

# Statutory Expectations & Desired Attributes of Colorado's Statewide Assessment System



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

*The following document provides a summary of the statutory expectations and desired attributes that have been articulated over time and have shaped Colorado's statewide assessment system.*

## Assessment Attributes Adopted by the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education

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*The Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act (S.B. 08-212 or CAP4K) was passed in 2008 and intended to align Colorado's educational system from preschool to college by establishing a seamless system of standards, expectations, and assessments. From fall of 2009 through spring of 2009, the Assessment Stakeholders Committee met to consider the state's revised content standards and make recommendations for revisions of Colorado's assessment system. The committee consisted of 35 members, including superintendents, chief academic officers, university professors, community members, business representatives, assessment directors, representatives from the early childhood community, military representatives and local board members, and involved the work of subcommittees focusing on summative, formative and interim, postsecondary and workforce readiness, school readiness, and special populations assessments. After recommendations for Colorado's new assessment system were drafted, the Colorado Department of Education and Colorado Department of Higher Education oversaw a Regional Town Hall Assessment Revision Tour, holding 10 meetings across the state and gathering feedback on the draft from over 200 Coloradoans. In November 2010, the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education unanimously adopted an agreement concerning the architecture of a statewide assessment system and in December 2010 the State Board voted to approve the following attributes of the system.*

- **SBE acknowledges that summative assessments aligned to the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Colorado Academic Standards (including both content knowledge and skills) will be part of the new assessment system.**
  - The state summative assessments will at least measure Math and English Language Arts, including the application of knowledge and skills, in grades 3-11.
  - Science and Social Studies will be measured, at least once in elementary, middle, and high school.
  - To take advantage of new interactive item types and facilitate the timely return of the results, the summative assessments will be on-line to the extent it fits instructional best practice and is fiscally possible or feasible.
- **SBE agrees that formative assessment will be part of the new assessment system; therefore, the state will support and provide guidance for local education providers in formative assessment.**
  - CDE will support districts in providing on-going professional development activities in the use of these practices and interpretation of these results. Support should include differentiated approaches based on local needs: collaboratively developing learning progressions, models/exemplars, and videos as resources allow.
  - CDE will support the creation of district or regional consortia to promote professional dialogue on assessment throughout the state as resources allow.
- **SBE agrees that interim assessments should be a part of the new assessment system and that the state will support and provide guidance for local education providers with the uses of interim assessments.**
  - Districts will determine timing, frequency, and design/selection of interim assessments.
  - CDE will offer exemplary, voluntary interim assessment tools aligned to the state-tested subjects with the goal of providing interim assessments aligned to all standards as resources allow.



- CDE will provide a vetting process and rubrics to assist district in purchasing or designing rigorous and standards-focused interim assessments for all grades and all content areas as resources allow.
- **SBE agrees that school readiness assessments will include primarily a mix of state-approved formative and interim assessment tools.**
  - CDE recommends that the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) be updated to align with the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Colorado Academic Standards and that numeracy be added to reflect the same instructional values of progress monitoring and early intervention where needed.
  - The state will offer districts a menu of approved school readiness assessment tools.
  - In preschool through second grade school readiness assessments will rely on formative assessment practices and interim assessments.
  - In grades 1-2 mastery of the PWR Colorado Academic Standards will be measured.
  - Districts are encouraged to introduce developmentally appropriate end-of-year assessments.
- **SBE acknowledges that the English Language Learners assessments will include a screener and proficiency test aligned to the Colorado English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards.**
  - The proficiency assessment window will begin after the October count and will close prior to the beginning of any other state annual summative academic content testing.
  - The proficiency assessment will be technically sound and administration practices will be consistent with the expectations of other high stakes state assessments (e.g., tests will be secure and students will not be exposed to the same form multiple times).
- **SBE agrees that the priority of postsecondary and workforce readiness measures will be part of the new assessment system. The system will capture bodies of evidence for a student's academic progress, planning, preparation, and readiness competencies, which will not necessarily be used for state accountability purposes.**
  - A dashboard will be a visual display for P-20 students to use as on-going documentation of their postsecondary and workforce readiness progress, including ICAP (Individual Career and Academic Plans) documentation, student work exemplars, employer recommendations, and other relevant materials.
  - Results can be used for high school, as well as college and career eligibility and guidance. The body of evidence displayed on the dashboard can be used for graduation considerations or endorsed high school diplomas.

### Relevant Statements from Education Accountability Act Legislative Declaration

*In 2009, the General Assembly passed the Education Accountability Act (S.B. 09-163), outlining the role that assessment and growth data are meant to play in the district and school accountability system. The Legislative Declaration for the Act provides an overview of the desired goals of the legislation and includes language explaining the significance of academic achievement and growth data.*

- **Section 22-11-102(1), C.R.S.: "The General Assembly hereby finds that an effective system of statewide education accountability is one that:**
  - (a) focuses the attention of educators, parents, students, and other members of the community on maximizing every student's progress toward postsecondary and workforce readiness and post-graduation success;



- (b) reports information concerning performance at the state level, school district or Institute level, and individual public schools level that is perceived by educators, parents, and students as fair, balanced, cumulative, credible and useful;
  - (c) provides more academic performance information, and fewer labels, to move from a punitive accountability system to one that is positive and focused on learning and achieving high levels of academic performance; and
  - (d) holds the state, school districts, the Institute, and individual public schools accountable for performance on the same set of indicators and measures statewide, ensures that those indicators and measures are aligned through a single accountability system, to the extent possible, that objectively evaluates the performance of the thorough and uniform statewide system of public education for all groups of students at the state, school district or Institute, and individual public school levels, and, as appropriate, rewards success and provides support for improvement at each level.”
- **Section 22-11-102(2), C.R.S.:** “The general assembly further finds that an effective education accountability system will be built around implementation of the Colorado growth model that:
    - (a) Uses a common measure to describe in plain language how much academic growth each student needs to make and how much growth the student actually makes in one year toward proficiency on state content standards;
    - (b) Incorporates a complete history of each student's assessment scores in calculating the student's needed and achieved academic growth;
    - (c) Focuses the attention of educators, parents, and students on maximizing students' academic growth and achievement over time and reveals where, and among which groups of students, the strongest academic growth is occurring and where it is not;
    - (d) Assists the state in closing the achievement gaps that plague the public education system by spotlighting the gaps in students' academic growth rates and ensuring that educators have the data necessary to assist the neediest students in making more than a year's academic growth in a year's time so that these students can catch up to the academic performance levels of their peers; and
    - (e) Provides data that are recognized by educators, parents, students, the higher education community, the business community, and other stakeholders as fair, balanced, objective, and transparent to support individual school, school district, institute, state, and federal education accountability purposes.

## Values and Expectations Embedded in Education Accountability Act and Assessment Attributes

*Below is a staff-developed synthesis of the values and expectations for Colorado's assessment system and growth model that are expressed in both the Educational Accountability Act and the assessment attributes adopted by the State Board.*

- **Performance on statewide assessments will signal mastery of Colorado Academic Standards at grade level, including both knowledge and application of skills.**
  - Results from the final high school summative assessment will provide an indication of a student's postsecondary and workforce readiness. This readiness may have implications for high school graduation guidelines, higher education admissions policies and criteria for endorsed diplomas.
- **Statewide assessments and growth data will measure progress toward postsecondary and workforce readiness.**
  - Assessments will be used to help prevent the chronic need for postsecondary remediation.



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- Assessment and growth data will focus attention on maximizing students' academic growth and achievement over time and reveal where, and among which groups of students, the strongest academic growth is occurring and where it is not.
  - **Statewide assessments and growth data will inform instruction.**
    - When fiscally possible and fitting to best instructional practices, assessments will be given online to accommodate the timely return of results.
    - The state will support districts in providing voluntary formative practices assessments and interim benchmark assessments.
    - Assessment and growth data will lead to a deeper understanding of each child so that instruction and support can be differentiated to best meet individual needs.
  - **Statewide assessments and growth data will provide meaningful results.**
    - Summative assessments will be given as late in the school year as possible to allow for more instruction.
    - Assessment and growth data will be a part of a system of accountability that is perceived by educators, parents, and students as fair, balanced, cumulative and useful.
    - Assessment and growth data will assist in holding districts and schools accountable on the same set of indicators and measures statewide to objectively evaluate the performance of a thorough and uniform statewide system of public education for all groups of students.