



COLORADO
Department of Education

Office of the Commissioner
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

Aug. 18, 2023

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Executive Directors,

"A new school year means new beginnings, new adventures, new friendships, and new challenges. The slate is clean, and anything can happen." Denise Witmer

Welcome Back! It's hard to believe that the summer break is over already, and I hope that you have all had the chance to catch your breath before gearing up for this new school year. Here's hoping that this coming year is one of growth and achievement for all the students and educators around the state!

I love being an educator, because we get two "New Years" to celebrate, with the chance to recommit to the work that will help us improve. The beginning of the new school year gives me optimism, and seeing our students reconnect with their friends and meet their new teachers always fills me with a sense of joy. There is so much potential in the year ahead. I hope you, too, are feeling optimistic for the coming year.

Yesterday we [released the results of the 2023 spring assessments](#). I was heartened to see that achievement in several grades and tests reached or came very close to reaching the percentage of students who met or exceeded expectations in 2019, but we are still seeing the lingering impacts of the pandemic. It is also worth noting that students across the state seem to be recovering better in math than in English language arts. This is a testament to the excellent work you and your educators have done to support students who missed out on important math learning during the pandemic.

Now that we have a common set of data on how students are doing on our grade-level expectations, the question is what's next for our work at the state level. I will be working with staff at the department and our State Board of Education over the coming months to ensure that our supports for schools and districts are aligned to the needs you see in your districts and develop priorities for our work with the legislature. My initial thoughts are that we must double down on addressing the historic gaps in achievement between groups of students. This has been a priority for a long time, and it's clear that we need to continue our focus on the students who need the most support. We also need learn more about the disparity between our boys and girls. It's great that boys are rebounding, but we need to better understand what is going on with our girls and devote focus and support to them.





I do believe that we have some important infrastructure in place to support our students and educators:

- The investments in reading that our state has made through the READ Act, especially the commitment to ensuring all teachers complete training in evidence-based reading instruction, are already making a difference. And in this coming year, that training will also be extended to include administrators.
- The investments the legislature made in math earlier this year will take us in the right direction. The legislation provided funding for CDE to develop a list of high-quality mathematics materials; and it created an academic accelerator grant program to provide opportunities for free academic enrichment in mathematics.
- Beginning in 2025, educators in core content areas who are up for licensure renewal will need to complete 45 clock hours of English learner professional development. This should help us address the large gaps we see in the achievement results for our multilingual learners.
- CDE has focused almost \$8.3 million in ESSER state reserve funds for high-impact tutoring, evidence-based summer and afterschool programs, and high-quality math curriculum through September 30, 2024.

I will be in touch again soon over the coming weeks to share news from the department. Please stay tuned for the chance to give us feedback on how we are doing in providing you with the support and resources you need. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or requests that you have.

Here's to a fantastic year ahead!

Susana Córdova
Commissioner
Colorado Department of Education

