

# Overview of Colorado's State Accountability System

## Summary and Purpose

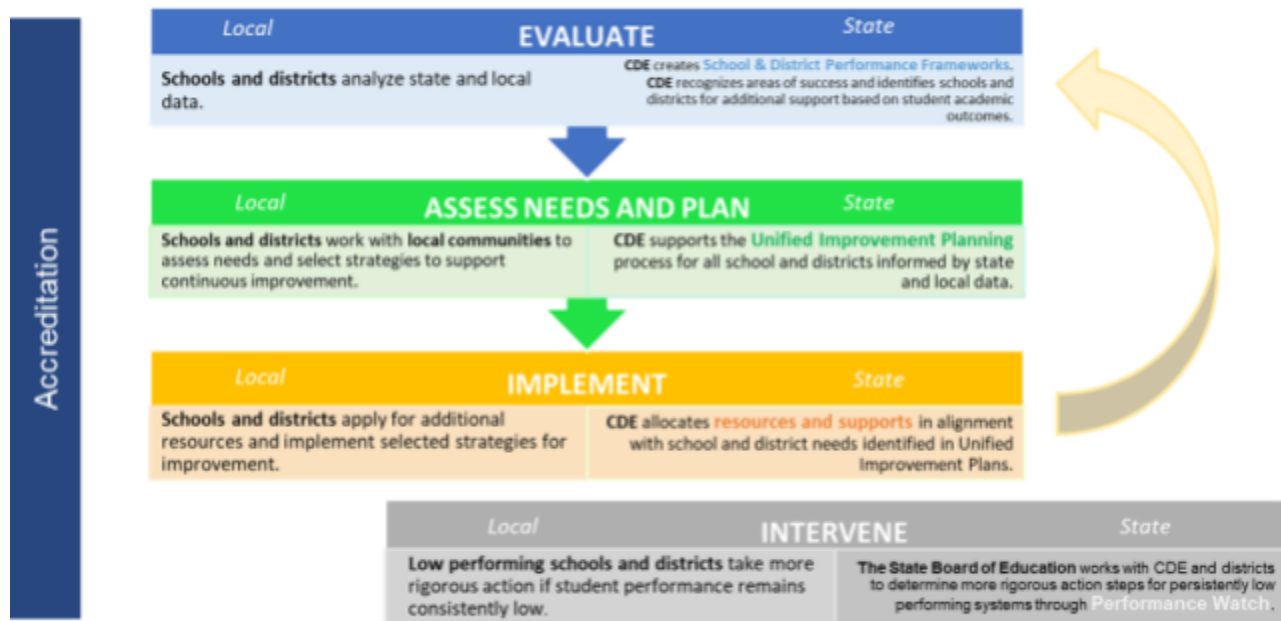


### Overview

Colorado's education accountability system is based on the belief that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed. The accountability system consists of local, state, and federal processes:

- **Local accountability** is driven by locally elected boards and reflects locally-held values. Boards oversee superintendent and district policies.
- **State accountability** is informed by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 and by rules set by the Colorado Board of Education. This policy context drives the creation of performance frameworks, public reporting, improvement planning, performance watch, accreditation contracts, accountability committees, supports and interventions, and several state awards programs.
- **Federal accountability** is informed by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the approved Colorado state plan. The state plan establishes the criteria to identify schools on improvement.

While all different types of accountability overlap, this fact sheet focuses on the elements of the state accountability system for schools and for districts. The image below summarizes the state's theory of action for how these elements interact each year. The state is expected to evaluate school and district performance (e.g., performance frameworks), schools and districts engage with their data to plan (e.g., improvement planning) and implement approaches to improvement. The state also provides supports and interventions to identified schools and districts. Stakeholder engagement is woven through each step.

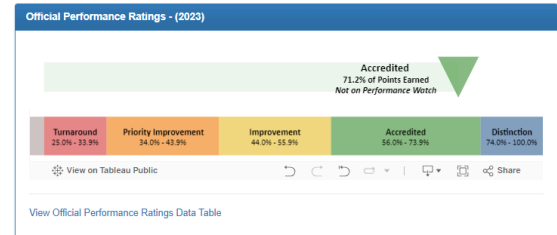


## Elements of the Accountability System

Colorado’s state accountability system is built on multiple elements to bring the theory of action to life. Seven main elements are highlighted: Performance frameworks, public reporting, improvement planning, public engagement, supports and interventions, accreditation, and awards.

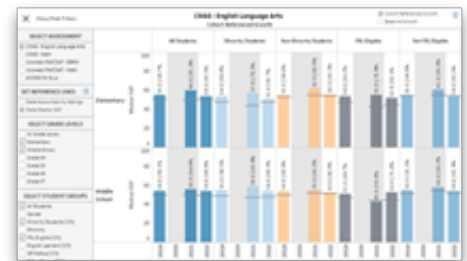
### Performance Frameworks

CDE is responsible for providing high-quality information to a variety of stakeholders about school and district performance through the creation of [performance frameworks](#). Each fall, CDE evaluates the performance of all public schools, all districts, and the state using a set of common performance indicators (i.e., achievement, growth, postsecondary and workforce readiness). This information is used along with assessment, safety, and finance compliance indicators to determine district accreditation ratings and school plan types.



### Public Reporting

CDE develops and maintains a web portal, [SchoolView](#), to provide high-quality information about school, district, and state performance to the public. Within SchoolView, a set of [state accountability data tools and reports](#) are available to support district and school improvement processes. These dashboards are updated for the public after the release of frameworks and are designed to allow users to interact with performance (e.g., achievement, growth) and improvement planning data.



### Improvement Planning

Continuous improvement is an important concept that is baked into the accountability system. [Unified Improvement Planning \(UIP\)](#) was introduced to streamline state, federal and grant improvement planning requirements. Each Colorado district and school is required to submit an improvement plan that addresses how they will improve their performance for public posting, with some flexibilities. The intent is for schools and districts to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement and to create a single plan that is meaningful for stakeholders.



### Public Engagement

Great emphasis has also been placed on engaging families in the accountability process. State statute requires the formation of school and district [accountability committees](#) (e.g., stakeholder engagement in the planning and implementation process). Families are expected to engage in progress monitoring of improvement plan implementation, help increase family engagement in school improvement efforts, and provide feedback on new and changing initiatives. Furthermore, schools and districts are expected to report school data and document plans in a transparent manner. Local boards also have explicit



tasks (e.g., accrediting schools, adopting improvement plans).

### Supports and Interventions

Through Colorado’s accountability system, successful schools and districts are recognized and serve as models, while those that are struggling are offered additional support and increased monitoring. The state support system is distributed through tiers (e.g., universal, targeted, intensive) and are driven by CDE staff and improvement funding channels. [CDE staff serve a variety of roles](#) to support districts, including providing support for districts with identified schools (e.g., [Performance Watch](#) or [ESSA identified](#)). For identified schools and districts, additional funds are available through the [Empowering Action for School Improvement \(EASI\) grant program](#). EASI is a streamlined approach to distribute school improvement funds (1003a through ESSA and H.B. 17-1355). District participation in CDE’s support is encouraged but voluntary. Identified schools and districts also have additional requirements (e.g., improvement planning) and may need to meet with the Colorado State Board of Education after a number of years of identification.



### Accreditation

The State Board of Education is responsible for the annual [accreditation](#) of school districts. All districts are responsible for accrediting their schools based on the state’s appraisal of the school’s performance or a more rigorous local process. Under some conditions, districts may submit additional evidence to adjust a school or district’s plan type through the [request to reconsider process](#). Once district accreditation ratings and school plan types are finalized in December, the [District Accreditation Contract](#) is signed by state and local leadership. Accreditation contracts document that the district is in good standing with the state and remains in compliance as laid out by state statute and regulated by the state board.



### Awards

CDE has a variety of [award programs](#) that recognize the success of high performing schools and districts each fall. These include awards that recognize schools and districts with high levels of achievement (e.g., [Blue Ribbon Schools](#)), exceptional student growth (e.g., [Governor’s Distinguished Improvement Award](#)), or those making a difference for special populations of students (e.g., [National ESEA Distinguished Schools](#)). Awards may be monetary, include public commendation, or include invitations to shared learning.



**If you have questions about the contents of this fact sheet or need further assistance: Contact us at [accountability@cde.state.co.us](mailto:accountability@cde.state.co.us).**