



Great Futures Colorado Coalition Membership

“Great Futures Start with a Great Education”

What is the Great Futures Colorado Coalition?

The Great Futures Colorado Campaign is a coalition of community organizations that advocates for implementation of, and adequate funding for, an education system that will prepare *all* children for the challenges of the 21st century – as outlined in the “core principles” of the Campaign’s “Membership Statement.” The Campaign provides member organizations with a platform and simple tools for united action toward our shared vision.

Organizations join the Great Futures Colorado Coalition by:

- agreeing to the Great Futures core principles;
- signing the “Membership Statement;” and
- making a donation to the Great Futures Colorado Coalition at a financial level that is meaningful to the joining organization.

Great Futures has proven itself to be a coalition of action, courage and competence. Moving forward, we will capitalize on the strength and reach of our current and future member organizations and community activists and on the momentum of our recent successes.

What does it mean to be a “member organization” of the Great Futures Colorado Campaign?

Opportunities. Member organizations will be given opportunities to participate in Great Futures education and advocacy activities, which may include online actions, rallies, press conferences, forums, and organizing conferences. Great Futures will also provide resources to members such as a speakers’ bureau and online PowerPoint presentations.

For example, in March 2011, the Coalition launched the “It it OK?” Letter to state leaders. The Great Futures letter (www.greatfuturescolorado.org) allowed individuals to tell state leaders the impact of multi-year education cuts and asked them to respond to two questions: 1) Do you understand the impact of poor education funding on Colorado students; and 2) Are you OK with it? Together, the coalition delivered over 5,200 signatures and 2,500 stories about the impact of education cuts from over 200 communities to all 100 legislators and the governor. There was extensive media coverage on Great Futures’ letter delivery and the impact of education – preschool through higher ed.

Responsibilities. By signing the membership statement, organizations authorize Great Futures to use their name and/or logo on the Great Futures website and other educational and advocacy materials.

Member organizations will be asked and encouraged to use their own networks to disseminate Great Futures’ online actions and information about upcoming Great Futures events (rallies, conferences, press events, etc.). These actions promote and reinforce the Campaign’s core principles. However, no particular actions will be required.

All Member organizations are encouraged to attend monthly coalition meetings to discuss policy initiatives and potential Great Futures actions and events. Coalition members are also encouraged to serve on committees, which advise the full coalition on Communications, Outreach, and Events. The coalition also requires a supermajority – two thirds – of members in order to endorse a policy proposal.

What has Great Futures accomplished so far?

The Coalition formed in January 2010 and has since grown to over 30 organizations. In mid-March 2010, Great Futures introduced the DECIDE legislation, which stands for “Decide: Education Cuts or Invest in our Democracy and Economy.” If passed by the legislature, the DECIDE proposal would have placed on the November 2010 ballot a referred measure to give the legislature options to balance the budget other than deep cuts to education. Unfortunately, in a 35-30 vote, the House failed to reach the two-thirds vote necessary to put DECIDE on the ballot in November 2010. By bringing DECIDE to the Legislature, the Great Futures Coalition put the education funding crisis front and center for the last eight weeks of the legislative session, and significantly advanced the public conversation about budget reform. Thousands of e-mails were sent to legislators; hundreds attended and testified at the Legislature (most for their first time ever); and most major media outlets covered DECIDE, Great Futures, and its broad and diverse support.

Following the legislative session, Great Futures released and distributed an open letter to Colorado voters, signed by hundreds of constituents stating “We commit to a ballot measure in November 2011 that will increase funding for public education, because our children have already waited far too long.”

In the Fall of 2010, Great Futures helped defeat three anti-education ballot initiatives – Amendments 60, 61, and Proposition 101 – with resounding numbers. The coalition undertook an education program around the measures in a way that also raised awareness of the impact that Colorado’s already dire financial situation is having on Colorado’s students and economy. Great Futures planned with and supported local leaders and volunteers to: produce 70,000 handwritten postcards to targeted voters; contact over 40,000 individual voters 2-3 times each; harness over 6,000 volunteer hours; and make over 125 presentations to community groups.

In 2011, Great Futures committed to supporting a 2011 ballot initiative that would give voters an opportunity to improve investment in education, early childhood through higher education. The Coalition hosted a Forum for the education community to consider policy issues about fiscal reform and education investment, and participated in other coalitions working to create a long-term fix for Colorado’s fiscal crisis (including the Colorado Reform Roundtable and Colorado’s Worth It coalition). In the Spring of 2011, Great Futures hosted a Grassroots Statewide Organizing Conference for more than 70 interested education supporters to educate them on education investment issues and community organizing strategies.

Recognizing that any further delay would result in a possible end to state funding for higher education and irreversible cuts to P-12, and, consequently, in irreparable harm to Colorado’s economy, Great Futures ultimately endorsed Initiative 25 (later Proposition 103), and actively participated in the petition signature process. Over the course of two and a half months, Coalition volunteers gathered more than 20,000 of the 140,000 petition signatures submitted to the Secretary of State. The Coalition’s tools also enabled volunteers to access cutting-edge online tools by downloading petitions right from home to circulate in their communities, and to contact more than 26,000 voters about the importance of Prop 103 in stopping a fourth year of deep cuts to schools and colleges.

Although the Coalition was disappointed in the outcome of the election, the Proposition 103 Campaign allowed public education supporters throughout the state to work together, gain a new voice in Colorado politics, and offer Colorado voters a positive alternative to continuing and deep cuts to education.

The Great Futures Colorado Campaign has achieved success because of its unique structure and ability to: 1) build consensus among its members on policy and strategy; 2) create and provide common tools for individual organizations to work toward a common vision; and 3) garner support and energy for concrete action steps toward the goal of fiscal reform.

How is the Great Futures Colorado Campaign organized?

The Great Futures Colorado Campaign is a collaborative project of member organizations and Great Education Colorado, a 501c3 charitable organization that provides the staffing and technology platform for the Coalition.