

# COLORADO STATE SENATE

MAJORITY OFFICE



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## Addressing dropout rates through school innovation



DENVER – Nearly one in five high-risk, alternative school students dropped out of school during the 2012-2013 school year. Today, Sen. Rachel Zenzinger, D-Arvada, presented a bill before the Senate Education Committee to reduce that alarming dropout rate and provide improved educational opportunities for high-risk students. A high-risk student falls into one or more of these categories: dropout, expelled, adjudicated youth, pregnant/parenting, drug/alcohol abuse, insufficient credits, and more.

“There are not enough high-quality secondary school options in Colorado to effectively serve our high-risk students and prepare them for postsecondary and workforce success,” said Sen. Zenzinger, a sponsor of the bill and former alternative education teacher. “These students face many challenges in attaining high school credentials, so this bill provides additional funding and

support to alternative education campuses (AECs) to develop research-based, transformative school models that will improve students’ postsecondary and career success.”

The bill, SB 14-167, creates the Opportunity Schools Pilot Initiative, which will provide additional funding for alternative education campuses. Schools that apply to participate in the initiative must describe the model that it will implement to serve high-risk students and must include at least two of the following three elements:

1. High-quality college and career-ready instruction that includes strong academic and social support services;
2. Programs to build college and career-ready skills and to provide informed counseling to assist students in the transition from high school to postsecondary enrollment; and
3. Appropriate support for students in the first year of postsecondary enrollment to ensure postsecondary persistence and success.

For example, schools may adopt a student-centered focus that provides differentiated instruction to its students, a college and career readiness focus, or provide an education that includes wraparound support services, such as substance abuse treatment, child care and behavioral health.

Sen. Zenzinger is also working to boost student success through her School Turnaround Leaders Development Program (SB 14-124) and School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SB 14-150).

The Senate Education Committee heard testimony today and will vote on SB 14-167 in the coming weeks.

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**About Sen. Rachel Zenzinger:** Sen. Rachel Zenzinger serves Colorado Senate District 19, which spans most of Arvada and the Jefferson County portion of Westminster. She was appointed to her seat and sworn into office on Dec. 13, 2013. She serves on the Senate Education Committee, Senate Local Government Committee and she is a Senate advisor to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Her professional background is in education, and she was coordinator of the Regis University Master of Arts in Education program. For more information about Sen. Zenzinger, please go to [www.RachelForColorado.com](http://www.RachelForColorado.com) or call her at 303-866-4840.