COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Robert K. Hammond
Commissioner of Education

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Deputy Commissioner

March 1, 2011

Dear Superintendents,

We have had several phone calls again this year about the considerations by a few parents to refuse having their children take the state assessments. Despite the convictions of a few, the law and the rules of the assessment are clear about student participation on the CSAP. Here are some clarifications.

Misconception 1: Parents may "opt out" their child(ren) from participating in the state assessment program (CSAP/CSAP-A).

Clarification: Per Colorado law [22-7-409(1.2.a.1.d.I)], as part of the school and district accountability system, every student enrolled in a public school is required to take CSAP or CSAP-A. There is nothing in this section of the law allowing parents choice regarding this testing. People may be confusing the law governing testing with the law governing instruction in human sexuality. Parents are able to excuse their child(ren) from the curriculum concerning human sexuality. The state assessment does not cover this area of the curriculum; therefore, this part of the law does not apply to CSAP/CSAP-A.

Misconception 2: Schools and districts are not penalized when parents refuse to allow their child(ren) to be assessed.

Clarification: Lack of participation is represented in both AYP and the new accreditation system as reflected in the Performance Frameworks. Schools and districts not meeting the participation requirements drop one full category on the Performance Frameworks.

Misconception 3: Parental refusals have no negative impact on students as a group.

Clarification: The accuracy of all of the accountability data is impacted when students do not participate due to parental refusal. This data is publicly displayed and also is utilized to make policy decisions at the state, district and school level. Obviously, the more accurately the data reflects the true performance of the students the better when high stakes decisions are being made. We entrust our schools with the great responsibility of educating our children. CSAP gives us a common tool to use when we're looking at how well schools and districts are doing that job and preparing kids for the world of college or work. It is useful for Colorado's citizens to be able to look at the performance of its public schools using a common, fair tool, given under the same conditions in every school: CSAP. It's an important method of looking at all our schools and districts in a comparable way.

Misconception 4: Parental refusals have no negative impact on their individual child(ren).

Clarification: CSAP does not try to measure all the learning students engage in throughout the year – but it is a very reliable end-of-year measure of how well students can read, write, and do math and science problems. Students who do not participate are not provided with this information. In addition, students who

do not participate in state testing do not get growth projections, which can be an important gauge of whether or not the student is on track. Further, CSAP scores serve as an early predictor of college and career readiness. As an example, they are able to provide a good prediction of each student's probable ACT scores.

Misconception 5: Schools are obligated to provide alternate learning activities during testing times.

Clarification: Since all students are required to take CSAP/CSAP-A, schools are not required to provide alternate activities.

We wish you success in this year's assessment administration,



Jo O'Brien, Assistant Commissioner
Office of Standards and Assessments