

SB08-212 – Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) Joint Regional Town Hall Assessment Meetings Winter 2010 - Summary Colorado Department of Education / Department of Higher Education

In 2010, in accordance with SB08-212 (the Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act), the Colorado Departments of Education (CDE) and Higher Education (CDHE) co-sponsored 13 regional town hall meetings around the state that focused on the revision of the statewide system of assessments. Coloradans were asked to share their values and ideas for assessing “school readiness” and elementary through middle school grades, as well as “postsecondary and workforce readiness,” and the skills and competencies Colorado students need to succeed after high school.

This legislation, sometimes called the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, or CAP4K, was enacted in 2008. In addition to creating a description for early school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR), it required Colorado to revise and align 13 Model Content Standards. The PWR description was adopted in June 2009, and the standards were adopted on December 10, 2009.

In 2010, the focus shifted to the next phase of the legislation: a revision of our state assessment system. Under CAP4K, Colorado is required to adopt a revised system of assessments that aligns with the updated state content standards. The revised system must include both school readiness and PWR assessments; summative assessment; and the assessments for special populations (English Language Learners and students on an Individualized Education Plan).

Just as the standards revision, the assessment revision is based on a transparent, inclusive and research-driven process. With this in mind, and in a continued joint effort, CDE and DHE conducted a 13-city regional tour to provide an opportunity for Coloradans to describe what they want in the new assessment system, based on these new standards and descriptions.

To accommodate in-depth conversation on each end of the system, the 2010 town hall meetings were split into two parts: one devoted to school readiness and assessments for elementary grades, and one devoted to PWR and assessments for secondary grades and the other devoted to assessing school readiness and elementary school assessments. Below is the schedule and locations of the tour:

School readiness and primary grade assessments

Colorado Springs - January 26
Fort Morgan - January 28
Limon - February 4
Cortez - February 23
Steamboat Springs - March 17
Glenwood Springs - March 24

PWR and secondary grade assessments

Boulder - January 20
Denver - January 21
Grand Junction - February 16
Gunnison - February 17
Alamosa - February 24
Pueblo - March 4
Greeley - March 31

The meetings convened educators, students, parents, business people, community leaders, interested citizens and the media. Over 400 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.

After a brief presentation about the background of the legislation, small groups were formed and participants were led through a discussion of the following four questions:

1. *What would be the significant elements of the new assessment system?*
2. *How should we measure PWR/SR and k-6 or high school?*
3. *If you can't have everything what do you chose?*
4. *What would be the optimal impact of the new assessment system if we got this right?*

The conversations were lively and often sparked debates among participants about what matters most, what the purposes of assessments are and are not, and ultimately provided some very common themes for CDE and CDHE to consider. The key highlights include:

- Fast results that provide timely feedback.
- Meaningful results to all stakeholders, including students, parents and institutes of higher education; portability.
- Just in time...not a BIG event but ongoing feedback.
- Assessment results should be diagnostic and used to inform instruction and interventions.
- Student-driven and mastery-based and assessments are relevant to the real world.
- Formative and summative assessments needed, students should have multiple methods and opportunities for showing what they know.
- The optimal impact would be that students are empowered to know their strengths and weaknesses, motivated and have the self awareness to graduate from high school ready for their next step.
- Remediation happens during year because assessments inform instruction and interventions.
- Keep the end in mind: prepare all students for postsecondary and workforce readiness without remediation.

The public feedback will help inform the assessment revision process as it continues in the summer 2010, with the work of the Assessment Stakeholders Committee and in collaboration with its five subcommittees. A more thorough report of the tour results will be made available in July 2010. The tour results will assist decision makers in Colorado as they approach this ambitious reform, make tough choices and develop a truly aligned P-20 system that improves outcomes for all students.