



AUGENBLICK,
PALAICH AND
ASSOCIATES

Local Accountability System Grant Year 2 Evaluation

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to Julie Oxenford-Obrian who provided participant logic models to support program descriptions and to the districts and accountability partners who provided both data and support in describing their programs.

Executive Summary

This is the second annual evaluation of the local accountability system grant (LASG). The evaluation design was created to comply with the legislative requirement for a quantitative evaluation. This evaluation addresses the following questions:

1. Is participation in the LASG associated with improvements in the four main components of accountability systems:
 - a. Community engagement,
 - b. Goals,
 - c. Measures, and
 - d. Change?

This question was addressed through case studies of five LASG participants who volunteered to provide data showing changes in their accountability systems: Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), Fountain Fort Carson School District (FFC8), Jefferson County School District (Jeffco), MOPP and S-CAP. Each of these LASG participants provided quantitative data that illustrates changes in their local accountability system supported by the LASG grant. Three LASG participants provided data showing changes in community engagement.

1. FFC8 provided data showing their efforts resulted in increased parent engagement in community forums.
2. Jeffco provided data showing how their *School Insights* accountability framework developed as part of their LASG activities.
3. S-CAP provided evidence of increased engagement of the education community in the LASG activities through the continued growth in district participation in S-CAP during LASG implementation.

Two districts provided data showing changes in accountability measures that reflected local goals.

1. BVSD had a local goal of reducing and eliminating student discipline disparities between different racial and ethnic groups. They provided data on student suspensions that showed both a decrease in suspensions and a reduction (but not elimination) in disparities in discipline.
2. MOPP data shows use of student achievement measures that are better aligned with alternative education campus (AEC) goals is associated with increases in accountability outcomes as measured in the state's AEC school accountability frameworks.

Taken together, these results show that the localities implementing the LASG can provide evidence of changes associated with local accountability systems. The evidence provided shows increased community engagement in shaping accountability systems and changes in measures that better reflect local values and goals. Grantees and CDE have shared lessons learned from this process with other

districts. Future evaluations have the opportunity to learn about how districts sustain these efforts as well as if and how these efforts can lead to changes in student outcomes.

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Introduction

This is the second of two evaluations by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) of the Colorado Local Accountability System Grant (LASG) program. Authorized by the Colorado State Legislature in Senate Bill (SB) 19-204¹, the LASG provides grant funds to enhance local accountability and continuous improvement systems². This section begins with a description of the LASG followed by a short description of the evaluation. The following sections provide the results of the evaluation.

LASG Overview

As described in Colorado Department of Education (CDE) publications, the LASG local accountability system is supplemental to the state accountability system and may be designed to:

- a) Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success, including additional performance indicators or measures, which may include non-academic student outcomes such as student engagement, attitudes, and dispositions toward learning;
- b) Evaluate the capacity of the public-school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success; and
- c) Use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a cycle of continuous improvement (22-11-703)³.

Grants were awarded in March 2020 by CDE through a competitive process to 11 of the 14 applicants. Grant amounts range from \$25,000 to \$75,000 per year for a statewide grant total of \$450,000 per year. The grants are intended to last for three years; however, grants were suspended soon after they were awarded for a year due to pandemic-caused disruptions. Currently, 10 grantees participate in the LASG.

As described by CDE, grantees are engaging in a wide variety of initiatives, including public reporting dashboards, site visit protocols, rubrics, development of nonacademic indicators, stakeholder engagement processes, and alternative approaches to improvement planning. All grantees have worked on defining their values, articulating their underlying structure, and defining a theory of action. Grant awardees include individual districts as well as consortia of participating districts:

- Boulder Valley School District, RE-2, Canon City School District, Greeley-Evans School District 6, and Gunnison Watershed School District
- Delta County 50J – Vision Charter Academy
- Student-Centered Accountability Project (S-CAP), including Buena Vista R-31, Akron R-1, Buffalo RE-4J, East Otero R-1, Frenchman RE-3, Hanover 28, Haxtun RE2-J, Holyoke Re-1J, Kit Carson R-1, La Veta Re-2, Las Animas RE-1, Monte Vista C-8, West Grand 1-JT, and Wiggins RE-50(J)
- Denver Public Schools

¹ The bill text can be found here: <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb19-204>

² Information about the grant can be found here: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant>

³ This language was taken from a CDE LASG fact sheet, located at:
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier>

- District 49 (Falcon)
- Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8
- Garfield County School District 16 (withdrew due to constraints created by the pandemic)
- Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP), including New America School – Lakewood (Jefferson County), Brady Exploration School (Jefferson County), Denver Justice High School (Denver), Durango Big Picture School (Durango), HOPE Online High School (Douglas County), Jefferson High School (Greeley), New America School – Aurora (Charter School Institute), New America School – Thornton (Adams 12), Southwest Open School (Cortez), Rise Up Community School (Denver) and Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs)
- Jefferson County Public School District
- Northeast Colorado BOCES, including Plateau School District RE-5, Revere School District, Yuma School District 1, Lone Star 101, and Haxtun Re-2J
- Westminster Public Schools and Brush School District RE-2J⁴

While much of resources and attention from the state accountability system focus on lower-rated schools and districts, i.e., schools and districts identified for Priority Improvement or Turnaround, LASG grantees are generally higher rated on the state accountability framework. Grantees provided videos describing their work, which are available at this link:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant>.

Grantees represent a wide range of contexts including small rural districts, large urban districts, as well as a consortium of alternative education campuses (AECs) as part of the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)⁵. AECs have specialized missions and serve high-risk student populations including students experiencing homelessness, addiction, are in foster care, and/or are pregnant or parenting. Since 2002, the state has been working to support high-quality settings for vulnerable and challenging populations. AECs are able to select optional measures for their accountability and improvement planning in addition to state measures.

An important feature of the LASG is the option to work with Accountability System Partners that provide expertise in developing measures, designing infrastructure, and supporting data interpretation. These partners include Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), University of Colorado (CU) Boulder, CU Denver, Marzano Academies, Momentum Strategy and Research, Generation Schools, Battelle for Kids, WestEd, and Cognia⁶.

CDE's role in the grant included helping to administer the grant, supporting ongoing improvement planning that complies with federal, state, and grant requirements, facilitating convenings of grantees to support networking, planning, and capacity building. CDE staff has also provided technical assistance to

⁴ The language describing grantee activities as well as list of grantees was taken from:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier>

⁵ More information about AEC accountability in Colorado can be found here: [Alternative Education Campus Accountability | CDE \(state.co.us\)](#)

⁶ From the Year 2 Legislative Report at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant>

grantees upon request. Technical assistance topics have included measurement development, reporting and visualization, and stakeholder engagement.

Outside Evaluation of the LASG

This is the second evaluation of the LASG and is required by the authorizing legislation (SB-19-204). *This is not an evaluation of any individual grantee or Accountability Partner.* The findings from the first qualitative evaluation included:

- Grantees felt they were meeting or making progress towards meeting their goals.
- Challenges were most often associated with data: capacity to make data-informed decisions and data infrastructure e.g., data dashboards, data storage, and data cleaning.
- The largest sustainability challenge identified by grantees is ongoing leadership buy-in.
- Accountability partners have provided valuable capacity to school districts as they do this work.
- CDE played an important role in presenting local accountability plans with the state accountability framework. This provided credibility to the local efforts.

This second evaluation uses quantitative information to provide information on impacts and changes associated with the LASG. The goal of this evaluation is to provide quantitative information about the relationship between implementing the LASG and 1) public engagement components of local accountability systems and 2) changes in measures of student outcomes. The changes in community engagement are described using data provided by districts. Changes in student outcome measures are described using data from the district performance framework (DPF), the alternative education campus (AEC), school performance framework (SPF), and data provided by districts. The analysis plan for this evaluation was developed in consultation with Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff and participating districts.

This evaluation explores whether participating in the LASG led to changes in grantees' local accountability systems. In particular:

1. Is participation in the LASG grant associated with improvements in the four main components of accountability systems:
 - a. Community Engagement,
 - b. Goals,
 - c. Measures, and
 - d. Changes in Practice?
2. Do districts and schools participating in the LASG show improvement in measures of student achievement and growth in the state accountability framework between 2018-19 and 2022-23?
 - a. Is the change for LASG participating districts larger than what is seen statewide?

The next section of this report reviews the accountability system model described in the year 1 report with a literature review. That model has four primary components: community engagement, goals, measures, and changes in practice. This is followed by four case studies of LASG participants and

resulting changes in their accountability systems. The final section of the report provides an analysis of state accountability data from the DPF.

This evaluation is part of multiple efforts to learn from LASG activities. CDE has produced three legislative reports that both describe the grant program as well as observations by CDE staff⁷. CDE and grantees have also collaboratively presented at Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE). In addition, the CU Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER) has also engaged in study of the grantees including mapping each grantee’s theory of action.

System Model

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 laid the foundation for most of the school and district accountability systems in place today.⁸ Current accountability systems follow the administrative model within which districts and schools are rated based on student outcomes, and these ratings are used to help target resources (Loeb & Byun, 2019). As accountability systems have evolved, they sometimes work on a faster cycle than the yearly cycle of NCLB accountability systems and are often described as continuous improvement systems.

Within accountability and continuous improvement systems, several critical elements are evident, including community or stakeholder engagement, clear goals or desired outcomes, measures of progress towards, and changes within the system or processes to move towards meeting goals. In either an accountability system or a continuous improvement system, these critical elements combine to form a theory of action: if stakeholders identify a set of desired outcomes, measure them, and use that data to inform changes to systems or processes, then student outcomes will improve. These two systems share components that are summarized in Figure 1 below.

⁷ Information is available here: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant>

⁸ This section uses information from the Year 1 evaluation to provide structure and context for the quantitative measures used in this analysis.

Figure 1: Critical Elements in Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems



This representation of accountability and continuous improvement systems has several important elements. First, these elements are shown within a **cycle of improvement**, not as one-time events. Second, **information within the cycle flows bi-directionally**. For example, efforts to identify measures can influence goals as can efforts at change. Finally, this system operates in the **context of community engagement** that can occur throughout the entire cycle. Community engagement does not occur at any one time within accountability and continuous improvement systems but throughout the system.

Community engagement gathers information about what is needed in classrooms and schools to help students reach the community's expectations. The community encompasses people invested in the school system including parents choosing schools for their students, members of the school system and their professional community, as well as elected officials who set standards and decide school funding levels.

As community members consider what improvements need to be made within the system, they identify goals for students served by the system. Goals for students are generally long-term and revolve around students' readiness for postsecondary success (aka, readiness⁹). Once desired goals are identified, when appropriate, measures are used to track progress toward reaching the outcomes. In the case of the LASG, these measures should reflect local goals. NCLB required states to develop and use measures related to state academic standards. The original state measures included student proficiency on state assessments and have expanded to include student growth.

Changes to systems and processes within the public education system as part of accountability and continuous improvement are multi-layered. They can range from focusing on classroom interactions to how state leaders interact with district leaders. As highlighted in the O'Day framework, these changes often include resource reallocation. Nevertheless, all discussions about system and process change center on the essential question: how do we achieve desired outcomes?

It is important to note that all of the changes intended by the LASG, and grantees were impacted by the pandemic. The pandemic placed incredible stress on the school systems as they were working to implement the LASG. It created large measurement challenges including delayed assessments and other disruptions to longitudinal data collection. This interruption in data collection then slowed the use of data to inform and support changes in processes and systems. Thus, the pandemic was a barrier to implementing changes associated with LASG goals.

The next section of this report contains five case studies showing the results of district changes to their accountability systems followed by the legislatively required analysis of student achievement and growth.

Analysis of Changes to Local Accountability Systems

The following five case studies provide context to the quantitative data collected for the second evaluation report for the Colorado Department of Education's Local Accountability System Grants. Five districts volunteered for the case studies to illustrate the quantitative changes associated with LASG implementation in different districts or in the case of Alternative Education Campuses (AEC) groups of similar schools.

The case studies illustrate the unique circumstances that guide their thinking about local accountability system goals, measures, community engagement, and change. These local accountability systems reflect each community's values. Each of the five case studies uses quantitative data to illustrate changes in each entity's local accountability systems:

1. Fountain Ft. Carson – changes in community engagement to serve military families
2. S-CAP – changes in peer community engagement to tap educator expertise and knowledge

⁹ Readiness can be defined as prepared for college, a career, or the military. Some systems define readiness in terms of being prepared for civic engagement. Goals such as increased graduation rates, improved performance on nationally normed standardized assessments, or other meaningful goals are set.

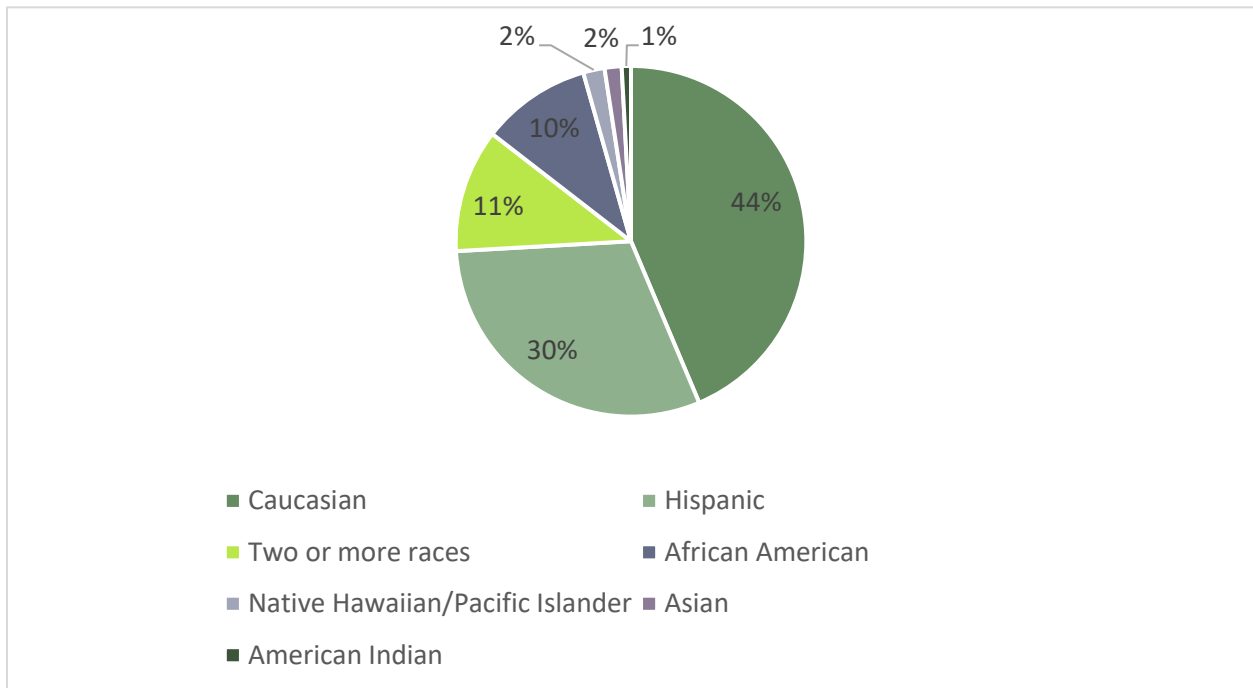
3. Jeffco – changes in community engagement through the use of accountability frameworks reflecting local goals.
4. Boulder – changes in measures to reflect local goals to reduce disparities in discipline.
5. MOPP – changes in measures to better reflect the work of individual Alternative Education Campuses (AECs).

The following sections provide more detail on the five grants. The sections introduce the district with demographic information¹⁰, then are divided into subsections that reflect the four critical elements of accountability and continuous improvement systems.¹¹

Fountain Ft. Carson School District 8

Fountain Ft. Carson (FF8) is located south of Colorado Springs, minutes away from the U.S. Army Base, Ft. Carson. In fact, a few of the district’s 13 schools are located on base. Over 7,880 students were enrolled in FF8 during the 2023-24 school year. Of the total, 52 percent of students received free or reduced lunch, 18 percent of FF8’s students required special education services and 3 percent were English language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 2:¹²

Figure 2: Race and Ethnicity of Fountain Fort Carson Students 2023-24



Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

¹⁰ Additional enrollment data can be found on [CDE’s website](#).

¹¹ For a more extensive discussion about these elements, see the [Year 1 Local Accountability Grant Evaluation](#).

¹² 2023-24 [district-reported data](#).

Community Engagement

As part of the work supported by the Local Accountability System Grant, Fountain Ft. Carson’s Local Accountability System was developed as part of a broader district strategic plan called District Effectiveness. It was presented to the Board of Directors on October 27, 2021. The plan has three priorities:

1. Learning and Achievement
2. Community Engagement
3. Operational Planning

The purpose, also called “The Why,” of the Local Accountability System is focused on Community Engagement:

FFC8 is committed to safe learning and working environments by providing effective safety and security protocols and practices, flexible communication systems, and the development of family, student, school, civic, business, and community partnerships.

FFC8’s strategic plan includes an action plan, also called “the How”.

FFC8 is committed to improving educational outcomes for all schools by fostering a sense of belonging, providing needed resources, and promoting a culture of collaboration with all stakeholders:

- Family, student, school partnerships
- Civic, community, business partnerships
- Effective communication systems
- Safe & secure learning environments

Goals

The goals stated within FF8’s districtwide Theory of Action focus on community knowledge of and engagement with the district’s goals.

Short-term:

- Consistent implementation of critical feedback loops between district and school leadership, school staff, students, and parents to increase awareness about school and district improvement and effectiveness, as measured by stakeholder survey feedback.
- Parents, Students, Staff, and community members better understand the goals of the educational system and their roles in achieving those goals.

Intermediate term:

- Improved coherence in expectations for effective instruction and the development of the whole child across the district.
- Parents, Students, Staff, and community members should be able to clearly communicate the goals of the educational system and their roles in achieving those goals.

Long-term (impact):

- Increase public confidence about the effectiveness of school and district improvement efforts.

- Improved stakeholder agency at all levels with regard to achieving the goals of the education system.

Measures

As Fountain-Ft. Carson’s leadership defined the measures of the Local Accountability System, they developed a Theory of Action. In addition, leadership wanted to identify unique ways to engage military families with the district’s changing math curriculum. District leaders felt it was important for schools to focus on military families, who comprise approximately 70 percent of the families within the system. Military families also have a high mobility rate.

As the district operationalized the strategic plan, each school was asked to identify ways to connect families at least three times per year starting in the fall of the 2022-23 school year.

Change in Practice

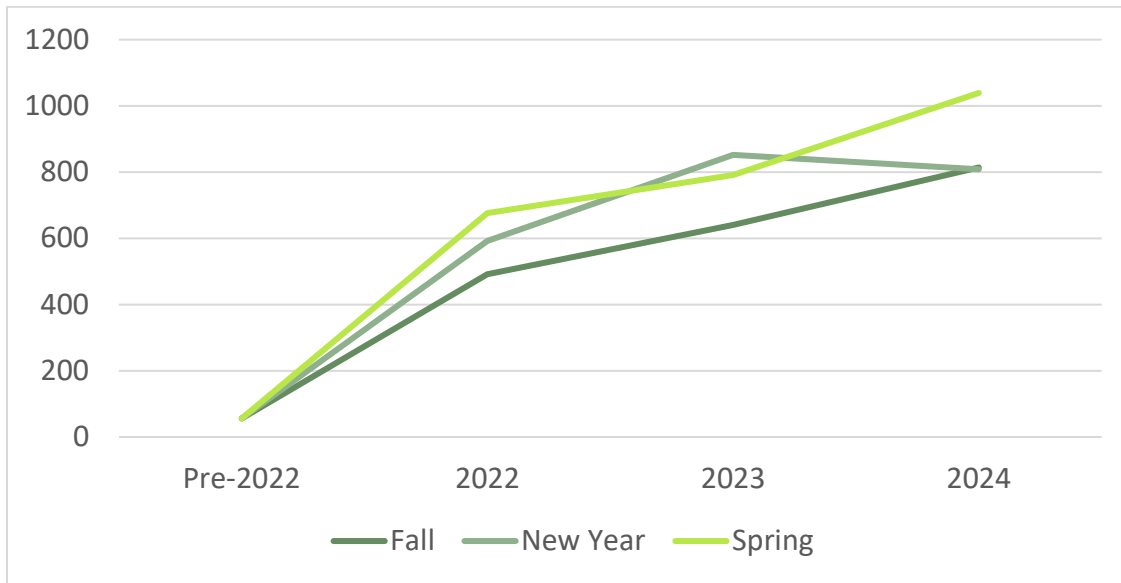
Schools focused on engaging parents in instruction by creating sessions that extended after-school activities that parents usually attended such as performances. For example, at a band performance, the introduction could include a 30-minute presentation on the math curriculum that the school used.

One school held an event that solely focused on its math curriculum. Parents were introduced to the content, then moved through a series of classrooms, observing teachers teach the content. After the classroom sessions, parents reconvened in a plenary session, which had a panel discussion. The panelists were students who provided more detail about their classroom experiences and answered questions from parents. The school thought it was important to focus on math because students were learning different ways of approaching problems than their parents learned when they were in school.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

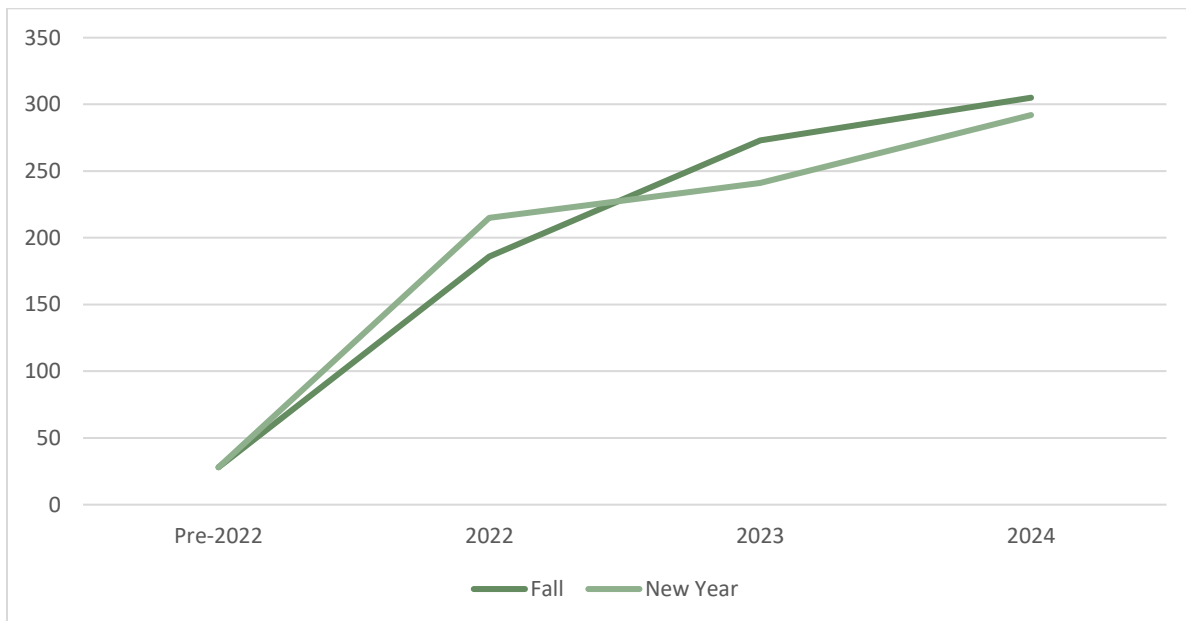
Figures 4 and 5 show the increase in parent participation in community forums in district elementary and secondary schools. They show the average number of parents participating in these events across schools at a given level (elementary and secondary) during different periods of the year. This data is based on parent sign-in sheets at these events.

Figure 3: Parent Participation in Elementary School Community Forums



Source: FF8 data provided to the evaluation team

Figure 4: Parent Participation in Secondary School Community Forums



Source: FF8 data provided to the evaluation team

Parent participation in elementary schools increased by 14 to 18 times. Participation in secondary schools grew by 10 times. These large changes in parent participation and engagement in the district’s accountability system reflect the successful implementation of the LASG and goals associated with community engagement.

Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP)

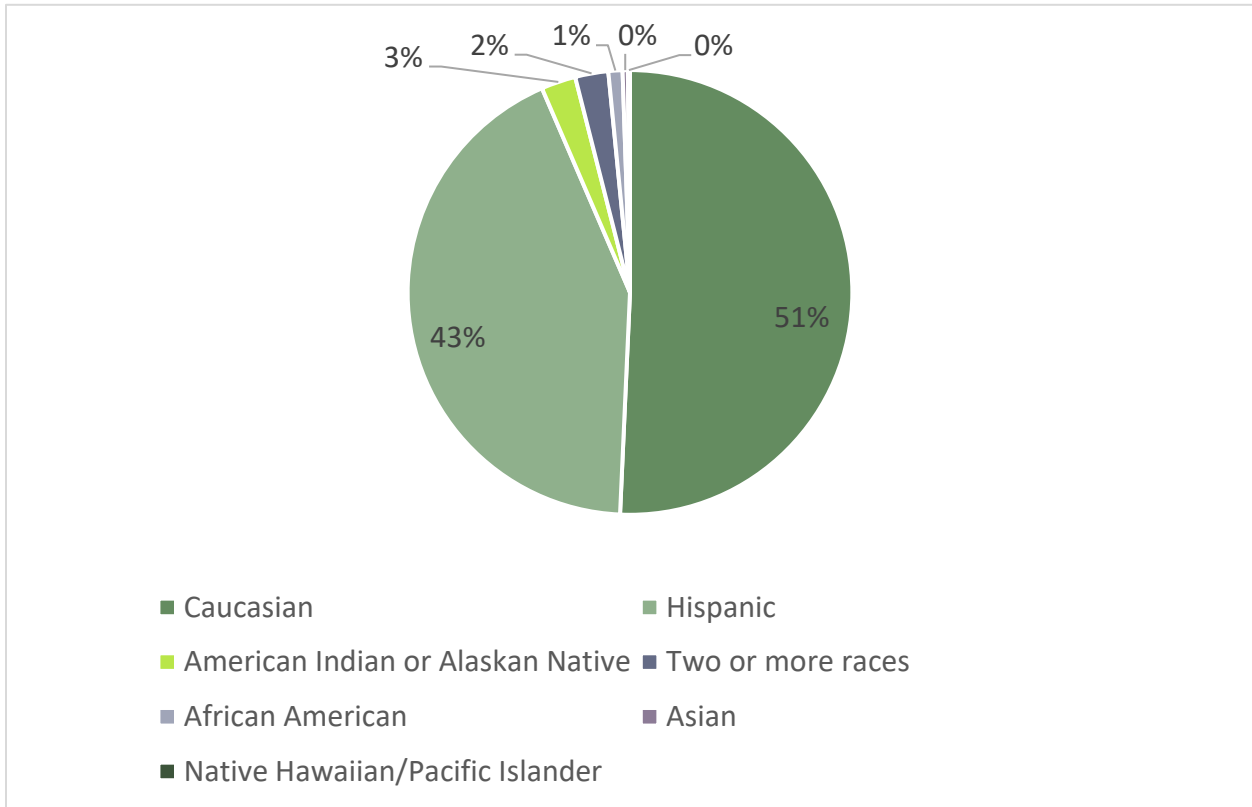
[The Student-Centered Accountability Program \(S-CAP\)](#) was established in 2015 when five rural districts, Buena Vista, Buffalo, Kit Carson, La Veta, and Monte Vista, (S-CAP Core Districts) collaborated to establish an approach to accountability that would drive system improvement in rural Colorado. The leaders from the five founding districts decided to try visiting one another’s districts to provide useful feedback that could facilitate their collective learning within their professional community and improvement efforts. The leaders were partly motivated by gaps in state accountability reporting caused by their smaller-sized schools¹³.

The vision has evolved in several ways. First, the group has an official name, S-CAP. The visits are formalized into *System Support Reviews (SSRs)*. S-CAP districts also grew from a group of five; as of the 2022-23 school year, S-CAP includes 19 rural Colorado school districts and two external partners, Breezy Strategies and the University of Colorado, Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER).

The total population for all 19 districts is 10,510. The average population of the districts is 556, with a range of 36 to 1,326. The average free and reduced lunch percentage is 57 percent, with a range of 37 to 81 percent. The race and ethnicity of the students in S-CAP districts are reflected in Figure 5.

¹³ The first evaluation of the LASG noted that privacy concerns lead to significant limits in the publicly data available to rural districts. The state as subsequently provided restricted access to accountability data for district employees.

Figure 5: Race and Ethnicity of Students In S-CAP Districts 2023-24



Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community Engagement

The S-CAP frameworks were initially developed by the S-CAP Core districts in 2015. The five districts piloted the frameworks over three years. Since 2018, representatives from all S-CAP districts have reviewed them annually (each summer).

At the first S-CAP Summer Summit in 2018, C-PEER reviewed the relevant research literature, developed the S-CAP Evidence map, summarized Findings, identified Performance Level Descriptors, and provided potential implications for revisions to the frameworks (S-CAP indicators at the student and system levels). S-CAP district staff members (superintendents, school leaders, and teacher leaders) and partners considered the research review and identified recommended framework updates. In addition, in preparation for their annual SSRs, district leaders updated background information and key documents.

Goals

Goals within S-CAP are two-fold: (1) to increase the number of small districts throughout Colorado that participate and (2) to identify goals for each member district.

To provide an example of district goals created within the S-CAP process, one school district, Wiggins School District, will be used as an illustration. Wiggins is located in northeast Colorado, with a town population of 1,200; the district's population is 880:

Wiggins

1. Empower Teachers to Collect and Analyze Data - *Data collection and analysis will be consistent across the district to aid in the process of incorporating interventions across all levels.*
 - a. *The middle school and elementary school reached Performance status in 2023.*
2. Promote Professional Development to Ensure Implementation of Curriculum - *Staff will engage in targeted professional development designed to foster the use of the new curriculum with fidelity. As staff becomes comfortable with the curriculum horizontal and vertical alignment will take place.*
 - a. *Minority Students are improving, according to CMAS data, having gone from Does not Meet to Meet in student growth in just one year. Minority students also improved in growth, going from Does not Meet to Approaching.*
3. Ensure Consistent Use of Language to Support All Students - *WSD recognizes the uniqueness of each student's background therefore WSD will continue to incorporate SIOP strategies amongst other tactics to garner students' success.*
 - a. *Minority students have reported to focus groups through the S-CAP process that their teachers are trying to connect with them more than ever before and that the word walls of common language have helped ease some of their anxiety in the classroom.*
4. Build Professional Collaboration and Staff well-being - *It is proven that students cannot focus on their education if they feel unsafe. WSD will continue to keep our students safe from physical harm while focusing on student and staff mental health.*
 - a. *Wiggins was able to work with its insurance provider to offer staff lower insurance rates for those who take part in regular exercise. Several staff competed in competitions such as marathons and Tough Mudders. The friendly competition has led to camaraderie on top of better physical and mental fitness.*

Measures

During SSRs, reviewers conduct focus groups of students, educators, family/ community members, and leadership interviews. SSR reviewers conduct classroom observations, capturing individual notes and team-based summaries for multiple classrooms in the district. Leaders and teachers from other S-CAP districts analyze and interpret evidence as part of the three types of System Support Reviews.

C-PEER bi-annually administers surveys to key stakeholders in S-CAP districts, including Students, Families, and Educators. The results are used during the SSRs. Breezy Strategies facilitates all aspects of the district System Support Reviews, including collecting evidence during the reviews.

S-CAP districts maintain S-CAP websites with support from S-CAP partners. Web sites are updated at least annually in conjunction with the districts' SSR.

As part of the **Onboarding** and bi-annual **Comprehensive SSRs** districts receive descriptive feedback and an overall rating regarding their evidence of student success and implementation of system supports described in the S-CAP frameworks. Separate teams of reviewers focus on Curriculum and Instruction, Learning Dispositions and Learning Climate, Leadership and Vision, and Professional Learning. These teams also rate the status of the district's implementation of systems of support (based on the performance-level descriptors). There are three types of SSRs:

1. **Onboarding Year 1 SSR (1 day)** for district in their first year with S-CAP. This orients districts to hosting an SSR with a more limited focus (two priorities among the S-CAP frameworks for

system supports) and is used by district leadership to initiate a conversation with their staff and local boards relative to establishing/updating strategic priorities.

2. **Comprehensive SSRs (2-days)** beginning year two and every other year after, aimed at supporting district identification and refinement of strategic priorities based on a review of evidence related to their students' success and system support (all framework areas). At the end of the second day of a comprehensive review, reviewers work across their teams to develop an Executive Summary regarding the district's level of implementation of the system supports for each of the S-CAP Frameworks.
3. **Focused SSR (1-day)** beginning year three and every other year after, aimed at monitoring and providing feedback regarding the progress of district implementation of their strategic priorities (identified or updated based on the prior years' comprehensive SSR). Note, during the 2020-21 school year all SSRs shifted to the "focused" 1-day format and were conducted virtually. Focused SSRs peer review teams are organized by the district's strategic priorities (typically aligned with the S-CAP frameworks). As described here, the focus is somewhat different. Through this process, district/school leaders receive feedback on evidence the review teams found regarding actions taken to implement their strategic priorities, the impact of the priorities, and stakeholder communication about resource allocation towards their strategic priorities.

During each type of SSR, peer reviewers work in teams (at least three people) organized by system support framework areas. They make meaning of the various evidence sources relevant to their focus. They engage in a structured process to combine the different types of evidence to summarize findings regarding the level of district implementation of system supports described by the S-CAP framework (multiple components).

Change in Practice

District leaders use the evidence and results of the S-CAP district System Support Reviews (SSRs) to develop and adjust their strategic priorities, associated actions, and resource allocation. Districts work through their internal structures to facilitate the process of developing strategic priorities and planning for their actions to address them. This includes engaging internal and external district stakeholders.

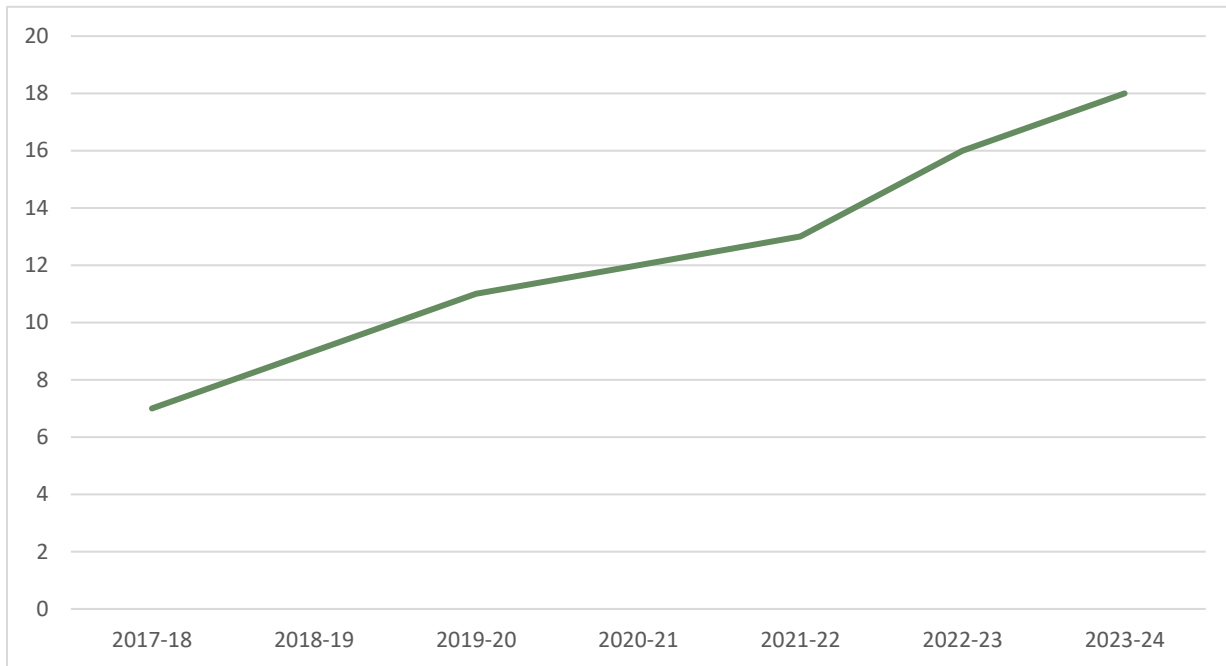
Districts generally identify four priorities, emerging from the SSRs findings that are aligned with and or address identified gaps related to the indicators in the S-CAP frameworks. Progress monitoring of district actions to implement their strategic priorities occurs through the bi-annual Focused SSRs.

During the 2019-20 school year, C-PEER conducted a study to assess 1) how S-CAP districts used their SSR findings to improve local systems and educator practices and 2) how S-CAP district staff used their experiences as reviewers for other districts to change their own practices. C-PEER research about the SSRs suggests that participating as a reviewer for other districts' SSRs correlates with individuals using their own district's SSR results to improve their practice.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

The S-CAP began prior to the LASG. However, the LASG did support the ongoing growth of the projects as evidenced by the continued growth of the number of participating districts after 2020 shown in Figure 6. In the school year 2019-20, when the LASG grants were awarded, there were 11 districts participating in S-CAP. By 2023-24 participation increased to 18 districts. This is both an indicator of increased engagement by the peer education community in the local accountability systems and as evidenced by C-PEER research showing increased engagement in professional learning by participating district staff.

Figure 6: Growth in S-CAP Participation



Source: S-CAP data provided to the evaluation team

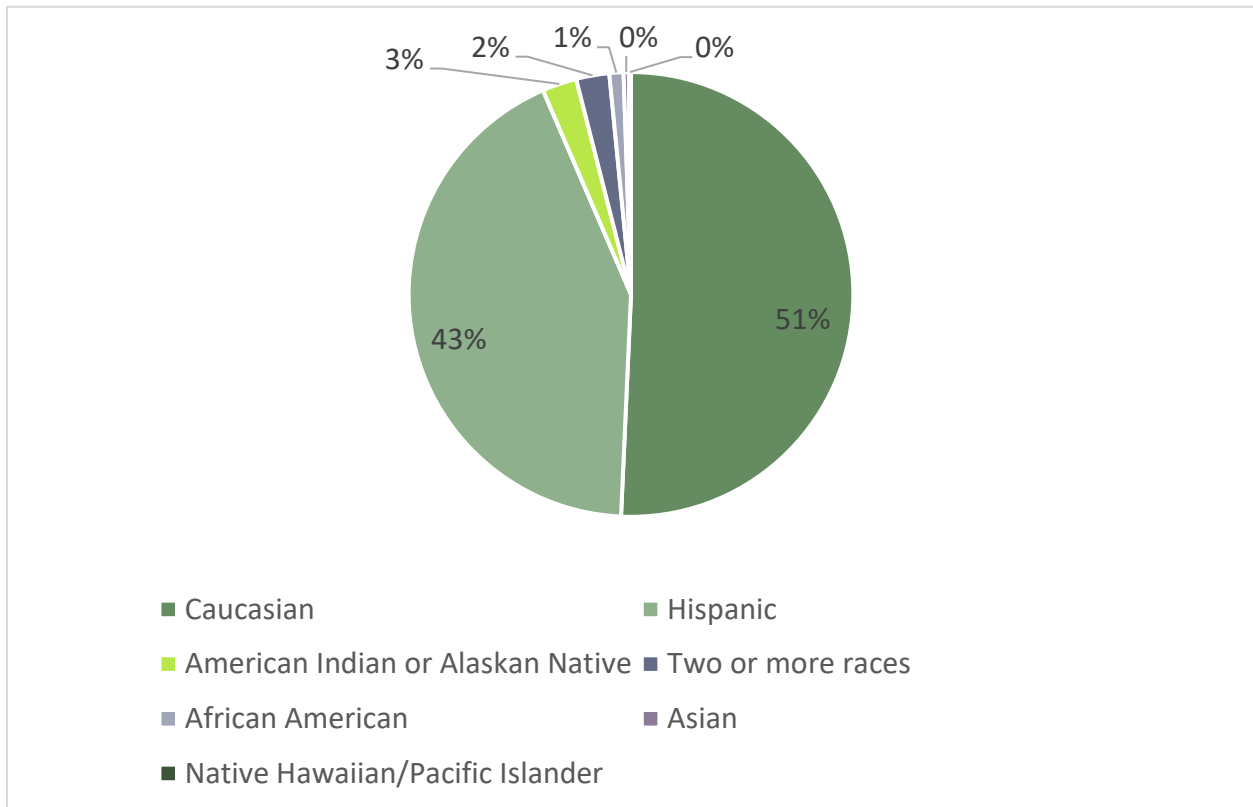
Jefferson County Public Schools (Jeffco)

Jefferson County Public Schools (Jeffco) spans a 770-square-mile radius serving the western suburbs of Denver to the rural towns on the eastern edge of the Rockies. In 2023-24, 76,172 students¹⁴ attended Jeffco in 155 schools across the district. Thirty-two percent of the PK-12 student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch; 12.8 percent receive special education services; and 6.2 percent are English-language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 7.¹⁵

¹⁴ <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent>

¹⁵ <https://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/about>

Figure 7: Race and Ethnicity of Jefferson County Students 2023-24



Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community engagement

Jeffco’s Local Accountability System, [School Insights](#), was created during a superintendent transition. School Insights was in use at the time of Tracy Dorland’s appointment in April 2021, during the final months of the 2020-21 school year. Dorland was the district’s 6th superintendent in ten years.

The Theory of Action behind *School Insights* was that if the district could provide more comprehensive, consistent, and standardized data dashboards for public review, then school communities could participate in the improvement process in a consistent/standardized way. The district staff developing School Insights engaged both district and school leadership in a series of meetings (large group, small group, and individual) focused on proposing and discussing indicators and evidence/data that would be included in *School Insights*. Jeffco’s Executive Director of Instructional Data Systems and Chief Academic Officer also met quarterly with staff to develop School Insights.

Since its launch, *School Insights* has become a key source of school-level information/data for internal and external stakeholders across the district as they engage in improvement efforts. Between April 2021 and December 2022, over 20,000 users visited the site, spending an average of close to 5 minutes on the site.

Goals

The goal stated within the Theory of Action for School Insights is to level the playing field for families and communities across the district’s 155 schools. School Insights dashboards are not designed or intended to summarize school performance. Rather, the goal of School Insights was to provide information to inform progress toward collaboratively established goals and to allow each school community to make shared judgments about their school’s performance. Each school community engages in a process to define success and progress. District staff anticipated that school communities would feel empowered to implement meaningful improvement processes through this approach.

Measures

The performance indicators/outcomes included in *School Insights* include the following major categories with a variety of evidence sources/measures provided for each (identified below):

- School Basics:
 - Enrollment over time,
 - choice in/out,
 - demographics, and
 - federal program participation.
- School Culture:
 - student engagement,
 - family engagement, and
 - teaching and learning conditions.
- Academic Performance:
 - Statewide and district-administered assessment results,
 - Graduation rates, and
 - Dropout rates.

School Insights also provides information about each school’s context, including a school profile with the neighborhood school boundary, mission, vision, staff-student ratios, and school-based program offerings, as well as a link to each school’s website.

Change in Practice

Jeffco's stakeholders believe that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed in their future endeavors. Jeffco staff sought to inform progress toward this goal with academic benchmark data and school culture information to provide a more holistic view of each Jeffco school.

Jeffco district staff developed *School Insights* in response to the following challenges related to public display of various types of data about the district’s schools:

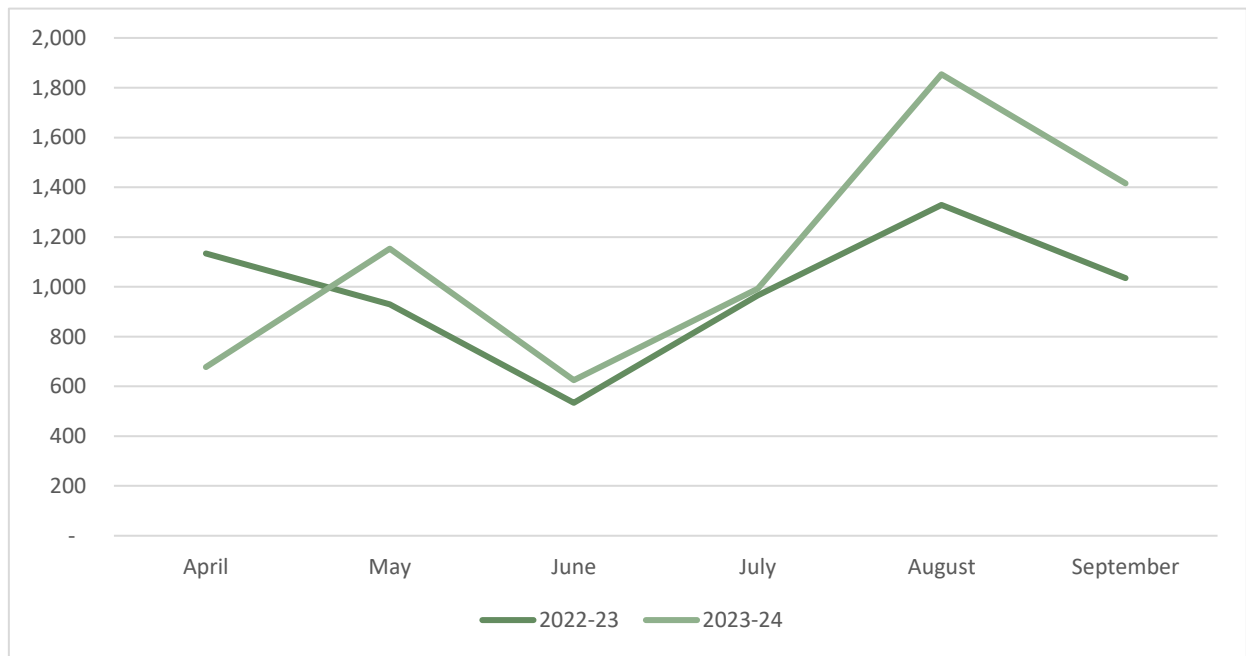
- District reporting on various types of data (i.e., local assessment results, stakeholder surveys, etc.) was organized by the data sets rather than by the school. As a result, internal and external stakeholders were required to “put the pieces of data” together themselves to get a comprehensive picture of data available regarding each school.
- External entities were using CORA requests to access and display district data in ways inconsistent with the district values.
- Non-profit organizations were providing their web-based displays of Jeffco data that the district was not displaying – creating inequities in access to data across school communities.

- District leadership committed to being more transparent with the community about what data was available about Jeffco schools.
- District leaders wanted to “Own [their]own story.”

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

Public engagement in the School Insights is used as an indicator of change caused by participation in the LASG. Figure 8 shows the increase in public engagement with the *School Insights* website. This data shows the number of visits to the website in 2022-23 and 2023-24. There were 5,927 visits in 2022-23 which increased to 6,718 visits in 2023-24, which is a 13% increase.

Figure 8: Local Accountability Measure Website Engagement over Time



Source: Jeffco data provided to the evaluation team

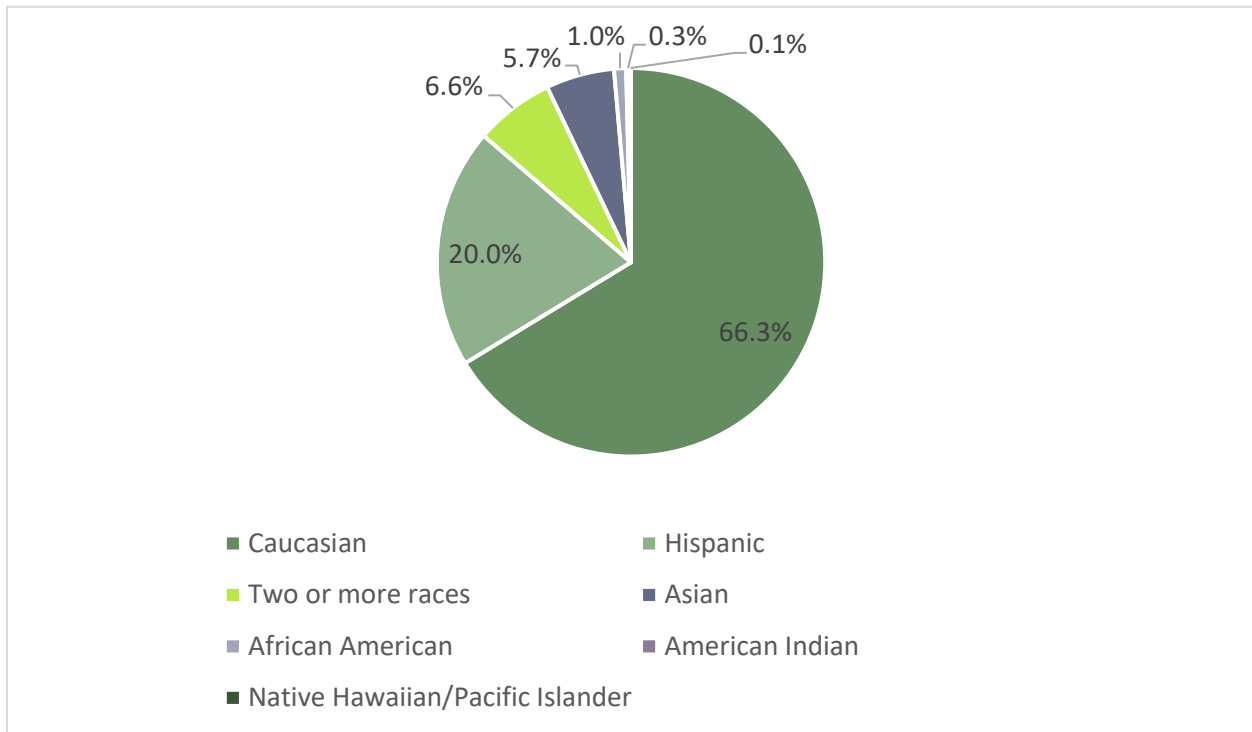
Boulder Valley School District (BVSD)

Boulder Valley School District extends from the Rocky Mountains into the suburbs of Denver, covers more than 500 square miles, and includes 11 communities. The district has 56 schools and educates more than 28,000 students. Nearly 8 percent of Boulder’s students are English Language Learners, 25 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch, and nearly 13 percent are in special education.

The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 9.¹⁶

¹⁶ 2023-24 [report](#)

Figure 9: Race and Ethnicity of Boulder Valley School District Students 2023-24



Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community Engagement

BVSD’s Local Accountability System was developed amid community conversations about equity. The impetus for the community conversations was a request from the Boulder County chapter of the NAACP, which presented data to the school board in June 2020 illustrating how black students were disciplined at higher rates than white students (Bounds, 2020a). In addition, throughout the conversations, community leaders, parents, and students raised concerns about how School Resource Officers (SROs), who were police officers from local jurisdictions, interacted with students. As a result, during the start of the 2020-21 school year, the community conversations centered on whether to remove SROs from schools.

The community conversations were held in two formal pathways: through the District Accountability Committee (a legislatively required committee) and a newly formed Equity Council. Both advisory groups advised the district to eliminate the SRO role and suggested different ways to interact with students, such as restorative practices. The Board adopted the [recommendations](#) to eliminate SROs on November 10, 2020, and the SRO program was phased out by January 2022 (Bounds, 2020b).

Goals

The community conversations about SROs opened the door to discussing disparities across the district. The Center for Assessment, Design, Research, and Evaluation at the University of Colorado - Boulder (CU – Boulder) worked with the team to identify goals and measures. As a starting point, the team began with the sense from the community that the current accountability system did not highlight the disparities within the system.

Boulder’s strategic plan states: “We strive to close historically large gaps between the performance of our student body as a whole and that of economically disadvantaged students and students of color, particularly Latinx students.”¹⁷ As such, the district sought to add goals such as decreasing the number of suspensions and the suspension rates. The district also aimed to set quarterly goals to enable more timely resource decisions.

Focusing on all discipline data also led district leaders to disaggregate suspension data further. As of the 2023-24 school year, the district’s focus is mainly on decreasing out-of-school suspensions. Their theory is that in-school suspensions are guided by an adult who will focus students on something productive and helpful; students are still supervised and do not fall behind in the same way as students who are punished with out-of-school suspensions. This approach is especially helpful for students who prefer being at home rather than at school. In addition, each building has a school safety advocate who focuses on ensuring Boulder Valley’s schools are community-oriented spaces.

Change in Practice

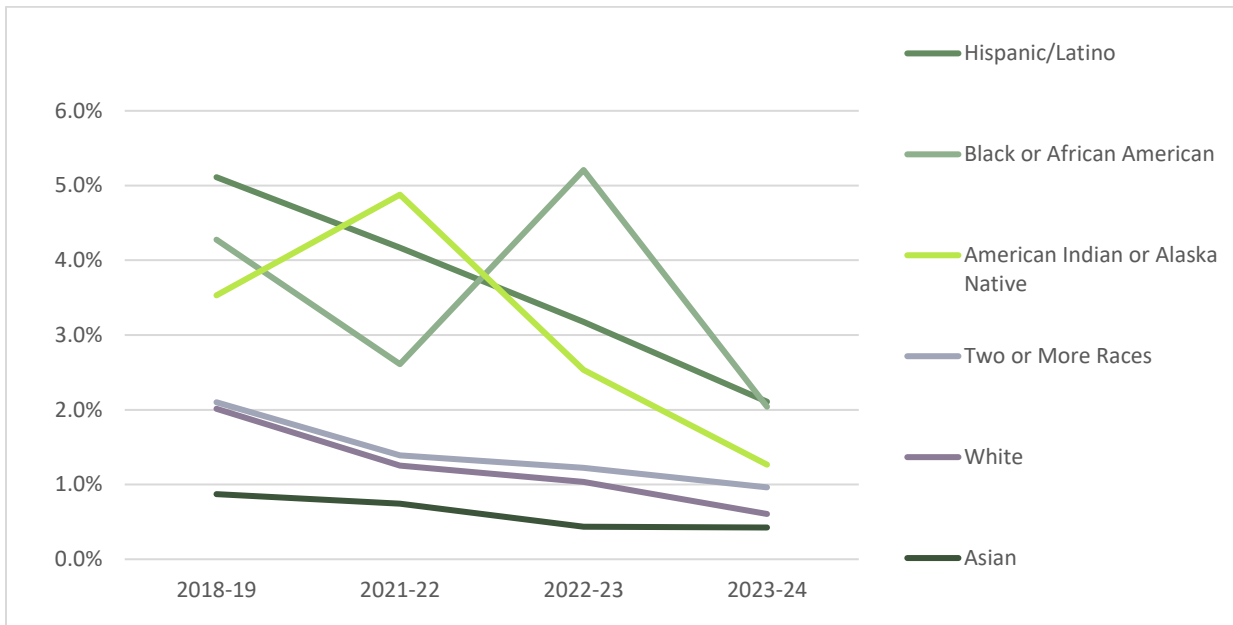
The focus on proportionality enables the district to allocate resources where disparities exist. For example, when local accountability was first created, the district held monthly meetings focused on discipline and suspension data. Thinking together regularly pushed administrators from all buildings to characterize and react to behavior. Ultimately, the district shifted toward restorative interventions, which enabled the proportion of Black and Brown students to decrease within a year.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Local Measures

In many ways, the local accountability goals and measures reflect changes envisioned by the community. Figure 10 shows changes in suspension rates by race/ethnicity group. For all groups, the suspension rates decreased. This is evidence of local goals being developed and reached as a result of LASG activities.

¹⁷ The complete array of measures used to monitor this goal can be found on [Boulder Valley’s website](#).

Figure 10: Differences in BVSD Suspension Rates Over Time by Race and Ethnic Groups

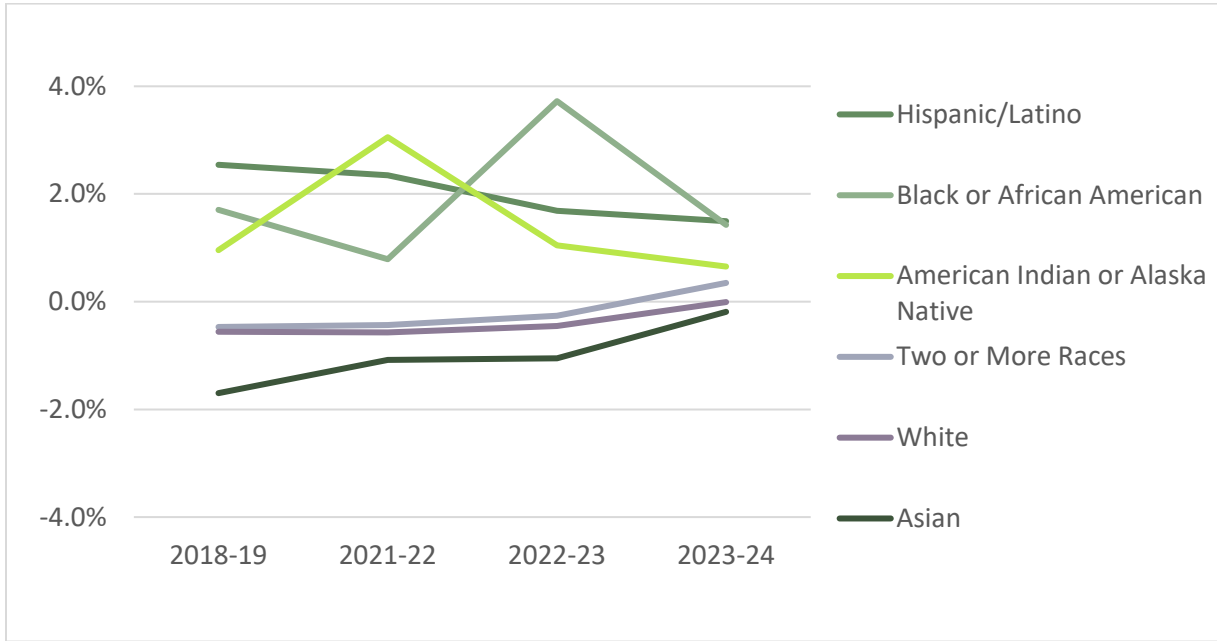


Source: BVSD data provided to the evaluation team

However, BVSD also had the goal of reducing the gap between the suspension rates for white students and students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly Hispanic/Latino students and black or African American students. The evaluation team created a measure of disparity, which is the difference between the average suspension rate for all students in the district and the suspension rate for each racial/ethnic group. This data is shown in Figure 12 below. A negative difference means the suspension rate for that group was lower than the district average. As differences approach zero, the size of the disparity (by this measure) is reduced.

Figure 12 shows that for most groups, the disparity in suspension rates decreased, which was part of the district’s goal of reducing disparities. However, the district was unable to close the “historically large gap” in disparities between student groups. The decreases in suspension rates and the reductions in disparities are significant, positive accomplishments for BVSD. However, the goal of eliminating disparities may not have been an achievable goal during the timeframe of this evaluation.

Figure 12: Differences between the Average Suspension Rate and Rates for each Race/Ethnic Group



Source: BVSD data provided to the evaluation team

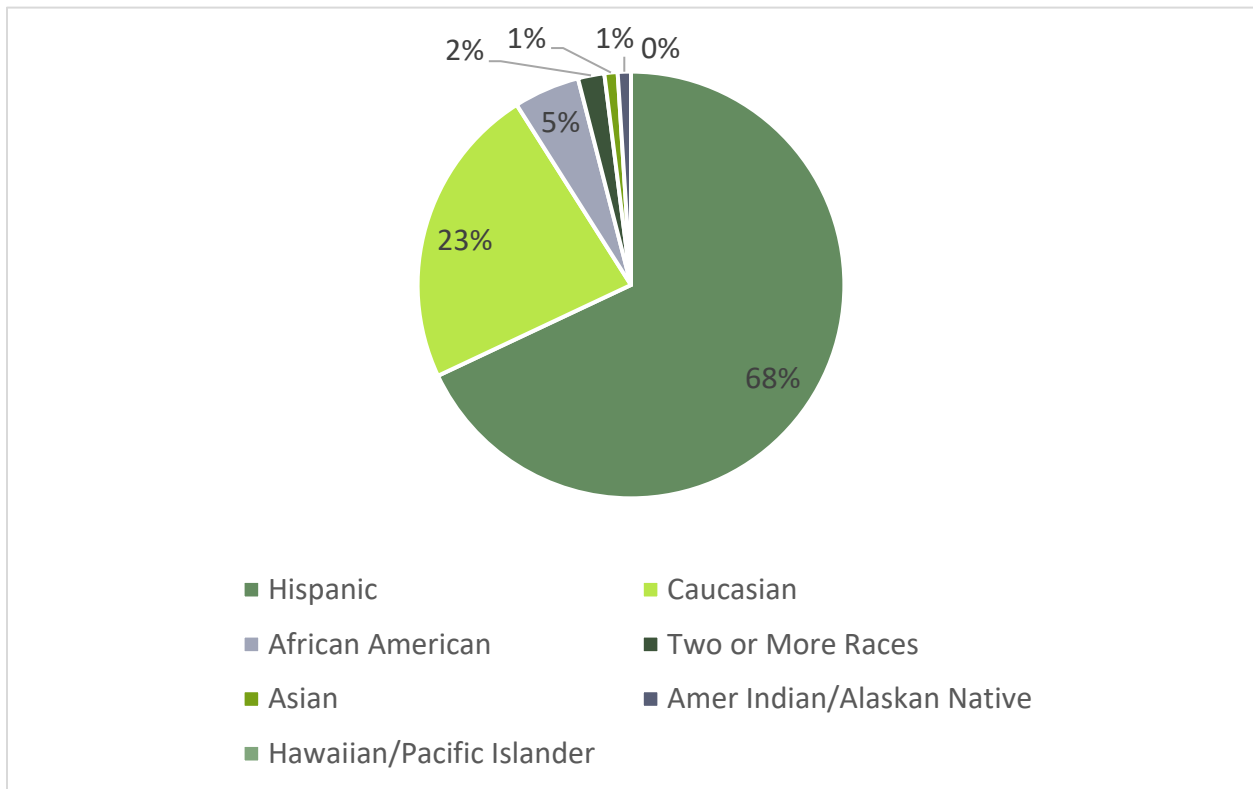
Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)

The Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP) includes 11 alternative education campus (AEC) schools¹⁸ located in a wide array of communities across Colorado. MOPP schools include Denver Justice High School, Grand Mesa Choice, Grand Mesa High School, Hope Online, Jefferson High School, The New America School – Aurora, Lakewood and Thornton campuses, New Legacy Charter School, Southwest Open School, Rise Up Community School, and Yampah Mountain High School.

In the 12 MOPP schools there were 2,846 students during the 2023-24 school year; 79 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch; 13 percent were special education students; 22 percent were English language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 12 below:

¹⁸ AECs have specialized missions and serve high-risk student populations, including students experiencing homelessness, addiction, are in foster care, and/or are pregnant or parenting.

Figure 12: Race and Ethnicity of Students in Schools Supported by MOPP 2023-24



Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

MOPP schools work in partnership with two organizations, Momentum Strategy and Research and the New America Schools (the MOPP project team). A different third-party evaluator has conducted broader evaluation of MOPP, which tells a more complete story of this partnership (Nicotera, 2024).

Community Engagement

The MOPP project team helped schools identify key measures that they could use for mission-based indicators in the SPF. The MOPP project team collected and organized data to create *School Accountability Roadmaps*, which provided schools with different options for measuring each SPF indicator. The *School Accountability Roadmaps* increased awareness of measures available from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and other possible measures that fit within the AEC SPF.

MOPP School Accountability Roadmaps included measures for the following:

- Academic Achievement & growth (e.g., NWEA MAP data)
- Student Engagement (e.g., Student return rate, discipline rate, Panorama SEL Survey results, student re-engagement rate)
- Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (e.g., Course completion rate, Work Keys Certificate Rate)
- Other Optional Measures (e.g., SEL & School Climate survey, student satisfaction survey, Panorama Survey, measurements above, but for specific populations served, college credits earned in specific programs)

The MOPP project team suggested schools participate in the diagnostic review process if school staff was receptive to feedback and could use support in implementing their improvement plans. Site review teams include administrators from other schools led by a representative from Momentum.

The *Diagnostic Review Process* comprised a subset of MOPP school leaders who participated in two-day site visits that include reviewing school artifacts, stakeholder interviews, and classroom observations. The review also included collecting data from key artifacts, common interview scripts, and common classroom observation processes. Using the data collected during these processes, participating schools were scored on a rubric.

On the second day of the qualitative site review, the site review teams use the *Continuous Improvement Prioritization Protocol* to synthesize information from their artifact review, classroom observations, and interviews to consider the school's overall strengths and areas for improvement, which helped prioritize action steps.

Goals

MOPP started with the assumption that traditional accountability measurements did not tell the complete story of how AEC students improve. In addition, AECs participating in MOPP viewed the cut points offered by the state as absent from the context of AEC students' lived experiences. MOPP strived to identify more accurate and representative AEC metrics that were mission-specific, aligned to student needs, assessed student progress, assessed the impact of interventions and targeted programming, and included innovative measures and non-academic successes.

The Local Accountability Measures established the Student-Centered Growth System, which includes three domains: Academic Standing, Academic Participation & Engagement, and Social Emotional Well-Being.

Measures

Measures for each of the MOPP *Student-Centered Growth System* are described below with examples of how each domain has been individualized for different schools.

- **Academic Standing:** Measures in this domain address where students are, academically speaking (e.g., Are they behind in credits? Are they on grade level in reading?), and the domain includes a total of 3-5 measures that can be reassessed to track students' long- and short-term progress. Examples include:
 - Number of core credits accumulated or grades at previous school in relation to the student's age or cohort
 - Prior or incoming assessments of academic skill (e.g., NWEA MAP, STAR 360, iReady)
- **Academic Participation & Engagement:** The engagement domain includes 3-5 measures to assess students' behaviors and/or attitudes toward schooling (e.g., Are there gaps in the student's attendance? How many behavior incidents are in the student's record? How connected does the student feel to school?) that can be reassessed to track changes to the students' engagement over time. Examples include:
 - Attendance rate at previous school
 - Behavior records from prior school
 - Survey on attitudes toward learning/school
- **Social Emotional Well Being:** The social-emotional domain includes measures to assess the social-emotional challenges students face (e.g., low self-esteem, hopelessness, experience of trauma), as well as social-emotional strengths (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) and supports (e.g., a

supportive adult) the students have that help them navigate those challenges. Change measures should be aligned with the schools’ programming and support services and evaluated multiple times a year. Examples include:

- Number of challenges or barriers to success (e.g., trauma, 504 plan)
- Number of strengths and opportunities (e.g., resilience, supportive adult, motivation)
- MOPP also supported the identification and adaptation of an SEL Survey (based on school demand) and later added the school climate. Nine schools used this survey (Chaffee County HS, Denver Justice, Grand Mesa HS, HOPE, NAS Aurora, NAS Lakewood, NAS Thornton, SWOS, Yampah Mountain).

Change in Practice

The AEC-specialized SPF includes optional, mission-specific metrics, a Student Engagement Indicator, and alternative cut points on state-required metrics. The MOPP project team support for the Student-Centered Growth System included:

- a. Documenting Student Needs:** Schools identify measures currently being used and data being collected and used within the indexing system.
- b. Tracking Student Progress:** Schools collect data on students' progress across each domain, using benchmarks identified by the MOPP project team.
- c. Understanding School Progress:** Schools provide their data to the MOPP project team, which then consolidates the data and outcomes from other alternative schools nationwide—allowing for more appropriate comparison points.

In addition, since SEL was adopted as an “optional indicator” by many MOPP schools, the project team created an SEL assessment tool. As a result, Momentum developed a survey following the CASEL SEL Framework:

- Self-awareness: self-concept
- Self-awareness: emotional knowledge
- Social awareness
- Self-management: emotion management
- Self-management: goal management
- Self-management: schoolwork
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision making

For accountability, schools can submit their total average survey score (the mean score) from the spring survey administration. The school could submit the average percent positives for each scale and the overall survey for the Supplemental Accountability Report. The percent positive calculation is the percentage of students who responded ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to each item. That data is then combined into the percent positive averages using the items’ averages across all survey participants. The MOPP Project Team created a tool so that analysis could be done through an Excel Calculator to help support the schools in data reporting.

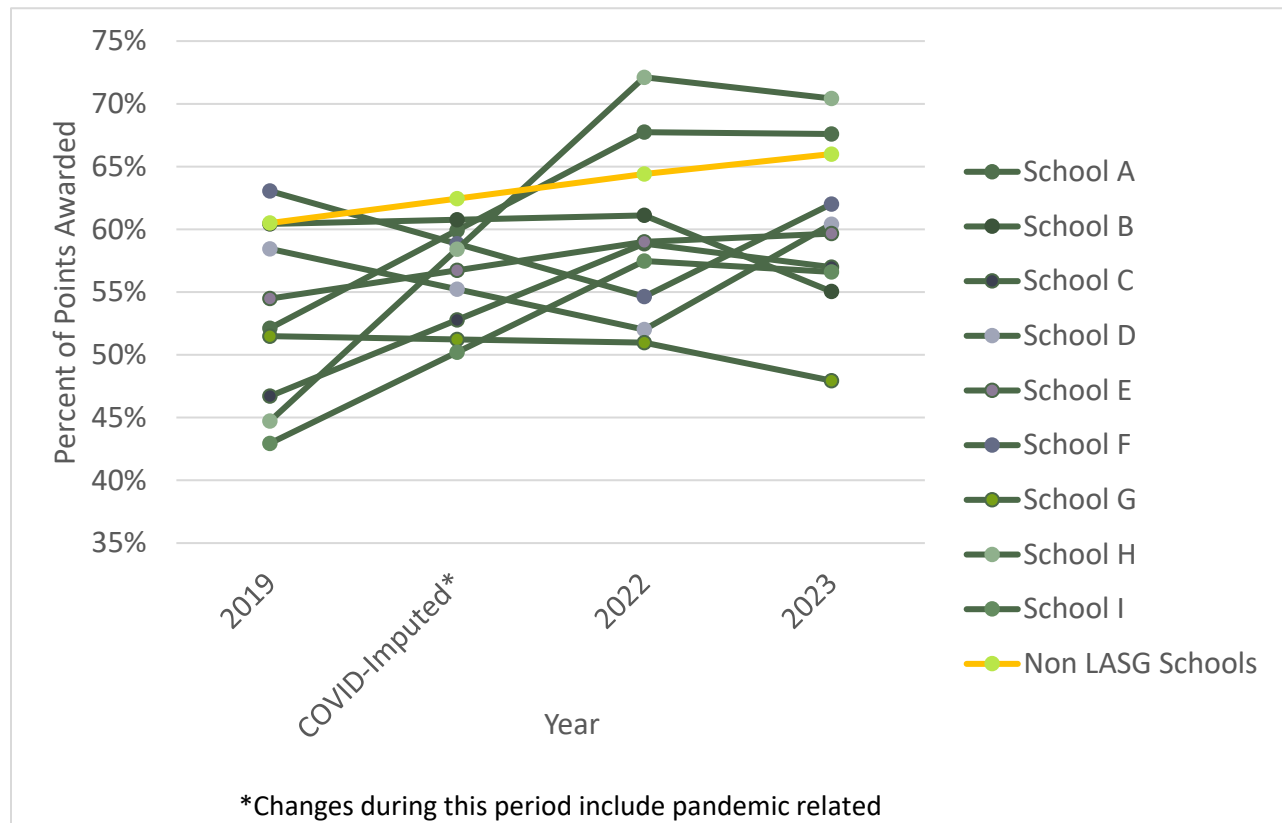
One goal of the AEC SEL survey is to analyze growth for internal school use and accountability purposes. However, during the 2022-23 administration, the numbers of students who took both the fall and winter surveys was not high enough to be considered for growth reporting. For example, 1,134 completed fall-

to-winter surveys, yet only 137 matching student IDs were found in fall-to-winter administrations. The MOPP Project Team hopes to have more matches in 2023-24 to start analyzing AEC growth norms.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Local Measures

As discussed in the Goals section above, MOPP supported their participating schools in identifying and changing assessment measures used in the state accountability frameworks with *School Accountability Roadmaps*. MOPP’s intention was for the AEC SPF to better reflect each school’s impact on student outcomes. The change in measures was related to improvements in school ratings as shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Changes in MOPP Supported School Percentage of Points Awarded



Source: MOPP data provided to the evaluation team

During the implementation of the LASG, the majority of schools working with MOPP showed increases in the percentage of points awarded. However, these increases were not larger than the average change for AECs. The validity of this analysis is also complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had large impacts on students and student outcomes during this time period.

Association of LASG Participation with Student Assessment Results

The analyses conducted for the year two evaluation reports are required by the legislative text authorizing the LASG. Senate Bill (SB) 19-204 requires the evaluation to include information on student

achievement and growth by grade level for students in districts that participated in the LASG and those that did not. This analytic approach suggests an assumption that participation in the LASG should impact student achievement. There are multiple reasons for the LASG grant to not be associated with changes in student assessment scores. For example, the work on the grants may have focused on other components of the accountability system that are not directly related to student assessment scores such as public engagement or goals other than achievement such as student discipline.

Figure 14 below shows the mean CMAS score and growth percentile by Figure 14 shows the results before the LASG grant 2019—representing school year 2018-19, and two years (2022 and 2023) after the grant began. It also shows the change from 2019 to 2022 (Change'22) and change from 2019 to 2023 (Change'23). The bold/italics indicates better outcomes for LASG students than for those in non-LASG participating districts.

There are two clear takeaways from this table. First, there was an overall decline in student performance from before to after the grant, as shown by declines in the Math and ELA scores in both Change columns ('22 and '23). There is not strong evidence that LASG districts had better student outcomes than non-LASG districts. Instead, there is no clear pattern of differential student outcomes between LASG and non-LASG districts.

Figure 14: Changes in Middle School Student Outcomes During LASG Implementation

| Status | Measure | 2019-20 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | Change '22 | Change '23 |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|------------|
| LASG Participants | Math | 728.1 | 723.3 | 722.5 | -4.7 | -5.5 |
| | ELA | 736.1 | 733.5 | 733.4 | -2.6 | -2.6 |
| | Math Growth | 47.6 | 46.3 | 43.7 | -1.3 | -3.9 |
| | ELA Growth | 48.4 | 47.3 | 44.9 | -1.1 | -3.5 |
| Non-LASG Participants | Math | 730.3 | 726.3 | 726.7 | -4.0 | -3.6 |
| | ELA | 740.2 | 737.5 | 738.7 | -2.7 | -1.5 |
| | Math Growth | 48.9 | 44.2 | 46.4 | -4.7 | -2.5 |
| | ELA Growth | 48.9 | 46.9 | 47.9 | -2.0 | -1.0 |

Source: CDE District Accountability Frameworks

Importantly, change in student outcomes may not be an appropriate measure of the LASG at this point. First, many participants in the LASG were not focused initially on improving student outcomes, but instead on improving one or more of the components of their accountability systems. However, these changes in local accountability system components, may ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. Second, the LASG is a relatively limited and small grant. While the grant provided opportunities for districts to make changes, the ability to sustain the changes is uncertain. The prior evaluation found that building and sustaining the capacity needed to implement and maintain accountability systems was a constant challenge for districts. Furthermore, the district-level experience with the pandemic that began in March 2020 added complications that hindered student outcomes. For these reasons, the data,

unsurprisingly, does not yet show a clear association between participation in the LASG and improved student outcomes at the district level.

Conclusion

The case studies of five different participating districts or consortia do show changes in accountability systems concerning community engagement, goals, measures of success, and changes in operations associated with the accountability systems. These findings, in concert with quantitative data, show that the LASG has supported positive changes in local accountability systems.

When given the opportunity and support, districts can expand accountability systems to enable continuous improvement. The case studies highlight the unique elements of grantee's accountability work. Notably, each grantee identified the core values and worked to identify appropriate measures. Once the measures were identified, frequent discussions enabled either the development of measures or a deeper understanding of how the additional measures can inform continuous improvement. Moreover, districts were able to demonstrate change in their systems as a result of their accountability work:

1. Fountain Ft. Carson – change in community engagement to serve military families meaningfully
2. S-CAP – changes in peer community engagement to leverage educator expertise and knowledge
3. Jeffco – increases in community engagement through an on-line accountability framework reflect local goals
4. Boulder – changes in measures to reflect local goals for reducing disparities in discipline
5. MOPP – changes in measures to better reflect the work of individual Alternative Education Campuses (AECs)

In addition, each grantee cited their strategic plan as they explained how the LASG grant evolved over time. Because the community engagement work focused broadly on the strategic plan of the whole district, the work to identify the additional measures for the local accountability system strengthened the communities' understanding of all the work districts are doing to support student learning and improve their systems. In other words, the community engagement did not solely focus on the accountability system additions.

This report is also intended to provide quantitative information on the impact of participation in the LASG on school or district operations. The analysis of state level accountability data does not show different changes in student growth or achievement for districts participating in LASG and districts not participating in LASG. The lack of impact associated with the LASG is not surprising given the short timeframe and the focus on changing accountability systems as a first step in the broader effort to improve student outcomes. Furthermore, LASG participants achieved the aforementioned goals even while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic environments.

The new measures identified by grantees and their use in continuous improvement systems will take more time to see to their full impact on student outcomes. Future research should examine whether districts were able to develop leading indicators of change and student learning. The evaluation team recommends that CDE continue to evaluate the LASG to understand the changes implemented by districts and how measures developed are associated with student achievement and other important outcomes.

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