

Prior to submitting your comments, we invite you to read [a letter from Commissioner Anthes on Colorado's ESSA State Plan Development and release of the state plan draft](#).

## Colorado's Commitment to Challenging Standards

Standards for student learning are not new in Colorado. Passed in 1993, House Bill 93-1313 initiated standards-based education in Colorado. The statute required the state to create standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, civics, geography, economics, art, music and physical education. This first generation of standards in Colorado remained in place with only minor modifications until the passage of Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), which initiated a thorough revision of Colorado's standards. The goal of CAP4K is an aligned preschool through postsecondary education system to provide Colorado students with the knowledge and the skills needed to be successful in college and careers.

Preparing all students adequately for college and career success is the established goal of Colorado's public education system. Colorado's complete commitment to college- and career-ready standards is demonstrated by CAP4K which grew out of the recognized need for higher and clearer preschool through postsecondary aligned standards for students in *all* content areas, including: comprehensive health and physical education; dance; drama and theatre arts; mathematics; music; reading, writing, and communicating; science; social studies; world languages; and visual art. CAP4K called for next generation, standards-based education to prepare Colorado's students for the increasing expectations and demands for higher-level critical thinking skills, and national and international competition in the workforce. A separate law, House Bill 08-1168, required personal financial literacy to be included in the mathematics standards and any other relevant content area. Taken together, the key components of the CAP4K legislation created the path for aligning Colorado's education system from preschool through postsecondary education and ensuring a rich, balanced, and well-rounded education for Colorado's students.

### **CAP4K: Ensuring Challenging Academic Achievement Standards for Colorado**

Key components of CAP4K are driving the alignment and continuous improvement of preschool through postsecondary education in Colorado: (1) defining school readiness, (2) defining postsecondary and workforce readiness, (3) creating, adopting, and implementing challenging preschool through high school academic standards that lead to postsecondary and workforce readiness.

To begin with, through CAP4K, the Colorado General Assembly called on Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (governing bodies for K-12 and higher education, respectively) to create a seamless system of public education in Colorado that is "sufficiently relevant and rigorous to ensure that each student who receives a public education in Colorado is prepared to compete academically and economically within the state or anywhere in the nation or the world" (section 22-7-1002(4)(e) C.R.S.). Specifically, CAP4K required that the Colorado State Board of

Education adopt a description of school readiness and, through consensus with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, a description of postsecondary workforce readiness. To ensure the definitions remain relevant over time, CAP4K required that the definitions be reviewed, revised, and re-adopted by July 2017 and July 2015, respectively, and every six years thereafter.

To ensure an aligned and coherent learning trajectory beginning with school readiness and resulting in postsecondary and workforce readiness, the Colorado General Assembly, through CAP4K, directed the Colorado State Board of Education to adopt preschool through secondary school standards. The requirements of CAP4K ensure the highest quality, challenging standards for Colorado's students. First, Colorado's standards "consider the needs of the whole student by creating a rich and balanced curriculum" (section 22-71-1002(3)(a) C.R.S.) by requiring standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, visual arts, performing arts, physical education, world languages, English language competency, economics, civics, and financial literacy. Upon the next standards review and revision process, CAP4K requires the addition of optional computer science standards at the secondary level. Next, to promote college- and career-readiness, Colorado's standards are required to be aligned with the state's definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness, and to the extent practicable, to the state's career and technical education standards. Furthermore, CAP4K requires that Colorado's standards "are comparable in scope, relevance, and rigor to the highest national and international standards" (section 22-7-1005(3)(f) C.R.S.). CAP4K also requires the Colorado's standards promote the development of critical skills to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce and active citizenship: creativity, innovation, critical-thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, social and cultural awareness, civic engagement, initiative, self-direction, flexibility, productivity, accountability, character, leadership and information technology application.

Clearly, the requirements for Colorado's standards within CAP4K provide a firm foundation for challenging standards for Colorado's students.

### Implementation of CAP4K Policies: Defining Challenging Expectations from Preschool through Postsecondary

With the new law in place, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) worked together to develop a postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) description that includes the knowledge, skills and behaviors essential for high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and to compete in the global economy.

To a foundation for postsecondary and workforce readiness, the two departments jointly convened 13 regional meetings around the state between November 2008 and June 2009. The purpose of these meetings was to engage local communities in conversations about the skills and competencies students need to succeed after high school. To this end, both entities engaged over 1,000 P-12, higher education, community college, business, parents, board members and other local stakeholders.

Additionally, CDE partnered with *Colorado Succeeds* and a number of prominent business and community college leaders in online surveys targeted toward the specific needs and interests of these

groups. Based on local input, CDE and DHE jointly drafted a PWR description for review and feedback by the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Members of the public were invited to provide comment at the State Board meeting on June 10, 2009. The final PWR definition was adopted by the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education for joint adoption at a meeting on June 30, 2009.

At the same time, CDE supported the development of a school readiness description for the Colorado State Board of Education to consider. In December 2008, the Colorado State Board of Education adoption the following definition:

School readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.

With school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness descriptions in place, CDE initiated a year-long process of revising academic standards in all of its 10 content areas and the Colorado English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards in 2009. The standards were developed by content areas committees consisting of a broad spectrum of Coloradans representing early childhood education, K-12 education, higher education, English learners, students with disabilities, business, and parents. Each committee began their work defining "prepared graduate competencies" (PGCs) in order to begin with postsecondary and workforce readiness in mind. From the point of postsecondary and workforce readiness, the committees worked backward to define expectations for high school, middle school, elementary grades, and preschool.

In May 2008, CDE convened a stakeholder committee consisting of leaders in K-12, early childhood and higher education as well as leaders from business and the military whose role was to advise the department on the development process and content of Colorado's new standards. Each stakeholder committee meeting was publicized in advance, open to the public, and followed up with detailed minutes posted to CDE's website. The parameters of research-based, inclusiveness, and transparency were visible throughout the steps of the revision process.

In total, 786 people applied to fill 255 unpaid roles on content committees. Selection was made by Colorado stakeholders in a name-blind process using the merits of both the application and resumes. The committees were supported by benchmarking reports of the best national and international exemplars.

The standards writing process began with an analysis of old Colorado standards compared to national and international benchmarks and educational research appropriate for each content area. Content specific reports are available on our website. Reference of the benchmarking states and nations used as well as other resources and research can be found within the introduction of each of the Colorado Academic Standards documents. Using the research provided, over 250 Colorado education and

business professionals and parents participated on standards development subcommittees to write Colorado's new academic standards. The names of the subcommittee members are also included in the standards documents.

Drafts of each set of standards were disseminated to the Colorado public and national content experts for review. In addition to public feedback gathered through feedback meetings held throughout the state, individuals could provide line by line recommendations on each draft through an online feedback system. After this review process, subcommittees made final revisions and the revised drafts were presented to the State Board of Education for adoption on December 10, 2009. National experts also provided reviews and feedback on the drafts of each content area standards. Official public hearings also followed at each relevant State Board of Education meeting.

Following this year-long standards revision process, in December 2009, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) in ten content areas comprehensive health and physical education; dance; drama and theatre arts; mathematics; music; reading, writing, and communicating; science; social studies; world languages; and visual art, with standards for personal financial literacy included with the mathematics and social studies standards. Doing so, Colorado created its first fully aligned preschool-through-high-school academic expectations that forms basis for a system that strives to prepare all of Colorado's schoolchildren for achievement at each grade and, ultimately, successful performance in postsecondary institutions and/or the workforce.

Upon the release of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics and English/language arts in June 2010, the Colorado Department of Education commissioned a thorough, independent gap analysis process between the CAS in mathematics and reading, writing, and communicating and the CCSS for mathematics and English/language arts. The gap analysis confirmed the close alignment of the Colorado Academic Standards with Common Core State Standards. However, the report noted some critical instructional elements which existed in the Common Core State Standards, but were not evident in the 2009 Colorado Academic Standards. In addition, the report recommended inconsistencies between the two sets of standards be considered and reconciled, where appropriate, to benefit Colorado teachers and students. Based on the gap analysis report, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in August 2010 and requested the integration of the entirety of the CCSS for mathematics and English/language arts with the CAS for mathematics and reading, writing, and communicating, respectively. This decision was made with the expectation that CDE would honor the work and values of the CAS previously written by Colorado educators and adopted by the board to create the best mathematics and reading, writing and communicating standards for the State of Colorado. In December 2010, CDE re-released the CAS in mathematics and reading, writing and communicating.

Through a separate state level process, in 2011, Colorado's Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) engaged Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) to facilitate the development of Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG). The ELDG articulate research-based developmental trajectories for children from birth through grade 3 across multiple

domains. As the ELDGs were being developed, CDE partnered to align the ELDGs with the Colorado Academic Standards.

### Maintaining Colorado's Challenging Standards

To ensure Colorado's standards continue to meet the intended outcome of statute, CAP4K requires the regular review and revision of the school readiness and postsecondary readiness descriptions and the standards.

Per statute, the postsecondary and workforce readiness description must be revisited every six years and both the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education need to approve any revisions. The first review and revisions process began in spring of 2015 with the collaboration of CDE and CDHE in conjunction with the Colorado Workforce Development Council to facilitate a discussion with statewide participants from business and industry, education, higher education, non-profit organizations and government sectors. Student voice was also an active part of the conversation. The goal of the work group was to identify skills to ensure Coloradans are prepared for work or education beyond high school. The group synthesized and identified the core skills from more than 100 established, industry-developed skills lists of the competencies necessary to enter the workforce or educational opportunities beyond high school. The following revised description was a result of this work and adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education in December 2016: "Colorado high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens."

The school readiness description is set to be reviewed and revised by July 2017 and every six years thereafter, and the CAS will be reviewed and revised by July 2018 and every six years thereafter.

### Colorado's Commitment to Standards for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Colorado has a strong commitment to ensuring that standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in all grades are clear and rigorous, so that our public educational system gives all students the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to succeed in postsecondary environments and the workforce, to be well-informed and responsible citizens, and to lead fulfilling personal lives. Colorado is committed to the federal requirement specific to alternate assessments and achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The Colorado Exceptional Children's Education Act corresponds to federal guidance: 5.01 (24) Requirements regarding the participation of all children with disabilities in general state and district-wide assessment programs as established in 34 CFR § 300.160.

### Defining Colorado's Alternate Achievement Standards

A team of educators, including content specialists and special educators, was convened by the CDE in the Fall of 2009 to develop alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This workgroup worked collaboratively with staff from the CDE Exceptional

Student Services Unit and the then Office of Standards and Assessment. In addition stakeholder input was gathered from field experts, parents of students with significant cognitive disabilities, higher education faculty, and school administrators. Over the next two years the workgroup formulated the Colorado Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) with due diligence that they were aligned with the corresponding grade level Colorado Academic Standards, represented an appropriate foundational level of expected knowledge and skill, and maintained academic content and rigor. This team was reflective with their collective expertise to promote and to embed the highest possible standards achievable by students with the most significant cognitive disability.

On August 3, 2011, the State Board of Education unanimously adopted the Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) to the Colorado Academic Standards. The EEOs provide the alternate standards in mathematics, science, social studies and reading, writing and communicating for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who qualify for the alternate assessment. These alternate achievement standards are directly aligned to the student's enrolled grade level expectations and promote access to the general education curriculum.

Only students who are eligible to receive special education services, have an IEP, have a documented significant cognitive disability, and who through the IEP team process, are determined to have met participation requirements to receive instruction based on alternate academic achievement standards (EEOs) will participate in an alternate assessment. It is the existence of the significant cognitive disability, regardless of a certain special education eligibility category, that allows the IEP team to consider the option of alternate achievement standards and assessment. All other students receive instruction based upon the grade-level academic achievement standards and take assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards, with or without accommodations.

The *Alternate Standards and Assessment Participation Guidelines Worksheet and Companion – Participation Guidelines: Alternate Academic Achievement Standards for Instruction and Alternate Assessment* can be found at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/AssessmentDisability>. Both of these documents can be found in both English and Spanish.

## **Maintaining Colorado's Alternate Achievement Standards**

Ensuring the ongoing alignment to Colorado's Academic Standards is a high priority for the Colorado Department of Education. Once the Colorado Academic Standards undergo a review and revision process by July 2018, the department will conduct a process to review and revise the EEOs accordingly. The close working relationship between the Office of Standards and Instructional Support and the ESSU will continue through the review and revision process to ensure that any changes with the EEOs are fully aligned with the amended Colorado Academic Standards and preserve expectation of content and academic rigor.

## Colorado's Commitment to English Language Proficiency Standards that Align with the Colorado Academic Standards

Colorado is firmly committed to making sure that the civil rights of English learners are met through English Language Proficiency (ELP) instruction that provides access to grade level academic content area standards. State law, CAP4K, required the Colorado State Board of Education to adopt English language proficiency standards along with the academic content areas. On December 10, 2009, the Colorado State Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt the World Class Instructional Design Assessment (WIDA™) standards as the Colorado English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards. WIDA advances academic language development and academic achievement for linguistically diverse students through high-quality standards, assessments, research, and professional development for educators. The new standards were a major change in English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards for Colorado, thereby creating a need for intentional professional development throughout the state. The CELP standards facilitate content instruction, impact curricula through academic language and create a bridge to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) for English learners.

The Colorado English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA), under state law, provides a supplemental grant to support Colorado districts and schools serve the increasing number of Colorado's English Learners.

### Defining Colorado's English Language Proficiency Standards

Among the committees CDE engaged to inform the standards development process in 2009 was a committee designed to make recommendations for English language proficiency standards. The committee conducted a thorough review of existing state standards and concluded that the WIDA™ English Language Development (ELD) standards would best serve the needs of Colorado's English learners. The WIDA standards provide English learners with the social and instructional language necessary for the school experience, as well as access to grade level academic content area standards and instruction in the four recognized domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing at 6 levels of English language proficiency.

The state adopted the WIDA™ English Language Development (ELD) standards as Colorado's English language proficiency standards using the same timeline and process as content area standards in December 2009. To emphasize that the WIDA™ ELD standards are Colorado's standards, Colorado has named its new ELP standards the Colorado English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards.

The CELP standards meet all of the federal requirements through ESSA. They are derived from the four recognized domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. They address six different English language proficiency levels (1-Entering, 2-Emerging/Beginning, 3-Developing, 4-Expanding, 5-Bridging, and 6-Reaching). Finally, because the CELP standards provide access to the Colorado Academic Standards through direct instruction of the academic language of each content area, the CELP standards align with Colorado's challenging State academic standards.

### Implementing Colorado's English Language Proficiency Standards

In response to the new CELP standards, CDE developed a professional development plan that would target, not only ELD teachers, but also content area teachers, specialists and school and district leaders. The trainings were conducted as a collaboration between CDE's Standards and Instructional Services Office and the Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education. The CELP development and implementation team included CDE content specialists in all disciplines as well as English Language Development Specialists. The trainings helped to insure that school districts would include the new CELP standards as part of the larger CAS implementation effort and helped build district capacity to implement them.

### Maintaining Colorado's English Language Proficiency Standards

Ensuring the highest quality English language proficiency standards for Colorado's English Learners is a high priority for the Colorado Department of Education. In fact, CAP4K requires the regular review and revision of the CELP standards on the same timeline as the academic standards, on or before July 2018 and every six years thereafter.

CDE's Office of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education continues to offer statewide professional development that provide support to districts' in the implementation of all Colorado's standards with a focus on academic language and connections between CELP standards and CAS. CDE models for districts the work of cross-unit teams that include content and English language development specialists. Educators' consideration and understanding of linguistic demands while teaching challenging and relevant academic content ensures that English learners have the opportunity to access and achieve Colorado's college-and career-ready standards on the same schedule as other students.

\*\*\*[Click here to provide feedback on this Draft Section of the ESSA State Plan](#)\*\*\*