



COLORADO
Department of Education
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

December 21, 2016

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

I hope you are all enjoying the holiday season and looking forward to some rest and relaxation during your winter break! Some of you have asked about the State Board motion on assessment last week and I didn't want to delay my response. This email is to provide you with a little background information following the SBE motion that gives several specific directions to the department for our upcoming requests for proposals for assessment vendors.

As you may know, some of our current assessment contracts expire this June, so we have been in discussions with the board regarding plans for the procurement of assessment vendors for required tests in 2018 and beyond. Although our science and social studies assessments must be procured this spring, we had some options on the timing for the procurement and execution of a new English language arts and math contract. At last week's meeting, the State Board of Education directed the department to move forward with the procurement for an ELA and math contractor for grades three through eight within the next few months.

The Board's motion last week instructs the department to include the following specifications in the request for proposals for our third- through eighth-grade English language arts and math exams:

- Combined, the standard time for the ELA and math operational tests will not be more than a total of eight hours
- Individual student-level results will be provided to districts within 30 days after all testing materials are received.
- The department must have decision-making authority over test design, form development and test administration policies.

While addressing a couple of the key concerns heard from the field, including test length and timing of results, no single test is required or precluded by the board's direction. In addition to the board requirements, proposals will need to address state and federal legislative requirements, as well as technical and system requirements. It is important to note that while we expect multiple bidders, current contractors are eligible to bid on new requests for proposals as long as they meet the proposal requirements.

The board also required the department to issue a separate RFP for the ninth-grade ELA and math assessment. Both intents to award - one for third through eighth grade and one for ninth grade - must be announced by the end of June 2017.

We've heard feedback over the last couple of years about the length of our current ELA and math tests and the timing of results. While some changes were made to the tests in 2015 that were well received,



including condensing the tests to one window and eliminating the 10th- and 11th-grade CMAS English Language Arts and Math assessments, the board's motion attempts to address continued concerns about the length of the tests and the timing of results.

At the same time, we've heard that some of you would like to preserve some continuity in the system so that we can measure growth and build on the momentum underway with the CMAS system.

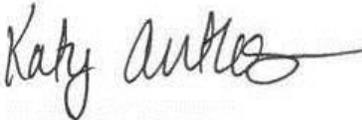
I want you to know that I hear and understand all these concerns. While the department will develop an RFP that is responsive to the board's direction and to district feedback, we know that the state law requires the selection process for these contracts to go through the state procurement process. That system is designed to provide a competitive, fair and unbiased review of proposals with an aim of selecting the best option for Colorado's students and schools.

By announcing our intent to award these contracts in June, we will have the summer to plan for a transition between test contractors, should a new contractor be selected through the procurement process.

Please keep in mind that these procurements do not impact Colorado's assessments for spring 2017. We will continue to give our current Colorado Measures of Academic Success English Language Arts and Math assessments to students in grades three through nine and PSAT10 to our 10th-grade students. CMAS Science will be given in grades 5, 8 and 11, while a sampling of schools will also be administering CMAS Social Studies to grades 4 and 7. Lastly, the SAT will be given as our college entrance exam to 11th graders for the first time as planned.

If you have any additional questions or suggestions for what to include in the RFPs regarding desired characteristics of vendor systems, please do not hesitate to contact me or Joyce Zurkowski, executive director of assessment. We will be sure to keep you updated as we have new information that we can share.

Sincerely,



Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner

