



FACT SHEET

On High-Stakes Standardized Testing and Local Accountability

118%

Increase in Colorado at-risk students since 2000 [6]

9 Million

Hours of classroom instruction diverted annually due to testing [2]

\$100 Million+

Estimated annual cost of statewide testing in Colorado [1][2]

Rising Student Need in Colorado

The number of students identified as at-risk in Colorado public schools has increased 118% since 2000, reflecting rising economic instability, housing insecurity, and other barriers to learning.[6]

In the 2024–25 school year, more than 7,840 special services provider positions remained unfilled statewide, including counselors, psychologists, and other student support professionals.[7]

Instructional Time Lost to Testing

Each spring roughly 500,000 Colorado students participate in statewide standardized assessments, including CMAS and the PSAT/SAT. Testing administration and preparation require extensive scheduling changes across schools.

Approximately 450,000 students lose an average of 20 hours of classroom instruction annually due to testing requirements—representing more than 9 million hours of teaching and learning time diverted each year.[2]

Financial Cost of Testing

Colorado appropriated approximately \$35.6 million for statewide assessments in FY 2024–25 through the Department of Education’s Assessments and Data Analyses budget line.[1]

When district staffing, training, technology preparation, scheduling adjustments, accommodations, and reporting requirements are included, the overall annual cost of statewide testing in Colorado is estimated to exceed \$100 million.[2]

Administrative Growth in Colorado Education

While districts face resource constraints and staffing shortages, the Colorado Department of Education has expanded substantially over the past two decades. Since 2000–2001, department staffing increased approximately 90% while the department budget increased approximately 214.8%.[1]

National Academic Trends

National results from The Nation’s Report Card (NAEP) show recent declines in student performance in both reading and mathematics, suggesting that test-centered accountability systems alone have not produced sustained improvements in student learning outcomes.[4][5]

References

[1] Colorado General Assembly. (2024). Department of Education budget figure.

https://content.leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/fy2025-26_edufig1.pdf

[2] Augenblick, Palaich and Associates. (2014). A study of assessment use in Colorado districts and schools.

<https://hermes.cde.state.co.us/islandora/object/co%3A33928/datastream/OBJ/view>

[4] National Center for Education Statistics. NAEP reading results. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g12/>

[5] National Center for Education Statistics. NAEP mathematics results.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/mathematics/2024/g12/national-trends/>

[6] Colorado Children’s Campaign. At-risk student analysis. <https://coloradokids.org/understanding-the-at-risk-student-count-in-the-release-of-colorados-2022-23-public-school-enrollment-numbers/>

[7] Colorado General Assembly. HB26-1027. <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/HB26-1027>