



SB08-212 Goals and Accomplishments: 2016 Annual Report to the Colorado General Assembly

Submitted to:

House Education Committee and Senate Education Committee of the Colorado General Assembly

By:

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Overview

Senate Bill 08-212, also known as Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), passed in 2008 and called for a revision of Colorado's preschool through high school standards and the state assessment system with a focus on postsecondary and workforce readiness for Colorado's students. 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.

CAP4K requires the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide annual reports to the General Assembly each February 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 section 22-7-1019 (2) C.R.S..

School Readiness

Background

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

CAP4K requires the State Board of Education to (1) define school readiness, (2) adopt assessments appropriate for determining students' levels of school readiness, and (3) adopt a system for reporting population-level results. Colorado school districts are required to ensure all children in publicly-funded kindergarten programs receive an individual school readiness plan that is informed by a State Board approved school readiness assessment.

The State Board of Education has voted to offer districts a menu of school readiness assessments, and the menu includes four options for Colorado School Districts: (1) Teaching Strategies GOLD, (2) Teaching Strategies GOLD Kindergarten Entry Assessment Survey, (3) Desired Results Developmental Profile, and (4) Riverside Early Assessment of Learning. Since 2013, the CDE has been supporting a phased-in implementation of the school readiness requirements of CAP4K. This has been necessary to allow assessment publishers to catch up to national demand for quality kindergarten school readiness assessments.

Implementation Status

Progress in the kindergarten school readiness initiative since the 2015 Annual CAP4K Report relate to efforts to implement relevant components of HB 15-1323, supporting Colorado educators with implementation challenges, and working to adopt of a reporting system.

HB 15-1323 and School Readiness. In the 2015 legislative session, the General Assembly passed HB 15-1323 which instituted some changes to school readiness and READ Act assessment requirements at the kindergarten level. HB 15-1323 provides a 60 day window at the beginning of the school year for districts to complete the first checkpoint of the school readiness assessment. Regarding the READ Act, at the kindergarten level, each district must administer an approved reading interim assessment to kindergarteners in the first 90 days of the



school year. If a district administers the READ Act assessment in the first 60 days of the school year, it is not required to administer the literacy component of the school readiness assessment.

The CDE has worked to communicate this change to Colorado superintendents, school leaders, and kindergarten teachers engaging both the Office of Literacy and Office of Early Learning and School Readiness. Communication efforts included electronic outreach through The Scoop, the CDE website, email distribution lists, regional meetings, and face-to-face technical assistance.

School Readiness Implementation Challenges and Support: The 2015-16 school year has been the first year of full implementation of the kindergarten school readiness initiative. As districts moved toward full implementation, the CDE has endeavored to respond to implementation issues that Colorado school districts have experienced. The primary challenges that emerged relate to functionality of the most widely used assessment system, concerns about data privacy and security, and time pressures experienced by kindergarten teachers.

In 2015, Teaching Strategies, publisher of the GOLD assessment, launched an upgraded version of their online assessment platform which experienced functionality issues. The functionality problems significantly limited teachers from effectively using the assessment tool. The CDE staff worked closely with Colorado school districts to channel communication from users of the assessment tool to Teaching Strategies executives and to ensure responsiveness from Teaching Strategies to Colorado concerns. Because of functionality issues with the GOLD assessment system, the CDE has needed to recommend to districts that the 2015-16 school year be considered as an extension of the phase-in process for the school readiness initiative. The CDE has encouraged districts to use the extension year to continuing learning to use the assessment tools and to work through implementation planning.

Through Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant, the CDE has been able to support the implementation of school readiness assessments by providing grant funds for assessment subscriptions and technical assistance from CDE staff early childhood education experts. Since the 2013-14 school year, the CDE has been able to provide approximately \$720,000 to offset Colorado school district purchase of kindergarten school readiness assessment subscriptions. This support will be able to continue through the duration of the ELC grant at a minimum through the 2016-17 school year. Colorado anticipates requesting an extension of the ELC grant period beyond the December 2016 end date. The extension, if approved, would lengthen the grant period through June 2017.

Colorado's ELC grant also funds four full-time staff members to provide technical assistance and training to Colorado school districts with the kindergarten school readiness initiative. This support has taken the form of training for use of approved kindergarten school readiness assessments, design and use of individual school readiness plans, and high quality kindergarten instructional practice. The department has also been able to work as an intermediary with the publisher of the most commonly used kindergarten school readiness assessment, Teaching Strategies GOLD.

The second implementation challenge relates to the concerns that some parents have raised regarding data privacy and security of the kindergarten school readiness assessment systems. As a result, the State Board requested that all of the publishers of approved kindergarten school readiness assessments appear at their September 2015 meeting to address these concerns. Furthermore, CDE data privacy and security staff conducted a review of the data privacy and security policies of each publisher for compliance with the department's policies. The review concluded that all assessment publishers are largely in compliance with the department's current policies and are effectively moving towards compliance with the department's new



policies. The greatest challenge for all vendors with which the department works is encryption of data at rest. Each publisher of kindergarten school readiness assessments is or will be in full compliance with the department's policies by June 2016.

At their December meeting, the State Board of Education approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Teaching Strategies, the developer of the GOLD assessment, regarding changes that will strengthen data privacy and security and streamline the use of GOLD for kindergarten readiness assessment in Colorado. The MOU outlines provisions that will be included in all contracts between Teaching Strategies and school districts for kindergarten subscriptions beginning in the 2016-17 school year. Specifically, Teaching Strategies and CDE have agreed to (1) provide the option of a shortened set of items for kindergarten assessment, (2) require a parent opt-in process to enable use of the photo and video features for documentation purposes, and (3) ensure that data security practices meet strict state requirements. The measures intend to mitigate privacy concerns, strengthen the security of information collected by Colorado educators as they use the GOLD assessment, and save teachers time without compromising the integrity and validity of the instrument. CDE and Teaching Strategies are committed to ongoing review and refinement of this important and useful assessment process and look forward to partnering with educators on an ongoing basis to achieve the best results for Colorado's children.

The third implementation challenge has been experienced by kindergarten teachers. Kindergarten teachers have expressed concerns over the time requirements of the kindergarten school readiness assessments. As with any new system, kindergarten teachers indicate that they need time to learn how to use the school readiness assessments to better understand the learning and development needs of their students. The time constraints are exacerbated for teachers who teach half-day programs as their number of students is double that of teachers of full-day programs. Based on the challenges expressed by teachers, CDE has worked with Teaching Strategies to find solutions. Initially, the department provided the option to assess only the statutorily required domains, use information from READ Act assessments in lieu of the literacy area of the assessment, and monitor students only through compliance with the first 60 day timeline as outlined in HB 15-1323.

School Readiness Reporting System: Section 22-7-1014 (2)(b) C.R.S. requires the State Board of Education to “adopt a system for reporting population-level results that provide baseline data for measuring overall change and improvement in students' skills and knowledge over time.” Pursuant to Section 22-7-1019, the CDE must produce an annual progress reports to the Colorado General Assembly to include the levels of kindergarten school readiness on a statewide basis and disaggregated by school district, school, free or reduced-cost lunch eligibility status, gender, and ethnicity, and “by any other characteristic deemed by the department to be meaningful.” The State Board of Education is continuing to work through recommendations for the reporting system.

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 (comprehensive health and physical education, dance, drama and theatre arts, music, visual arts, 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 entirety of 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.

Since the 2015 CAP4K Legislative Report, additional sample units have been developed, based on requests from schools and districts, to include: physical education, elementary arts integration, middle and high school units in all content areas, environmental literacy and personal financial literacy. Specific standards-based samples in reading, writing, and communicating and mathematics for each grade span (elementary, middle and high) were developed to embed Extended Evidence Outcomes for the one percent of students with significant cognitive disabilities (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coextendedeo>). The Office of Standards and Instructional Support have offered face-to-face and webinar professional development trainings on standards implementation regarding the curricular design process have been conducted throughout the state.

Educators from 121 Colorado school districts have been involved in all 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.

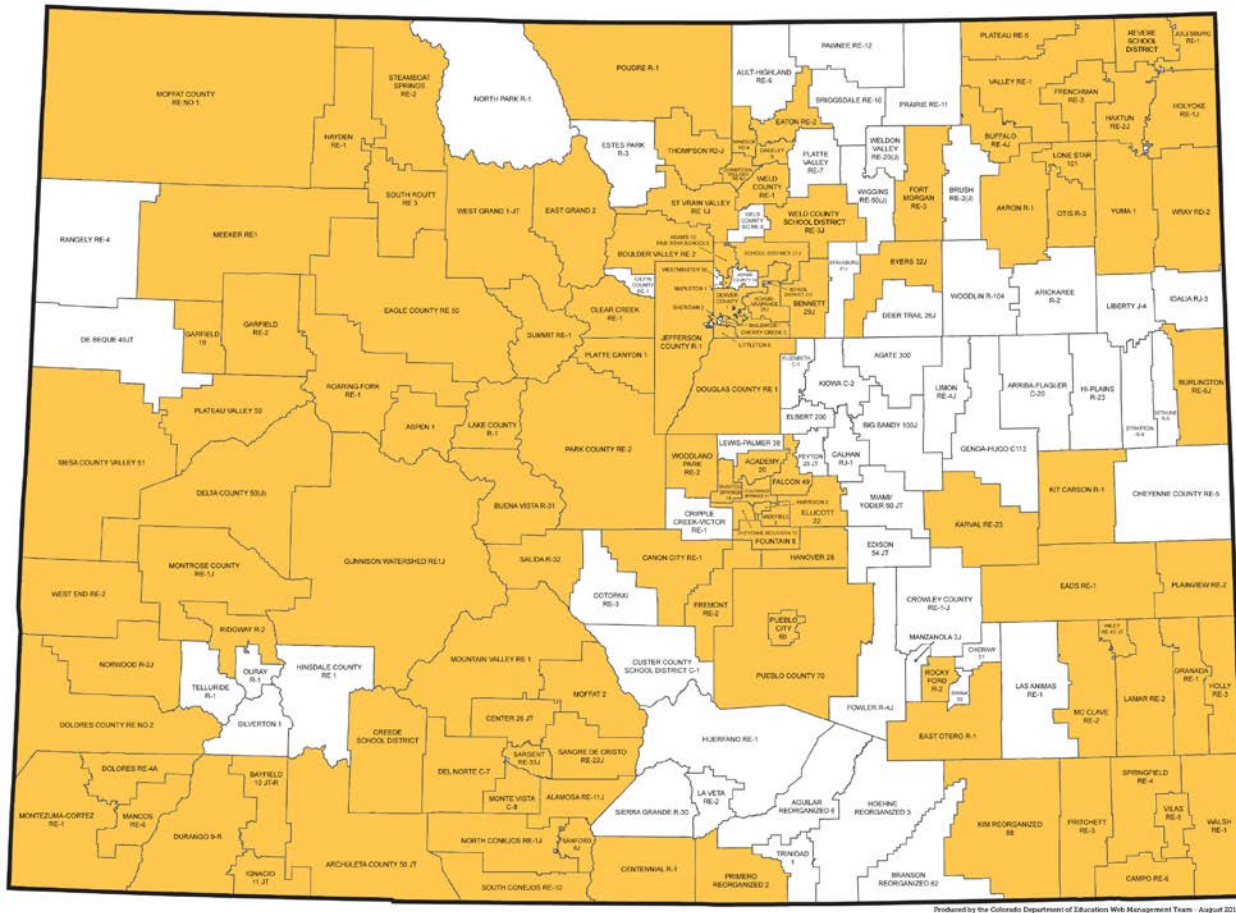


Figure 1: Colorado school districts who participated in the District Sample Curriculum Project, 2012-14)

Furthermore, 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 measure student mastery of the standards in science, social studies, English language arts (reading, writing, and communicating), and mathematics. These assessments represent the next generation in assessment technology, incorporating performance tasks and simulations designed to engage students while testing higher-order thinking and problem solving.

Implementation Status



Colorado fully implemented the CMAS assessments in 2014-2015. The CMAS: PARCC English language arts and math assessments were administered in grades 3-11. Science was administered in grades 5, 8 and 12. Social studies was administered in grades 4, 7 and 11.

Cut scores establishing performance levels for the English language arts and math assessments were established in fall. In fall, 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, state and consortium.

CMAS PARCC English language arts and math results may be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-englishmath-dataandresults>.

CMAS science and social studies results may be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-sciencesocial-dataandresults>.

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

Background

CDE and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) worked together to develop a description of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR). 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. To inform review of the description, CDE and CDHE solicited input from thousands of stakeholders across Colorado in a series of three surveys. Additionally, the two departments jointly convened two statewide meetings in 2015. The purpose of these meetings was to engage stakeholders from business, education and the community in conversations about the skills and competencies students need to succeed after high school. It is anticipated that the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education will consider approval of an updated PWR description after this report is published in 2016. The current PWR description was jointly adopted by the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education at a meeting on June 30, 2009. This description 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 description for Colorado, CDE and DHE measure several factors that reflect levels of PWR 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 information can be accessed at www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview and <http://highered.colorado.gov/Data/Tools.html>.

The on-time, four-year high school graduation rate for the class of 2015 remained the same at 77.3 percent as compared to the previous year. The 2014-15 dropout rate for Colorado is 2.5 percent. This rate increased by 0.1



percentage points from the prior year. An emerging trend is for students to spend additional time in high school to ensure they are ready for the next step. This is reflected in the five-year graduation rate for students, which has raised graduation rates by approximately 5 percent for both of the past two years.

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 2013-14 academic year, approximately 25 percent or 31,000 Colorado 11th and 12th grade students in a public high school participated in concurrent enrollment. This reflected a participation increase of 13 percent over the prior year. Nearly 90 percent of concurrent enrollment students passed all their courses, which 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 27 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 September 2015, the Colorado State Board of Education voted to adopt the graduation guidelines menu of options from which school districts can choose in order to establish local graduation requirements. The purpose of graduation guidelines is to articulate Colorado's shared beliefs about the 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 take effect for ninth-graders in fall 2017 or the high school graduating class of 2021 and align with the description of postsecondary workforce readiness and postsecondary entrance requirements.

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 (CCHE policy I, F) and the remedial education policy (CCHE 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. The Department of Higher Education has worked with College in Colorado to develop a new web based admission tool which clearly explains admission standards at each institution. The online tool is found at this link: www.coadmissionstool.org

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.