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## **NATIONAL CHARTER COALITION ESTABLISHES NEW STANDARDS FOR CHARTER SCHOOL QUALITY**

*Four-Year Federally-Funded Project Draws on Colorado's Charter Movement to Improve National Landscape*

**Denver, CO** – Building Charter School Quality (BCSQ), a coalition of four leading charter school organizations, today announced the culmination of a four-year effort to establish performance standards for charter schools across the country, representing the first time that the national charter movement has developed broad consensus around national charter school quality. Through support from the U.S. Department of Education, the convening partners of BCSQ include the Colorado League of Charter Schools (the League), CREDO at Stanford University, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

In its beginning stages, BCSQ developed two reports centered on academic and operational quality featured today on its website, [www.charterschoolquality.org](http://www.charterschoolquality.org), a first-of-its-kind consensus in today's public education reform movement. The reports outline quality standards that can apply across the nation's charter sector, and include guidance as to how different stakeholders – including charter schools, authorizers, charter support organizations, and policymakers – can implement policy and practice to achieve those standards. With these national standards in place, implementation is taking hold in four target states, including Colorado, Arizona, Ohio and New Mexico.

The BCSQ effort built upon work commissioned in Colorado, which has been at the forefront of the charter school movement since 1993 and has already adopted many of these standards into its state's charter school operations. Colorado's strong policy environment has allowed quality charter schools to open with proven results, and includes a strong charter support organization in the League. Over the course of BCSQ project, the League spearheaded efforts that enabled Colorado to develop and implement the *Colorado Growth Model*, Denver Public Schools' accreditation model, a series of charter authorizer tools, and research-informing benchmarks for alternative education students that have influenced the development of an alternative accountability framework in the state.

“As a key authorizer in the state, the work of the BCSQ partnership helped us develop several significant tools including the School Performance Framework (SPF) that we use for addressing all public schools in the district, irrespective of charter or district-run status,” said Tom Boasberg, Superintendent of Denver Public Schools. “I’ve seen how much the SPF has helped school communities truly understand the strengths and improvement areas of each of our schools, and having a very detailed multi-measure objective framework based on student

growth has also helped us make crucial and sometimes difficult decisions around school turnarounds and closures. The work done under this project has truly helped shape the landscape of Colorado’s system of public education.”

The BCSQ partnership released today its state report on Colorado, titled *Building Charter School Quality in Colorado*, which is intended to serve as a guide for the state’s charter school sector, elected officials and education leaders, to strengthen school performance through these new, nationally-recognized standards created under the BCSQ partnership. The report provides an overview of the state’s charter school landscape and offers gap analyses of the charter school policies, charter school authorizer practices, support services for public charter schools, and the public education data system policies in Colorado.

The report highlights “evidence of the strong academic performance of Colorado charter schools,” as measured by “both federal and state measures of student achievement.” Not only do a higher proportion of Colorado charter schools meet AYP, according to the report, Colorado’s charters also outperform the state on helping students to meet or exceed the growth needed to get them to proficiency before exiting the public school system. The report goes on to highlight “Colorado [as the] first state to adopt a new and highly regarded method for assessing student-level growth,” most commonly referred to as the Colorado Growth Model—a measure that is better able to assess the impact of schools on students’ learning gains over time than status measures such as AYP.

“For the first time in the evolution of the charter sector, we have established consensus on definitions of school quality that will shape the future of charter school growth and performance,” said Jim Griffin, President of the League and convening partner for BCSQ. “The BCSQ effort is built on lessons learned over the past 20 years across the charter sector, and helps integrate those lessons into practice through real-world tools, metrics and attainable goals that can be systemically applied in order to adopt improved policy changes. We are confident that BCSQ’s work will continue to shape the broader public education landscape and become a vehicle for change across the nation.”

BCSQ notes Colorado’s early strides in providing quality options through a policy environment that allows for positive charter school growth, effective charter authorizer practices, a strong charter school support organization with stable and consistent leadership, and strong state technical and data support. In addition, the state currently ranks fourth in the nation for the strength of its charter school law according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools’ recently-released 2011 rankings.

BCSQ also found areas where Colorado policymakers can continue to make improvements. They include: 1) more transparency in the charter school application process as well as the review and decision-making processes; 2) improved performance-based contracts for schools; 3) a more comprehensive way to monitor and collect charter school data; and 4) a clearer process for renewal, nonrenewal and revocation decisions.

Next month, BCSQ will release additional state-level reports assessing the education reform landscape in Arizona and Ohio.

### **About Building Charter School Quality**

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the Building Charter School Quality initiative was designed to align expectations among school operators, authorizers, funders, and lenders around how a quality charter school performs and how various stakeholders can work together to hold schools accountable for improved student achievement through a quality public education. The convening partners were the Colorado League of Charter Schools (the League), the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). Visit [www.charterschoolquality.org](http://www.charterschoolquality.org).