

**THE COLORADO OPPORTUNITY CONTRACT PILOT PROGRAM:
SOME BASICS**

This brief note outlines the basics of the Colorado Opportunity Contract Pilot Program (COCPP). The note is intended for those with a general, but non-specialist interest in the Program. For further details, please email Dr Clive Belfield at cb2001@columbia.edu.

Date Enacted: April 2003

Start Date: Academic Year 2004-05

Student Eligibility: The COCPP applies to students in all grade levels, according to their own characteristics and the characteristics of their school district:

- Eligible students are ones who meet all the following: (i) qualify for free/reduced lunch prices; (ii) attend public school in the previous year; and (iii) demonstrate low academic performance¹
- Eligible school districts are ones that either (i) had 8 or more “low” or “unsatisfactory” performing schools in 2001-02 which continue to operate; or (ii) voluntarily participate²

No more than 1 percent of the district’s student enrollment for the previous year may participate. This proportion is increased to 2% in 2005; 4% in 2006; thereafter no more than 6%.

School Eligibility: Private schools participating in the COCPP must:

- administer state assessments to their voucher students
- not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or disability

Voucher Amount: For all voucher-eligible students, the value of the voucher is the lesser of:

- The actual cost of educating the child as demonstrated in a yearly audit of the school
- A proportion of the cost to the school district of educating a child; where the proportions are 37.5% (K); 75% (1-8); and 85% (9-12)

Support Services: The burden of transportation, information, and adjudication costs is not specified. School districts are required to inform eligible families of the program and the application procedure by December 1 of the school year. If available, school districts are to provide private schools with contact information for eligible families. Families wishing to participate in the program must inform their district by January 1 of the school year.

¹ For grades 4-12, low academic performance is defined as “unsatisfactory” on at least one specified area of state assessments or college entrance exams. For grades K-3, low academic performance is determined as where students “lack overall learning readiness attributable to at least three significant family risk factors”.

² For 2001-02 there were 13 districts where 8+ schools were performing “low/unsatisfactory”. These districts (student numbers) are: Northglenn-Thornton (33,522); Adams County (6,698); Brighton (7,277); Westminster (11,012); Adams -Arapahoe (32,253); St. Vrain Valley RE (21,335); Boulder Valley RE (27,764); Denver County (71,972); Harrison (10,810); Colorado Springs (32,368); Jefferson County R-1(87,925); Mesa County Valley (20,084); Pueblo City (17,875); Greeley (17,131). The total student count in these districts is 398,026.