O N N A L Y N N E (D) :

Adequately fund our schools and reform the way we distribute education funding: While our education system undoubtedly needs more money, our outdated funding formulas for K-12 and higher education also need to be addressed. These two issues – funding and structural reforms -are inexorably linked and must be simultaneously tackled if we want to make lasting changes to benefit the lives of our children and grandchildren. We must re-align funding for institutions of higher education so that the distinct needs of our research institutions, regional universities and community colleges are accounted for. Similarly, we must ensure that our K-12 funding formula adequately supports mental health and special education services, as well as the needs of English language learners and gifted and talented students.

Attract, retain and support great teachers: I will do this by expanding and investing in proven teacher training programs, including residency models, and finding new incentives, such as loan forgiveness and subsidized housing, to attract and retain teachers, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Support college and career readiness efforts for all Coloradans: As Governor, I will pursue programs and strategies that have been proven to successfully address educational opportunity gaps.



TALENT PIPELINE

2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

J A R E D P O L I S (D) :

The future of Colorado's economy depends on providing avenues to success for young adults regardless of if they choose to attend a four-year college or a trade school. We don't have to wait until a student completes high school, either. My administration will prioritize boosting participating in dual and concurrent enrollment programs throughout the state.

Families can save thousands of dollars on a college education through these programs, and in many cases, even earn an Associates Degree while in high school at no or little cost to them. We should provide students who may have unique needs with more opportunities to earn an education. I'm proud to have founded the New America School which empowers immigrants with an education, as well as the Academy for Urban Learning which helps provide homeless youth with opportunities to learn.

Additionally, Colorado should lead the way on training for advanced robotics and manufacturing. Programs like CareerWise help create a development pipeline for students to receive certification in business, healthcare, financial services, and advanced manufacturing. And, P-Tech schools, like Skyline High School in St. Vrain School District, are leading the way to train students in programming, web design, and other advanced computer skills.



TALENT PIPELINE

2. What are your top three strategies for increasing the graduation rate and the postsecondary attainment rate? (200-word limit)

DOUG ROBINSON (R) :

1. Raise the standards and expectations across the state for student achievement
2. Create a Recovery school district for Colorado, similar to Tennessee and Louisiana
3. Invest more state and private resources in apprenticeship programs, like Career Wise Colorado, to give kids more real world skills and bring employers into school districts

WALKER STAPLETON (R) :

1. Be proactive, support at-risk students sooner: Identify at-risk students and increase support. Use data on attendance, suspensions, and academic failure to identify the most at-risk students. Identify the signs of a potential drop out early and help get them back on track, and sustain that support along the way to graduation. Buddy programs and student/teacher initiatives can be great tools. I support creating smaller learning communities in school to help support students.
2. Job Ready: Emphasize vocational and technical training. We can help get students into high skilled jobs and technical colleges. We need to move away from "factory" view of education, where each student comes out with same curriculum, and create alternative paths to empower students for the best outcomes. I want to emphasize adaptability and transferable skills whether it be in the arts, sciences, or technical disciplines. I would allocate more resources on programs that cultivate partnerships with industry to get more students directly into the work force.
3. College bound students: More access to AP and college level courses in high school. We want our kids to hit the ground running when they get into higher education. We need to emphasize making the transition to college easier.



SCHOOL CHOICE

3. How would you make sure all Colorado students have access to a high performing school, regardless of their zip code? (200-word limit)

MIKE JOHNSTON (D) :

As the only former teacher and principal in this election, I have deep ties to the education community across the state and have worked with stakeholders on all sides of education conversations to find solutions in the best interest of our students. I believe that all families should have access to a high performing school for their children. For this reason I have supported the opportunity for districts to open various types of schools including "innovative" and charter schools to meet the needs of their students. That being said, I firmly believe all schools should be held to the same standards and accountability systems. This was important to me when I founded Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts in Thornton, and again as when I was a State Senator, where I sponsored legislation requiring charter schools to serve a representative population of students, including special education and at-risk students. Choice also means that public schools need the funding, accountability and transparency to serve families.

CARY KENNEDY (D) :

I believe that different children learn differently and that our education system must address the unique needs and talents of a diverse student population. But choice in education is meaningless if a child's neighborhood school isn't a great choice. We must ensure that neighborhood schools have the resources, support and a pipeline of teacher talent to provide a rich and engaging education. We need all schools, including charter schools, to engage their communities and innovate with new models for learning and meeting the unique needs of each student.



SCHOOL CHOICE

3. How would you make sure all Colorado students have access to a high performing school, regardless of their zip code? (200-word limit)

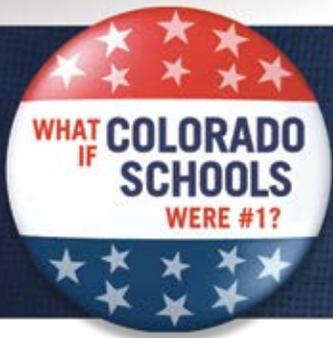
G R E G L O P E Z (R) :

Colorado first must determine what it means, through established metrics, what it means to be a “high-performing school.” After all, if the case is being made in this questionnaire that the state is not benefiting from a talent pipeline conveying knowledge and skills to our students, we must agree what the “model school” comprises. The existing choice in program has been a subject of debate for some time, as parents try to distinguish the “performance trajectory” of their neighborhood school. If not deemed adequate by the parents, they enter the laborious and competitive process of placing their student elsewhere, in a choice-in alternative – thereby leaving the neighborhood school to wither on the vine [in the current scheme of underperforming schools and their rate of “rehabilitation”]. To best serve the parents and students, state government must be clear on choices between public and private/charter alternatives, and the barriers to each that lay in the current state policies. To improve performance among students, the current model must be evaluated and improved.

D O N N A L Y N N E (D) :

Colorado currently offers school choice; however, it could be improved in the following ways.

1. Improve transparency by providing more user-friendly data to parents about school performance and quality.
2. Conduct outreach campaigns to parents who might not know about the information in #1. Encourage schools and districts to promote this data as well.
3. Encourage more autonomy in schools so that they connect their curriculum directly to the needs of their community (thereby strengthening the local schools).
4. Encourage more innovation schools in rural areas, as transportation and distance are obstacles to students choosing schools outside of their districts.
5. Share with school districts across the state the lessons learned in school districts like DPS and Jefferson County that have robust choice programs.



SCHOOL CHOICE

3. How would you make sure all Colorado students have access to a high performing school, regardless of their zip code? (200-word limit)

J A R E D P O L I S (D) :

Our teacher shortage is one of the most troubling issues our state faces. Children, particularly in rural areas, are struggling to earn a high-quality education because many school districts are unable to recruit talented teachers to serve in them. A large part of the reason for this is that Colorado teachers have suffered a 7.7 percent reduction in pay over the last decade. The single best thing we can do to correct this is to pay a competitive wage.

We can also do more to support high-quality public school choice. Parents should be empowered to choose their public school, whether a public charter, neighborhood, or magnet school, that's best for their child, regardless of zip code. But too often, transportation is one of the biggest barriers to accessing school choice. As governor, I will work closely with school districts to support the creation of cost-effective transportation options for students, so that students can attend the public school that best prepares them for their bright future. I will also continue to advocate for strong accountability for all schools including schools of choice. While many public charter schools benefit from additional flexibility, that flexibility should always be coupled with thoughtful transparency and accountability.

D O U G R O B I N S O N (R) :

School choice is key to improving student outcomes. This doesn't have to simply be a choice between public and charter schools; we should also be looking at online schools, trade schools and all innovative forms of education. Furthermore, we need to be allowing great teachers to teach students anywhere through blended learning platforms.



SCHOOL CHOICE

3. How would you make sure all Colorado students have access to a high performing school, regardless of their zip code? (200-word limit)

WALKER STAPLETON (R):

I am a strong advocate for school choice. I think that it is insane to limit someone's access to a world-class education based on where their parents get their mail. I support expanding access to charter schools and empowering parents, teachers, and students in their communities. I want to be clear that this is not at the expense of public schools. We need to continue to provide support and funding across the board. But too often entrenched interests characterize school choice as an either-or scenario. This is nonsense; it has to be an all-the-above attitude, where the metric of success is how many students we are empowering to lead thoughtful, happy, and successful lives as members of a vibrant society in Colorado.

Students in Colorado's Charter Schools outperform their peers both nationally and on the state level in math and reading scores. I support continuing to empower charter schools and efforts like HB 1375, which became law last year. This law allows charter schools to access local funding and continues to improve the quality of education and variety of enriching activities at charter schools.



FUNDING

4. How would you ensure Colorado's schools have the financial resources they need to succeed? (200-word limit)

MIKE JOHNSTON (D) :

In 2013, I fought for the largest single increase in education funding across the state, and when that did not pass at the ballot box, I sought out creative and innovative funding measures to meet the needs of Colorado students, including social impact bonds for ECE expansion and increases in K-3 funding. I believe we need to both increase the funding that goes to the preK-12 system and be more careful with how those funds are allocated.

As a state senator, I sponsored a revised funding formula for this exact reason: too many schools that served high-needs students were not getting the state funding support they deserved and needed to serve these students. This requires that we provide state funding supplements to rural school districts to ensure that schools are safe, clean, and inspiring learning environments. For schools in urban and suburban parts of the state, the focus should be on providing additional funding to schools that are committed to educating high needs students and English language learners.

I will continue to support and fund programs that promote teacher development, incentivize teachers to work in communities that need more great teachers, and ensure teachers can continue to develop their craft.



FUNDING

4. How would you ensure Colorado's schools have the financial resources they need to succeed? (200-word limit)

CARY KENNEDY (D) :

Colorado lacks the financial investment to adequately support its public education system. It is the reason our teachers are amongst the worst paid in the nation and why we can't make real progress on the educational equity gap.

I have spent my career working to stop the ongoing erosion of funding in public schools caused by TABOR. I was the author of Amendment 23 that protected funding for schools and I helped develop Referendum C that prevented further cuts. As State Treasurer, I created Building Excellent Schools Today which has invested over \$1 billion to renovate dilapidated schools across the state.

I will lead as governor by using my financing expertise to identify new opportunities to reform our inadequate, inequitable and outdated system for funding public education and by building and leading a coalition to pass a successful school financing ballot measure. It must start with permanent TABOR reform. For the first time in twenty-five years there is bipartisan support in the legislature to permanently change the revenue cap in TABOR, and with your help I will build a bipartisan coalition to pass permanent TABOR (and Gallagher) reform. This reform needs to restore equity to our school finance structure.



FUNDING

4. How would you ensure Colorado's schools have the financial resources they need to succeed? (200-word limit)

G R E G L O P E Z (R) :

I certainly respect the sentiments of the respondents in the statewide poll. They are sincere and observe the negative outcomes of K-12 results daily; there is dissatisfaction, and naturally they may feel money is the answer. The budget shortfall must be addressed, and specifically why the shortfall exists by not adhering to Amendment 23. Further, to echo an earlier sentiment in the questionnaire, we must find out if the tax dollars collected and spent so far, serve the interests [through allocation] of the front-line educators, the available resources to the students, and adequately meet the needs in these areas as our population grows (with projections looming).

As my professional history demonstrates, I'll be the first to "ring the bell," when all avenues are exhausted, and action must be taken. If I learn our schools are truly running at optimum efficiency within the current operation matrix, and an influx of money would truly lift our schools to next-level performance, you can bet I'll ring the bell once again, and marshal the support needed to have money fuel the goals & objectives hindered by the shortfall.

D O N N A L Y N N E (D) :

Quite simply, the pie of money we have for education is not big enough. Politicians that claim otherwise are out of touch with the needs of this state. I support changes to TABOR and the formula behind it, and as governor I will lead the effort and build a statewide coalition to implement those changes. But I am also very realistic and pragmatic, and I do not believe that we will repeal the requirement for voters to decide on tax increases.

I am proud that this administration has been able to secure extra funding for our schools in the budget that is just passed the state legislature, and I'm proud to have been a part of those efforts. We suggested a 5% increase in funding for K-12 schools - it is just a start, and I know that more must be done.



FUNDING

4. How would you ensure Colorado's schools have the financial resources they need to succeed? (200-word limit)

J A R E D P O L I S (D) :

There is no reason that Colorado schools should be shortchanged in their funding at a time when our economy is one of the strongest in the nation. The negative factor has robbed rural schools of critical funds by nearly \$800 million, and our School Finance Act is not keeping up with the needs of our schools, teachers, and students. I'll work with our legislature to improve our funding formulas in the School Finance Act, and much like I did with Amendment 23, I will build a winning coalition to go to the ballot box and pass an initiative to better fund our schools and early education opportunities.

At the end of the day, we must have the political will to modernize it to fit our modern needs. I'm glad that bipartisan discussions to do so are being considered in the Capitol, such as Senator Larry Crowder and Representative Dan Thurlow's efforts to alter TABOR's formula to provide the state more revenue and increased flexibility to invest in schools and infrastructure. As governor, I would be eager to begin expanding the amount of interests in this conversation to ensure that we have a bipartisan and agreed-upon framework to update TABOR.

D O U G R O B I N S O N (R) :

The amount of education funding that goes to administrative costs has risen dramatically. Over the last 20 years, the Colorado student population has increased by 53%. Meanwhile, the number of administrators in our schools has increased by 85%. That's ridiculous. We need to emphasize getting more money into our classrooms to our teachers, ensuring that education is being prioritized over bureaucracy. Simply throwing money at the problem isn't the issue. We should be paying down the negative factor, but before we talk about how much we want to spend, we need to talk about what we want to achieve.



FUNDING

4. How would you ensure Colorado's schools have the financial resources they need to succeed? (200-word limit)

WALKER STAPLETON (R) :

First off, we need to address PERA and health care spending, which are crowding out education spending in the state. If we can reign in the spending in these areas it will free up more money for our schools.

However, getting dollars into the school is just half the battle. Once they get there we need to make sure more of the money is going towards resources, retaining and rewarding amazing teachers, and providing students access to tools they need to succeed, not to administrative costs and backfilling the pension liability.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5. Do you think Colorado should be doing more, doing less, or doing the same amount to ensure affordable opportunities for children to access quality early care and education programs? If you think we should be doing more, how would you increase access to quality early care and education programs in Colorado? (200-word limit)

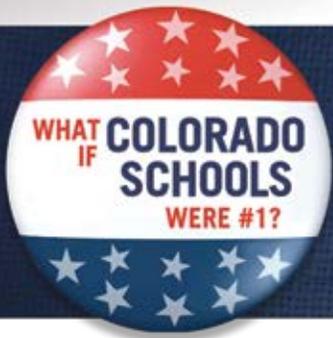
<p>MIKE JOHNSTON (D)</p>	<p>Doing more.</p> <p>In my education policy, I called for providing free full-day kindergarten to all students across the state, and eliminating the 3- and 4-year old Pre-K waitlist to give our kids access to a high quality start to their school career.</p>
<p>CARY KENNEDY (D)</p>	<p>Colorado should be doing more to ensure that every child has access to quality early care and education. Research has shown the longterm, important benefits of high quality early education.</p> <p>Early in my career I worked for Educare Colorado (now Qualistar) and developed legislation that brought (and continues to provide) millions in federal funding to expand quality early education. I also helped secure sustainable funding for the Nurse Family Partnership program that provides wraparound services to first time, low-income mothers. Nurse Family Partnership works by having specially trained nurses regularly visit low income, first-time moms-to-be, starting early in the pregnancy, and continuing through the child’s second birthday. During my time at Educare, I also helped expand access to high quality childcare programs. Parents in Colorado struggle to support their children’s early learning. Infant care costs \$14,950 per year, far out of reach for most families. Early Care and Education can span a wide range of programs from infant care to four year old preschool. Paid family leave will allow moms to provide their own infant care which currently costs \$14,950 per year. In terms of preschool access, the recent NIEER report ranked us in the middle of the pack but put us at 39th for funding. We have the infrastructure establish to spend dollars well, so we should increase our financial commitment.</p>



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5. Do you think Colorado should be doing more, doing less, or doing the same amount to ensure affordable opportunities for children to access quality early care and education programs? If you think we should be doing more, how would you increase access to quality early care and education programs in Colorado? (200-word limit)

<p>GREG LOPEZ (R)</p>	<p>Doing the same.</p> <p>I believe ECE is an integral part of educational development for parents wishing to enroll their children in those state-funded programs. As a matter of statute, children are not required to attend public school until they reach age 6 by August 1 of a given year. So, while 1 in 4 children are enrolled in an ECE program, I have yet to see a significant study or demonstrative demand from the parents of the “other three” to provide state resources or state infrastructure to fill the “void.” As a result of respectable support from the state, and through grants available by the federal government, a number of Colorado non-profit ECE centers have been established “organically,” and thrive (and are rated by such organizations as Qualistar). Many parents wish to keep their children at home as a matter of choice, until age 6. But as Governor, if I reviewed data revealing a true shortage of ECE programs/facilities with a significant demand from parents across the state, I will be happy to evaluate our options and work with ECE leaders to create a solution with an accompanying implementation plan.</p>
<p>DONNA LYNNE (D)</p>	<p>Reports have revealed what many Colorado parents already know – that the cost of childcare and preschool in Colorado is extremely high. In fact, Colorado is one of the most expensive states in the country for childcare. For some working families, the cost of preschool for a single child can account for almost 30% of their income. When quality, affordable childcare or preschool isn’t available, the entire community suffers. Children lose important educational opportunities, caregivers face limited employment options, and employers miss out on an engaged and work-ready labor force.</p> <p>This is an immediate and statewide problem, that as Governor, I will address by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing \$100M in early care and education through targeted expansions of programs designed to serve working families • Partnering with communities to leverage local resources • Fostering partnerships with businesses to develop flexible, family-friendly policies



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5. Do you think Colorado should be doing more, doing less, or doing the same amount to ensure affordable opportunities for children to access quality early care and education programs? If you think we should be doing more, how would you increase access to quality early care and education programs in Colorado? (200-word limit)

<p>JARED POLIS (D)</p>	<p>Early childhood education is one of the best predictors of future academic and economic success and our state absolutely needs to be doing more to give kids a high-quality education throughout their lives.</p> <p>I am the only candidate running for governor on a pledge to bring universal full-day kindergarten and preschool to Colorado families within two years of my election. My plan will allow any parent to send their child to a preschool or kindergarten of their choice at no additional cost to them.</p> <p>We will accomplish this by building a winning coalition of Democrats, Republicans, business leaders, and advocates for our schools, to write and pass a ballot measure that will boost funding for early education opportunities. I've done this before when I helped lead the coalition to pass Amendment 23, numerous local bonds and mill levies, and I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves to do it again as governor.</p>
<p>DOUG ROBINSON (R)</p>	<p>We should be doing more to ensure early access but not in the way the Democrats are proposing. Early access to learning does make a difference. Investing in children at this age provides better educational outcomes and saves us money down the road.</p> <p>We should partner with private foundations to help us expand the Colorado Preschool program, while also lobbying for additional federal resources to grow the Head Start program. As Governor, I would work with the Trump Administration to get Colorado an additional block grant to assist in expanding the number of slots available in our early childhood education programs.</p>
<p>WALKER STAPLETON (R)</p>	<p>I would like to see more progress made in early childhood education in the state of Colorado. We need to increase access by making our dollars go further for state preschool programs through increasing local community engagement. Preschool plays an instrumental role in getting students school-ready and closing the performance gap. But ultimately, it all starts in the home. I think we need to work with our partnerships in the non-profit and private sector around the state, to empower new parents with the tools they need to help their children succeed. This starts with an emphasis on engaging children, reading in the home, and promoting family values.</p> <p>Yes, I would like to increase access to these programs, but think that it is crucial that the directives be led on the community and local level. It is paramount that these early childhood education initiatives are coupled with support for new parents starting in the home.</p>



TEACHERS AND LEADERS

6. Please rank order your top 3 strategies for recruiting and retaining excellent educators in Colorado. (200-word limit)

<p>MIKE JOHNSTON (D)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand online, blended, or virtual instructional practices 2. Develop “grow your own” strategies where districts develop local talent 3. Hold educator preparation programs accountable for producing effective teachers that stay in the classroom
<p>CARY KENNEDY (D)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay teachers as professionals. 2. Support, train and empower teachers as leaders. 3. Improve resources and opportunities for students.
<p>GREG LOPEZ (R)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow teachers in hard-to-fill positions like science and math or in rural areas to be paid more 2. Expand online, blended, or virtual instructional practices 3. Hold educator preparation programs accountable for producing effective teachers that stay in the classroom
<p>DONNA LYNNE (D)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow teachers in hard-to-fill positions like science and math or in rural areas to be paid more 2. Develop “grow your own” strategies where districts develop local talent 3. Require a minimum salary to be paid to all educators
<p>JARED POLIS (D)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allow teachers in hard-to-fill positions like science and math or in rural areas to be paid more 2. Develop “grow your own” strategies where districts develop local talent 3. Offer loan forgiveness to all educators
<p>DOUG ROBINSON (R)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand online, blended, or virtual instructional practices 2. Allow teachers in hard-to-fill positions like science and math or in rural areas to be paid more 3. Relax teacher credentialing rules
<p>WALKER STAPLETON (R)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relax teacher credential rules - Make sure we have qualified teachers in the classroom but do not have them meet arbitrary requirements that do not translate into teaching in the classroom 2. Collect better data on the state level regarding current and future hiring needs 3. Hold educator preparation programs accountable for producing effective teachers



RETIREMENT SECURITY

7. What are your top three recommendations for improving Colorado's public retirement system (PERA) in a way that helps to retain and recruit the highest quality public workforce? (200-word limit)

MIKE JOHNSTON (D) :

1. Because people are living and working longer, I believe we should extend the retirement age to age 65.
2. We should allow the cost of living adjustment to fluctuate based on actual economic conditions rather than peg it in statute with no fluctuation.
3. We should also explore an option for pensions to be portable. In a world where folks may have 8 or 10 different careers and many will not teach for a full 40 years, they should be able to move in and out of the retirement fund without losing all the benefits.
4. Finally, I also support the recommendation that came out of the PERA board calling for shared sacrifice among employers and employees.

CARY KENNEDY (D) :

While serving as Colorado State Treasurer and a member of the PERA board, I helped lead the development and passage of SB 1001, the last successful PERA legislation that reduced PERA's unfunded liability by \$9 billion – the largest improvement to the financial health of PERA in its history. I participated in dozens of town halls throughout the state and worked with state and local leaders and PERA members to develop the compromise.

Retirement security is an important component of professional compensation. PERA helps us recruit, and keep, the best and brightest to educate our children, plow our roads, and keep our highways safe. It also provides economic stability for communities throughout Colorado that have a large retirement population.

Properly managing Colorado taxpayers' money has been central to my work both as State Treasurer and as CFO of the City of Denver. A pension is a promise and I helped develop the legislation that improved PERA's financial status by \$9 billion the largest improvement in it history (SB 1). As Governor, I will continue to provide this leadership to ensure we maintain our commitment to public employees and keep our state on sound financial footing.



RETIREMENT SECURITY

7. What are your top three recommendations for improving Colorado's public retirement system (PERA) in a way that helps to retain and recruit the highest quality public workforce? (200-word limit)

G R E G L O P E Z (R) :

1. Begin with the end in mind, and never make PERA recipients secondary to the FIRST priority they deserve, and whose security has been promised.
2. Reform the board structure so that appointees and participants are not conflicted by votes they cast before sending recommendations to the statehouse for approval, that make them choose between themselves/self-interest, and the PERA recipients of today and tomorrow.
3. Bring in an outside expert without a conflict of interest to examine every aspect of the PERA charter/rules that may leave room for [conscious or unconscious] investments to be made that do not have a high-rate of success or long-term security – and make reviews of the process known and actively communicated to stakeholders across the board. Let the sunshine in!

D O N N A L Y N N E (D) :

PERA is a promise that our state has made to our public employees, and as governor I will not break that promise. There is often a trade off in total compensation for employees in the public sector with regards to salaries and other benefits. I do not believe that career public servants should sacrifice because of bad decisions made by politicians in the past.

But we must also be honest about the current state of PERA. It is underfunded, and we must do more to ensure that it is around for generations of public workers to come. As governor, I will work with stakeholders to ensure that however we decide to strengthen PERA, it is through a shared sacrifice and not laid on the back of teachers and retirees.



RETIREMENT SECURITY

7. What are your top three recommendations for improving Colorado's public retirement system (PERA) in a way that helps to retain and recruit the highest quality public workforce? (200-word limit)

J A R E D P O L I S (D) :

1. Protecting the defined benefit system
2. Ensuring that long-term sustainability of PERA is a shared sacrifice among beneficiaries
3. Putting policies into place that automatically adjust contribution rates to ensure long-term sustainability and reduce the need for legislative action

Over 500,000 Coloradans rely on the benefits they earned over a lifetime of service to the public. Communities all over Colorado benefit from the retirement income provided to retirees in our state through the PERA system. In fact, \$3.8 billion in benefits were paid to retirees living in Colorado in 2016 alone.

I believe that a pension is more than a fund, but it's a promise. We've made a promise to thousands of public servants that if they forego Social Security and enter into PERA, they will be afforded a dignified retirement in exchange for their service to their community. As governor, I intend for Colorado to keep that promise.

D O U G R O B I N S O N (R) :

1. Solve our governance issue. Currently we have a 16 person board with 12 of them PERA beneficiaries. I would shrink the Board and require the majority to be outside experts in asset management and finance. This is critical to make sure we don't get in this same situation again.
2. Reform the current plan - Keep retirees benefits the same, raise the retirement age, the average of highest years served to 7, decrease the cost of living adjustment.
3. Switch to a defined contribution vs defined benefit plan for new enrollees.



RETIREMENT SECURITY

7. What are your top three recommendations for improving Colorado's public retirement system (PERA) in a way that helps to retain and recruit the highest quality public workforce? (200-word limit)

WALKER STAPLETON (R):

As Colorado's Treasurer, reforming PERA has been one of my top priorities. Frankly, we can no longer ignore this problem, as it endangers the financial future of our children as well as the well being of our state employees. PERA is draining money that should be going directly into the classroom but instead is being used to backfill the pension liability. Fixing this system so that funding increases translate into immediate raises for teachers, lowering student-teacher ratios and increasing technology in the classroom will be critical to attracting and retaining teachers.

I believe fixing PERA is contingent upon four main principles:

- 1) Taxpayers have done their part already, no more bailouts for PERA
- 2) Provide real retirement options and choice for public employees.
- 3) Retirement age needs to be moved to be more in line with federal retirement programs like Social Security.
- 4) Restructure PERA's corporate governance putting independent voices on the board that do not have a vested economic interest in maintain the status quo.