



**Colorado Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education
Assessment System Revision Tour Results
November 12, 2010**

Beginning October 25 through November 9, the Colorado Departments of Education and Higher Education hosted ten meetings around the state to gather input and feedback from the field about the new assessment system design attributes. The meetings convened educators, students, parents, business people, community leaders, interested citizens and the media. Over 200 people attended the tour meetings which were held at local community colleges and community centers. CDE also offered an online survey opportunity for people unable to join the meeting in person and to date received 176 completed surveys.

The evening meetings started with a brief presentation about the definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness, reviewed the new Colorado Academic Standards and S.B. 08-212 legislative requirements, and described the vision for the new assessment system. Then small groups were formed and participants were led through a discussion of the following five questions:

1. *Does this assessment system make sense to you?*
2. *What do you like about these components?*
3. *What don't you like about these components?*
4. *How can these components enhance student learning & performance?*
5. *How will these components help you in your role?*

The first question, "Does this assessment system make sense to you?" solicited a variety of mixed opinions but in general, people were very positive about the vision for the system. Most everyone felt that although the proposal made sense, they wanted more details. Some of the concern was over subjects being assessed, what would be used for accountability, and what would be voluntary. With the state and districts making more budget cuts, it was not surprising that some of the questions focused more on costs and implementation, particularly with the ICAP and dashboard.

The next two questions uncovered the specific aspects people felt were good and those aspects about which people had questions or concerns. People were most in favor of the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), dashboard, the system as a whole versus just one CSAP replacement, student ownership, and that the system now begins with the early grades. Finally, most people felt the new system was focused on and measuring what we value, including the thinking skills and behaviors.

Criticisms of the new system included concerns about local control, funding restraints for technology, staff, and Professional Development. There was also a concern about over

assessing, especially if the formative and interim assessments were viewed as *in addition to* the existing assessments that happen in classrooms every day, rather than replacing them.

The fourth question, “How can these components enhance student learning & performance?” raised a lot of positive feedback. Participants felt the new system would encourage student buy-in, especially with the focus on the 13th year, and supporting them as they prepare and explore college and career options. Feedback also centered on the value of students receiving ongoing feedback during the year and receiving their state summative scores before they leave for the year. The feedback was also positive based on the new standards and how the expectations now call for students to critically think, apply what they know, and make connections with the real world. The dashboard also received a lot of positive comments in terms of supporting students in understanding and being actively engaged in their academic achievement, progress, and planning over time.

The final question centered on the extent to which the new assessment system could assist adults in their role. Feedback from educators centered on the value of formative and interim assessment (aligned to the new standards) and the potential to assist teachers with classroom decisions and instructional differentiation. Although there is already a lot of formative and interim assessment happening in classrooms across the state, many teachers felt the state’s support would be very beneficial, efficient, and particularly helpful as they implement the new standards.

Quicker results and ongoing feedback were also a highlight for many attendees. Many administrators and teachers recognized the value and need for increased opportunities for professional development if the assessment system is truly to change classroom outcomes. For parents, the assessment system proposal was exciting because it was more understandable and they felt it was clearer what schools would be measuring and what the results meant for their students.

Additional comments from the tour focused mostly on the need to add social studies to the state summative assessment. People were also most concerned with how the new system fits in with other state initiatives (e.g. Educator Effectiveness, Unified Planning, and S.B. 09-163). Finally, people wondered what would be state mandated and what would be offered to districts to utilize on a voluntary basis.