



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K)

## 2024 Annual Legislative Report

Submitted to:  
**House Education Committee and Senate Education Committee of the  
Colorado General Assembly**

By:  
**Colorado Department of Education**

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## Overview

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In 2008, the Colorado General Assembly passed S.B. 08-212. Known as Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), the law called for an alignment of the preschool through postsecondary education system to enable Colorado students to graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and careers. CAP4K requires the regular review of Colorado’s preschool through high school student learning standards, an aligned state assessment system, and expectations for postsecondary and workforce readiness for all Colorado high school graduates.

Pursuant to section 22-7-1019 (2), C.R.S., the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is required to provide annual reports related to the provisions of CAP4K, including the results achieved through the implementation of school readiness, the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards, and postsecondary workforce readiness.

## Kindergarten School Readiness

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### Background

CAP4K includes an emphasis on kindergarten school readiness, calling for the State Board of Education (SBE or “state board”) to define it and for educators to annually measure it. Specifically, CAP4K requires the SBE 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.

The state board has defined school readiness as the preparedness of a child to engage in learning as well as the ability of the school to meet the needs of all students in partnership with families and the community. The kindergarten school readiness provision allows for the monitoring of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of students as they enter kindergarten. Additionally, it provides an indicator of children’s experiences prior to kindergarten to better inform partnerships, prioritize needs, and select effective strategies to support ready systems.

Under CAP4K, local education providers are required to administer state board approved kindergarten school readiness assessment tools to each student in kindergarten and to ensure that all children in publicly funded kindergarten receive an Individual School Readiness Plan.

To inform statewide progress toward school readiness, the kindergarten school readiness assessment informs:

- individual kindergarten readiness plans and classroom instruction;
- families of their child’s progress toward school readiness; and
- reporting to the legislature and public through this CAP4K report.

### Kindergarten School Readiness Description

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 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.

State Board of Education, April 2023.

## Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment

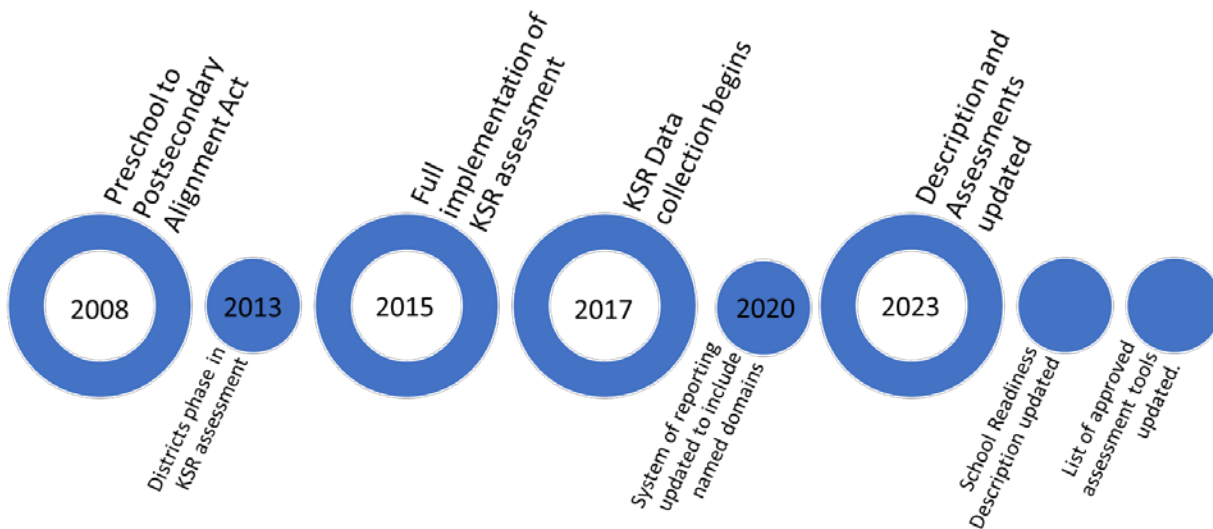
Kindergarten school readiness assessment tools measure students’ knowledge, skills, and abilities as they enter kindergarten and progress toward grade level expectations. Districts select assessment tool(s) from the State Board of Education approved list of assessment tools.

As a snapshot of school readiness, CDE collects aggregate data on the percentage of students meeting grade-level expectations at the beginning of the year, as determined by the assessment tool. Districts annually submit aggregate assessment data for each of the required school readiness domains:

- Physical well-being and motor development;
- Social and emotional development;
- Language and comprehension development;
- Cognition; and
- General knowledge (mathematics and literacy).

For the purpose of reporting, the general knowledge domain consists of mathematics and literacy, such that six domains are reported to the state.

Figure 1: Timeline of Kindergarten School Readiness



Colorado school districts began phasing in kindergarten school readiness assessments in 2013 with full implementation during the 2015-16 school year. The SBE adopted a reporting system for kindergarten school readiness in the spring of 2016, enabling CDE to begin collecting data from districts during the 2017-18 school year.

In March 2020, the state board updated the reporting system to include named domains. Previously, districts submitted only aggregate information by number of domains in which students demonstrated readiness. Beginning in the fall of 2021, the new system reported population-level kindergarten school readiness data in each of the required domains. This new system collects statewide results of aggregate student data. This data is disaggregated by school district, school, grade level, free or reduced-cost lunch eligibility status, gender, and ethnicity as required in statute.



The Colorado SBE updated the description of school readiness during the March 2023 board meeting. Additionally, the SBE updated the list of approved kindergarten school readiness assessment tools to align to this description during the June 2023 board meeting.

Individual child data may be used to inform instruction and to inform families of child progress, but it may not be shared publicly and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

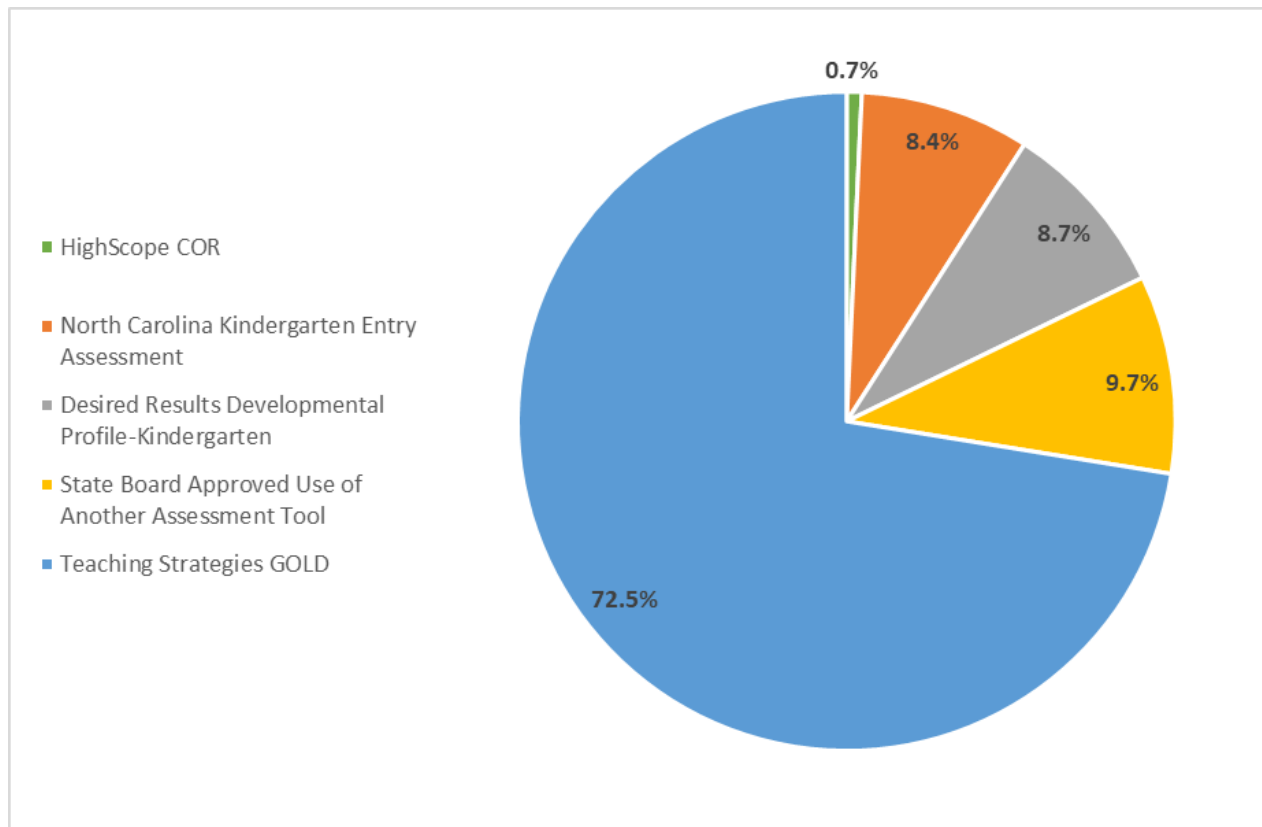
This report details data from the kindergarten school readiness collection from the fall of 2023.

### Kindergarten School Readiness Findings

School districts reported school readiness data collected during the school readiness assessment window, which occurs in the first 60 calendar days of the 2023-24 school year. Student data was collected using the assessment tools approved by the SBE. Teaching Strategies GOLD® was used by 72.5 percent of schools throughout the state. Desired Results Developmental Profile- Kindergarten (DRDP-K) was used by 8.7 percent of schools, North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Assessment was used by 8.4 percent of schools, and HighScope COR was used by 0.7 percent of schools across the state (Figure 2).

The data from the 9.7 percent of schools which use a waiver for a state board approved KSR assessment tool have been excluded from this report due to compatibility concerns. The excluded population represents 7,059 students from schools or 12.4 percent of the total number of students assessed.

Figure 2: Use of Approved Assessment Tools for the Kindergarten School Readiness Data Collection, 2023-24



## Overall Results

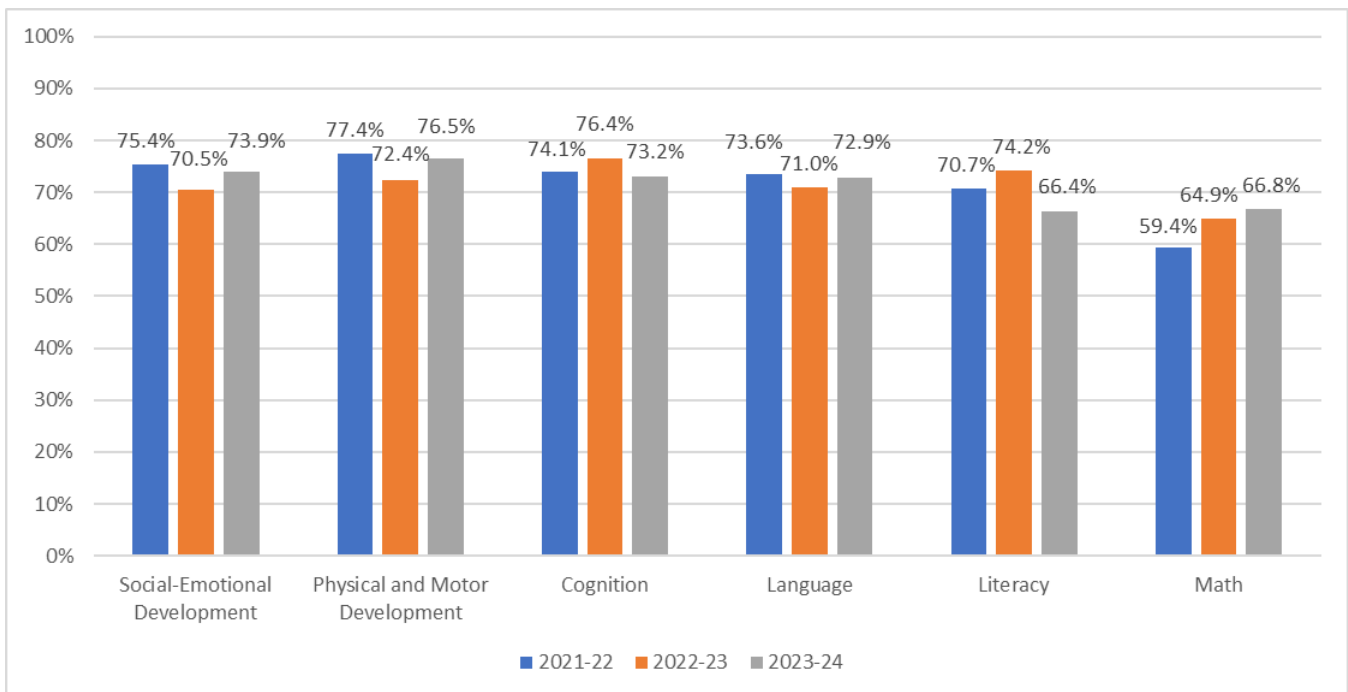
The Kindergarten School Readiness Data is reported to CDE aggregated at the school level. Districts report the following information for each of their schools:

- Total number of students assessed for each of the KSR domains
- Total number of students who met or exceeded expectations for each of the KSR domains
- Demographic data for the students who met or exceeded expectations within each of the KSR domains
  - Gender
  - Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Status
  - Race/Ethnicity

As illustrated in Figure 3, the results from the 2023-24 reporting window reveal that 76.5 percent of Colorado’s kindergarteners met or exceeded age expectations for physical and motor development. A total of 73.9 percent met or exceeded age expectations in social emotional development, followed closely by cognition (73.2 percent), then followed by language (72.9 percent), math (66.8 percent), and literacy (66.4 percent). When compared to last year (2022-23 school year), the percent of kindergarteners meeting expectations rose slightly for social emotional development, physical and motor development, language, and math. While the percentage dropped slightly for cognition and literacy.

Due to the pause in reporting kindergarten school readiness data in 2020-2021 and the change in state board approved reporting system in 2020, annual data is only included for the 2021-22 through 2023-24 school years.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Colorado Kindergarteners Meeting or Exceeding School Readiness Expectations by Domain**



The disaggregation of kindergarten school readiness information by gender, free or reduced-lunch status, and race and ethnicity is included in the following sections. School readiness data are not disaggregated based on



half-day or full-day kindergarten status. In addition, the data reported are for those students who met or exceeded readiness expectations and does not include the students who did not. As a result, we cannot report the percentage of students in each disaggregated group. The state kindergarten enrollment data is provided for context, so it is clear where the number of students meeting expectations fall within the broader enrollment numbers. But the enrollment data may not exactly match the KSR data reported.

**Kindergarten School Readiness by Gender**

In 2023-24, based on the October enrollment count data, the total number of female students comprised slightly less than half of Colorado’s enrolled kindergarten population (28,675 students). Male students comprised slightly more than half of the enrolled kindergarten population (29,956 students).

Table 1 provides the number of students by gender who met or exceeded expectations in each of the KSR domains in the 2023-24 school year.

**Table 1: Number of Colorado Kindergartners by Gender Meeting or Exceeding School Readiness Domains in 2023-24**

	Male	Female	Nonbinary
State Kindergarten Enrollment	28,675	29,956	*
Social-Emotional Development	18,926	17,853	*
Physical and Motor Development	19,432	18,633	*
Cognition	18,561	17,855	*
Language	18,416	17,890	*
Literacy	16,470	16,586	*
Math	16,375	16,896	*

\*N-size does not meet the minimum reporting threshold of 16.

**Kindergarten School Readiness by Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility**

In the 2023-24 school year, based on the October enrollment count data, 31,967 students in Colorado’s enrolled kindergarten population were not eligible to receive Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL), and 26,669 students were eligible to receive FRL.

Table 2 provides the FRL eligibility status for the students who met or exceeded Kindergarten Readiness expectations in each domain. When reporting state baseline data, it is important to note that the Kindergarten School Readiness data collection allows districts to use the FRL Eligibility Unknown option when reporting their student numbers. The State Kindergarten Enrollment data is collected without this option. Therefore, the number zero will be presented in the enrollment row of the data table below.



**Table 2: Number of Colorado Kindergartners by Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility Meeting or Exceeding School Readiness Domains in 2023-24**

	FRL Eligible	FRL Not Eligible	FRL Unknown
State Kindergarten Enrollment	26,669	31,967	0
Social-Emotional Development	10,123	14,656	12,002
Physical and Motor Development	10,553	15,015	12,500
Cognition	9,966	14,445	12,009
Language	9,745	14,720	11,845
Literacy	8,415	12,697	11,947
Math	8,697	13,985	10,566

**Kindergarten School Readiness by Ethnicity and Race**

In 2023-24, based on the October enrollment count data, the majority of Colorado’s enrolled kindergarten population identified as White (29,270 students). This was followed by Hispanic (20,577 students), Two or More Races (3,579 students), Black (2,698), Asian (1,996), American Indian or Alaska Native (300 students) and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (216 students).

Table 3 provides the racial and ethnic compositions for the students who met or exceeded expectations in each Kindergarten School Readiness domain. When reporting state baseline data, it is important to note that the Kindergarten School Readiness data collection allows districts to use the Unknown Race/Ethnicity option when reporting their student numbers. The State Kindergarten Enrollment data is collected without this option. Therefore, the number zero will be presented in the enrollment row of the data table below.





Table 3: Percentage of Colorado Kindergartners by Race and Ethnicity Meeting or Exceeding School Readiness Domains in 2023-24

	Asian	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Black	Hispanic	White	Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Unknown Race / Ethnicity
State Kindergarten Enrollment	1,996	300	2,698	20,577	29,270	216	3,579	0
Social-Emotional Development	1,575	190	1,447	11,519	19,455	105	1,891	599
Physical and Motor Development	1,698	203	1,561	12,063	19,915	114	1,941	573
Cognition	1,594	183	1,494	11,315	19,297	103	1,868	566
Language	1,483	176	1,446	10,519	20,075	102	1,939	570
Literacy	1,500	164	1,202	9,422	18,409	81	1,734	1,996
Math	1,409	150	1,248	9,454	18,696	86	1,780	425

## The Colorado Academic Standards

### Background

CAP4K required the state board to adopt standards that identify the knowledge and skills a student should acquire as the student progresses from preschool through elementary and secondary education. It further requires the state board to review and revise the standards every six years. In the spring of 2020, the General Assembly passed H.B. 20-1032 which amended the standards revision timeline. The state board has since then been required to review and revise approximately one-third of the standards beginning in 2022 and an additional one-third every two years thereafter.

### Standards Review and Revision Process

The arts and social studies standards revisions were included in the first phase of the three-phase process. The content areas in Phase II include English Language Proficiency, World Languages, Physical Education, and Computer Science. Content areas planned for Phase III overlap with state-level assessment contracts for these tested content areas, in addition to Comprehensive Health.

During the 2021-22 school year, the department convened stakeholder committees to make recommended revisions for the arts and social studies standards. These committees were composed of 81 members with CDE staff serving in a supportive role. In addition to responding to public feedback on the 2018 version of the



Colorado Academic Standards for social studies, the social studies standards review and revision committee was required to implement and respond to new legislative requirements for the standards:

- H. B. 19-1192: History, Culture, and Civil Government in Education Commission recommendations. This bill requires that the recommendations from this commission be considered during the standards review process.
- H. B. 20-1336: Holocaust and Genocide Studies. This bill required the State Board to adopt standards for Holocaust and genocide by July 2021.
- H. B. 21-1200: Revise Financial Literacy Standards. This bill requires the inclusion of new topics in the personal financial literacy standards.
- H. B. 21-1103: Media Literacy Standards. This bill requires the review process to consider the recommendations of the Media Literacy Advisory Committee established under H. B. 19-1110.
- S. B. 21-067: Strengthening Civics Education. This bill requires the inclusion of specific topics in the civics standards.

Initial recommended revisions were made public for feedback in November 2021 with presentations regarding the proposed revisions to the state board from November 2021 through November 2022.

Following the adoption of revisions to the arts standards in April 2022 and the social studies standards in November 2022, local education providers will have the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years to transition to the revised standards, with implementation beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

In the Spring of 2023, the department began the review process for the Phase II content areas: computer science, English language proficiency, physical education, and world languages. After reviewing benchmarking reports for all four content areas, the State Board of Education decided to move forward with revisions to the computer science standards and convened a committee of stakeholders to make recommendations for revisions. Final decisions regarding revision recommendations to the Phase II standards will be made by June 30, 2024.

## Colorado's Statewide Content Assessment System

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### Background

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments in English language arts, science and social studies are developed to assess the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS). The CMAS in science and social studies were administered for the first time in 2014 with English language arts (ELA) and mathematics added in 2015. The paper-based SAT Suite of Assessments (PSAT in grades 9 and 10 with SAT at grade 11) were fully administered starting in spring 2018.

The spring 2023 administration schedule is shown in Table 4 below.



Table 4: 2023 State Content Assessments

Spring 2023 Assessments	
CMAS/CoAlt ELA	Grades 3-8
CMAS/CoAlt Math	Grades 3-8
CMAS and CoAlt Science (Developed to align to 2020 CAS)	Grades 5, 8, and 11
PSAT/SAT and CoAlt	Grades 9, 10, and 11

### 2023 State Assessment Results and Interpretation Considerations

#### Students Instructional Experiences

Schools returned to more typical schedules and settings with fewer disruptions in 2022-2023 compared to the more active pandemic years. Districts and schools made instructional adjustments to address the missed learning opportunities from prior years within the context of current grade level learning experiences and mostly within typical instructional times. Districts implemented additional support, including high impact tutoring, high quality mathematics curricula, and evidence-based summer and afterschool programs. Staffing challenges continued and Colorado schools had a larger percentage of unfilled positions than in prior years.

#### 2023 State Assessment Results Provide Insight into Student Learning

Spring 2023 state tests and expectations were consistent with tests from previous years. Because the scale scores and performance levels (e.g., approached expectations, met expectations, etc.) had the same meaning from previous years, results provide important insight into what individual students know and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations of the Colorado Academic Standards. Results for students may be interpreted with reasonable confidence. For example, student scores at performance levels “Met Expectations” or “Exceeded Expectations” are indicators of mastery of the standards.

#### Participation Information is Critical to Interpretation of State, District and School Results

Participation information must be reviewed and taken into consideration thoughtfully when interpreting 2023 district and school results. Although this year’s participation rates for districts, schools and student groups were significantly higher than in 2021, there were widespread differences across and within districts with some student groups participating at higher rates than other groups.

As participation rates decrease and vary across student, school and district groups, challenges with interpreting results increase. Depending on the specific school or district, some student groups will be overrepresented in the results and others may be underrepresented. Participation rates and how well the students who tested reflect the district/school vary across the state again this year. Participation information indicates that in some cases, conclusions should be drawn with caution or completely avoided. High school science participation especially poses significant challenges to generalization and interpretation of the results.



CMAS: English language arts, mathematics, and science achievement results and participation rates for the spring 2023 assessments are available at the following location: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults-2023>.

PSAT and SAT results and participation rates for spring 2023 are available at the following location: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/sat-psat-data>.

Operational CMAS and CoAlt science assessments aligned to the 2020 Colorado Academic Standards were administered with scale scores and performance levels for the first time in spring 2023.

## Looking Ahead

The adaptive digitally based PSAT/SAT assessments will be administered for the first time in spring 2024. The prior paper based PSAT/SAT assessments have been discontinued by the vendor.

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) in all content areas and the CoAlt science and social studies assessments are undergoing a competitive procurement this school year (2023-2024) for a first administration under a new contract expected in spring 2025.

## Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

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### Background

CDE and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) worked together to develop a description of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR). As required in Colorado law, every six years the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education are required to review the PWR description and adopt any appropriate revisions.

After extensive educator, community, and business input, the updated PWR description was jointly adopted by the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education in winter 2016. The description was reviewed and re-confirmed by the State Board in 2022 and will soon be reviewed by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. This description serves as the basis for the state's alignment efforts including the Colorado Academic Standards, assessments and informing student demonstrations of skills and knowledge required to be ready for college and a career upon earning a high school diploma.

***Colorado high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens.***

### Progress in 2022-23

In alignment with the PWR description for Colorado, CDE and CDHE measure several factors that reflect levels of PWR for students beyond high school, including graduation rates, dropout rates, college entrance scores, participation in concurrent enrollment courses during high school, matriculation and persistence rates to and through postsecondary education, remediation rates for students who enter college at a Colorado public institution of higher education, and implementation of Colorado's graduation guidelines.



## Graduation and Dropout Rates

The four-year high school graduation rate for the Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG) 2023 cohort is 83.1 percent, which signifies a 0.8 percentage point increase compared to the previous year. AYG 2023 had 528 more four-year graduates than AYG 2022. The state's four-year graduation rate has increased 10.7 percentage points since 2010 when Colorado moved to the Anticipated Year of Graduation cohort method for calculating graduation rates. Extended year rates for high school students taking five, six and seven years to graduate also show improvement in 2022-23. See the state's [graduation data dashboard](#) for more information. The dashboard features longitudinal data by student groups, schools, and districts.

The state's 2022-23 overall dropout rate is 2.1 percent, which is a decrease of 0.1 percentage point from the previous year. After an increase in 2021-22, the state saw 9,665 students in grades seven through 12 drop out last year -- this is a decrease from the previous year, however still higher than in 2020-21. Overall, the statewide dropout level has decreased 1.0 percentage point since 2010. [Details on the dropout rate](#) are available on the CDE website.

## Concurrent Enrollment

The state of Colorado passed the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act (CEPA) in 2009, which provides a structure for local education providers and institutions of higher education to enter into cooperative agreements to offer college courses to high school students. Due to changes in CEPA per S. B. 19-176, to expand concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students, especially in areas with historically low (or no) student enrollment in concurrent enrollment opportunities, local education providers are now required to offer Concurrent Enrollment opportunities to qualified students in grades nine through 12 at no tuition cost to students and families. S. B. 19-176 also created a [grant program](#) to fund expansion and innovation efforts and created [a statewide comprehensive website for students and parents](#) to inform them of Concurrent Enrollment and other dual credit opportunities for students, what they cost, and the benefits and challenges of each option.

For more information about statewide student participation in Concurrent Enrollment and other dual credit programs, please see the Colorado Department of Higher Education's [Concurrent Enrollment webpage](#).

## Graduation Guidelines

CDE continues to implement [Graduation Guidelines](#) as established under H. B. 07-1118 and S. B. 08-256, requiring the development of statewide high school graduation guidelines that local school boards must meet or exceed. The purpose of graduation guidelines is to articulate Colorado's shared expectations for 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 took effect for ninth graders in fall 2017, and with a one-year delay due to COVID, were required of all graduates in 2022 and beyond. Graduation Guidelines align with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness and postsecondary entrance requirements.

To support local education providers in implementing the Graduation Guidelines, CDE staff has provided multiple opportunities for school and district leaders to learn from one another about the local implementation strategies that are proving effective for each learner. From capstone workshops focusing on meaningful capstone processes for all and especially for students with disabilities, to symposia on promising practices for English learners, to monthly town halls focusing on strategies to increase postsecondary and workforce readiness, the Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness regularly seeks to highlight the best of what is happening in the field from which others can learn. Hundreds of educators from local education providers across the state have attended and participated in these learning opportunities.



## Admissions and Developmental Education Policy Review and Revision

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### Background

CAP4K and subsequent state law (section 23-1-113, C.R.S.) required the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to review and revise the admission standards policy (CCHE policy I, F) and the developmental/remedial education policy (CCHE policy I, E) by December 15, 2013. Statute required CCHE to align the admissions standards policy with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness and graduation guidelines. After extensive institution and community input, CCHE approved revisions to the admission policy in November 2014.

### Admission Standards Policy

The revised admission standards policy took effect for all students seeking admission for fall 2019 and thereafter. The key elements of the new admission standards policy directly support the shift in focus in Colorado from enrollment to student success. The changes included aligning postsecondary admissions expectations with high school Graduation Guidelines. Further, the policy increased flexibility for institutions to determine their own specific admissions requirements and increased the number of tools they may use to do so within the scope of their statutory role and mission. The policy presupposes that institutions will admit students whom they are best able to serve to be successful and earn a credential.

As required by the new policy, institutions submitted their proposed admission standards, which were approved by CCHE in December 2014 and are evaluated on an annual basis. The admissions standards include the mid 50 percent range of assessment scores and grade point average (GPA) for each institution's previously admitted student class, as well as academic rigor and demographic information. In alignment with the graduation guidelines, academic rigor can specifically include competency-based education.

### Developmental Education Policy

Colorado's developmental (formerly "remedial") education policy provides criteria to be used by all public higher education institutions in the state in identifying students who need developmental courses in English and mathematics. The change from "remedial" to "developmental" was made by the Commission on Higher Education in 2017 to reflect the national movement away from using the term "remedial." The policy lays out standards whereby institutions may offer developmental courses.

The developmental education policy aligns with postsecondary expectations and with high school Graduation Guidelines. The goal of the policy is to improve the effectiveness of developmental placement and education, and to increase the number of credentials received by Colorado high school graduates, especially by those from underrepresented backgrounds. In 2013, the policy was updated to increase institution flexibility by giving more placement options, including allowing institutions to place students into college level courses along with supplemental academic instruction. The updated 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 the General Education Development test (GED) and the other state-approved high school equivalency exam, HiSET. Also, institutions may use additional means of evaluating a student's readiness such as high school GPA and prior learning experiences (e.g., work experience).

In 2019, H. B. 19-1206, titled "Concerning removing equity gaps in higher education by ensuring more students have access to supplemental academic instruction," was passed. Among other things, beginning in fall 2022 Colorado's public institutions of higher education could enroll no more than 10 percent of students into traditional stand-alone pre-requisite developmental education courses that delay degree completion. This



change also impacted school districts that offer developmental education courses through Concurrent Enrollment. The Colorado Department of Higher Education holds ongoing meetings with academic and data representatives from institutions of higher education to determine how to best implement this change effectively.