

Colorado's Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Assessment System

Considerations for mutual agreements between Colorado Commission on Higher Education and Colorado State Board of Education

Adopted by CCHE and SBE on November 29, 2010

Vision:

Colorado's new assessment system will signal mastery of PWR Colorado Academic Standards at grade level. As the Colorado Academic Standards reflect both knowledge and application of skills as expressed in the description of postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR), the new assessment system will also measure progress toward PWR. It will be designed to produce meaningful results which will be both easy to understand and applicable to students, parents and educators.

Ongoing feedback, student relevance and interim results each represent a new approach to the role of assessment in high-quality instruction. The new assessment system will inform instruction and provide early feedback, which will also help to reduce remediation. Over time (and where appropriate) the assessments will be given online, in order to accommodate the timely return of results. Voluntary formative practices and aligned interim benchmark assessments may be provided by the state. The summative assessments, given by the state as the state record and for accountability, will be given as late in the school year as possible to allow for more instruction and results will be made available prior to the end of the school year.

The state, in collaboration with educator preparation programs, shall prepare annually a report on the effectiveness of IHE-based and alternative educator preparation programs, using aggregated data on student academic growth, educator placement, and educator mobility, and retention.

Introduction:

Colorado's citizens, policy leaders and educators have developed attributes of a new state assessment system. All levels of the public education system now converge into a unified set of expectations, which are outlined in the postsecondary and workforce readiness description and incorporated within the academic standards for Colorado students. With content mastery as the primary focus, the new assessment system will measure formal mastery of content and ongoing progress toward readiness. Components will include end-of-year mastery, interim checkpoints, bodies of evidence, nationally recognized college admissions tests, and early childhood measures.

What follow are the recommended assessment system attributes and the mutual agreements for CCHE and SBE to consider.

State summative postsecondary and workforce accountability system

The purpose of the state summative assessment is to measure progress toward college and career readiness and mastery of the PWR Colorado Academic Standards (both content knowledge and skills).

A nationally recognized college admissions test will also be required of all 11th grade students.

CCHE and SBE agree that the results from the final high school summative assessment will provide an indication of a student's postsecondary and workforce readiness. Implications may include eligibility for high school graduation, higher education admissions policies, and criteria for endorsed diplomas.

Mutual Agreement: CCHE and SBE acknowledge that summative assessments aligned to the PWR Colorado Academic Standards (including both content knowledge and skills) will be part of the new assessment system.

Decision Points:

1. State summative results will measure at least Math and English Language Arts in grades 3 through 11. Science and social studies will be measured at least once in elementary, middle and high school. Application of knowledge in context will be expected.
2. Summative assessment results will be reported on student transcripts.
3. The SBE and CCHE will collaboratively determine scores which indicate that students meet college-level content and learning skills expectations without remediation. Educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative) will ensure that all candidates completing educator preparation programs are familiar with and competent in the PWR Colorado Academic Standards prior to providing endorsement for licensure.

Formative (ongoing) postsecondary and workforce measures

Formative assessments lead to formative instruction, and thereby require changes in expected teaching practice. These assessments will determine both student mastery and confusion, allowing for improved classroom instruction and student learning.

Aligning formative assessment to new PWR Colorado Academic Standards impacts educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative), ongoing professional development, induction and classroom practices.

Mutual Agreement: CCHE and SBE agree that formative assessments are key components of effective instruction; should be an integral part of educator preparation programs; and will be part of the new assessment system.

Decision Points:

1. Educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative) will include formative assessment practices in their coursework in order to develop future educators competent in soliciting, understanding and utilizing student performance feedback.
2. Educators already in the classroom require ongoing professional development on formative assessment practices and results interpretation. Through such methods as collaborative information sharing, models/exemplars, videos and the like, DHE and CDE are committed to supporting districts through collaboration with educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative) and ongoing professional development activities.

Interim (benchmark) postsecondary and workforce measures

Interim assessments measure a student’s progress toward mastery over time. Optimally, students will be able to understand their results and their progress and what they mean in terms of their academic and post-high school plans. The use of interim assessments is expected to help prevent the chronic need for postsecondary remediation.

Aligning interim assessment to the PWR Colorado Academic Standards impacts educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative), ongoing professional development, induction and classroom practices.

Mutual Agreement: CCHE and SBE agree that interim assessments should be part of how we measure student progress in the future and as such should be included in all educator preparation programs, as well as part of the new assessment system.

Decision Points:

1. Educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative) will teach educator candidates how to analyze and best utilize assessment data to improve student performance.
2. DHE and CDE will support ongoing professional development for licensed educators on the use of interim assessments and the interpretation of their results.

Early childhood measures

The new system must provide one or more assessments to measure preschool and kindergarten students' level of readiness to engage in and benefit from elementary classroom environments. The primary purpose of measuring readiness factors is to inform instruction and intervention to achieve positive outcomes. The data derived from school readiness assessments will lead to a deeper understanding of each child so that instruction and support can be differentiated to best meet individual needs.

Results from assessments will NOT be publically reported for individual students and will NOT be used to deny a student's admission or progression through first grade. Ensuring all students in public schools have a unique student identifier (i.e. SASID) allows for these and other results and data to be shared across education sectors. Aligning early childhood measures to PWR Colorado Academic Standards will impacts educator preparation programs, ongoing professional development, induction and classroom practices.

Mutual Agreement: CCHE and SBE agree that the priority of early childhood measures will be to provide formative and interim signals aligned to the PWR Colorado Academic Standards.

Decision Point:

1. In grades 1-2 mastery of the PWR Colorado Academic Standards will be measured.
2. Educator preparation programs (IHE-based and alternative) will teach developmentally appropriate assessment practices.

Other postsecondary and workforce measures

Individual and Career Academic Plan (ICAP) will capture a student's career and academic plans (per SB256), such as career exploration, interest inventories, academic progress, service learning, and college applications. Career and technical pathways toward a career may be captured in the ICAP. ICAP may also capture those 21st century skills/attributes that do not currently lend themselves to being assessed on the state summative assessment. The ICAP is a body of evidence that captures progression toward college and career readiness. The new assessment system would benefit from a state-wide, common visual display for the results and bodies of evidence collected in the new system. Concurrent enrollment credits earned will continue as Colorado statutes provide. State high school assessments will require Higher Education Admission Requirement (HEAR) alignment.

Mutual Agreement: CCHE and SBE agree that the gauging of PWR will be part of the new assessment system. The system will capture bodies of evidence of student's academic progress, planning, preparation and readiness competencies, which will not necessarily be used for state accountability purposes.

Decision Points:

1. A dashboard will be a visual display for P-20 students to use as ongoing indication of their PWR progress (academic results, learning skills, interim scores, ICAP, etc.). The dashboard will be aligned only to the PWR Colorado Academic Standards and will be useful in postsecondary advising and guidance.
2. Postsecondary results will be shared with the secondary system to inform continuous improvement.
3. Results can be used for high school, as well as college and career eligibility and guidance.