

**TOPIC: UPDATE ON SB08-212/CAP4K**

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**I. SUMMARY**

*In 2008:*

- *The high school graduation rate in Colorado was 74.6%; Hispanic students' graduation rates hovered around 50%;*
- *Colorado had the largest White-Hispanic Achievement Gap in the country;*
- *Twenty-five percent (25%) of schools in Colorado (108 schools) accounted for 70% of all dropouts;*
- *Colorado ranked 12th in the nation in preschool access for three-year olds and 23rd in access for four-year olds;*
- *Twenty-nine percent (29%) of high school graduates entering college required remediation; in many Colorado high schools, the percentage of students needing remediation was over 60%.*

As a response to the declarations above, the Colorado General Assembly passed SB08-212 (the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act). Also known as Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids, CAP4K was designed to align Colorado's educational system from pre-school to college with a particular focus on the readiness of all children at key transition points and to prepare them for **postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR)**. The CAP4K legislation stipulates that students who graduate from high school "ready by exit" be eligible for automatic admission into the moderately selective colleges in Colorado. Additionally, the 2009 School Finance Act (SB09-256) added a requirement that all students, starting in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the latest, have an ICAP, or Individual Career and Academic Plan.

Specifically, the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act:

- Aligns P-12 school standards and assessment measures with the knowledge and skills necessary for students to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce;
- Assumes that high school students need the same fundamental core knowledge and competencies, and personal skills for postsecondary study and the workforce;
- Assumes that most students will need some postsecondary education in order to remain competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy and marketplace;
- Assumes that a high school diploma is a meaningful indicator of PWR;
- Has implications for admissions purposes in Colorado public institutions of higher education, for those students who gain a PWR endorsement on their high school diploma;

- Requires the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and the Colorado State Board of Education (SBE) to negotiate a single description of postsecondary and workforce readiness;
- Stipulates that the adopted description of PWR, among other provisions, shall:
  - ❖ Describe specific knowledge and skills that students must have to demonstrate PWR;
  - ❖ Ensure that PWR includes “demonstration of a sufficiently high level of comprehension or skill to successfully complete, without need for remediation” specified core academic courses;
  - ❖ Ensure, to the extent practicable, that students demonstrate such “21<sup>st</sup> century skills” as creativity and innovation; critical thinking; communication and collaboration; social and cultural awareness; initiative and self-direction; character and leadership; productivity and accountability; and information technology application skills.
- Requires the CCHE and SBE to negotiate a consensus regarding assessment measures, including a new 11th grade PWR assessment that “at a minimum, tests in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science and is relevant to college admission determinations by institutions of higher education throughout the United States.”

## II. BACKGROUND

The first statewide, co-convened, joint tour of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) commenced in autumn 2008. This tour was the first of three to date and required by the legislation. Both departments fielded teams who went to several communities across the state to solicit input for the creation of a description of PWR – postsecondary *and* workforce readiness. In total, the CDE and DHE facilitated 15 statewide meetings with over 700 attendees contributing to the creation of the PWR description. In June 2009, the SBE and CCHE jointly voted to formally approve the state’s PWR description.

The next step of the CAP4K legislation entailed the adoption of state standards that are “fewer, clearer, and higher” *and* benchmarked internationally. Each grade, beginning with “prepared graduate” outcomes articulates the few but essential content and learning skills in subject areas and which link back to the same type of developmentally ready goals at pre-school. They are the same expectations which lead forward to simple, strong performance expectations held for a successful freshman year in college or toward an early career. In December 2009, the SBE formally approved the new P-12 academic standards for the state. The new standards cover not just academic content area but also “21<sup>st</sup> century skills” defined as “Learning and Behavior Skills.”

The third step of the alignment legislation requires the specification and development of new state assessments to measure the expectations of PWR, which includes the state’s new P-12

academic standards. *Per legislation, the assessment must include: the state summative assessments, postsecondary and workforce readiness assessments, school readiness measurements, English language acquisition, screening and placement tools, and assessment accommodations for special populations.*

In October 2009, groups comprised of professionals from across the P-20 education spectrum and the business community, in collaboration with the CDE and DHE, began establishing terms and principles for a new, re-designed assessment system. These additional stakeholder groups were comprised of the Assessment Stakeholders Advisory Committee (ASAC), the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)<sup>1</sup>, and five subcommittees created by the ASAC: the School Readiness and Early Childhood Assessment Subcommittee, the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Subcommittee, the Assessment Subcommittee, the Summative Assessment Subcommittee (NCLB requirements), the Formative (Interim/Benchmark) Assessment Subcommittee, and the Subcommittee for Special Populations. One hundred experts and practitioners were selected from across the state to serve on these subcommittees and to make recommendations about each component of the new assessment system. Three main questions served as guideposts for ongoing discussions with the various committees:

1. How might Colorado measure these common expectations and avoid silo agendas and separate measures which don't always support student awareness of progress toward one unified goal of readiness?
2. How does a student (and his/her family) invest ownership in personal progress so that his/her efforts are apparent, impactful, and relevant?
3. How does the assessment system itself "speak" to the need to find more subtle evidence of preparedness and still be reliable and confidently recognized as a measure of mastery?

The CDE and DHE have collected additional data regarding the re-designed assessment system through a second series of co-convened, co-facilitated 212 meetings around the state. This second round of meetings took place in spring 2010. Close to 400 Colorado residents participated in these thirteen meetings which focused on assessment specifications for the re-designed assessment system. The Departments have also collected data collection with postsecondary stakeholder groups including admissions personnel; chief academic officers from Colorado's public institutions of postsecondary education; senior level representatives from the student services departments of institutions; and guidance professionals such as counselors and pre-collegiate advisors. Results of the data collection with postsecondary stakeholder groups will be available by October 15, 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> The TAC is comprised of national-level consultants with particular expertise in assessments/psychometrics.

### **III. NEXT STEPS**

A third statewide tour to address the re-designed assessment system specifications will be co-convened and co-facilitated by CDE and DHE. This tour will get underway this October, 2010.

After this third public vetting process, both the SBE and CCHE will consider adopting the new assessment design in advance of a formal December 2010 vote of both governing bodies (as stipulated in the 212/CAP4K legislation). Joint meetings of the SBE/CCHE will be held on October 21, 2010 and November 29, 2010.

### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. 22- 7-1008 *et seq.*