



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education  
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue  
Denver, CO 80203-1799

February 27, 2017

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

Happy Monday! I hope you all had a nice weekend. Let me thank you again for all the amazing work you are putting in day-in and day-out for the students of Colorado.

I wanted to follow up with you regarding our Friday [news release](#) announcing that the State Board of Education voted to support [House Bill 1181](#) which would change the English language arts and math assessments taken by Colorado's ninth grade students beginning in 2018. If passed, ninth-graders would take an assessment that is aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards and the state's other high school assessments next year instead of the current CMAS tests for ELA and math that were developed with the PARCC consortium.

Earlier news stories about the legislation may have left the impression that the bill has a broader scope, so I wanted to clarify that it covers only the ninth-grade assessment and wouldn't take effect until 2018. This year, our third- through ninth-graders will again take the existing CMAS assessments for English language arts and math, as well as science in grades 5, 8 and 11 and social studies in grades 4 and 7.

For several months the state board has been discussing the possibility of switching the ninth-grade assessment to one with a clearer connection to the college entrance process. As you know, last year's participation among 10th graders increased substantially following the switch to the PSAT 10, from 62 percent participation on the 2015 CMAS tests to 88 percent participation on the 2016 PSAT 10. It's clear that our students are drawn to assessments that are aligned to the college entrance process. We also expect strong participation on the SAT which will be given for the first time to all of Colorado's 11th grade students this spring.

We announced previously that we are working on an RFP for our other CMAS assessments. We expect to go through that process this spring with an intent to award announced by the end of June.

The assessment window is right around the corner, and I continue to believe that communications with parents and students about the purpose of the assessments is our shared responsibility. We've developed some sample materials to help you with this important task: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/tools-assessments>.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or Joyce Zurkowski, executive director of assessment.

Sincerely,

Katy Anthes, Ph.D.  
Commissioner

