



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K)

## 2023 Annual Legislative Report

Submitted to:

**House Education Committee and Senate Education Committee of the  
Colorado General Assembly**

By:

**Colorado Department of Education**

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## Overview

In 2008, the Colorado General Assembly passed S.B. 08-212. Known as Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), the law called for an alignment of the preschool through postsecondary education system to enable Colorado students to graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and careers. CAP4K requires the regular review of Colorado’s preschool through high school student learning standards, an aligned state assessment system, and expectations for postsecondary and workforce readiness for all Colorado high school graduates.

Pursuant to section 22-7-1019 (2), C.R.S., the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is required to provide annual reports related to the provisions of CAP4K, including the results achieved through the implementation of school readiness, the preschool through elementary and secondary education standards, and postsecondary workforce readiness.

## Kindergarten School Readiness

### Background

CAP4K includes an emphasis on kindergarten school readiness, calling for the Colorado State Board of Education to define and for educators to annually measure it. Specifically, CAP4K requires the State Board of Education to: (1) define school readiness; (2) adopt assessments appropriate for determining students’ levels of school readiness; and (3) adopt a system for reporting population-level results.

The state board has defined school readiness as the preparedness of a child to engage in learning as well as the ability of the school to meet the needs of all students in partnership with families and the community. The kindergarten school readiness provision allows for the monitoring of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of students as they enter kindergarten and provides an indicator of children’s experiences prior to kindergarten to better inform partnerships, prioritize needs, and select effective strategies to support ready systems.

Under CAP4K, local education providers are required to administer a state board adopted kindergarten school readiness assessment to each student in kindergarten and to ensure that all children in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten receive an Individual School Readiness Plan.

To inform statewide progress toward school readiness, the kindergarten school readiness assessment informs:

- individual kindergarten readiness plans and classroom instruction;
- families of their child’s progress toward school readiness; and
- the CAP4K report.

### Kindergarten School Readiness Description

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.

Source: Adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education (April 2017).



## Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment

Kindergarten school readiness assessments measure children's progress toward age and grade level expectations through observations and documentation of each child's knowledge, skills, and abilities. As a snapshot of school readiness, CDE annually collects aggregate data from school districts. Districts submit aggregate assessment data from a menu of kindergarten school readiness assessments approved by the State Board of Education.

Each assessment provides information on whether a kindergartner is meeting age-level expectations in each of the required school readiness domains at the beginning of the school year:

- Physical well-being and motor development;
- Social and emotional development;
- Language and comprehension development;
- Cognition; and
- General knowledge (mathematics and literacy).

For the purpose of reporting, the general knowledge domain consists of mathematics and literacy, such that six domains are reported to the state.

Colorado school districts began phasing in kindergarten school readiness assessments in 2013 with full implementation in the 2015-16 school year. The state board adopted the reporting system for kindergarten school readiness in the spring of 2016, enabling CDE to begin collecting data from districts in the 2017-18 school year. In March 2020, the state board updated this reporting system to include named domains. In previous years, districts submitted only aggregate readiness information by number of domains in which students demonstrate readiness. Starting in the fall of 2021, the new system reported population-level kindergarten school readiness levels in each of the required domains. The system collected only aggregate student data for statewide results and disaggregated by school district, school, grade level, free or reduced-cost lunch eligibility status, gender, and ethnicity as required in statute. Individual child data used to inform instruction and families of child progress is retained within each district and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

This report details data from the kindergarten school readiness collection during the 2022-2023 school year.

## Kindergarten School Readiness Findings

School districts reported school readiness data collected during the school readiness assessment window, which is the first 60 calendar days of the 2022-23 school year. Data included in this report comes from one of the following approved assessment tools: Teaching Strategies GOLD®; HighScope Child Observation Record (COR); the Desired Results Developmental Profile for Kindergarten 2015 (DRDP-K 2015); and the North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Teaching Strategies GOLD® was used by 75.4 percent of districts throughout the state. North Carolina Kindergarten Entry Assessment was used by 11.0 percent. DRDP-K 2015 was used by 9.6 percent of schools, HighScope COR was used by 0.5 percent of schools across the state, and 3.5% of data from the 23 districts and 10 charter schools that have waivers for use of a state board approved kindergarten school readiness assessment have been excluded from this report due to compatibility concerns (Figure 1). Data from

the 22 districts and 10 charter schools that have waivers for use of a state board approved kindergarten school readiness assessment have been excluded from this report due to compatibility concerns. The excluded population represents 6,378 students or 11.0 percent of total kindergarten enrollment (8.6 percent of schools). At the time of the writing of this report, data for 99.6 percent of students was reported, representing 99.5 percent of schools.

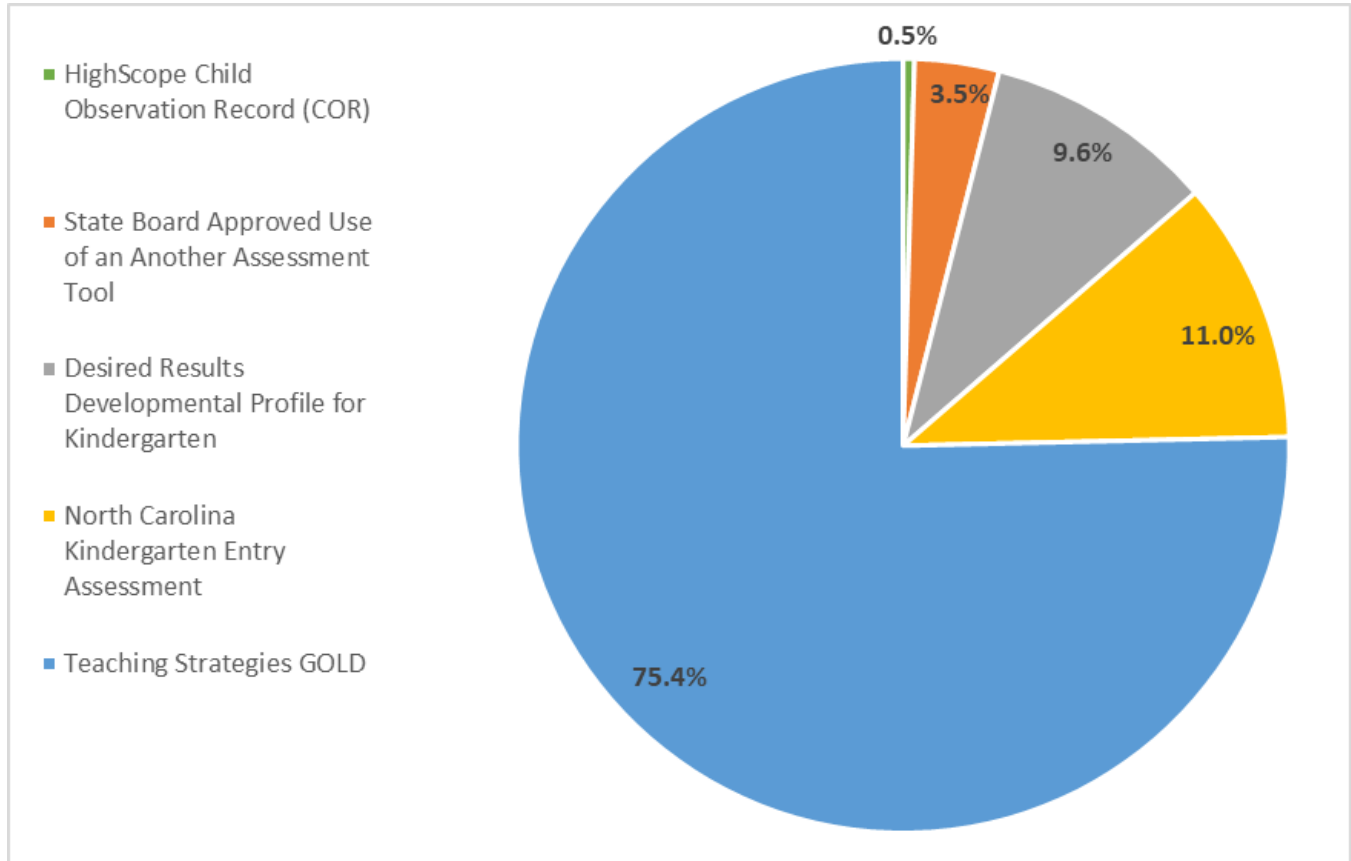


Figure 1. Use of Approved Assessment Tools for the Kindergarten School Readiness Data Collection, 2022-23

### Average Age at Entry for Kindergarten

The average age at kindergarten has been calculated for the 2020-2021, 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. The rationale for this calculation is to account for any differences in reporting since districts saw declines in enrollment in the 2020-21 school year. The comparison shows no difference in the average age at entry for kindergarten between the three school years.

### Overall Results

As illustrated in Figure 2, the results from the 2022-23 reporting window reveal that 76.4 percent of Colorado’s kindergarteners met age expectations for cognition. This is followed by literacy (74.2 percent), physical and motor development (72.4 percent), language (71.0 percent), social emotional development (70.5 percent), and math (64.9 percent). When compared to last year (2021-22 school year), the percent of kindergarteners meeting

expectations rose slightly for cognition, literacy and math. While the percentage decreased for social emotional development, physical and motor development, and language.

Due to the pause in reporting kindergarten school readiness data in 2020-2021 and the change in state board approved reporting system in 2020, annual data is only included for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years.

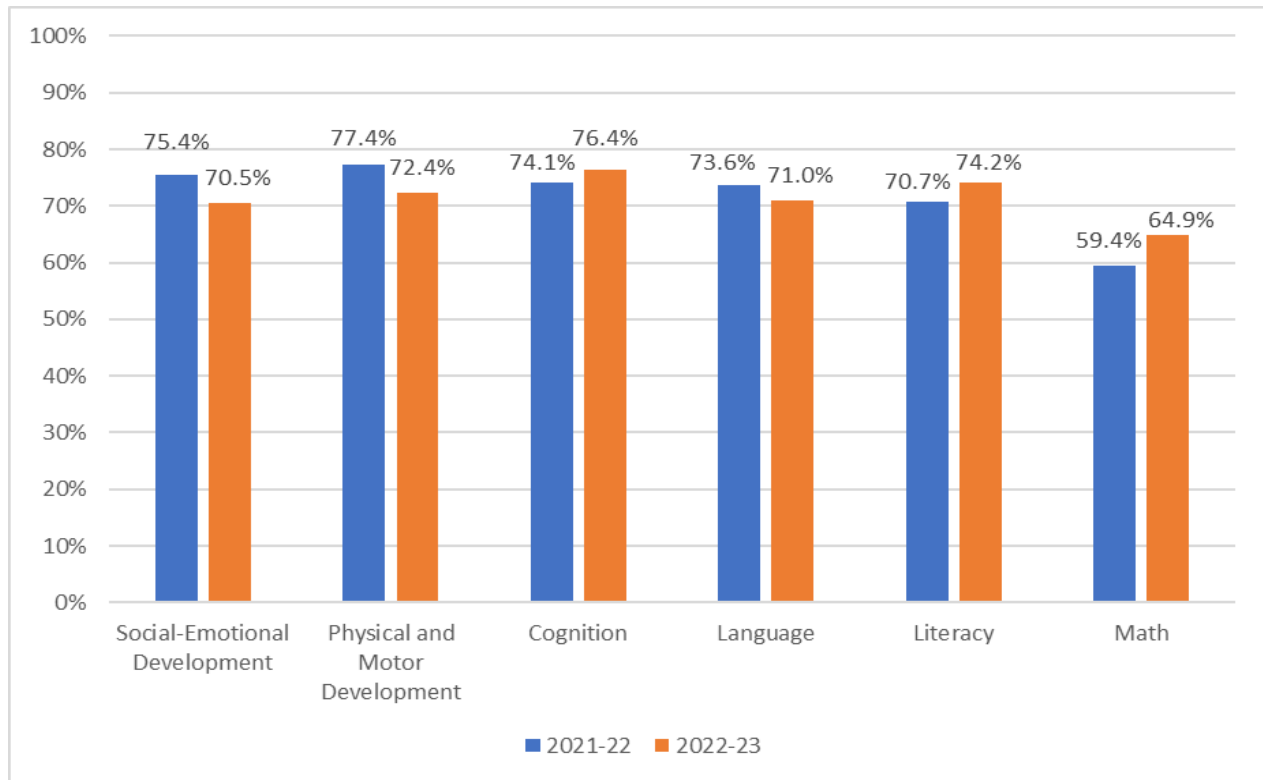


Figure 2. Percentage of Colorado Kindergartners Meeting School Readiness Age Expectations by Domain in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The disaggregation of kindergarten school readiness information by gender, free or reduced-lunch status, and race and ethnicity is included in the following sections. School readiness data are not disaggregated based on half-day or full-day kindergarten status.

### Kindergarten School Readiness by Gender

In Figure 3, the school readiness data by gender indicates that there are slight differences by gender between students who meet or exceed expectations in specific domains.

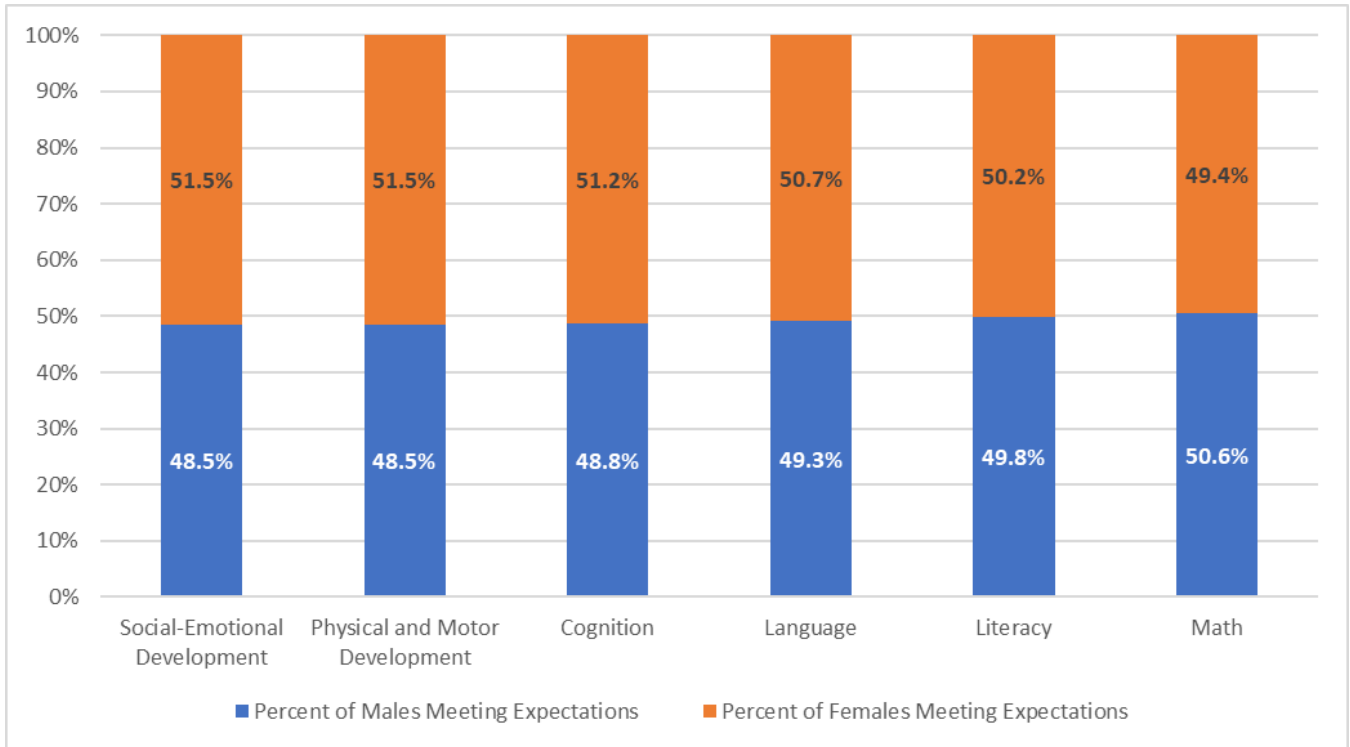


Figure 3. Comparison of Colorado Kindergartners Meeting School Readiness Domains in 2022-23, by Gender

### Kindergarten School Readiness by Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility

Readiness data by free or reduced lunch (FRL) eligibility is shown in Figure 4. In all domains, students not eligible for FRL had met age expectations at higher rates than students who were eligible for FRL. The greatest differences between eligible and not eligible students occurred in literacy and math, the same trend as seen for the 2021-22 school year.

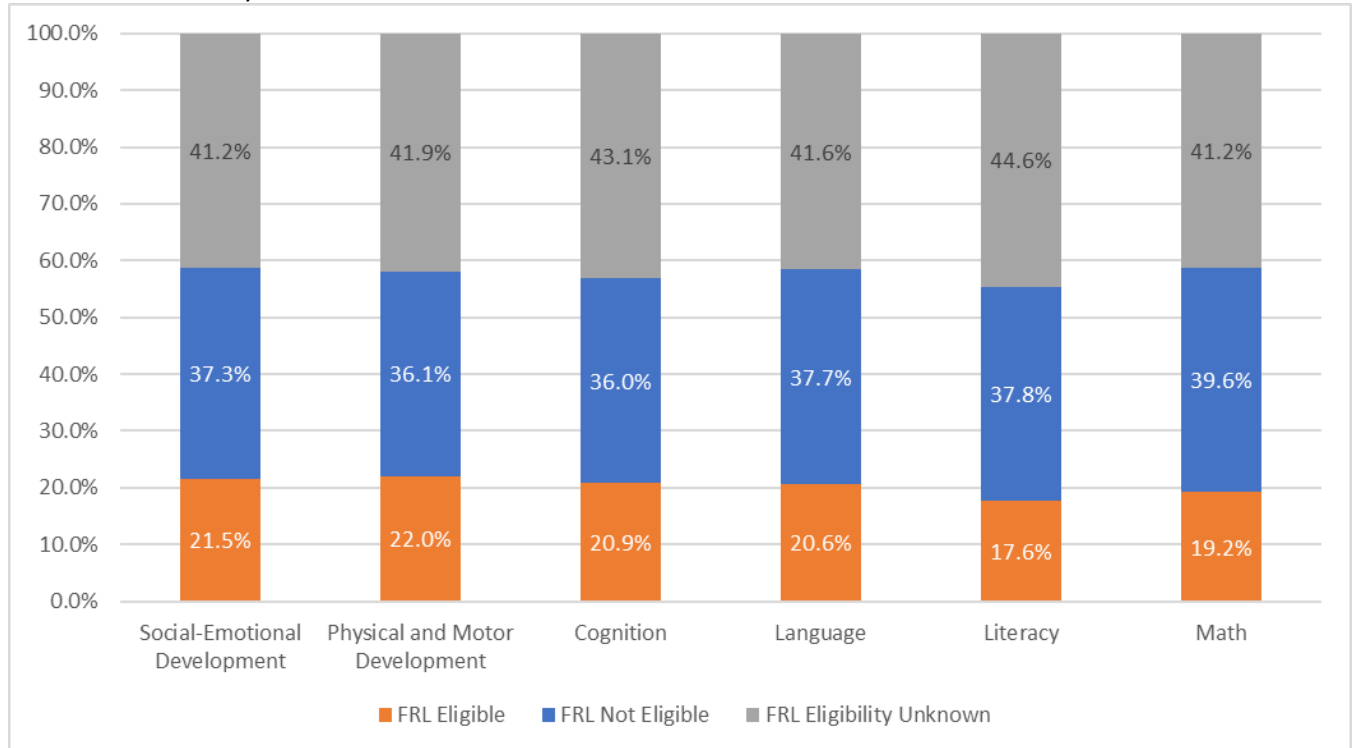


Figure 4. Comparison of Colorado Kindergartners Meeting School Readiness Domains in 2022-23, by Free or Reduced Lunch Status.



### Kindergarten School Readiness by Ethnicity and Race

Table 1 displays the percentages of students that met the kindergarten entry expectations by race and ethnicity. The first line of the table shows the percentage of each group within the total Colorado kindergarten population. The subsequent lines contain the percentage of each group that met age expectations within each of the domains, out of all students who met age expectations. For example, of the students who met age expectations in social-emotional development, 4.2% were Asian, which is higher than the total population of Asian kindergartners (3.2%). A discrepancy between the state baseline percentage and the percentage meeting the readiness domain will provide a sense of any race/ethnicity gaps.

**TABLE 1: Percentage of Colorado Kindergartners by Race and Ethnicity Meeting School Readiness Domains in 2022-23**

	Asian	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Black	Hispanic	White	Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Unknown Race/Ethnicity
<b>State Baseline Percentage</b>	3.2%	0.5%	4.5%	34.0%	51.6%	0.3%	5.9%	0.0%
<b>Social-Emotional Development</b>	4.2%	0.5%	4.2%	29.8%	54.5%	0.3%	5.0%	1.5%
<b>Physical and Motor Development</b>	4.3%	0.6%	4.3%	30.4%	53.6%	0.3%	5.1%	1.4%
<b>Cognition</b>	4.4%	0.5%	4.2%	29.5%	54.6%	0.3%	5.0%	1.5%
<b>Language</b>	3.9%	0.5%	4.2%	27.9%	56.5%	0.2%	5.3%	1.5%
<b>Literacy</b>	4.6%	0.5%	3.7%	26.0%	58.0%	0.2%	5.4%	1.5%
<b>Math</b>	4.5%	0.5%	4.0%	27.2%	56.9%	0.2%	5.3%	1.4%

## The Colorado Academic Standards

### Background

CAP4K required the state board to adopt standards that identify the knowledge and skills a student should acquire as the student progresses from preschool through elementary and secondary education. It further requires the state board to review and revise the standards every six years. In the spring of 2020, the General Assembly passed House Bill 20-1032 which amended the standards revision timeline. The state board is now



required to review and revise approximately one-third of the standards beginning in 2022 and an additional one-third every two years thereafter.

### **Standards Review and Revision Process**

The arts and social studies standards revisions were included in the first phase of the three-phase process. Content areas planned for Phase III overlap with state-level assessment contracts for these tested content areas. The content areas in Phase II will consist of the remaining content areas.

During the 2021-22 school year, the department convened stakeholder committees to make recommended revisions for the arts and social studies standards. These committees were composed of 81 members with CDE staff serving in a supportive role. In addition to responding to public feedback on the 2018 version of the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) for social studies, the social studies standards review and revision committee was required to implement and respond to new legislative requirements for the standards.

- House Bill 19-1192: History, Culture, and Civil Government in Education Commission recommendations. This bill requires that the recommendations from this commission be considered during the standards review process.
- House Bill 20-1336: Holocaust and Genocide Studies. This bill required the state board to adopt standards for Holocaust and genocide by July 2021.
- House Bill 21-1200: Revise Financial Literacy Standards. This bill requires the inclusion of new topics in the personal financial literacy standards.
- House Bill 21-1103: Media Literacy Standards. This bill requires the review process to consider the recommendations of the Media Literacy Advisory Committee established under House Bill 19-1110.
- Senate Bill 21-067: Strengthening Civics Education. This bill requires the inclusion of specific topics in the civics standards.

Initial recommended revisions were made public for feedback in November 2021 with presentations regarding the proposed revisions to the state board from November 2021 through November 2022.

Following the adoption of revisions to the arts standards in April 2022 and the social studies standards in November 2022, local education providers will have the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years to transition to the revised standards with implementation beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

## **Colorado's Statewide Content Assessment System**

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### **Background**

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) were developed to assess the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) initially adopted in 2009 and 2010 with revisions adopted in 2018. The CMAS in science and social studies were administered for the first time in 2014 with English language arts (ELA) and mathematics added in 2015. The SAT Suite of Assessments (PSAT in grades 9 and 10 with SAT at grade 11) were fully administered starting in spring 2018. After assessment adjustments due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, spring 2022 tests returned to a more typical schedule as shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: 2022 State Content Assessments**

Spring 2022 Assessments	
CMAS/CoAlt ELA	Grades 3-8
CMAS/CoAlt Math	Grades 3-8
CMAS and CoAlt Science (developed to 2020 CAS)*	Grades 5, 8, and 11
PSAT/SAT and CoAlt	Grades 9, 10, and 11

\*Students saw items written to the 2020 Science CAS for the first time in spring 2022. Normative results have been shared with students, parents, schools and districts. The 2023 assessments will be fully reported with proficiency information.

## 2022 State Assessment Results and Interpretation Considerations

### COVID-19 Impacts Learning for Some Students

Students may have experienced ongoing reduced, disrupted and/or adjusted learning opportunities in school year 2021-2022. Assessment results provide an indicator of the progress being made to address the unfinished learning resulting from the pandemic.

### 2022 State Assessment Results Provide Insight into Individual Student Learning

Spring 2022 state tests and expectations were consistent with tests from previous years. Because the scale scores and performance levels (e.g., approached expectations, met expectations, etc.) had the same meaning from previous years, results provide important insight into what individual students know and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations of the Colorado Academic Standards. Results for students may be interpreted with reasonable confidence. For example, student scores at performance Levels "Met Expectations" or "Exceeded Expectations" are indicators of mastery of the standards.

### Participation Information is Critical to Interpretation of State, District and School Results

Participation information must be reviewed and taken into consideration thoughtfully when interpreting 2022 district and school results. Although this year’s participation rates for districts, schools and student groups rebounded significantly since 2021, there were widespread differences across and within districts. Some student groups participated at higher rates than other groups.

As participation rates decrease and vary across student, school and district groups, challenges with interpreting results will increase. Depending on the specific school or district, some student groups will be overrepresented in the results and others may be underrepresented. Participation rates and how well the students who tested reflect the district/school as a whole vary across the state this year. Participation information indicates that in some cases, conclusions should be drawn with caution or completely avoided.



CMAS: English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies achievement results and participation rates for the spring 2022 assessments are available at the following location:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults-2022>

PSAT and SAT results and participation rates for spring 2022 are available at the following location:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/sat-psat-data>

New CMAS and CoAlt science assessments aligned to the 2020 Colorado Academic Standard are in development. Development was delayed due to the pandemic and the first full operational assessment will be in spring 2023. Other assessments will be revised as needed following the standards revision schedule.

## Looking Ahead

The current PSAT/SAT assessments will continue to be administered through spring 2023. The college entrance exam and the associated 9th and 10th grade assessments will go out for a fair and competitive procurement this school year (2022-2023) for a first administration under a new contract expected in spring 2023.

## Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

### Background

CDE and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) worked together to develop a description of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR). As required in Colorado law, every six years the Colorado State Board of Education and Colorado Commission on Higher Education are required to review the PWR description and adopt any appropriate revisions.

After extensive educator, community, and business input, the updated PWR description was jointly adopted by the State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education in winter 2016. The description was reviewed and re-confirmed by the state board in 2022 and will soon be reviewed later by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. This description serves as the basis for the state's alignment efforts including the Colorado Academic Standards, assessments and informing student demonstrations of skills and knowledge required to be ready for college and a career upon earning a high school diploma.

***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.***

### Progress in 2021-22

In alignment with the PWR description for Colorado, CDE and CDHE measure several factors that reflect levels of PWR for students beyond high school, including graduation rates, dropout rates, college entrance scores, participation in concurrent enrollment courses during high school, matriculation and persistence rates to and through postsecondary education, remediation rates for students who enter college at a Colorado public institution of higher education, and implementation of Colorado's graduation guidelines.



## Graduation and Dropout Rates

The four-year high school graduation rate for the Class of 2022 is 82.3 percent, which signifies a 0.6 percentage point increase compared to the previous year. The Class of 2022 had 442 more four-year graduates than the Class of 2021. The state's four-year graduation rate has increased 9.9 percentage points since 2010. Extended year rates for high school students taking five, six and seven years to graduate also show improvement in 2021-22. See the state's [graduation data dashboard](#) for more information. The dashboard features longitudinal data by student groups, schools, and districts.

The state's 2021-22 overall dropout rate was 2.2 percent which is an increase of 0.4 percentage points from the previous year. In total, the state saw 10,526 students in grades seven through 12 drop out last year – 2,234 more students than the previous year. The statewide dropout level decreased 0.9 percentage points since 2010. [Details on the dropout rate](#) are available on the CDE website.

## Concurrent Enrollment

The state of Colorado passed the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act (CEPA) in 2009, which provides a structure for local education providers and institutions of higher education to enter into cooperative agreements to offer college courses to high school students. Due to changes in CEPA per Senate Bill 19-176, to expand concurrent enrollment opportunities for high school students, especially in areas with historically low (or no) student enrollment in concurrent enrollment opportunities, local education providers are now required to offer Concurrent Enrollment opportunities to qualified students in grades nine through 12 at no tuition cost to students and families. Senate Bill 19-176 also created a [grant program](#) to fund expansion and innovation efforts and created [a statewide comprehensive website for students and parents](#) to inform them of Concurrent Enrollment and other dual credit opportunities for students, what they cost, and the benefits and challenges of each option.

For more information about statewide student participation in Concurrent Enrollment and other dual credit programs, please see the Colorado Department of Higher Education's [Concurrent Enrollment webpage](#).

## Graduation Guidelines

CDE is also implementing Graduation Guidelines as established under House Bill 07-1118 and Senate Bill 08-256, requiring the development of statewide high school graduation guidelines that local school boards must meet or exceed. The purpose of graduation guidelines is to articulate Colorado's shared expectations for the meaning of a high school diploma and to outline the minimum components, expectations, and responsibilities of local districts and the state to support students in attaining their high school diploma. The graduation guidelines took effect for ninth graders in fall 2017, and with a one-year delay due to COVID-19, were required of all graduates in 2022. Graduation Guidelines align with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness and postsecondary entrance requirements.

To support local education providers in implementing the Graduation Guidelines, CDE staff has provided multiple opportunities for school and district leaders to learn from one another about the local implementation strategies that are proving effective for each learner. From capstone workshops focusing on meaningful capstone processes for all and especially for students with disabilities, to symposia on promising practices for English learners, to monthly town halls focusing on strategies to increase postsecondary and workforce readiness, the Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness regularly seeks to highlight the best of what is happening in the field from which others can learn. Hundreds of educators from local education providers across the state have attended and participated in these learning opportunities.



CDE's Offices of Standards and Instructional Support and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness updated the list of [PWR essential skills](#) that assist students in reflecting readiness for next steps beyond high school and included these skills in the recent revisions to the Colorado's Academic Standards.

## Admissions and Developmental Education Policy Review and Revision

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### Background

CAP4K and subsequent state law (section 23-1-113, C.R.S.) required the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHHE) to review and revise the admission standards policy (CCHHE policy I, F) and the developmental/remedial education policy (CCHHE policy I, E) by December 15, 2013. Statute required CCHHE to align the admissions standards policy with the state's description of postsecondary and workforce readiness and graduation guidelines. After extensive institution and community input, CCHHE approved revisions to the admission policy in November 2014.

### Admission Standards Policy

The revised admission standards policy took effect for all students seeking admission for fall 2019 and thereafter. The key elements of the new admission standards policy directly support the shift in focus in Colorado from enrollment to student success. The changes included aligning postsecondary admissions expectations with high school Graduation Guidelines. Further, the policy increased flexibility for institutions to determine their own specific admissions requirements and increased the number of tools they may use to do so within the scope of their statutory role and mission. The policy presupposes that institutions will admit students whom they are best able to serve to be successful and earn a credential.

As required by the policy, institutions submitted their proposed admission standards, which were approved by CCHHE in December 2014 and are evaluated on an annual basis. The admissions standards include the mid 50 percent range of assessment scores and grade point average (GPA) for each institution's previously admitted student class, as well as academic rigor and demographic information. In alignment with graduation guidelines, academic rigor can specifically include competency-based education. Institutions' assessment score standards must meet or exceed college-ready standards, unless an institution shows that it is able to support the student adequately.

An interactive web-based admission tool was created that clearly explains admission standards at each institution. The online tool is found at this link: [www.coadmissionstool.org](http://www.coadmissionstool.org).

### Developmental Education Policy

Colorado's developmental (formerly "remedial") education policy provides criteria to be used by all public higher education institutions in the state in identifying students who need developmental courses in English and mathematics. The change from "remedial" to "developmental" was made by the Commission on Higher Education in 2017 to reflect the national movement away from using the term "remedial." The policy lays out standards whereby institutions may offer developmental courses.

The developmental education policy aligns with postsecondary expectations and with high school Graduation Guidelines. The goal of the policy is to improve the effectiveness of developmental placement and education, and to increase the number of credentials received by Colorado high school graduates, especially by those from underrepresented backgrounds. In 2013, the policy was updated to increase institution flexibility by giving more



placement options, including allowing institutions to place students into college level courses along with supplemental academic instruction. The updated policy also increases the number of assessment options to use in placement. Assessment options have been expanded from including ACT/ SAT college entrance exam scores and the Accuplacer tests, to also including the General Education Development test (GED) and the two new high school equivalency exams (TASC and HiSET), Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced scores. Also, institutions may use additional means of evaluating a student's readiness such as high school GPA and prior learning experiences (e.g., work experience).

In 2019, House Bill 19-1206, titled "Concerning removing equity gaps in higher education by ensuring more students have access to supplemental academic instruction," was passed. Among other things, beginning in fall 2022 Colorado's public institutions of higher education may enroll no more than 10 percent of students into traditional stand-alone pre-requisite developmental education courses that delay degree completion. This change also impacts school districts that offer developmental education courses through Concurrent Enrollment. The Colorado Department of Higher Education holds ongoing meetings with academic and data representatives from institutions of higher education to determine how to best implement this change effectively.