



SYMPOSIUM BREAKOUT SESSION
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2022 | 1:15-2:15 PM ET

Exploring Flexible Learning and Future Policy Reform Through Colorado's Blended Learning Initiative (BLI)

PRESENTERS:

- Mallorie Klemm, Colorado Department of Education
- Renee Martinez, Colorado Department of Education



Introductions

From the Colorado Department of Education (CDE):

- Renee Martinez, Supervisor, Office of Online and Blended Learning (OBL)
- Mallorie Klemm, Senior Consultant, Office of Online and Blended Learning (OBL)



Today's Agenda

Goals

- *What are Colorado's rules and regulations related to flexible learning?*
- *What is CDE's Blended Learning Initiative (BLI)?*
- *How is the BLI engaging statewide Colorado stakeholders?*
- *What are our suggested next steps for the group?*



Warm-up Activity

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The image shows a Padlet board interface. At the top left is the Padlet logo. The main title of the board is 'Exploring Flexible Learning and Future Policy Reform'. Below the title is a welcome message: 'Welcome to our Aurora Institute Symposium presentation!'. There are two visible sticky notes on the board. The first sticky note contains the text 'About you (first name, organization)' followed by a vertical ellipsis icon. The second sticky note contains the text 'Star rating for your state's current policies' followed by a vertical ellipsis icon.

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Exploring Flexible Learning and Future Policy Reform

Welcome to our Aurora Institute Symposium presentation!

About you (first name, organization) ⋮

Star rating for your state's current policies ⋮

What are Colorado's rules and regulations?

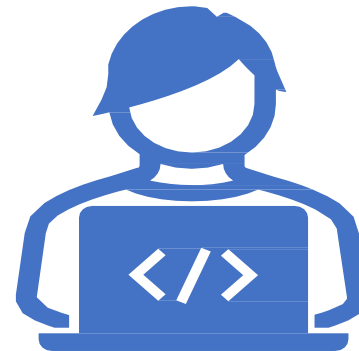
Traditional Paradigm:

Students are either **Brick and Mortar** (full time in-person) or **Online** (full time remote)

Either,

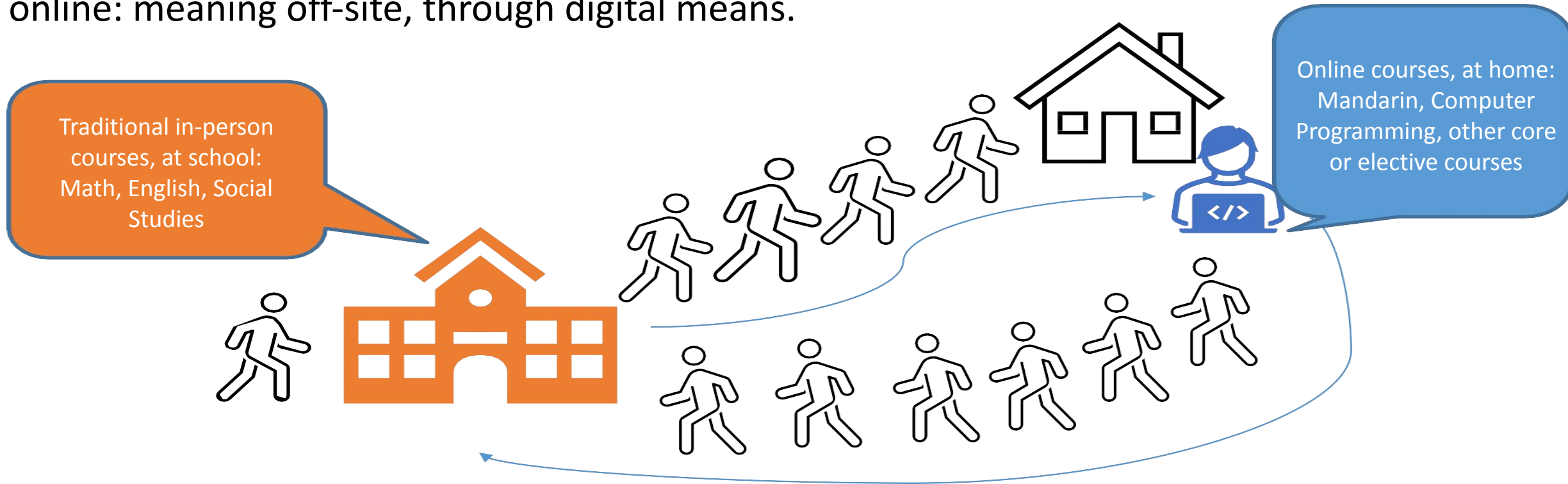


Or...



Context

In practice, more brick and mortar students are learning partly online: meaning off-site, through digital means.



When this happens, there are possible implications for qualifying a student for full-time funding.

Current Colorado Policy

Online Schools Act ([Colorado Revised Statutes, § 22-30.7-101 — 22-30.7-113](#))

- Multi-district online school
- Single district online school and programs
- Quality standards for online schools and programs

State Board Rule (1 CCR 301-71)

- Rules for the Administration, Certification and Oversight of Colorado Online Programs

Statewide Supplemental Online and Blended Learning Program ([Colorado Revised Statutes, § 22-5-199](#))

- Affordable supplemental online education courses and blended learning support
- “Each high school student in the state may take at least one supplemental online course per year.”
- Recognition and definition of blended and supplemental online

Public School Finance Act (SB19-246), Rules for the Administration of the Public School Finance Act (1 CCR 301-39)

- Funded based on scheduled instructional hours and student membership (enrollment/attendance)
- Local boards define educational process
- Funding requirements
 - Students must be enrolled and meet attendance requirements
 - Students must meet instructional hours for full-time or part-time
- Calls out specific treatment for independent study
- Identifies when passing periods may count, and that lunch does not count
- Allows for work-study or work-based learning experiences
- Allows for post-secondary courses (Extended HS and Early College)

COVID-19 caused many schools in Colorado to completely shift their instructional models from traditional in-person to remote learning instruction and other types of hybrid models.

This shift has in many ways upended what schools thought of as “normal” instruction for a large number of students.

Rather than going back to business as usual, it is an important moment to step back and reassess what we know, or thought we knew, about “what works” in terms of instruction, seat time/funding requirements and—fundamentally—achieving strong student outcomes.

Context Cont.



201
9

Models (Pre-COVID)

- Brick and mortar schools
- Blended and Supplemental courses
- Online Schools and Programs

202
0

COVID Impact

- Brick and mortar schools pivot to 100% remote learning
- Growth and innovation of blended/online

2021

Developing Blended Models

- Brick and mortar schools develop and utilize a range of models:
 - Fully-remote
 - Blended
 - Temporary
 - Hybrid

2022

Learning and Innovating

- Schools/districts expand use of remote/blended
- Innovative adaptations
- Learning from each other
- Equitable learning opportunities



Breakout Group Discussion #1



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Exploring Flexible Learning and Future Policy Reform

Welcome to our Aurora Institute Symposium presentation!

| | |
|---|--|
| How has the pandemic impacted K-12 education policy in your state(s)? | What is one positive impact and one negative impact of the pandemic on your specific role(s) in education? |
|---|--|

Current Flexible Learning Opportunities



Online School/Program

- MDOL (Multi District) and SDOL (Single District) Processes
 - [CDE Guidance](#)

Blended/Supplemental Courses

- Blended Learning (BL) & Supplemental Online (SO) Courses
 - [CDE Guidance](#)

Variance Waiver

- Formal Variance Waiver Process for Instructional Models
 - [CDE Guidance](#)

Other Pathways

- Innovative Opportunities Pilot (ILOP)
- Teacher Recruitment Education Preparation (TREP)
- Accelerating Students Through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT)
- Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)
- Work-based Learning Opportunities (WBL)

Why is this a problem and how can we address it?

- Old assumptions about teacher-pupil instruction and contact, and funding do not apply as neatly or cleanly as they might have even in the recent past.
- Learn from schools and districts using blended learning, supplemental courses and other flexible learning models
- Innovate with schools and districts to inform potential future policy
- Improve learning experiences for all students within remote and online learning models

Avenues for Policy Reform



Develop the BLI



- **Initiative proposal** from CDE's School Finance Unit (Office of School Auditing) and Schools of Choice Unit (Office of Online and Blended Learning)
- **Contract out for research** (REL - Regional Educational Laboratory at Marzano Research, ECS - Education Commission of the States, Keystone Policy Center)

Implement the BLI



- **Develop and facilitate stakeholder engagement activities** to the field (district leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, students) to gather perspectives
- **Ongoing updates** to the Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education Commissioner and Leadership

Draft Recommendations

- **Collaboration with CDE's** School Finance Unit
- **Request for an internal, CDE research evaluation project** "BLI Student Outcome Impact 2021-2023" from CDE's Accountability and Continuous Improvement Unit and Program Evaluation and Data Management Office

What is the Blended Learning Initiative (BLI)?

Timeline



Question from the field

Will CDE extend remote learning flexibilities for the 2021-2022 school year?

January 2021

January - May 2021

Flexibilities with “guardrails”
100% remote option, temporary remote guidance, blended and supplemental learning guidance

State Board presentation

Online and Remote Learning for Brick and Mortar Students

June 2021

June - July 2021

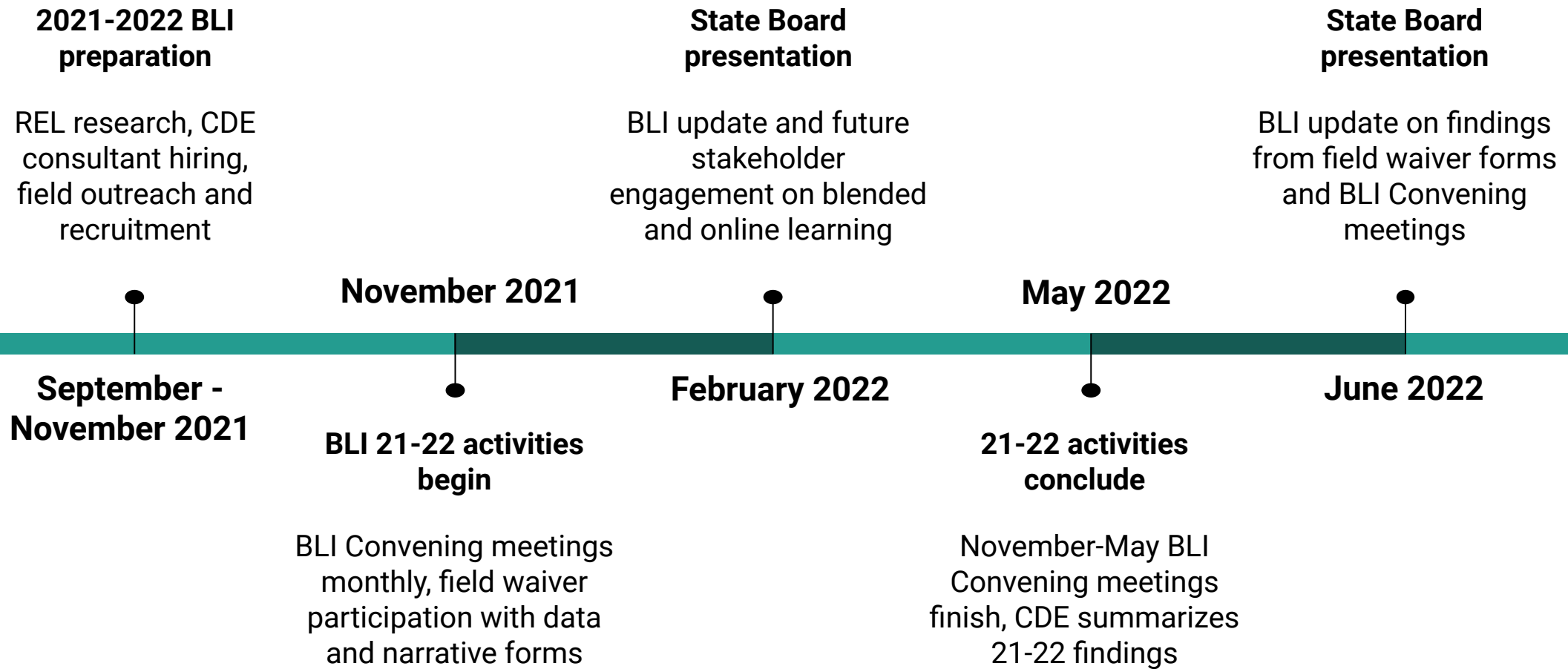
Audit Guidance updates
Adopted blended and supplemental learning guidance, published Variance Waiver process

Two-year BLI established

Field intent to seek the waiver and invited to participate in the BLI

August 2021

Timeline Cont.



Timeline Cont.

2022-2023 BLI preparation

Contract with
Keystone Policy
Center for field
engagement

July 2022

August -
October 2022

BLI 22-23 activities
begin

Summer survey, fall
focus groups, prepare
for 22-23 Variance
Waiver

Two-year BLI continuation

Field waiver
participation, CDE
summarizes 22-23
findings so far

2022 into
2023

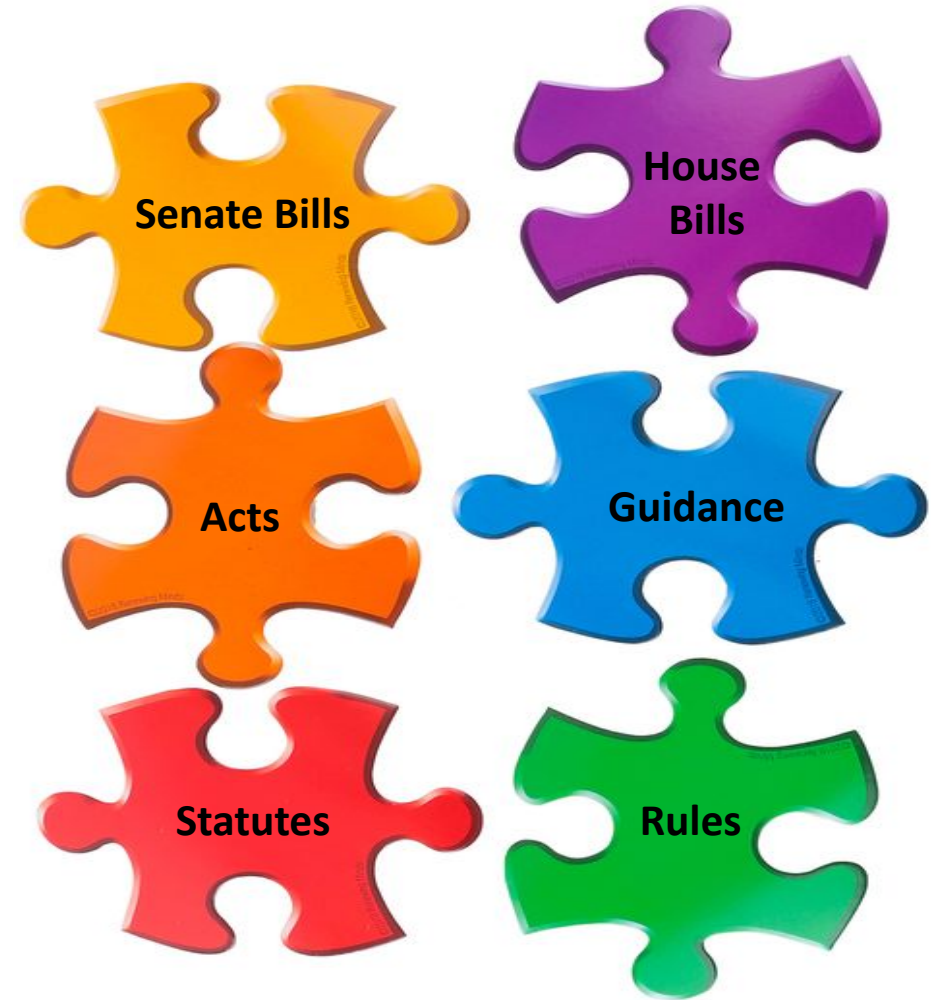
Anticipated for
2023

Potential policy reform
drafting

State Board updates,
CDE to evaluate and
propose policy
recommendations

BLI Goals

- Take a deeper look at existing policies and practices related to how and where students learn, to evaluate whether changes are needed
- Learn from schools and districts using blended learning and supplemental courses
- Explore research and what other states are doing
- Identify systems/policy solutions and stakeholder-informed recommendations
- Innovate with schools and districts to inform potential future policy
- Improve learning experiences for all students engaged in flexible learning opportunities such as remote and online learning models



How is the BLI engaging Colorado stakeholders?

BLI Outreach Efforts



CDE outreach to understand field perceptions:

Formal Variance Waiver Process



- Colorado districts and schools
- Blended and online instructional models

BLI Convening Meetings



- Colorado administrators, advocates, etc.
- Research findings and best practices

BLI Stakeholder Engagement



- Colorado students, parents, and teachers
- Surveys and focus groups

Future Efforts into 2023



- Continued discussion with the State Board of Education, policymakers, throughout CDE, and any other stakeholders

Formal Variance Waiver Process

The variance waiver allows districts and schools for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years to waive course requirements for blended learning and supplemental online courses within their instructional models and programs.

Primary objectives:

- The first is to expand knowledge and understanding of the current policy structure for which blended learning and supplemental online learning can be implemented in brick and mortar schools in the state.
- The second is to provide a mechanism for schools and districts that are implementing practices outside of this policy structure, to continue their practices for two years while we see if more specific policies can be put in place.
- The final objective is for the state to get a better understanding of the scope of the policy conflict in the state. Through the waiver process, we can come to a better understanding of where needs exist, how many students are impacted by current policies, and what practices are currently being used.

BLI Convening Meetings

During the 2021-2022 school year, CDE hosted monthly BLI Convenings with a broad representation from across the state of 53 school districts, 15 schools, and 14 stakeholder groups for 136 total registrations.

Primary topics:

- Nationwide policy, rules, and regulations from KnowledgeWorks and the Education Commission of the States
- Colorado policy, rules, and regulations
 - Field feedback and barriers to current Colorado policy on the purpose of online and blended learning, the focus on student learning, how students demonstrate mastery and success, and both state and local considerations
 - Rethinking points, vision, and ideal state for future Colorado policy
- Colorado implementation of blended and online learning
 - Data from blended and online instructional models in the variance waiver
 - Presentations from districts and schools

BLI Stakeholder Engagement

For the 2022-2023 school year, CDE has contracted with Keystone Policy Center to conduct surveys and focus groups. The purpose of this 2022-2023 stakeholder engagement is to expand on the initial feedback gathered in 2021-2022 through the convening meetings for perspective from teachers, parents/guardians, and students.

- August-September 2022: public “CDE Blended and Online Learning Summer 2022 Survey”
- October 2022: field focus groups as a ‘listening tour’ throughout the state

Breakout Group Discussion #2



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What do you foresee is a lasting implication of the pandemic in K-12 education?

As a stakeholder, how can you influence the evolving landscape of education through your current role(s)?

What are our suggested next steps?

Our Next Steps

As we conclude the two-year BLI:

- Continue synthesizing and summarizing the findings
 - Second year, 2022-2023 for the formal variance waiver process
 - Fall 2022 stakeholder engagement activities (survey and focus groups)
- Reconvene BLI stakeholders to share recent findings
 - Gather those from the 2021-2022 BLI Convening meetings for an update on the stakeholder engagement
 - Share about CDE's drafted policy recommendations and considerations
- Present to the State Board of Education
 - Prepare a holistic review of the two-year BLI, stakeholder engagement, and research findings
 - Propose the policy recommendations and considerations for state policy form
 - Update the field in preparation for the 2023-2024 school year

Recommendations



Learn about how your state approaches flexible learning:

- Connect with your state board and/or department of education
 - Discuss where your state is at with flexible learning options
 - Find out your state's process for updating state-specific policy
- Identify and include statewide stakeholders in conversations
 - Provide various modes (meetings, surveys, focus groups, site visits) for education stakeholders to access
 - Use the stakeholder feedback as data to share with state leadership and drive next steps
- Monitor nationwide approaches to flexible learning
 - Some professional organizations we reference are:
 - [Education Reimagined](#), [Education Commission of the States](#), [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), [Education Pioneers](#), [Education Policy Fellowship Program](#)
 - State-level higher education institutions (School of Public Affairs for example)

Conclusion

Contact & More Information:

- BLI email: BLI@cde.state.co.us
- [BLI webpage](https://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/blendedlearninginitiative): <https://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/blendedlearninginitiative>

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Thank you for joining us!

Share Your Thoughts

Participate in our one-minute poll (link in chat box)

