



COLORADO
Department of Education
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

August 11, 2016

Dear Superintendents,

Today we released state-level results of our CMAS tests along with the PSAT 10 and ACT at the State Board of Education meeting in Grand Junction. We also released district- and school-level overall results for CMAS science, and the PSAT 10 and ACT. Your district- and school-level data for our English language arts and math tests will come out later this month or early September.

As with last year, it will be our collective challenge to communicate with parents about the purpose of these tests and the value of the results. Here are a few thoughts from CDE's communication materials. We wanted to share them with you in case they would be helpful in your own conversations.

First, we think it's still important to remind parents that these tests are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards which were required by state legislation and developed with a great deal of input from Colorado educators. Fully implemented in 2013-14, the standards are more rigorous than previous standards, and serve as a roadmap to college and career readiness for all students.

As the only common academic measurement for all students in our state, the Colorado Measures of Academic Success allow parents to see how well their children did in comparison to peers in their school, district and the state. Still, the tests are just one measure of student achievement, and parents should remember that the tests should be considered together with classroom grades and teacher feedback to create a more complete picture of their child's academic achievement.

While there are some notable areas of improvement over last year's scores, we can't announce any significant trends. Two years of data simply isn't enough to identify trends, and that might be something you consider as you look at and discuss your school and district data.

I also encourage each of you to consider participation rates along with achievement on the tests. I'm pleased to see that participation has stabilized in Colorado, with significant increases in high school participation rates with PSAT replacing the 10th grade CMAS assessments and the elimination of 11th grade CMAS ELA and math assessments.

We're excited to be releasing PSAT and ACT scores at the same time as our CMAS scores because together these assessments create a full continuum of information about whether our students are on track for college or careers. As we move toward our first administration of the SAT this coming spring, we want to make sure students, parents and educators are fully aware of the free SAT support services available to all Colorado students who take the PSAT. Free college applications are also available from the College Board to low-income or students eligible for free or reduced lunch who take the Colorado SAT. We still have a fair number of principals, counselors and parents who aren't aware of these free resources, so please help us get this information out.



As with last year, we have developed a variety of sample materials to help you communicate with your parents, educators and communities about the assessments. You can find sample English language arts and math score reports as well as a parent guide to the score reports, information about the free resources related to the PSAT and SAT, sample letters to parents, and fact sheets about 2017 assessments at www.cde.state.co.us/communications/tools.

Thank you for all the incredible, challenging work you are all doing every day - I appreciate the ever-changing environment you are in and the challenges of communication that can pose. There is certainly more work to be done to ensure that each and every one of our students is prepared for success after high school, and these assessments will help us measure the success of the good work being done every day in classrooms across Colorado.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact [Joyce Zurkowski](#), 303-866-6929, about the results or [Dana Smith](#), 303-866-6682, about the parent resources and sample communications materials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Anthes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Interim Commissioner

