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Get Smart Schools Honored with 2013 ECS Chair’s Award

DENVER – Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, Chair of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), recognizes Get Smart Schools for outstanding service to education with the 2013 ECS Chair’s Award. The award will be presented today at the 2013 ECS National Forum on Education Policy in St. Louis, Missouri.

Get Smart Schools (GSS) was formed in 2008 to ensure students in urban Colorado communities are prepared for success in college and beyond. By 2020 they aim to prepare 85 new school leaders and support the transformation or creation of more than 50 autonomous schools—publicly funded schools such as charter and innovation schools where most decisions are made at the school level.

“Great principals are critical to the success of students and schools, and Get Smart Schools stands apart for its commitment to developing innovative and talented leaders,” said Gov. Hickenlooper.

A unique organization, Get Smart Schools:

- Specializes in helping principals and administrators develop the unique skills required to lead autonomous schools.
- Adheres to no particular school model. Their alumni currently lead schools that are college preparatory, Expeditionary Learning, Montessori, dual-language, single-gender, health and wellness focused, classical, and blended learning, among others.
- Require that participating schools serve a student population that is at least 40% low-income. During the 2012-2013 school year, 73% of the more than 4,000 students served by GSS schools were low-income.

The Get Smart Schools Fellowship, a comprehensive, tuition-free training program for innovative school leaders, offers an alternative route to principal licensure. In addition, they offer ongoing leadership support for schools that are currently operating.

“High-quality school building leadership increasingly is seen as an efficient and effective way to boost student outcomes across the country. Get Smart Schools has taken a thoughtful approach to transforming our schools and our children’s lives with their leadership
programs and direct school support,” said ECS President Jeremy Anderson.

Get Smart Schools has graduated 39 fellows and formed 15 new schools. Performance data, while limited, show that ten of 12 schools with data have student proficiency rates higher than their district’s rates.

Barbara O’Brien, President of Get Smart Schools and former Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, will accept the award with Jane Shirley, Vice President.

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About ECS

ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan organization that works directly with governors, legislators, chief state school officers, higher education officials, and other leaders across all areas of education, from pre-K to college and the workforce. Since 1965, we have tracked policy, translated research, provided unbiased advice, and created opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another. ECS is located in Denver and maintains the nation’s most extensive clearinghouse on education policy.

**Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas**