



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner



"Things do not change; we change."

- *Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862)*
- *Walden*

November 30, 2004

I. RELEASE OF SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS: A SCHEDULE UPDATE

It is that time of year again.

While the SAR release this year will be very similar to last, there are some variations owing to calendar accommodations.

We are now in a position, via this communication, to give all superintendents and principals a finalized schedule for the SAR release. It is as follows:

A. December 2nd (Thursday)

By this date, all superintendents shall be in receipt of specimen copies of their SARs for every school in their district.

Though the specimen SARs must remain under public embargo at this point, superintendents are authorized to share this information with their principals and other appropriate school personnel.

B. December 3rd (Friday)

On this date, members of the media will receive their SAR disks, which will give them the full data needed to prepare their post-embargo stories. Again, it will be strictly reinforced to media folks that none of this information can appear or be used anywhere until the Governor's press conference.

C. December 6th (Monday)

Day reserved for briefing of media personnel – information still under embargo.

D. December 8th (Wednesday)

At 10:30 a.m., in the Capitol, Governor Owens will hold his press conference for the purpose of publicly releasing the SARs.

At the very same time – as was done each of the past years – all SAR data will go up on the State website.

This timetable will ensure that school people will have all of their information prior to release of the data to the press and lifting of the embargo.

E. December 8th (Wednesday)

On this same day, we will commence delivery of actual SARs to your schools.

Allowing for the variation in local mail delivery, we expect 100% of the SARs to have arrived by the specified date of December 15, 2004.

In urging the importance of this priority for schools, we pointed out to the Governor's staff that over the last two years we had dealt with a five-day preliminary release without a single breach of the embargo in any district in the state. Needless to say, I enjoin all concerned to take the greatest possible care in maintaining this admirable record in the present year.

With this schedule finalized, it is our hope that all districts can make provisional plans to share information with the schools and expedite the legally required delivery of the SARs to your communities. I would again note, as we indicated last year, the inclusion of any and all supplementary data or information to your communities, along with the SARs, is entirely appropriate. Whatever gives the fullest possible picture to your community is an appropriate complement to the SARs.

SPECIAL NOTE

As in the past, you will receive with your SARs an "SAR Questions and Answers 2004" insert, which you will send to parents with their SARs.

Two changes, mandated by the 2004 General Assembly, I would particularly bring to your attention:

1. The "School Improvement" grade of past years has been replaced by a more valuable but very differently calculated "Academic Growth of Students."

This new calculation is being piloted for accuracy in 2004. Therefore, this year's SAR will report this as "Not Available."

2. "Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)" and the "Student Performance" pie chart will be listed as "Unreportable" when the number of students in a specific group is less than the legal minimum required by Federal and State privacy laws.

* * * * *

Finally, in reflecting on the enormous amount of work involved in the SAR task, I would like to thank all those district and state personnel whose work is the foundation of this vast enterprise, and specially thank our Chief of Staff, Karen Stroup, who has had the very substantial responsibility of being the general overseer of this project for CDE.

We will keep everyone updated as we go forward. As you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Stroup (303) 866-6822.

Sincerely yours,

William J. Moloney
Commissioner of Education

cc: Governor Owens, General Assembly, State Board of Education, CDE Cabinet, CDE Staff, BOCES, CASB, CASE, CEA, and CFT