

COVID-19 Policy Implications Stakeholder Group Report

Submitted to:

Dr. Katy Anthes, Colorado Commissioner of Education

By:

Amie Baca-Oehlert, Colorado Education Association

Elizabeth Casillas, Denver Metro Region

Carol Eaton, Technical Advisory Panel and Jefferson County School District

Christina Ethier, Association for Colorado Education Evaluators and Cherry Creek School District

Paul Freeman, Roaring Fork School District RE-1

Chris Gibbons, Colorado League of Charter Schools and STRIVEPrep

Da'Lisa Hatcher, Third Future Schools - Coperni 2 Charter School

Peter Hilts, District 49

Jennifer Holladay, Denver Public Schools

Kym LeBlanc-Esparza, Archuleta School District 50 JT

Bret Miles, Colorado Association of School Executives

Michelle Murphy, Colorado Rural Alliance

Stephanie Perez-Carrillo, Colorado Children's Campaign

Amy Pitlik, Stand for Children

Luke Ragland, Ready Colorado

Johan Van Nieuwenhuizen, Weld County School District RE-1

Jen Walmer, Democrats for Education Reform

Jason Westfall, Colorado Association of BOCES

Cheri Wrench, Colorado Association of School Boards

December 2020

The COVID-19 Policy Implications Stakeholder Group is facilitated by the
Colorado Department of Education.

For more information, Dr. Rhonda Haniford

201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203

Haniford_r@cde.state.co.us

Table of Contents

Introduction Page 4

HB20-1418 (Statute) Page 4

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and the Resulting Disruption of the 2019-20 School Year Page 4

Topics at Consensus Page 5

Assessment

Accountability and Accreditation

Educator Effectiveness

Topics Not at Consensus Page 7

Assessment

Assessment and Growth Reporting

CDE Staff and Facilitator of the Stakeholder Group Page 7

Executive Summary

The Colorado General Assembly called for a stakeholder group of Colorado education leaders to advise policymakers on what, if any, changes should be made to state law around testing and accountability because of the COVID-19 crisis.

On assessments, the group said districts should administer the PSAT and SAT to the extent that local health orders allow and that CMAS tests in science and social studies should be canceled in the spring. The group did not reach a consensus agreement on administering the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) mathematics and English language arts tests for a range of conflicting reasons, with some stakeholders wanting to be able to measure student learning loss and others concerned about the misinterpretation of the results within the context of COVID-19.

Additionally, the group recommended the School and District Performance Frameworks should be paused for the 2021-22 school year, allowing the school or district's rating to be rolled over from 2020. The 2020 ratings were previously rolled over from 2019 because assessments were not given in spring 2019 due to the pandemic.

The group also said educator evaluations should be based 100% on their professional practice score for the 2020-21 school year only.

Convened by the state legislature in the spring through the School Finance Act ([HB20-1418 \(PDF\)](#)), the group provided recommendations on issues ranging from accountability to assessments to teacher evaluations. Final decisions are up to the legislature since these matters are tied to state law.

Introduction

In the 2020 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly included in the School Finance Act ([HB20-1418 \(PDF\)](#)) the creation of a stakeholder group to address issues for students, schools and districts presented by the COVID-19 crisis. The Commissioner convened the COVID-19 Policy Implications Stakeholder Group which worked from late August through November 2020 to understand, discuss and make recommendations to policymakers. The charge of the COVID-19 Policy Implications Stakeholder Group was to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption to the 2019-20 school year, and to make recommendations regarding whether and how to proceed with state assessments, accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluations during the 2020-21 school year.

Members of the Stakeholder Group worked hard to find common ground so as to make consensus recommendations. The members represented a variety of perspectives which ensured robust and substantive discussion. These recommendations were made in a world that continues to change each week. It is impossible to know what spring of 2021 will look like for students, parents, schools, districts, and the state. The Stakeholders acknowledged that it is difficult to make static decisions in a quickly changing world.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) thanks all the Stakeholders for their hard work and commitment to this process. They engaged in thoughtful dialogue and discussed their perspectives in a collaborative manner. CDE is grateful for their leadership.

HB20-1418 (Statute)

Following the intent of HB20-1418, the Commissioner convened the Stakeholder Group to:

- (i) Review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption of the 2019-20 school year, including student transition to remote learning and the cancellation of the state assessments, accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluation systems for the 2019-20 school year;
- (ii) Discuss how the cancellation of state assessments will impact accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluations during the 2020-21 school year and whether future modifications are needed regarding the accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluation systems as a result of, and in response to, the COVID-19 pandemic and possible further disruptions; and
- (iii) Make recommendations regarding whether and how to proceed with state assessments, accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluations during the 2020-21 school year and how the systems can continue to effectively measure student achievement and growth and provide an accurate, credible, and comparable assessment of the quality of the public education system throughout the state following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 and the Resulting Disruption of the 2019-20 School Year

The Stakeholder Group reviewed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption of the 2019-20 school year, including the student transition to remote learning and the cancellation of the state assessments, accountability, accreditation, and educator evaluation systems for the 2019-20 school year. During the spring of 2020, Colorado was in a Stay at Home Executive Order which resulted in schools transitioning to remote learning. Schools and districts had to address many student, staff, and parent needs during this

transition, including, but not limited to, remote learning curriculum and instruction, communication challenges, access to devices and connectivity, and student and staff well-being. Many of these needs persisted into fall 2020.

In 2019-20 state assessments were cancelled through Executive Order, and no new state accountability ratings were issued for schools and districts. Through an Executive Order by the Governor last spring that was later codified through the Finance Act (HB 20-1418), state accountability was paused in 2020-21. This means that school and district plan types (e.g., Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround), rolled over from 2019 to 2020. The Colorado Department of Education did not create 2020 performance framework reports in the fall of 2020 as is typical practice. The request to reconsider process was also not available. Schools and districts on Performance Watch (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround, On Watch) retained their Performance Watch year without advancing (e.g., a school on Year 4 of the accountability clock in 2019-20 remains on Year 4 in 2020-21).

The disruption to learning in the spring of 2020 also impacted the education effectiveness system. The cancellation of spring 2020 state summative assessments, the disruption to local assessment systems, and the resulting lack of school and district performance frameworks meant that many educators had insufficient or incomplete data needed to produce a final evaluation rating that is based 50% on measures of student learning/outcomes (MSL/MSO). As a result, prior to the start of the school year, CDE announced the department would not be monitoring the MSL/MSO portion of the educator effectiveness requirements for educator evaluations in the 2020-21 evaluation cycle.

Topics at Consensus

Topics at Consensus: The Stakeholders reached consensus on several topics.

Assessment

Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)/Colorado Alternative (CoAlt) Social Studies: The Stakeholder Group recommends CMAS/CoAlt Social Studies not be administered in grades 4 and 7 in spring 2021. This recommendation requires state statute change or an executive order.

CMAS/CoAlt Science: The Stakeholder Group recommends CMAS/CoAlt Science not be administered in grades 5, 8 and 11 in spring of 2021. This recommendation requires state statute change or an executive order, as well as federal approval.

PSAT/SAT - (If and How to Assess): Consistent with current statute, the Stakeholder Group recommends that districts and schools administer the CO PSAT/SAT (and associated CoAlt) assessments to Colorado public school students enrolled in grades 9 (PSAT 9/CoAlt), 10 (PSAT 10/CoAlt) and 11 (SAT/CoAlt) in the spring of 2021 to the extent local health orders allow testing to occur.

The Stakeholder Group recommends that CDE work with districts to increase flexibility to ensure equitable access to PSAT/SAT testing.

CO SAT Essay: If the CO SAT is administered in spring 2021, the Stakeholder Group recommends the essay portion of the assessment should be an option for students to select as needed or desired.

PSAT/SAT (Individual Reports For Achievement and Growth): If 2021 PSAT/SAT results are available, then in accordance with current statute, board rule and state practices, the Stakeholder Group recommends the state distribute individual student level assessment and growth results containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) to students and their guardians, schools, and districts.

The Stakeholder Group recommends when providing reports that CDE describe the unique circumstances and conditions of testing in 2021 and provide additional guidance on proper use and interpretation of results.

Accountability and Accreditation

School and District Performance Frameworks: The Stakeholder Group recommends changes to statute or board rule to pause the calculation and publication of school and district level performance frameworks and state accountability ratings for the 2021-22 school year. A school or district's rating will roll-over from 2020. For the 2021-22-year, current statute and board rule of the reconsider process may need to be revised for schools on the accountability clock. CDE will partner with schools, districts, and other stakeholders to develop the process for special considerations, including, but not limited to, utilizing a body of evidence, leveraging the state review panel, or providing additional supports and grants.

Note: 2020 ratings were rolled over from 2019 based upon the 2020 accountability pause.

Accreditation: While the Stakeholder Group recommends rolling over plan types from 2019, it further recommends that districts continue to be responsible for the reporting and implementation of the other legal responsibilities of district accreditation (i.e., safety, finance, accreditation contract assurances) in considering current statute, board rule and state practices. Districts will continue to be responsible for accrediting their schools in alignment with current statute, board rule and state policies. The department will provide assistance as requested for the local accrediting process.

Improvement Planning: The Stakeholder Group recommends providing an optional spring 2021 submission window for improvement plans (e.g., Unified Improvement Planning -- UIP). In 2021-22, the improvement planning process should be implemented in alignment with current statute, board rule and state practices, as amended in 2020 during the accountability pause (e.g., focus on using local performance and non-assessment data). The process should also be adjusted to better reflect the learnings and needs of schools and districts as a result of the impact of COVID. Note: The department will also convene conversations with the field and other stakeholder groups to determine flexibilities in future planning (2021-22 and beyond), including the consideration of more locally designed plans.

Educator Effectiveness

Educator Evaluations: Because of the cancellation of state assessments and school disruptions due to COVID-19 in the spring 2020, the Stakeholder Group recommends educators' final evaluation ratings be based 100% on their professional practice score for the 2020-21 school year only. This recommendation requires state statute change or an executive order.

Topics Not at Consensus

Topics Not at Consensus: The Stakeholders did not reach consensus on several other topics.

Assessment

CMAS English Language Arts and CMAS Math: The stakeholders did not reach consensus on administering CMAS English Language Arts and CMAS Math for a range of reasons, including but not limited to the following. Some stakeholders expressed a desire to measure student learning loss, provide families and educators student academic information, and provide an opportunity for the Colorado community to see student learning progress across the state. Other stakeholders expressed concerns over loss of instructional time to administer CMAS, the perceived value and credibility of the assessment, and the misinterpretation of student results within the context of COVID-19.

Assessment and Growth Reporting

CMAS English Language Arts/Math and PSAT/SAT Public Release of Results: The stakeholders did not reach consensus on the public release of CMAS and PSAT/SAT results for a range of reasons, including but not limited to the following. Some stakeholders expressed the need to provide public results as another data point to show student learning, provide an opportunity to see student progress across the state, and understand student learning loss to make better policy and resource decisions in response to the impacts of the pandemic. Other stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential inequities to access the assessment and corresponding credibility issues, and misinterpretation of student results within the context of COVID-19.

CDE Staff and Facilitator of the Stakeholder Group

Katy Anthes, Commissioner, CDE

Mary Bivens, Director of Educator Development, CDE

Heather Chikoore, Facilitator

Melissa Colzman, Associate Commissioner of Student Learning

Rhonda Haniford, Associate Commissioner of School Quality and Support, CDE

Marie Huchton, Supervisor of Accountability Analytics, CDE

Mark Kirkemier, Executive Director of Student Learning Federal Programs, CDE

Lisa Medler, Executive Director of Accountability and Continuous Improvement, CDE

Colleen O'Neil, Associate Commissioner of Educator Talent, CDE

Christina Wirth-Hawkins, Director of Assessment Development, CDE

Joyce Zurkowski, Chief Assessment Officer, CDE

Endnotes

Additional information from the Stakeholder Group may be found on the [Stakeholder Group webpage](#), including all meeting recordings, slide deck presentations, Zoom chat box notes, and all meeting materials.