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## Press Release

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### CCA Test Audit Release

#### Pueblo City Schools issues statement on “disappointing” findings

**Pueblo, Colo.** – Today, the Colorado Department of Education released the audit of past testing procedures utilized by Cesar Chavez Academy (CCA). The Caveon Report confirms allegations that inappropriate CSAP test administration has taken place at Cesar Chavez Academy for the past three years.

The CDE findings reveal that significant accommodations were given to students at CCA for CSAP testing. Such accommodations are usually granted only to students identified as having ‘special needs’, and these same accommodations are provided in the classroom throughout the year. (Examples would be extended time for CSAP testing or where a ‘scribe’ writes down the student’s answers.)

The report states that: “Cesar Chavez had extremely high rates of extra time accommodations” in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The department indicates that if it had been pure coincidence that a school would have such a high rate of accommodations, the mathematical probability would be one in one trillion. Caveon chose to limit their audit to extended time, even though issues had been shared with CDE on excessive use of scribing.

These findings prompt Pueblo City Schools to consider a range of actions that could include, but not limited to, proctoring of future CSAP tests at CCA, sanctions against CCA administration and working with the Colorado Department of Education to invalidate certain CCA CSAP tests as a result of misadministration.

“This is unfortunate for so many families who had such high aspirations for the school as it was originally envisioned”, said Stephanie Garcia, PCS board president. “It certainly is sad that those in authority at CCA lost sight of the vision by compromising the school’s credibility and misleading children and their families into a false assessment of a student’s academic performance. “

Pueblo City Schools has a tradition of supporting educational choice for parents and students in Pueblo, Colorado. One of the first charter school authorizations in Colorado was granted in Pueblo, when the Pueblo School District Board of Education granted a charter to the Pueblo School of Arts and Sciences in 1993. Soon after, a charter was granted to the Youth and Family Academy to serve another aspect of

the community. Pueblo City Schools granted charter school status to Cesar Chavez Academy in November 2000 based on the vision that an alternative curriculum and culturally rich environment would be of value to many students and families in Pueblo. The same held true as an alternative concept for high school students with the granting of the charter for the Dolores Huerta Preparatory High School in 2004.

Beyond contractual obligations identifying quantifiable student academic progress, it is understood that appropriate character development modeling and ethical standards will be upheld by school staff for students to emulate. This trust has been breached in the case of those in authority at Cesar Chavez Academy.

In 2005, then District 60 Director of Assessment and Research John Brainard, received several calls from parents at Cesar Chavez Academy (CCA) that inappropriate testing practices had been taking place at the school. CCA parents contacted Brainard with claims that students were taken to different locations after the completion of the CSAP test and given additional time to review some of their answers as prompted by CCA staff. Based on these voluntary contacts, Brainard sensed credibility in the assertions and an investigation was begun. Ultimately, Brainard brought forward corroborated findings which raised serious concerns regarding mismanagement of testing procedures in the administration of the 2005 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading CSAP tests at CCA. Specifically, it was found by test scorers at CTB-McGraw that 62% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at CCA had 'notable' changes in their answers. In a Pueblo Chieftain article published on June 10, 2005, CCA CEO, Dr. Lawrence Hernandez, stated that at CCA "The procedure is that every student can have extra time to complete their test. They can be taken to another location if necessary." This is contrary to CSAP test administration, which is appropriately adhered at all other PCS schools.

For several years Pueblo City Schools and many media outlets have received confidential or anonymous allegations of cheating on CSAP tests or grade inflation at CCA. Many indicated they were afraid of retaliation by CCA administration; the latest of which was a report from KRDO-TV, where a CCA teacher shared his own evidence of student grades that had been inflated at the direction of a CCA administrator.

Pueblo City Schools now awaits the results of the financial audit.

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