

## Colorado Department of Education Assessment Implementation Study

### Background & Purpose of Study

CDE understands that the new assessments bring a range of intended and unintended implications on districts, schools, teachers, and students. These implications become more complex when viewed in light of early literacy assessments, local assessment systems, and other reform initiatives.

To quickly gather information about the implications of these assessment changes, CDE is working with WestEd, a nonprofit education research agency, to research the assessment requirements, gather data from a representative sample of districts across the state regarding the implications of the requirements, survey district leaders and assessment coordinators, and submit findings and recommendations to the department. The study will also take into consideration district and school level assessments. The department plans to share the results of the study with stakeholders, use the information to make any needed changes to administration policies and procedures, and use the recommendations to highlight any policy changes that might emerge from the findings that would address unintended consequences of the new assessment system.

### Study Design

The study will be conducted in phases so that the department can capture information, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement throughout the implementation of the new assessment system. The aim is to have initial recommendations to help address unintended implications of the new system by late April so that the state can act on those recommendations and respond thoughtfully to the greatest identified needs and concerns facing districts.

The first phase of the study will involve focus groups of a representative sample of districts and a statewide survey of districts. The focus groups will be conducted between late-February and mid-March. Focus groups will consist of approximately 7-10 members with people who fill the following types of roles (recognizing that in many districts the same individual holds multiple roles): superintendent, assessment coordinator, curriculum coordinator, technology coordinator, principal, teacher, parent, and student. The approximately two hour focus groups will be facilitated on site by WestEd researchers. A focus group of teachers from across the state will also be held to delve deeper into instructional issues and opportunities. WestEd will also be conducting a survey of all districts to get broad participation and feedback on assessment implementation challenges and opportunities.

The focus groups and survey will encompass all components of local and state assessment systems (including the new state science and social studies assessments, PARCC-developed assessments in English language arts and math, state-mandated assessments in such areas as the READ Act and school readiness, as well as local assessments used by districts) and the interplay/interaction of these assessments on instruction, time, teachers, and students. WestEd will provide initial findings and recommendations from the focus groups and survey in late April.

The second phase will include follow up focus groups and surveys in May after the online administration of the new science and social studies assessments to see how challenges/opportunities may have changed since the February/March focus groups and to gather lessons learned from the state's first administration of online assessments. It is anticipated that WestEd will provide findings and recommendations from the second phase of the study in June.

The department envisions additional phases of this study to support and inform the work of the department during the 2014-15 school year to inform implementation of the new online English language arts and mathematics assessments.

**Districts Selected to Participate in the Study**

CDE sent an invitation to all districts in the state the week of January 27<sup>th</sup>. Twenty-three districts responded to the department’s request representing all regions of the state. The Commissioner shared the list of interested districts with his superintendent advisory council at the CASE Winter Conference on February 6. The superintendent representative from each region who serves on the council helped select the district from the list of volunteers in his/her region to participate in the study. The districts selected for the focus group portion of the study include:

- Cherry Creek 5
- Platte Valley RE-7
- Strasburg
- Buena Vista R-31
- Woodland Park Re-2
- Delta County
- La Veta RE-2
- Archuleta
- North Conejos

**Findings and Recommendations**

CDE will share the findings and recommendations from each phase of the WestEd study with the State Board of Education, districts/BOCES, and interested policymakers and stakeholders. As noted earlier, the department plans to use the information to make any needed changes to administration policies and procedures and to highlight any policy changes that might emerge from the findings that would address unintended consequences of the new assessment system.