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CONTACT: Steven Shapiro
303-886-6342
Steven.Shapiro@HopeCo-Op.org

**HOPE ONLINE LEARNING ACADEMY CO-OP
SUPPORTS ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ONLINE EDUCATION**

Denver, CO—April 26, 2007—Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op (Hope Online) announced today that it supports elements of Senate Bill 215 regarding communication and accountability for online education. “We appreciate the hard work of Senators Sue Windels and Peter Groff and Representative Terrence Carroll to propose a bill that is truly a compromise for education stakeholders,” said Heather O’Mara, Executive Director of Hope Online Learning Academy Co-Op.

Earlier this year, Hope Online expanded its accountability procedures. Hope Online has plans to formalize the lines of communications between Hope Online and the districts where students attend Hope Online Learning Centers. Communication and collaboration will be improved as Hope Online is committed to providing information about its intentions and its detailed operating plans for Learning Centers in the district, including the following standards: location, grade levels served, projected enrollment, program descriptions, building and safety permits, staffing, contact information, etc.

“Hope Online was designed to deliver online education to at-risk children around the state who wouldn’t otherwise have access to it,” continued O’Mara. “It has always been our intention to work with the districts and to maintain complete transparency and accountability to the state and the families we serve. Hope Online is committed to accountability and to ensuring that we meet and exceed the quality standards of Senate Bill 215.”

As a public charter school, Hope Online is subject to the same accreditation rules and standards as all public schools, including assessment, accountability reports, CSAP, and longitudinal growth analysis. In addition to meeting these traditional standards, Hope Online has implemented guidelines for quality standards that exceed the accreditation criteria in areas including:

- On-line program governance, vision, and organization
- Standards-based curricula and data-driven instructional practices

- Technological capacity and support
- Internet safety
- Sound financial practices and resources
- Student academic performance and improvement
- Monitoring and assessing student academic performance and improvement
- Course completion measurements
- Attendance tracking procedures
- Data analysis, management, and reporting
- Guidance counseling
- Engagement of parents and communities
- Provisions for students with special needs, including gifted and talented students and English language learners

Specific measures implemented by Hope Online include:

- Established an Academic Operations position to manage and oversee the operational functions of the student management system, overseeing the submission of student report cards and weekly teacher Learning Center Evaluations, as well as providing additional resources to Hope Online teachers.
- Completed a review of the high school curriculum in fall semester 2006 to evaluate it in comparison to the Colorado Model Content Standards. Addressed and corrected weaknesses through the implementation of a supplemental online curriculum in the spring semester of 2007.
- Began using PowerSchool for the 2006/07 school year as a Student Information and Management System. Incorporated various features of PowerSchool, such as scheduling and attendance, into the daily routines of Hope Online teachers and Learning Center personnel.
- Hired three Special Education Teachers in addition to contracting with a team of psychologists, therapists and nurses, to better serve the special education needs of Hope Online students.
- Coordinated detailed procedures to ensure the integrity of Hope Online students' participation in the Colorado Student Assessment Program. Provided mandatory training to Hope Online teachers and Learning Center mentors regarding the proctoring of assessments and security measures to ensure the authenticity of assessment results and maximum participation.
- Developed and implemented methods for verifying Count Day attendance and ensuring that all Hope Online students met the criteria established for full-time enrollment at Hope Online.

- Established a Compliance Office in January 2007 with responsibility for ensuring that Learning Centers comply with federal and state law as well as Hope Online's policies and procedures including:
 - ~ Compliance with Hope Online's non-sectarian policy;
 - ~ Record keeping of student data;
 - ~ Monitoring of expenditures by Learning Centers of the per-pupil allocation; and
 - ~ Compliance with employee and staff screening policy.

- Developing a comprehensive Operations Manual for use by Hope Online and all Learning Centers. Learning Centers will receive training regarding the Policies and Procedures included in the Operations Manual during summer of 2007. Issues which the Operations Manual will address include:
 - ~ Parent and Student Handbook
 - ~ Discipline
 - ~ Graduation Requirements
 - ~ Assessment Plan
 - ~ Safe School Plan
 - ~ Hardware/Software Terms of Use
 - ~ Learning Center Roles and Responsibilities
 - ~ Student Code of Conduct
 - ~ Curriculum and Instruction
 - ~ Attendance
 - ~ Student Enrollment Procedures
 - ~ Student Funding Allocations
 - ~ Use of Information Technology

- With the Douglas County School District (DCSD) in February 2007, formed a Learning Center Assessment Audit Team (LCAA) made up of individuals with strong education administration backgrounds to review infrastructure and current processes and procedures in 80 of the 81 Learning Centers.. Utilized processes and procedures currently in place in the DCSD which categorizes six areas for review, including:
 - ~ Leadership
 - ~ Student Learning
 - ~ Process Management
 - ~ Staff Focus
 - ~ Stakeholder Focus
 - ~ Budget Finance

- Directed the LCAA to ensure that the Learning Centers were in compliance with the Hope Online Non-Sectarian policy as it relates to curriculum and instruction. Determined that:
 - 97.5% of Learning Centers were in full compliance with the provisions of the Hope Online Non-Sectarian Policy.
 - 96% of Learning Centers were determined to be in full compliance with the funding provisions of the Hope Online Non-Sectarian Policy.

- With DCSD, facilitating a Learning Center Improvement Plan, including additional training regarding Hope Online Policies and Procedures, occasional Learning Center Quality Assurance Visits and Compliance Reports.

- With DCSD, creating and facilitating processes and procedures to ensure that Hope Online meets State Charter School Accreditation Guidelines by June 2007.
- With DCSD, constructing and implementing teacher development plans and training for the upcoming 2007-08 school year.
- Continually updating the Hope Online website to ensure constant availability to the public of Hope Online policies and procedures, budget, and learning information.
- Demonstrating Hope Online's commitment to student academic progress and success by sharing the student achievement data for students with the Colorado Department of Education and the students' school district of residence..

“It is our commitment to hold Hope Online to a higher standard in order to move the conversation from process and procedural issues to what is truly important - closing the achievement gap and reducing the drop out rate in Colorado,” asserted O'Mara.

Hope Online Learning Academy

Launched in September of 2005, Hope Online Learning Academy is a virtual charter school designed to meet the needs of K-12 at-risk students in Colorado. It offers an innovative learning model that provides online curriculum, access to mentoring and technology in Learning Centers operated by non-profit organizations and located in existing public or private schools, community centers, or other appropriate facilities. Hope Co-Op is chartered through the Vilas RE-5 School District. www.hopeco-op.org.

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