



Colorado Department of Education
William J. Moloney, Commissioner

"COLORADO STUDENTS OUTPACE PEERS"



- Denver Post
- *Headline November 14, 2003*

"STATE STUDENTS SHINE"

- Rocky Mountain News
- *Headline November 14, 2003*

November 18, 2003

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 the late date of the Thanksgiving holiday.

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. November 24th (Monday)

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. November 26th (Wednesday)

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 1st (Monday)

Day reserved for briefing of media personnel.

D. December 3rd (Wednesday)

At 11:00 a.m., either in the Capitol or across the street at the Colorado Department of Education, 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 two 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 3rd (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, 2003.

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.

Finally, in reflecting on the enormous amount of work involved in the SAR task, I would like to thank all those 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 don't hesitate to contact Karen Stroup (303) 866-6822.

II. THE NATION'S REPORT CARD RANKS COLORADO NEAR THE TOP

Any day the State's largest newspapers lead their front page with stories like those noted on our masthead, is a good day for Colorado education.

Beyond being evidence that Colorado's own education reforms are working and the lift that this public affirmation gives to our educators, there are several other significant points inside these numbers:

1. Colorado has significantly widened its lead over the national averages since we last participated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
2. Colorado's sixth place ranking in composite 4th and 8th grade reading is a validation of the emphasis being placed on this "most basic of basics" by districts across the state, as well as state initiatives like Read-to-Achieve.
3. Though Colorado ranked highly in 8th grade math, but just above average in 4th grade math, that is better than the other way around, since it suggests significant strides being made in the later years.

4. The fact that a lower proportion of students score at the "Proficient" level on NAEP than on CSAP indicates that the latter is not "too tough" a test. In further explaining this difference, however, we should remember that Colorado teachers prepare their students on the basis of Colorado standards, not those of NAEP.
5. Nothing in these results is more encouraging than the progress made by children of color. Below the national average in previous NAEP assessments, these groups are now above that average.

As much as we appreciate these moments of public affirmation, we know also how much further we have to go. Still, for today, let us savor the moment and pass on the thanks and congratulations to all those educators in your districts whose daily labors are lifting the prospects for all of Colorado's children.

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