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Education reform calls for attention to arts

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Figure Photo by Associated Press  
Colorado Education Commissioner Dwight Jones spoke today at a news conference in Denver on the subject of arts in education.



Colorado Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien joined Colorado Education Commissioner Dwight Jones at a news conference today.

The arts will be part of education reform, balancing an emphasis on so-called "core subjects" that frustrates many educators, state leaders said Monday.

Colorado is overhauling its academic standards and statewide achievement tests. Education Commissioner Dwight Jones said the arts will be part of the revised system.

"Based on what our young people are going to have to know and be able to do, that creative side is ever more important," Jones said.

Lt. Gov. Barbara O'Brien said, "Sometimes the arts are the things that keep kids in school so we can work on other things."

Jones and O'Brien addressed a news conference called to highlight a report showing that many Colorado students are not exposed to the arts, which include music, theater and dance, as well as the visual arts.

The report, prepared for the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Council on the Arts, shows that art is offered at 93 percent of elementary schools, 86 percent of middle schools and 83 percent of high schools. But 29,000 students attend schools that do not offer art, the study found. Statewide, 53 percent of high school students don't take art, which is not mandatory even at schools where it is offered.

The study found that 75 percent of principals say the arts are being squeezed by the need to focus on reading, writing and math.