



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education  
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203-1799

Sept. 14, 2016

Dear Superintendents,

I understand that some of you and your staff have questions and concerns about the data suppression practices CDE implemented for the recent public release of assessment results. I recognize that in our haste to get the assessment results out to you as quickly as possible, we could have done a better job communicating our plan to protect student privacy related to the test scores. We are adding some additional information about the suppression rules to our website and reaching out to a number of groups to help them understand why and how we modified our privacy practices.

Discussions about the importance of protecting the privacy of student data have been going on with the State Board of Education, the legislature and national forums for two years. The state board, in particular, places a very high priority on protecting student privacy, and as a result, starting with the 2015 CMAS: PARCC data release, CDE strengthened its data privacy practices by masking assessment results at the performance level for low N-sizes. For the 2016 release, when there were less than four students at a performance level, suppressions were applied. In addition, we again applied “complementary” suppression rules across schools within a district because knowing how many students are at the district level allows the calculation of the suppressed school’s data if all other schools are reported. Please see the attached document for examples of how this was implemented.

These steps were taken only for the files released to the media and placed on our website. The files and reports to which your district assessment coordinators have access contain all data, so your schools and teachers have all of their students’ scores.

Also, the student-level report that parents receive this year provides their students’ results along with the overall results for the school (as long as there are at least 16 students who received scores for that assessment in the school), district (as long as there are at least 16 students who received scores for that assessment in that district), state and PARCC consortium for the math and ELA tests.

Upcoming accountability reports will not have the same degree of suppression as the assessment reports due to two significant differences. The assessment reports are grade-level specific, so there are relatively low numbers of students for many schools and districts. Accountability reports are school- and district-level, so they reflect a larger group of students. In addition, accountability uses mean scale scores and median growth percentiles, which are metrics that do not allow for easy calculations that can identify any single student’s likely performance.

Please understand that CDE is trying to balance the competing priorities of protecting student privacy and providing important information about school performance so that parents and community members know how their schools are doing. These issues continue to evolve, so we encourage districts, parents, community members and any other interested groups to participate in the ongoing discussions at the state



and national level. We welcome your ideas on how to strike the right balance between protecting student privacy and providing transparency into school and district performance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Anthes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.  
Interim Commissioner

