



Guide For Communicating CSAP Scores

CSAP as a Part of an Overall Communications Strategy

CSAP scores, alone, will not be enough to inform the public about the quality of public education children are receiving. The scores will not be enough to increase public confidence in local schools and school districts. Nor will the scores provide information about those children and schools that may be "at risk."

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the CSAP reporting, it is critical that the test scores be a part of an overall communications strategy. The following outline suggests the basic elements of a communications plan that can be used to facilitate the development and enhance the effectiveness of a CSAP "report card."

Communicating with community stakeholders is not just a good idea--it's imperative. Schools/districts that have a solid communications plan, as well as those who have had very little contact with their public, face a huge challenge when CSAP scores are released. For this reason, it is extremely important that the communications groundwork is put in place now.

Creating positive relationships with parents, teachers, the media and other community leaders before CSAP scores are distributed will ensure that everyone is receptive to the information disseminated.

Through media relations, community relations, and stakeholder communications you can lay the foundation for an open dialogue between the schools, the school district and the public.

Reporting your CSAP results to reporters

Preparation is key to making the most of your school's improvement information. Here are some tips to help you prepare your school's message and how to deliver it in the most meaningful ways.

Key is to be prepared

First, review your school's CSAP results. Do a quick analysis and ask yourself, "What's the news here?" and "How are we doing?" Answers to these simple questions will help you frame your message to your community and media. From this, choose the three things you want people to remember about your information. Remember to draw your answers to questions back to these points and underscore them in your written materials.

After reviewing your school's report card, educators should brainstorm with colleagues and site council members about potential questions from reporters. Put yourself in the shoes of the reporter. Often, reporters ask questions about trends, a rise or decline in test scores, and other areas. Sometimes they will "zero in" on controversial areas. Don't panic or overreact--just be prepared. Brainstorming prior to the interview will help you prepare and focus your interview on the three most important points you want people to remember.

Two points to remember

1. Remember, an important function of public relations is getting your message out accurately and putting your best foot forward.
2. Repeating information is the best way to reinforce your point. Research notes that it takes seven times before a message is heard. It takes 22 times before a listener both hears something and then acts on it.

Consider a news conference

You may consider calling a news conference and inviting all area media representatives. Remember, it's important to give equal contact to all members of the media. Even if you don't agree with a particular reporter or media source, you will build insurmountable walls by ignoring that entity.

Consider asking site council members and students to be available for media interviews. A frequent public perception is that "school people" are paid to say good things, or the "right" things. Site council members, community members, parents and students are people who don't carry the same baggage.

Make a press kit including copies of your school improvement plan and other supporting materials suggested in this communications guide. Remember to relate your presentation and answers to questions back to your school improvement plan. If you met the goals you set out, boast that fact. Likewise, if your results aren't what you expected or wanted, explain what you are doing about it. Be honest. Honesty goes a long way toward building good relationships with the community and media.

Other useful reference resources

- CASB website
- PSD website at <http://www.psd.k12.co.us>
- CDE website
- CEA website
- CASE website

Here's an outline that can be used when explaining to your school staff and community about the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). This presentation can be used by school superintendents, principals, school public relations professionals, teachers, local teacher associations, and other school officials in preparing their school community to report CSAP results.

Answers to questions you may have...

What is the CSAP?

The Colorado Student Assessment Program, or CSAP, measures student performance on Colorado model content standards. Beginning in 1997, CSAP tests have been given to students statewide, starting with reading and writing, and tests in additional curriculum areas in several grades are being added each year.

Why do we need these tests?

These CSAP tests show how our students are performing on the standards Coloradoans have chosen. Students are being tested on the high, challenging standards that will prepare them for academic success. The statewide assessments are specifically designed to tell us where students are in relation to Colorado's model content standards.

Who receives results and how are they going to be used?

The results of the CSAP assessments are released to schools statewide, and to the news media in at various times throughout the school year. The results list student performance in one of four categories for their grade level: advanced, proficient, partially proficient, and unsatisfactory (in progress).

How are the CSAP assessments given and graded?

The CSAP assessments measure how well a student is doing on Colorado Model Content Standards. These tests differ from other assessments because they require students to demonstrate what they know, not only to simply "bubble-in" the correct answer. For example in math, students are required to demonstrate how they arrived at the answer, and write an explanation of how they reached their conclusion. The math assessment was given over three, 60-minute sessions. Reading and writing assessments are given over three 55-minute sessions. (OTHER HERE)

What does this assessment tell me about my child's performance?

Different assessments tell us different things. Although individual student results are made available to teachers and administrators--and teachers can use them to fine-tune a student's education strategy--the statewide assessment is primarily a "big-picture" tool to help schools make sure their local standards, curriculum, and teaching methods align with the state's model standards.

For the most complete information on an individual student's progress over the year, we want parents to go to the source--the student's teacher. Teachers have the entire body of evidence: class assignments, test scores, grades, local assessment returns, results on student projects, etc., that can paint a much clearer picture of an individual student's progress.

How will school-by-school and district-wide results be used?

It is important to remember that each community and each school is unique and faces its own economic, cultural, and geographic challenges. Comparisons between schools and districts may be inevitable, but the most valuable way to use the

statewide assessment results is as an indication of how well a school or district is overcoming educational challenges over time.

The statewide assessments tell us how well our students are doing toward reaching these new, high standards. Based on the CSAP scores (and other measurements) districts continually evaluate and improve curriculum and instruction to ensure student progress toward meeting the standards.

Concerns

- Rank-ordering of schools. Zero scores included in averages. Proficient does not equal grade level.
- Public understanding data--how to focus on growth and other indicators of a good school. A different group of students tested each time means that schools can use the results to identify areas where instruction and curriculum can be improved over time. (MORE HERE.)

How to handle the report

Be proactive. Start telling your story now.

Prepare your staff, site council, school volunteers.

Building into your calendar, the time to bring everyone up to speed on your school's results.

Use your site council to help get the information out to the community--site councils should be the most knowledgeable community members about school improvement. They are built-in ambassadors.

Use Take the Test Day to help your key communicators see how difficult the tests are.

Start year off with briefing staff as a part of your back-to-school sessions. Continue to keep staff updated on school improvement developments and data.

Sound advice

Use multiple methods of communicating.

Keep telling your story in a variety of ways.

Printed materials alone won't get the job done--they leave room for interpretation problems and miscommunication.

Must use face-to-face communication techniques.

Make this a year-round project.

When the state issues its report card, you will have already then the news out of the release.

Have a special session explaining your school's report card to your school volunteers.

Bring staff along every step of the way--make this a part of your staff meetings.

20+ Bright Ideas

Here are more than 20 bright ideas you can use to present your education report card to your community.

- Create your own report card before the state sends out its edition of the report card. Check out pre-print brochure designs available from paper companies.
- Conduct a district news conference immediately following the state release of CSAP scores.
- Conduct a news conference at the school using students and site council members to present school information. Be sure these people are adequately prepared. A dress rehearsal giving information to journalism students will help your preparations and involve students.
- Create a local school district speakers' bureau using parents, site council members, students, teachers, retired school employees, senior citizens, business leaders and community leaders. Have speakers available to present at local community groups such as Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce meetings, church groups, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, local radio talk shows, real estate agents, Federated Women's Clubs, service organizations, senior citizen organizations and centers, etc.
- Create a school report card "presenter's kit." Include some talking points about the report card information. Have a general fact sheet with highlights of the information for speakers to take with them. Also include overheads, slides and training modules.
- Create a program insert about your report card and school improvement progress and use it at school athletic events, music concerts and drama productions.
- Create a banner or poster of brief information regarding school progress and post it at the concession stand or ticket office to be showcased during home athletic games or events.

Choose a different school improvement topic for each home game.

- Use half time at the games to conduct a "trivia question" contest regarding your school's progress facts featured at past home games.
- Create a traveling display of student work and statistics from your report card. Allow local banks, malls and businesses to have the display at their offices. Include a generic fill-in-the-blank news release that the business can use to send to local media to showcase the display at their business.
- Talk to utility companies about including school report card information as bill or pay check stuffers.
- Present the report card information to local school site councils with an update of their school improvement plans to illustrate the impact of the improvement plan. Explain and discuss the results.

- Advertise your report card information on your school building marquee. This is a very inexpensive way to communicate brief statements and facts to your local school community. (And this reaches more than just the parents of your students.)
- Challenge student leadership organizations to get their school's progress information out to their community.
- Invite media to your school to showcase specific programs which have contributed to a boost in local academic achievements.
- Provide one-page summaries to local real estate agents, dentist offices, doctor offices, barbers, hair salons, chambers of commerce and banks. Create a display unit which draws readers' attention and holds the brochures neatly.
- Hand out a one-page summary for parents to read as they wait in their cars for their elementary school children after school.
- Create a list of places where people wait in line. Distributing your information to these people often will reach parents and community members who tend not to be active in school events.
- Have your high school students (art class, media class, video technology class, etc.) create posters, videos or other visuals of school improvement information for display on church bulletin boards, in restaurants, employees' lounges, break rooms, cafeterias, and entrances.
- At your school's back-to-school night, have students explain how they are learning concepts targeted in the school improvement plan. For example, have students explain how they are learning algebraic concepts and have a community member from the site council explain how those skills are used in the work place.
- Contact your shopping centers to use empty store fronts to display student work and illustrations of school progress. To answer questions, have volunteers host displays on weekends and/or evenings. Produce a video to explain your school's progress and play it continuously throughout the day for shoppers.

Capitalize on the time when your school honor roll is released. Provide information to media for a feature on your school improvement program.

Timeline for communicating about CSAP

Each time a new class of students begins taking the CSAP tests, you need to communicate to parents. Fourth graders who took the very first CSAP assessments in reading/writing will be 8th graders in (WHEN?). Here's a sample timeline:

August

Release of 4th and 7th reading/writing and 8th math and science results.

Give parents information about the upcoming release using school newsletters, letters home, parent advisory meetings, Back-to-School meetings, etc.

September

5th graders take math test.

Prepare a special note to parents of 5th graders, or use school newsletters. Give parents guidelines of how they can help their child succeed on CSAP tests.

October

November

December

January

Do a school news brief about upcoming testing season (CSAP, district level tests, ITBS, etc.) Do a media release about test sit articles to parent magazines, monthly newspapers, etc. about CSAP program.

February

Release of 5th grade math assessments--use this as an opportunity to reinforce key messages about CSAP testing. Prepare parent letter prior to release. (These parents are getting pretty used to CSAP by now--shouldn't be a big deal unless their child's scores are out of line with other tests or classroom work. Conduct Take the Test Day activities to heighten awareness of CSAP program.

March

3rd grade reading assessment, 4th and 7th grade reading/writing assessment, 8th grade math/science assessments given.

Remind parents of upcoming testing windows and their important role.

April

May

3rd grade reading results released - prepare parents for release of scores and how that may impact their child (summer school, ILP, retention).

June

CSAP - What You Should Know

Dear Parent/Legislator

COSPRA is proud to join Channel 9, the Denver Post, CASE, CEA, CASB and corporate sponsors New World and C in sponsoring Take the Test Day on February 29.

We believe that CSAP is a good test, and measures what students know and are able to demonstrate about the Colorado Model Content Standards.

CSAP is the most publicly accepted and important accountability tool used in Colorado today. According to the Colorado Department of Education, the program is intended to provide a picture of student performance at the state, district and school levels. Educators can use the results to improve curriculum and instruction in order to raise more students to these new, higher standards.

Because each administration of the CSAP assessments are given to a different group of test takers, it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool to provide detailed information about individual students. Even so, the future of your child's education and the funding of your child's school rests heavily on this high-profile measure. You should care about CSAP.

Take the Test Day February 29, 2000

Objective:

To demonstrate to our publics that CSAP assessments are rigorous and that Colorado has set high standards for its students. Also, to help parents understand the need to work with their children to improve their student's achievement on the CSAP.

Date of test:

- Tuesday, February 29
- Insert (with sample test) will be published in the Monday, February 28 Denver Post.

The two tests:

- There will be a public information test (Denver Post insert) and an officials' test.
- Questions will be selected by Don Watson (CDE) and Elliott Asp (Douglas County).
- The official's test will include questions from grades 3,4 and 7 in reading and writing&emdash;the public information test will also contain sample questions in math and science.
- At least one question will be in Spanish.

Scoring:

- A scoring guide will be included, as well as a description of the rubric. Tests given to public figures will NOT be scored.

The production:

- The Denver Post will do an overrun of the insert, which will be free to school districts.
- The Denver Post has also offered to supply a week's worth of newspapers (with CSAP/education related articles each day) to use in classrooms as a teaching tool.

Kick-off event--statewide:

- Two locations are identified for a test taking session: the capitol building, for legislators and other government officials; Channel 9 for business people, parents/others.
- The test taking session at these locations will be held from noon-1:00 p.m. in both locations.
- The test taking should take 30-40 minutes. Following the activity, a dialogue will be facilitated between the test takers and a panel of experts (classroom teacher, district assessment specialist, CDE or McGraw/Hill, district administrator).
- Channel 9 will tape both sessions.

Ideas under consideration for local events:

- Superintendent/BOE host a Take the Test Day site. Following the test, the assessment specialist for the district can facilitate a discussion about CSAP and standards.
- Area service clubs (Rotary, etc.) asked to put Take the Test on agenda during the week of February 28th. Administer the test to club members as part of their meeting agenda--conduct a discussion following the test.
- Ask the Chamber of Commerce to include a sample test in their packets to members, or ask to appear on the agenda of the Chamber's education committee to administer the test.
- Information into school newsletters and on the district's website. Include sample questions. Encourage parents to link into the websites of Channel 9 or the Post during the week of the test.
- Use the test as presentation at parent meetings, accountability committee, parent/teacher conferences, school district retiree's meetings, or use at senior center.
- Contact the office of the city manager to get time on a city council agenda. Take a group of students and sample questions to a city council meeting to do a presentation on CSAP.
- Ask your local paper or editorial board to bring together a group of community members. Administer the test to them at the paper.

Promotion:

- Channel 9 and the Post are creating a joint logo to promote the event. Channel 9 will assemble a panel of experts for a call-in opportunity, 4-6:30 p.m., on February 29th.
- An online chat room will be provided on March 1, by the sponsors, First World and Covad.
- The Post and Channel 9 will begin promotion on Friday, February 25. Stories will be done Sunday through Saturday.
- The Denver Post will put promotional cards in the individual sales racks around the state.

The Distribution:

School districts will receive:

- a sample article for school newsletters
- a sample press release

- a copy of the officials' test for local use

School districts can order:

- extra inserts (public test)
- the series of papers during that week
- a package of the stories and the insert, will be available in the summer.

To order, districts should fax Dana Plewka, 303-820-1406 by February 10.

Partners: CASB, Channel 9, Denver Post, CASE, CEA, COSPRA, CDE, First World, and Covad.

CSAP is a Good Test but Some Uses are Inappropriate

The tests used in CSAP are good tests! CSAP assessments are closely aligned with the state standards. They use a balance of open-ended as well as multiple-choice questions and thus do a better job of measuring challenging content than traditional tests with only multiple-choice questions. The tests are standardized and meet technical requirements for reliability and validity.

Proficiency Grade Level

The public does not understand that new proficiency standards are often set very high--well above the national average definition of a grade level."

In 4th grade writing the CSAP proficiency cutoff was set at a level roughly equal to the national 70th percentile (instead of the 50th percentile or "grade level" average). Raising the performance of all children to a new higher standard is an admirable goal of standards-based reform. But, the schools should not be judged to be failing when 34 percent of 4th graders in Colorado reach a standard met by only 30 percent of 4th graders nationally.

National standards on the National Assessment of Educational Progress were also set very high, so that only 29 percent of U.S. 4th graders are said to be "proficient" in reading on NAEP. The Commissioner was incorrect, however, to interpret this to mean that, "the nation isn't doing too well." In reading, U.S. 4th graders are 2nd in the world (after Finland). And Colorado 4th graders ranked 8th in the nation on NAEP 4th grade reading.

Impossible Mandate

The requirement that schools must show 80 percent proficient or 25 percent gain in the number proficient within 3 years may be an impossible mandate.

This goal was set without data as to its feasibility. Yet the consequences of failing to show huge gains are severe. For example, more than half the districts in the state could be placed on academic watch.

The graph on page 3 illustrates the serious consequences of the 80/25 percent rule. It shows (1) that more than half of the elementary schools in Colorado are "failing"

according to these criteria after three years of testing 4th graders in reading and writing, and (2) it shows that the greatest failure rate occurs in the top quartile of schools.

Situation Will Worsen

The Commissioner's most recent memorandum reminds us that growth will not be evaluated until 2003. Therefore, we can expect that the dismal picture for 4th grade Reading and Writing will improve somewhat because more schools will be successful after six years than were successful after three years. However, we can also expect that the overall picture will worsen considerably as tests in other subject areas are added, because meeting the success criteria in all areas is necessarily more difficult than meeting the target in any one area. The large number of schools, especially high-scoring schools, failing to meet accreditation criteria is likely to hold true unless the proficiency cutscores on new tests are not set as high as they were in 4th grade Writing.

Rather than lowering standards for students, accreditation rules for schools and districts should be set based on data and evidence as to what constitutes reasonable progress.

Editor's Note: Lorrie Shepard, education professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has researched many topics on testing and educational policy. Her comments are based on an analysis of CSAP.

Schools Meeting Accreditation Criteria, (Listed) by Quartile

The graph was constructed from statewide data provided by the Colorado Department of Education on all but the smallest school districts. Schools were divided into four equal groups (quartiles) according to their performance on the 1997 Fourth Grade CSAP in Reading and Writing. In each column, the number of schools meeting one or both of the accreditation criteria is shown for a 3-year period. (The commissioner's "best" criterion was used, meaning: 80 percent in any of the three years or 25 percent gain in the year with the greatest gain.)

In the first column showing the lowest-performing schools, 11 schools met the 25 percent improvement criterion, while 67 failed to meet either criterion. In contrast, the fourth column shows the success rate for the highest performing group of schools. Schools in the fourth quartile had between 57 percent and 93 percent of their students proficient or advanced (averaged across Reading and Writing) in 1997. Within this top group of schools, one school met both criteria, 16 met the 80 percent criterion at least once in the 3-year period, and seven schools met the 25 percent improvement criterion. Out of 185 schools in the top quartile, 161 failed to meet either criterion in a 3-year period.

Colorado Student Assessment Program Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is CSAP?

A: CSAP is a "standards-referenced" assessment, which reports student results in relation to Colorado standards set by the state and school districts to define what

students should know and be able to do. The results are reported according to four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, or Unsatisfactory.

Standards-referenced tests differ from other standardized tests which measure student performance based on the average scores of all students in a given grade level who also took the test. Therefore, CSAP does not assess whether a student performed at grade level; it assesses whether students meet a performance levels determined after the test is administered.

EXAMPLE: If 95 students of the same age were asked to climb a mountain, the average ability for students that age would be determined by the average height each student was able to climb. That would determine grade level. To determine whether students met a certain standard, they would be judged by how high up on the mountain they were able to climb.

Q: Who takes the tests?

A: Beginning in 1996, the reading and writing tests were administered to fourth-graders across the state. By 1999, the test had been expanded to include third-grade reading; fourth- and seventh-grade reading and writing; eighth-grade math and science and fifth-grade math. Starting in 2000, schools will begin testing 10th graders in math, reading and writing.

Q: Why are the tests given?

A: According to the State Department of Education, CSAP is intended to provide a picture of student performance for the public, educators and lawmakers.

Q: What information are the tests NOT intended to provide?

A: The CDE says CSAP is not intended to:

- be used as a diagnostic tool for individual students;
- measure the performance of the same group of students from year to year; answer all the questions about a school or district's instructional practices;
- provide the only measure of student achievement.

Q: What does proficient mean?

A: Proficient means that a student met certain requirements set by the state. In the case of the fourth-grade CSAP writing test, a student who is graded Proficient has met a standard higher than 70% of all fourth-graders in the nation. Therefore, the CSAP proficient writing standard is very rigorous.

Q: How should school districts use the information to improve curriculum instruction?

A: Under the current system, tests are given in the fall and spring. Districts receive detailed analysis of the results five to six months later, too late to make adjustments in the curriculum for the same group of students who took the test. That also means that the annual scores do not reflect same-group comparisons, but rather two different groups of students. CSAP should be used primarily as a big picture tool to

help districts make sure their local standards, curriculum and teaching methods align with the states model standards.

The CSAP Story

Since the first administration of the CSAP assessments in (WHEN?) districts have encountered a variety of frustrations in how results are scored and reported.

A Testing problem encountered by several districts around the state showed that many 4th and 7th grade test takers received zero scores on an entire writing test because they did not complete one very small section. After doing a practice editing exercise, the students apparently did not understand that they were to repeat the exercise on the actual test. Even very advanced students misunderstood the instructions. Consequently, dozens of tests received zeroes, significantly lowering the school's average scores for those tests.

At Aurora Public Schools' Lansing Elementary School, 100% of the students who took the test received zero scores because they took the test in pen instead of pencil.

At Cherry Creek Schools' Campus Middle School, 14 of 36 students in the same 7th-grade class received zero scores because of failure to follow instructions. All students received the same instructions from the same teacher.

At Cherry Creek Schools' Holly Hills Elementary School, 64 fourth-graders were eligible to take the writing test. Of those, 12 did not take the test because of limited English proficiency. Another seven students received zeros because they did not complete a single editing exercise. Of the 45 students who took the test, 40% scored proficient or advanced. But because the 19 who did not take the test or scored zeros and were included in the overall average, the school's CSAP score for writing was recorded as 25% at or above proficient.

What People are Saying About CSAP

"Unless you get bad results, it's highly doubtful you have done anything useful with your tests. Low scores have become synonymous with good tests."

Colorado State Education Commissioner, William Molonev, "Confusing Harder with Better." Education Week, Sept. 15, 1999

"I am a strong supporter of high standards, quality assessments and accountability for results. The issue is how the accountability system will work. After release of the CSAP results, we learned from the state testing director that a serious scoring error may have occurred. It appears that several thousand students did not have scores reported because of a flaw in the scoring system, which lowered the school, district and state averages. Unfortunately, this mistake was discovered after the release of the scores, casting doubt on the test construction and administration.

"Of 54,070 (seventh-grade) test takers statewide, a mere one half of one percent scored at the advanced level. Even if one wanted to believe that writing instruction across Colorado was poor--which I do not--sheer chance would produce more

advanced students than this measure, causing one to further question the quality of the assessment."

Monte Moses, superintendent of Cherry Creek Schools in a letter to employees. Oct. 8, 1999

"Let us not confuse testing with learning. An annual high stakes test cannot induce literacy and can in fact distort and reduce curriculum."

Jim Hobbs and Carol Sullivan, leaders of the Colorado Language Arts Society, in a letter to Gov. Owens, Denver Post, Jan 6. 2000

"It takes seven to 10 essay tests to get a good stable score of a student's proficiency in writing. One topic may really 'click' for a student or leave them struggling. A content question can be something the student knows well or a subject they never got to. Go ahead and report the score, but never take it by itself to generalize to the standard."

David Wright, coordinator of research & assessment, Centennial BOCES

"Indeed CSAP does not longitudinally track individual students. As intended, it is a systemic "snapshot" of a given grade, in a given subject, in a given year. In this way, it resembles NAEP, ACT, or SAT tests that judge the effectiveness of a system, state, or nation over time."

Colorado State Education Commissioner, William Moloney, letter to superintendents, Nov. 12, 1999

"Raising the performance of all children to a new higher standard is an admirable goal of standards-based reform. But, the schools should not be judged to be failing when 34% of 4th graders in Colorado reach a standard met by only 30% of 4th graders nationally."

Dr. Lorrie Shepard of the University of Colorado at Boulder

"Annual testing should be our first reform priority. Measuring results is fundamental to high performance, and we must establish a common definition of success."

Stephen L. Brant, senior vice president for the Apogee Group, chairs the Denver Metro Chamber's Education Reform Task Force, Denver Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 21, 1999

"As schools learn to play the assessment and accreditation game, they will realize that the focus is on moving children from the below proficient category to the proficient category. The system offers no credit for advancing an already proficient child. This will pressure schools to allocate more resources to the children just below the proficiency level. This will again be at a cost to the already proficient child as there will be fewer resources available to challenge these children."

John Wells, parent, Denver Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 15, 1999

"There are serious issues about where the state "sets the bar" in terms of proficiency. CSAP results can be confusing to parents and educators because the level of performance required to be proficient varies from test to test, across grade levels and subject areas. For example, a much higher cutoff was chosen for the CSAP proficiency standard on the fourth grade writing test than for the fourth grade reading test."

Rick O'Connel, Superintendent Douglas County Schools in a letter to employees

"It (state's accreditation plan) requires districts either to have a 25 percent improvement in the percentage of state (CSAP) tests on which students are rated proficient or advanced, or to reach 80 percent overall. That means very bad or very good districts need do very little, while the bar is raised impossibly high for districts in the middle."

Denver Rocky Mountain News editorial: "THE MIS-MEASURE OF SCHOOLS," Dec. 6, 1999

"Students in more affluent areas tend to score higher on CSAP than those in less affluent districts, in part because of factors beyond the school. As a result, those schools with the highest ranking, may not be those that are the most effective in improving student achievement. In fact, schools in less affluent areas may actually contribute more to the growth of students than those in higher income locations." Letter to members of the State Board of Education signed by 22 Colorado superintendents, Oct. 5, 1999.