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News Release

11th-graders to take the ACT in spring 2016

The Department of Education today confirmed it has received approval to administer the ACT exam to high school juniors this year. The agreement will not change the selection committee's unanimous decision to award College Board a five-year contract to administer the PSAT and SAT to Colorado's 10th- and 11th-grade students.

Under the agreement, this year's 10th-graders will take the PSAT in preparation for Colorado's full transition to the SAT in spring 2017.

"We're very thankful that the testing vendors were willing to work with us to create a transition year for our 11th-grade students," said Interim Education Commissioner Elliott Asp. "Our high school juniors can take the assessment they've been preparing for, and we will work with districts, educators and the College Board to create a smooth transition to the SAT in 2017."

A protest to awarding the contract to College Board was filed last week by the Colorado Association of School Executives. The department's representative at the Attorney General's Office said the protest has no standing, and all public documents related to the request for proposal and selection process will be available to the public today. Information that is proprietary to each of the vendors is not subject to public disclosure.

Competitive bidding process required by state law

The shift in the state's college entrance exam was a result of the state legislation passed last May (H.B. 15-1323) which, among other things, required the department to go through a competitive procurement process for both a college entrance exam and a new 10th-grade exam. In addition, the new 10th-grade exam had to be aligned to both

the Colorado Academic Standards and to the college entrance exam.

The process of developing a request for proposals and selecting a vendor for a contract of this magnitude typically takes six to nine months. The department issued a request for proposals for these exams in November and received bids from two vendors, College Board and ACT. After a comprehensive review of the two proposals, the 15-member selection committee made up of educators and district administrators from urban, rural and suburban communities across Colorado, with a single CDE representative, chose the College Board's SAT as the college entrance exam and the PSAT as the 10th-grade exam.

SAT selected for alignment to the Colorado Academic Standards and free test preparation support

The selection committee found the PSAT and SAT to be better aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards, a requirement of the 2015 legislation. The committee also found the College Board provides the most test preparation support and resources to students. College Board provides test preparation to students in a free mobile app, through the Khan Academy and at Girls & Boys Clubs across the state. College Board also offers free career planning services through Roadtrip Nation which offers strategies to help students make informed career decisions.

"We support the decision to administer the PSAT 10 this spring and begin the administration of the statewide SAT administration next spring," said Cyndie Schmeiser, chief of assessment for College Board. "Given the timing of this decision, we believe it is in the best interest of students and educators."

ACT is also supportive of administering its exam in 2016.

"ACT is committed to supporting a 2016 statewide administration in Colorado compliant with state and federal law," said Paul Weeks, senior vice president of client relations for ACT, in a letter to the department. "We value our relationship with the state and look forward to continuing to provide consistency to Colorado students, parents and educators with information that will help inform education and career planning."

Both ACT and SAT accepted at colleges and universities in Colorado and throughout the country

As Colorado makes this transition to a new college entrance exam and 10th-grade exam, it's important for parents and students to know that the SAT is an approved, recognized assessment option in the Colorado Commission on Higher Education's Admissions Standards Policy and a well-established, recognized credential presented by students from around the world to colleges and universities throughout the country. Also, all public colleges and universities in Colorado will continue to use both the ACT and SAT for admission and scholarship-consideration purposes.

Implementation of 2016 exams

The Department of Education has notified district assessment coordinators that, pending contract negotiations, the ACT will be administered to 11th-grade students on April 19. Districts will have the choice of administering the PSAT on April 19 or 20. In addition, the department understands the importance of longitudinal data on the college entrance exam. Staff will be working with testing vendors and measurement experts to link ACT and SAT data so the state and districts can continue to analyze trends in the college entrance exam results.