



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# SB08-212 Goals and Accomplishments: 2015 Annual Report to the Colorado General Assembly

Submitted to:

**Gov. John Hickenlooper; Representative John Buckner, chair of the House Education Committee; Senator Owen Hill, chair of the Senate Education Committee; Senator Bill Cadman, senate president; Representative Dickey Lee Hullinghorst, speaker of the house; Senator Morgan Carroll, senate minority leader**

By:

**Colorado Department of Education**

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## Overview

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Senate Bill 08-212, also known as Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), requires the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide annual reports to the General Assembly related to the implementation of provisions within the statute including the results achieved through implementation of school readiness, the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards, and postsecondary and workforce readiness pursuant to C.R.S. 22-7-1019 (2).

CAP4K passed in 2008 and called for a revision of Colorado's standards and assessments to ensure that students exit high school prepared for career and college success. The goal of CAP4K is an aligned preschool through postsecondary education system to provide Colorado students with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and careers.

### School Readiness

#### *Background*

CAP4K included provisions related to school readiness for both the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado school districts. CAP4K requires:

- The State Board of Education to define school readiness.
- Colorado school districts to ensure all children in publicly-funded kindergarten programs receive an individual school readiness plan that addresses the academic standards and skill areas students needed to be ready for higher levels of learning.
- School districts to administer a State Board of Education-approved school readiness assessment to each student in kindergarten. The assessment results help inform each child's school readiness plan.

The State Board of Education defined school readiness in 2008:

*School readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.*

School readiness describes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within the domains of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognition and general knowledge. By monitoring each child's progress in these areas, teachers, parents, schools, and caregivers can provide needed support to ensure each child's success in school. Information gathered from school readiness assessments is to be used for supportive and instructional purposes and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

#### *Implementation Status*

CAP4K requires the State Board of Education to adopt one or more assessments that are aligned with the description of school readiness and are suitable for measuring students' levels of school readiness. In approving school readiness assessments, CAP4K directs the State Board of Education to consider assessments that are research-based, recognized nationwide as reliable instruments for measuring school readiness; and suitable for determining the instruction and interventions students need to improve their readiness to succeed in school.



In December 2012, the State Board of Education voted to offer districts a menu of school readiness assessments. Only one assessment tool met the requirements for inclusion on the menu of assessments, *Teaching Strategies GOLD*®. In 2013 and 2014, the CDE conducted processes to solicit additional assessments for inclusion on the school readiness assessment menu. No assessment tools submitted in 2013 met the requirements for school readiness assessments set forth in CAP4K. In 2014, three assessment tools were submitted and approved by the State Board of Education for the state’s school readiness assessment menu.

Since 2013, the CDE has been supporting a phased-in implementation of the school readiness requirements of CAP4k in order to allow the school readiness assessment marketplace to catch up to demand in order to provide districts with more school readiness assessment options. This approach allowed districts who are ready to implement the school readiness initiative to move forward and provided an opportunity for other districts to build readiness and conduct trainings in advance of full implementation. Throughout the phase-in process, CDE has indicated that full implementation would occur in the 2015-16 school year.

Through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, the CDE has been able to support the implementation of school readiness assessments by providing grant funds for school readiness assessment subscriptions to Colorado school districts. During the 2013-14 school, 90 of Colorado’s 178 school districts received grant funds for school readiness assessment subscriptions. The number of participating districts expanded to 108 in 2014. Table 1 illustrates the growth in participation in the school readiness initiative in advance of full implementation in the 2015-16 school year.

**TABLE 1: Participation of Colorado School Districts in Grant Funded School Readiness Assessments**

Participation:	2013-14*	2014-15
<b>Districts</b>	92	107
<b>Schools</b>	350	533
<b>Teachers</b>	1043	1167
<b>Students</b>	12,448	16,223

\*Participation numbers for 2013-14 have been revised since the 2014 CAP4K Legislative Report.

For the 2015-16 school year, CDE will be able to use Early Learning Challenge grant funds to continue support for districts currently implementing school readiness assessments and plans.

## The Colorado Academic Standards

### Background

CAP4K required that the State Board of Education adopt standards that identify the knowledge and skills that a student should acquire as the student progresses from preschool through elementary and secondary education pursuant to C.R.S. 22-7-1005 (1). In 2009, CDE initiated a year-long process of revising academic standards in all ten content areas (the arts, comprehensive health and physical education, mathematics, reading and writing, science, social studies, and world languages) and English language proficiency. Following a year-long standards



revision process, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) in December 2009, creating Colorado's first fully aligned preschool-through-high school academic expectations.

In 2009, the Council for Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association initiated the development of the Common Core State Standards. The state-led effort to develop the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts began as the Colorado Academic Standards were being developed. Colorado was among six states asked to provide feedback on the Common Core State Standards in the development process. Once the Common Core State Standards were released in June 2010, the Colorado Department of Education commissioned a study to compare the state's reading, writing and communicating standards and math standards with the Common Core State Standards. The study showed close alignment of the two sets of standards. Using the results of the study and feedback from the standards development committees, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts in August 2010.

The standards for mathematics and reading, writing and communicating incorporate the Common Core State Standards while maintaining the unique aspects of the Colorado Academic Standards, including 21st century skills, prepared graduate competencies, personal financial literacy (pursuant to C.R.S. 22-7-406), research, and poetry. And, as always has been the case, districts maintain autonomy to adopt their own standards that meet or exceed the state standards and are required to develop their own curriculum aligned to the standards. Teachers retain the ability to design their instruction in ways that support students in meeting the standards.

#### *Implementation Status*

Colorado school districts began transitioning to the Colorado Academic Standards in 2010. The first year of full implementation of the standards occurred in the 2013-14 school year. The CDE has supported the three-year transition process through regional trainings, an online standards transition toolkit, in-person assistance, and a sample curriculum project.

#### Implementation Supports from the CDE

Pursuant to section 22-7-1013 (2) C.R.S., as part of the standards transition process, Colorado school districts were required to adopt curricula aligned to the standards. The CDE Standards and Instructional Support Office, at the request of Colorado school districts, has worked to support districts develop curriculum designed to successfully implement all ten content areas of the Colorado Academic Standards. The grass-roots requests for this project emerged from a March 2012 Standards Summit and a letter from the leadership of CASSA (Colorado Association of School Superintendents and Senior Administrators). These requests supplied the initial foundation and support for the CDE to begin working with educators across Colorado to build sample curriculum that districts could choose to use. The Colorado District Sample Curriculum Project is an evolving project that is oriented and guided by a fundamental principle: curriculum samples must be created by and for Colorado educators.

The project has involved three major phases. Each phase built on the work before as the Standards and Instructional Support team has responded to input from educators.

#### Phase I: Curriculum Overview Samples (Fall 2012)

During the first phase of the Project, Colorado educators worked together in grade level and content area teams to engage in process of translating Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) into curriculum overview samples. Highlights of the first phase include:

- 500+ educators participated in curriculum-creation workshops
- 47 of 64 Colorado counties represented



- 70+ of 178 Colorado school districts represented
- 700+ curriculum overviews produced in all content areas (k-12)

Following the release of the curriculum overview samples in February 2013, the CDE released a process guide for translating standards into curriculum overviews released to help districts replicate workshop processes.

#### Phase II: Refining Workshops (Spring 2013)

During the second phase of the project, the Standards and Instructional Support team conducted area workshops across the state to get feedback on the project, the curriculum overview samples, and the curriculum support tools still needed in the state. Highlights of the second phase include:

- Hundreds of educators (in 5 BOCES across the state) participated in two-day workshops to help refine and provide feedback on the 700+ unit overview samples
- Area-workshop participants engaged in process of modifying existing samples and creating new unit overviews for district/school use
- Standards and Instructional Support content specialists finalized and posted website support tools to help educators better understand and use curriculum overview samples

#### Phase III: Instructional Unit Samples (Fall 2013-Winter 2014)

During the third phase of the project, the Standards and Instructional Support (SIS) team traveled across Colorado to work with educators to build instructional units based on select curriculum overview samples. In three-day workshops, district-teams of general education, special education, English Language Acquisition, and gifted and talented educators and specialists worked together to plan for the instruction of all students.

Highlights of the 3rd phase include:

- Colorado educators and district teams from 60 different districts created more than 125 full instructional units for all subjects and grades based on select unit overviews created during phase one of the project
- More than 100 instructional units were produced, one unit in each grade k-12 for mathematics, reading, writing, and communicating, science, social studies, comprehensive health, visual arts, drama/theatre, dance, and music
- Each unit includes learning experiences, resource suggestions, differentiation options, and assessment ideas
- 68 districts were represented in this phase of the project

Following the release of the unit samples, the CDE released a process guide for creating full instructional units.

To date, educators from 121 Colorado school districts have been involved in all three phases of Colorado's District Sample Curriculum Project, by authoring and/or refining the curriculum overviews and instructional unit samples. Across the state, thousands of Colorado educators have voluntarily given their time and offered their expertise in service to a project designed to support all teachers in the transition to the new Colorado Academic Standards. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the districts involved in this project.

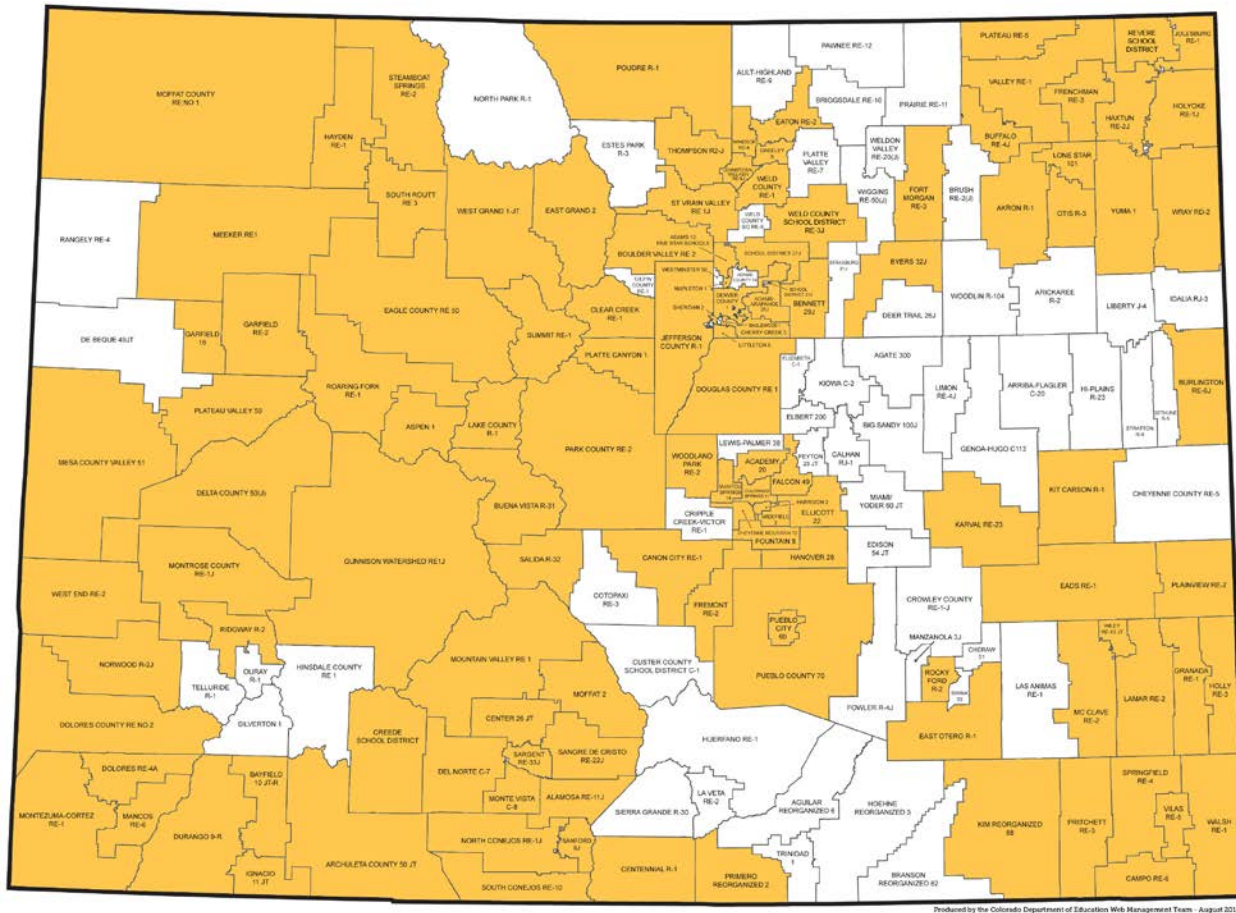


Figure 1: Colorado school districts who participated in the District Sample Curriculum Project, 2012-14)

At the request of Colorado school districts, the Standards and Instructional Support Office facilitated the development of user-friendly guides to the Colorado Academic Standards for all grades K – 12 in English and Spanish: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/guidestostandards> . The guides are intended to help families and communities across Colorado better understand the goals and outcomes of the standards. The guides describe the “big picture” purpose of the standards, as road maps to help ensure that all Colorado students graduate ready for life, college, and careers. They also provide overviews of the learning expectations for each of the ten content areas of the standards and offer examples of educational experiences that students may engage in, and that families could support, during the school year.

### Colorado’s Statewide Assessment System

*Background*

CAP4K called for the development of an aligned assessment system to measure student learning of Colorado’s new, more rigorous academic standards. The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) are the new online state assessments that are being developed to measure student mastery of the standards in science, social studies, English language arts (reading, writing, and communicating), and mathematics. These new assessments represent the next generation in assessment technology, incorporating performance tasks designed to engage students while testing higher-order thinking and problem solving.



### *Implementation Status*

Colorado administered online assessments for the first time in 2014. Elementary and middle school science and social studies assessments were successfully administered in spring to approximately 250,000 students. High school assessments were administered in fall to approximately 50,000 students. The science assessments were administered in grades 5, 8 and 12 and the social studies assessments were administered in grades 4, 7 and 12. The test engine used for the science and social studies assessments will also be used for the new English language arts and mathematics assessments. Familiarity with the test engine acquired during last spring's science and social studies administration will be valuable to students, schools, and districts during this spring's English language arts and mathematics assessment administration.

Cut scores establishing performance levels for the elementary and middle school assessments were adopted in August. In fall 2014, reports for these assessments were provided for students, schools and districts. Student level reports allowed students and parents to compare performance to the student's school, district and state. In addition, information was provided about performance at the total content level (ex. social studies), the standard level (ex., history, geography, economics and civics), and the grade level expectation level of the standards.

The Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) was administered for the last time in spring 2014 in reading, writing and math. Colorado is working with a multi-state assessment consortium, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), to develop online English language arts and mathematics assessments in grades 3 - 8. There will also be English language arts assessments in grades 9-11 and three mathematics assessments in high school. The PARCC assessments will be comprised of a performance-based component as well as an end-of-year component.

### PARCC Field Tests

The purpose of the PARCC field tests was to examine the quality of assessment items to ensure that the items selected for the 2014-15 operational assessments are of high quality, to test the assessment administration procedures, and to provide schools and districts with the opportunity to administer the PARCC assessments. Student results will not be available for students or schools.

The performance-based assessment field test window was open March 24-April 11, and the end-of-year field test window was open May 5-June 6. Some students participated in online assessment administration while others took the assessments via paper. Throughout all of the PARCC states, roughly 790,000 students completed online performance-based and end-of-year tests. Roughly 170,000 students took the performance-based assessments on paper and just over 100,000 took the end-of-year on paper. In Colorado, about 279 schools in about 76 districts participated in the performance-based assessment field test. About 324 schools in about 82 districts participated in the end-of-year field test. Across the two field tests, approximately 26,000 Colorado students participated in the computer-based administration with approximately 11,500 paper-based administrations. Most students participated in only one assessment component in one content area.

The new English language arts and mathematics assessments will be administered for the first time in spring of 2015. To assist schools and districts in making the transition to the new online assessments, mathematics assessments on paper are available for this first administration.

## **Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness**

### *Background*

CDE and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) worked together to develop a definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR). To create the definition, the two departments jointly convened





regional meetings across Colorado during the 2008-09 academic year. The purpose of these meetings was to engage local communities in conversations about the skills and competencies students need to succeed after high school. Beginning in July 2015, the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education are required to review the PWR description every six years and adopt any appropriate revisions.

The current PWR definition was jointly adopted by the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education at a meeting on June 30, 2009. This definition continues to serve as the basis for the state's alignment efforts including the Colorado Academic Standards and new assessments and informing student demonstrations of skills and knowledge required to be ready for college or a career upon earning a high school diploma.

*Postsecondary and workforce readiness definition: "The knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential to high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and compete in the global economy including content knowledge, learning and behavior skills."*

*Source: State Board of Education and the Commission on Higher Education's joint adoption on June 30, 2009 of the description of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness.*

#### *Implementation Status*

In alignment with the PWR definition for Colorado, CDE and DHE measure several factors that reflect levels of postsecondary and workforce readiness for students beyond high school, including, graduation rates, dropout rates, ACT scores, participation in concurrent enrollment courses during high school, matriculation and persistence rates to and through postsecondary education, and remediation rates for students that enter college at a Colorado public institution of higher education. State data is summarized below; district and school-level data can be accessed at [www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview](http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview) and <http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/data>.

The on-time, four-year high school graduation rate for the class of 2014 increased by nearly half a percentage point to 77.3 percent as compared to the previous year. The on-time graduation rate stood at 76.9 percent for the class of 2013. The 2013-14 dropout rate for Colorado is 2.4 percent. This rate improved by 0.1 percentage points from the prior year. The dropout rate is at its lowest point since 2003 when the rate was also 2.4 percent.

Concurrent enrollment is the simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary education courses. This program includes, but is not limited to, academic or career and technical education courses at a Colorado institution of higher education. During the 2012-13 academic year, more than 20 percent or 26,900 Colorado 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in a public high school participated in concurrent enrollment. This reflected a participation increase of 12 percent over the prior year. Eighty-four percent of concurrent enrollment students passed all their courses; this is a six percentage point increase from the prior year.

Students who participated in dual enrollment programs in high school had higher first-year credit hour accumulation, grade point averages, and retention rates in college. Participation in dual enrollment is associated with a 23 percent increase in the likelihood of enrolling in college and a 10 percent decrease in the need for remediation, holding gender, income, race/ethnicity, and ACT scores constant. CDE is also implementing graduation guidelines as established under House Bill 07-1118 and Senate Bill 08-256, requiring the development of statewide high school graduation guidelines that local school boards must meet or exceed. In May 2013, the Colorado State Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt the graduation guidelines recommendations proposed by a Graduation Guidelines Council. The purpose of graduation guidelines is to articulate Colorado's shared beliefs about the value and meaning of a high school diploma and to outline the minimum components, expectations, and responsibilities of local districts and the state to support students in



attaining their high school diploma. The graduation guidelines align with the description of postsecondary workforce readiness.

## Admissions and Remedial Education Policy Review and Revision

### *Background*

Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids and subsequently state law (§23-1-113 C.R.S.) required the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (the Commission) to review and revise the admission standards policy (CCHS policy I, F) and the remedial education policy (CCHS policy I, E) by December 15, 2013. Statute required the Commission to align the admissions standards policy with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness and graduation guidelines.

The Department of Higher Education appointed two task forces in May 2012 to assist in developing and vetting recommendations on revisions to both policies. Based on the recommendations, the Department developed revised admissions standards policy and a revised remedial education policy, which the Commission approved in December 2013. The Commission approved revisions to the admission policy in November 2014.

### *Admission Standards Policy*

The key elements of the new Admission Standards policy directly support the shift in focus in Colorado from enrollment to student success. The changes seek to align postsecondary admissions expectations with high school graduation guidelines. Further, the policy increases flexibility for institutions to determine their own specific admissions requirements and increases the number of tools they may use to do so. The policy presupposes that institutions will develop admissions requirements and admit students whom they are best able to serve reflecting their statutory role and mission.

As required by the new policy, institutions submitted their proposed admission standards which were approved by the Commission in December 2014. The admissions standards includes the mid 50% range of assessment scores and GPA for each institution's previously admitted student class, as well as academic rigor details. The Commission is charged with ensuring that each institution's standards are consistent with the institution's role and mission and that institutions with the same selectivity have comparable standards. Institutions' assessment score standards must meet or exceed college-ready standards, unless an institution shows that it is able to support the student adequately.

The new admission standards policy is effective for all students seeking admission for fall 2019 and thereafter. For students seeking admission in fall 2016, fall 2017 and fall 2018, institutions may use the new policy or the policy in place as of fall 2013, providing a three-year transition period. The Department of Higher Education is working with College in Colorado to develop a new web based admission tool which will clearly explain admission standards at each institution.

### *Remedial Education Policy*

Colorado's remedial education policy provides criteria to be used by all public higher education institutions in the state in identifying students who need remedial courses in English and mathematics. The policy lays out standards whereby institutions may offer remedial courses.

The new Remedial Education policy aligns with postsecondary expectations and with high school graduation guidelines. The goal of the policy is to improve the effectiveness of remedial placement and education, and to increase the number of credentials received by Colorado high school graduates, especially by those from underrepresented backgrounds. The policy increases institution flexibility by giving more placement options, including allowing institutions to place students into college level courses along with Supplemental Academic



Instruction. The new policy also increases the number of assessment options to use in placement. Assessment options have been expanded from including ACT/ SAT college entrance exam scores and the Accuplacer tests, to also including Compass, PARCC and Smarter Balanced scores. Additional assessment options for placement are also being reviewed.