

Colorado State Board of Education
High School Assessment

TO: Members of the Colorado State Board of Education

CC: Elliott Asp, Interim Commissioner of Education

DATE: January 7, 2016

SUBJECT: High School Assessment

As school superintendents from across Colorado, we are deeply concerned about the recent announcement that a state committee has selected the SAT as the high school assessment to replace the ACT beginning in the spring of 2016 for the next five years.

Thank you in advance for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts with you. We are hopeful that you may be able to intervene on behalf of, and in the best interest of, our students.

Our concerns are numerous. First, communication about the process and input into this important decision were significantly lacking. The announcement, made when many school districts were closed for winter break, lacked information about the process or criteria used to make this selection.

While state statute clearly gives the State Department of Education authority to select the assessments, the State Procurement Manual, Chapter III, Section 4.G. requires purchasing offices to meet with interested parties, including affected political subdivisions, prior to developing an RFP. Since it appears school districts were not consulted in this process, this state procurement requirement was not met.

Next, because of the new state assessments – PARCC, READ Act Literacy Assessment and CMAS Science and Social Studies - ACT is the only assessment the state and school districts have that provides longitudinal data. As you know, Colorado has used the ACT since 2001, and changing this test means a significant loss of trend data regarding the achievement of high school students in our state.

Many school districts have aligned their curriculum and assessments at other grade levels to the ACT, and have been using the test results to plan for the new graduation guidelines and continuing district improvement efforts. A sudden change to SAT will mean that ACT data will now be a lost resource, and we will have yet another new baseline on a test that has no state or national trend data since it is new this year. We will be trading a test with a long-standing longitudinal data set for a test with no baseline or longitudinal data set.

In addition, most Western states that include a college entrance exam in their admission criteria use the ACT. That makes it one of the few state-mandated tests that our students find relevant. With the change to SAT, our students may now choose to take the ACT privately and opt out of

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the state testing entirely, reducing participation rates and compromising critical data sets regarding the proficiency and college readiness of our high school students.

Furthermore, we have observed that sometimes students in poverty who take the ACT are motivated to consider going to college, especially if they achieve a “good” score and feel higher education is actually within reach. These students are more likely to be better prepared for the ACT this year since that assessment is what we have all been working toward. Economically disadvantaged students may not be able to afford to take the ACT privately, thus reducing their opportunities to gain college admission and significantly limiting their post-secondary options.

Finally, we are very concerned about the impact this change and the unreasonable timeline will have on our high school students who were planning to take the ACT as their college entrance exam this spring. The recent decision is to introduce the new SAT assessment in March 2016 – only three months from now!

This significant change comes at a particularly difficult time, as Colorado school districts are preparing for the adoption and implementation of new graduation requirements. We believe any change in the high school assessment should be aligned with the timeline for new graduation guidelines, which is state mandated for the class of 2021.

We urge the State Board of Education to reconsider this disappointing and disruptive decision. Please do what is in the best interest of our students and our school districts. Please, at the very least, delay this mandatory change for no less than one year and allow districts to choose either the ACT or SAT for 2016.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Hatchell, Academy District 20
Brian Christensen, Akron R-1
Dave Clarkson, Arickaree R-2
Valorie McCleary, Arriba-Flagler CSD #20
John Maloy, Aspen School District
Rico Munn, Aurora Public Schools
Troy D. Zabel, Bayfield School District
Shila Adolf, Bethune School District R-5
Steve Wilson, Big Sandy School District
Bruce Messinger, Boulder Valley School District
William Wilson, Brush School District RE 2J
Sue Holmes, Buena Vista School District
Tom Satterly, Burlington RE-6J
Tom Turrell, Byers School District 32J
Linda Miller, Calhan RJ1
Nikki Johnson, Campo School District RE-6
George Welsh, Cañon City Schools
Tonya Rodwell, Cheraw 31
Harry Bull, Cherry Creek School District

Glen Bradshaw, Cheyenne County School District Re-5
Roslin Marshall, Clear Creek School District
Carol A Hilty, Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
Buck Stroh, Creede School District
Scott Cuckow, Crowley County School District
Mark A. Payler, Custer County C-1
Alan Dillon, DeBeque 49JT
Kevin Schott, Deer Trail School District
Scott Cooper, Dolores School District Re4A
Liz Fagen, Douglas County School District
Jason E. Glass, Eagle County Schools
Jody Mimmack, East Grand School District
Randy L. Miller, Eaton School District Re-2
Pat Bershinsky, Edison 54JT
Kelli Thompson, Elbert School District #200
Wendy Rubin, Englewood Schools
Sheldon Rosenkrance, Estes Park School District R-3
Keith Owen, Fountain-Fort Carson School District Eight
Steven Grasmick, Fowler School District R4J

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Rhonda Roberts, Fremont School District RE -2
Steve McCracken, Frenchman School District RE-3
Ken Haptonstall, Garfield County School District No. 16
Frank Reeves, Genoa-Hugo C-113
David MacKenzie, Gilpin County RE-1
Ty Jay Kemp, Granada School District RE-1
Doug Tredway, Gunnison Watershed School District
Grant Schmidt, Hanover School District 28
Darcy Garretson, Haxtun Re2J
Michael Warren, Hi-Plains R-23
Leslie Nichols, Hinsdale County School District RE-1
Christine L. Barela, Hoehne R-3
John C. McCleary, Holyoke School District
Michael J Moore, Huerfano Re -1
Timothy Krause, Idalia School District RJ-3
Rocco Fuschetto, Ignacio School District 11 JT
Daniel M McMinimee, Jeffco Public Schools
Shawn C. Ehnes, Julesburg School District RE-1
Blake Byall, Kim R-88
Robert Framel, Kit Carson R1
Rick Lovato, La Junta Schools
Bree Lessar, La Veta RE-2
Wendy Wyman, Lake County School District
Dave Tecklenburg, Lamar RE-2 School District
Elsie Goines, Las Animas Re-1
Karen Brofft, Lewis-Palmer School District
Richard (Rick) C. Walter, Sr., Liberty School District J-4
Dave Marx, Limon
Brian Ewert, Littleton Public Schools
Susan Sonnenberg, Lone Star
Brian Hanson, Mancos School District RE6
Edward Longfield, Manitou Springs
Tom Wilke, Manzanola School District
Chris Selle, Meeker School District
Robb Sanders, Merino School District
Kirk Banghart, Moffat Consolidated School District #2
Brent Curtice, Moffat School District RE-1
Stephen Schiell, Montrose County School District
Curt Wilson, North Conejos School District RE-1J
David Crews, Norwood School District
Kendra Anderson, Otis R-3 School District
Scott C. Pankow, Ouray School District
Becky Minnis, Park County School District Re-2
Bret Robinson, Pawnee RE-12
Timothy Kistler, Peyton School District 23Jt
Brenda Krage, Platte Canyon SD
E. Glenn McClain Jr., Platte Valley, Weld Re-7
Joe Kimmel, Prairie School- RE 11 J
Denille LePlatt, Primero School District
Terry N. Bishop, Pritchett School District RE-3
Constance Jones, Pueblo City Schools (D60)
Ed Smith, Pueblo School District 70
Matt Scoggins, Rangely RE 4
Steven E. Smith, Ridgway School District
Diana Sirko, Roaring Fork School District RE-1
Kevin Edgar, Sanford School District 6J
Chris Fiedler, School District 27J
Michael Clough, Sheridan
Darci Mohr, South Routt RE-3
Richard Hargrove, Springfield RE-4
Brad Meeks, Steamboat Springs
Monica Johnson, Strasburg 31J
Jeff Durbin, Stratton schools
Heidi Pace, Summit RE-1
Mike Gass, Telluride School District
Stan Scheer, Thompson School District
Samantha Yocam, Vilas Re-5
Kyle Hebbard, Walsh RE-1
Don Rangel, Weld County School District RE-1
Greg Rabenhorst, Weld County School District Re-3J
Marty Foster, Weld County School District Re-5J
Rick Mondt, Weld RE 10J
Dan Seegmiller, Weld Re-4 (Windsor/Severance)
Robert D. Ring Jr., Weld Re-9 School District
Mike Epright, West End Public Schools RE-2
Michael Page, West Grand 1-Jt
Gary Bruntz, Wiggins School District Re50J
Dave Eastin, Wiley SD RE-13JT
Jed Bowman, Woodland Park School District
Dianna Chrisman, Yuma School District-1