1241: Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force Report

Submitted to the Education Committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Governor, the State Board, the Commissioner of Education, and the Department of Education

November 2024

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Letter from the Chairs

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share this final report authored by the Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force. The 30 recommendations and areas for further study presented in this report—all with full consensus from the Task Force—provide a clear guide to the Legislature, Colorado Department of Education, and other government entities to improve Colorado's Education Accountability System.

The recommendations and findings included in this report are a product of over a year of rigorous study and thoughtful consideration by the Task Force's 26 members. Through full and whole group meetings and consultations with stakeholders, the Task Force considered academic opportunities and inequities that may impact achievement gaps and improvements to Colorado's Education Accountability System to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address these inequities.

We strongly believe the Task Force's 30 recommendations and areas for additional study will improve Colorado's accountability system and help support improved academic outcomes for all students. The recommendations, informed by evidence and rigorous analysis, build on what already works and aim to address inequities between students.

We want to thank all 26 Task Force members for their dedication to our charge and commitment to this work since August 2023. The Task Force comprised a diverse set of seasoned and passionate education stakeholders appointed bipartisanly by the state's legislature. They held a variety of experiences, perspectives, and opinions representing the needs and priorities of school and district leaders, educators, parents, students, advocates, and other education stakeholders across the state. As one Task Force member noted, "Even when there was disagreement or differing perspectives, the conversation and the dialogue were respectful, and Task Force members came to the table with open minds and a curiosity to learn, grow, and most importantly, focus on students." By exploring, listening, compromising, and developing recommendations, we believe the state is well-positioned to improve our accountability system to benefit all of Colorado's students.

We look forward to engaging with Colorado's education leaders as they consider these important and timely recommendations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wendy Birhanzel and Hon. Rebecca McClellan, 1241 Task Force Chair and Vice Chair

Special Acknowledgment

The Task Force extends its deepest gratitude to Lisa Medler, Megan Richardson, April Thompson, and all the other Colorado Department of Education staff who responded to data requests, organized expert panels, provided technology and logistics support, and ensured the public had access to meetings and meeting content. Their critical contributions enabled the 1241 Task Force meetings to run smoothly and allowed the Task Force to focus on the content at hand.

Executive Summary

Statewide education accountability systems serve several important purposes. They provide reporting to help parents and families, education leaders, policymakers, and other community stakeholders understand student outcomes and identify and address disparities in educational opportunities among different student groups—thereby promoting equity in education. They offer transparency and comparability into how schools are performing against statewide standards. They recognize schools and districts performing well and help direct attention toward schools needing additional support.

Beginning in August 2023, stakeholders appointed by the Colorado General Assembly through H.B. 23-1241 formed the Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force "to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system." Comprised of 26 members representing parents and students, educators, district and state leaders, and advocates from across Colorado's many kinds of schools and districts, the Task Force engaged in over 150 hours of meetings, including 16 full Task Force meetings, 27 additional small group meetings between members studying elements of the accountability system, and additional stakeholder consultations (e.g., local interviews with parents, consultations with students, expert presentations). Members engaged in a rigorous and extensive study of the opportunities and challenges facing Colorado's existing accountability system by drawing upon state data, task force member expertise, and stakeholder input.

The following findings and recommendations are a culmination of the Task Force's commitment to making meaningful changes to a system impacting the educational opportunities and outcomes of Colorado's 800,000+ K12 students. This diverse body of stakeholders is presenting this report with full consensus. The 30 recommendations plus areas for further study are necessary to improve the state's existing accountability system, which will help improve outcomes in schools and districts.

The recommendations address several accountability-related challenges and opportunities and solve a core set of issues specific to the state's accountability frameworks, state assessments used for accountability, the accountability system's public reporting and engagement capabilities, and how the accountability system supports continuous improvement.

Many of the 30 recommendations are interconnected. For example, if the accountability system adds a new indicator to support postsecondary and workforce readiness (through the frameworks), changes would also be needed to communicate those results to parents and stakeholders through public reporting. The Task Force thought through these dependencies and now encourages policymakers to consider the interconnectedness of the recommendations while also paying attention to each recommendation on its own.

In sum, the 1241 Task Force's recommendations will:

- **Refine how the state accountability system rates schools and districts** (e.g., addressing some of the challenges that schools serving smaller student populations face, adjusting performance

frameworks to reflect diverse student populations better, paying greater attention to achievement gaps between student groups)

- **Enhance the accountability system's Growth, Achievement, and Postsecondary Readiness Metrics** (e.g., adding a new sub-indicator to help parents understand the efforts their schools are making to prepare students for postsecondary success)
- **Modernize state assessments used for accountability** (e.g., adjusting state assessments to be adaptive and accessible in multiple languages, encouraging assessment participation, and improving the timelines for sharing results)
- **Improve data reporting and sharing for parents and communities, educators, education leaders, and policymakers** (e.g., creating a statewide dashboard that is user-friendly for multiple audiences)
- **Strengthen school and district improvement processes** (e.g., implementing a comprehensive approach to improvement planning—including a system of early identification and intervention; expanding and targeting how schools are recognized for their successes)

The task force acknowledges that the accountability system alone cannot advance academic opportunities or prevent academic inequities. However, these recommendations can help schools and districts receive ratings through the accountability system that reflects the student outcomes they produce.

We encourage the Legislature, State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education (CDE), and all stakeholders to continue the task force's work by implementing these recommendations and relying on the consensus reflected in this report. When implemented, these recommendations will make the accountability system a true roadmap for supporting improvement efforts and, ultimately, opportunities and outcomes for Colorado's diverse student body and school communities.

The recommendations and areas for further study this Task Force is presenting for consideration are as follows:

District and School Performance Frameworks	Assessments for Accountability	Public Reporting and Engagement	Continuous Improvement	Accreditation
District and School Performance Frameworks				
1	Lower student count thresholds for accountability calculations and reporting			
2	Combine student groups for ratings and disaggregate student groups for state reporting			

3	Expand the students with disabilities group for calculating results
4	Explore best practices and monitor the accountability system to identify and reduce issues of volatility that impact schools and districts with small student populations
5	Move SAT Reading/Writing and Math out of the PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator
6	Create a "Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Before Graduation" sub-indicator for PWR
7	Rename the PWR matriculation rate indicator and thus expand it to be more inclusive of high-quality postsecondary options
8	Re-evaluate the weighting of frameworks with consideration to the Task Force's recommendations

Assessments for Accountability

9	Develop content area assessments to assess content in languages other than English and Spanish
10	Improve the accommodations for students by dividing the CMAS into smaller sections
11	Clarify how schools can encourage or not discourage test participation
12	Make the CMAS assessment adaptive
13	Improve the timeliness of assessment results

Public Reporting and Engagement

14	Create one coherent statewide dashboard that includes local and statewide data aligned with statewide instructional and PWR priorities
15	Enhance the user experience with reporting functionality and support that offers all stakeholders a comprehensive, accessible, and user-friendly way to utilize data
16	Clarify which students count for participation so that there is more transparency in reporting
17	Revise summative rating labels to improve differentiation and understandability

Continuous Improvement

18	Provide guidance to local boards on monitoring the improvement planning process
19	Implement a system of early identification and intervention

20	Provide more support for schools starting in Year 2
21	Support schools and districts pursuing bold solutions to turnaround
22	Require schools and districts in Years 4 and 5 to bring a CDE-vetted plan that the State Board of Education approves and monitors the effectiveness of the plan
23	Require schools and districts with "Insufficient Data: Low Participation" to create a corrective action plan
24	Provide more professional learning according to school and district plans
25	Conduct an evaluation of external managers and CDE's management of the external management process
26	Require schools and districts with State Board Action to convene and learn from their peers regularly
27	Provide additional benefits for those receiving awards
28	Focus awards on state priorities and values
29	Conduct and share research on best practices in Colorado schools
30	Change the rules on how districts can receive a Distinction designation

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

District and School Performance Frameworks	● Determine the possibility of including in the graduation count as graduates, students with disabilities working toward extended evidence outcomes (EEOs) and who are currently receiving a certification of completion.
Assessments for Accountability	● Continue to reflect on and adapt the state assessment to newer technologies. Specifically, continue to consider how technology, such as artificial intelligence, may/should impact state assessments (including scoring constructed responses). ● Seek input on making modifications to the state's approach to non-federally required assessments, including: ○ Maintain the reading/writing, and math assessments in grades 9 and 10 (PSAT 8/9 and 10), as these provide high school students with early indicators about their level of readiness and allow student growth to be reported and included within the high school and district frameworks. ○ Consider alternate approaches to meeting the federal requirement to assess grade 11 science, including embedding this assessment

	into the grade 11 SAT assessments, thus eliminating the grade 11 CMAS science assessment.
Continuous Improvement	● Consider expanding the purpose of the State Review Panel (SRP). These reviews should focus on being diagnostic in addition to evaluative. The SRP should include additional meaningful data in its report so that the SBE may best evaluate the Plan and/or identify the best directive action. Research whether SRP should evaluate holistic district systems, including budget, governance, operations, facilities, and enrollment patterns that go beyond academics. For schools and districts, at the end of the clock, the SRP should be assessing if the right district conditions are in place to foster success and, if not, diagnosing what the district can focus on to improve and take action, such as a change in leadership. This should all be reported to the State Board so that the SRP district system evaluation results can drive the support/interventions. ● Monitor the use of the new improvement planning template to ensure it meets the needs of the schools and districts and continue to make improvements as needed.
Accreditation	● Once all improvements to the rest of the accountability system are made, conduct a group study on aligning and improving the accreditation system.

I. Background

Task Force Charge, Membership, and Activities

Per H.B. 23-1241, the Colorado Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force (hereafter referred to as the "Task Force") was created "to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system." To see the full text of the statute, see Appendix B.

The bipartisan Colorado legislature appointed 26 education stakeholders to the Task Force. The Task Force members represent the viewpoints of superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, students, advocates, school board members, and other education stakeholders and communities across the state. See Appendix C for the complete list of Task Force members, what stakeholders they represent, and who appointed them.

The Task Force met 16 times as a whole group and 27 times in smaller study groups. During its meetings, to inform its findings and recommendations, the Task Force considered essential components of the state's accountability system (including individual elements of the accountability system) and past efforts to evaluate the system. The Task Force also consulted with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as necessary.

> *"We spent a significant amount of time focused on what is best for students within the systems of accountability. We were laser-focused on how the system has impacted historically underrepresented groups: students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), students experiencing poverty, and Multilingual Learners (MLs), and how we can improve the system to best support students and families."*
>
> *~ Task Force member*

For a description of the Task Force's activities and its stakeholder consultations, see Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively. An overview of meeting structures and the cadence of the Task Force's work is in Appendix F. Task Force meeting objectives and agendas are in Appendix G, and a summary of how the Task Force used study groups and came to consensus on recommendations is in Appendix H.

Overview of Colorado's Education Accountability System

Colorado's Education Accountability System is primarily designed to "(a) provide valid and actionable information regarding the progress of all students toward meeting academic standards and (b) prioritize support for schools and districts identified for improvement."[1] This design aligns with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which requires that states provide critical information to stakeholders

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[1] HumRRO (2022)

through annual assessments and identify and intervene in low-performing schools.[2] Similarly, Colorado state statute requires the State Board of Education to "appraise and accredit public schools, school districts, and the State Charter School Institute."[3] The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is the administrative arm of the State Board and implements the system responsible for holding districts and schools accountable for performance and providing support for improvement. Each year, the state issues district and school performance ratings using Performance Data as outlined in Table 1 below.

Colorado's Education Accountability System consists of the following elements:[4]

- **Performance Frameworks:** Performance frameworks provide a statewide evaluation of student performance using indicators based on academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) data. Table 1 defines what each of the three framework indicators currently consists of. Figure 1 shows the weight of each indicator on the performance frameworks at the elementary, middle, and high school and district levels.

Table 1

Performance Indicators Definitions

Performance Indicator	Performance Data Included
Academic Achievement	- Mean scale score on English language arts, math, and science assessments (CMAS, PSAT, CoAlt)[5] - Overall and for disaggregated student groups[6] [7]
Academic Growth	- Median student growth percentile on English language arts and math (CMAS, PSAT, SAT) and English language proficiency assessments (WIDA ACCESS) - English language proficiency on track metric (WIDA ACCESS) - Overall and for disaggregated student groups
PWR	- Reading & Writing and Math (SAT) - Graduation rate - Dropout rate - Matriculation rate (includes military enlistment and industry credentials, in addition to postsecondary enrollment) - Overall and for disaggregated student groups (except matriculation rate)

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[2] EducationWeek (2016)
[3] HumRRO (2022)
[4] Colorado Department of Education (2023)
[5] The Colorado Alternate (CoAlt) Assessment is used to measure academic achievement for a very small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. CoAlt is based on the Extended Evidence Outcomes of the Colorado Academic Standards.
[6] Disaggregated student groups are Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible, Students of Color, MLs, and Students with Disabilities. Previously identified for READ Plan is included for elementary CMAS-ELA academic achievement only.
[7] The official federal term for Students of Color is "Minority Students," however this report uses "Students of Color." The term "Minority Students" may appear in graphs and tables, though, due to the federal language.

Figure 1

Performance Indicators Weight Distributions

Elementary and Middle Schools

High Schools and Districts
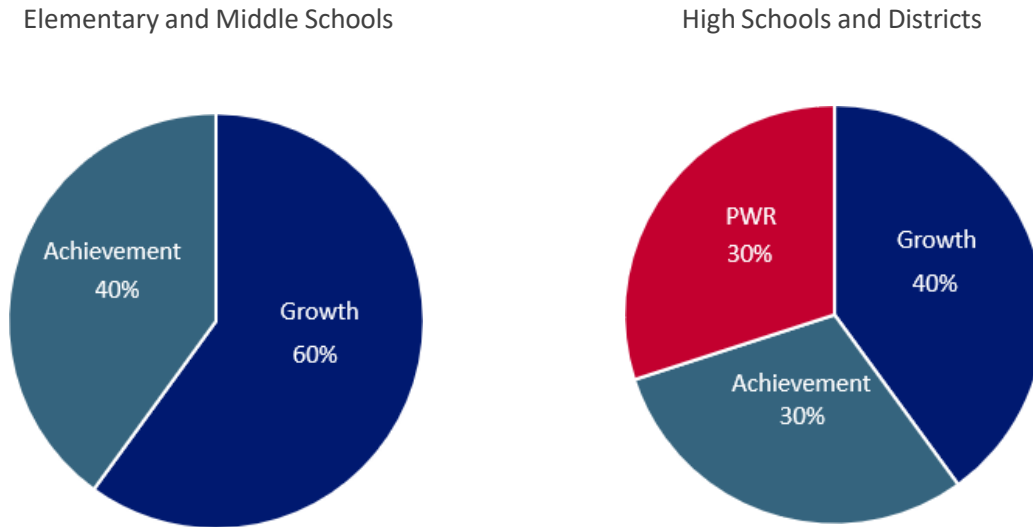
CDE uses points through the performance frameworks to assign performance ratings to schools and districts. Schools receive one of four ratings called plan types, and districts receive one of five accreditation ratings. Both schools and districts can also receive an "Insufficient State Data" (ISD) rating. Table 2 outlines the different plan types for schools and districts.

Table 2

School and District Plan Types

School Ratings	District Accreditation Ratings
N/A	Distinction
Performance	Accredited
Improvement	Improvement
Priority Improvement	Priority Improvement
Turnaround	Turnaround
Insufficient Data	Insufficient Data

It is important to note that academic achievement and growth ratings are only based on data from students who took the assessments, and several schools and districts have significantly lower participation rates than others. This means that part of the inputs for school and district performance ratings may only be based on a low percentage of students in that school or district. See Appendix I for more information on how assessment participation rates impact performance frameworks.

- **Public Reporting:** Public reporting includes interactive data visualizations and reports using accountability system data. These publicly available reports offer the public results from applying accountability frameworks and beyond. For example, the District and School Dashboard provides data visualizations on enrollment, demographics, achievement, growth, and PWR over time.
- **Improvement Planning:** Schools and districts receive state support on performance management, building on a continuous improvement approach to meet multiple state, federal, and grant improvement planning requirements. Appropriate resources are intended to be matched to identified needs.
- **Public Engagement**: All schools and districts are required to have accountability committees that provide recommendations to principals and local boards. The state also convenes multiple advisory groups (e.g., Technical Advisory Panel, Statewide Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education, CDE Accountability Work Group) to receive ongoing feedback on ways to strengthen and improve the implementation of the accountability system.
- **Supports and Interventions:** The state provides support and resources to schools and districts through a statewide tiered system of support. All schools and districts can access universal support (e.g., resources and training). However, schools and districts that are on or are approaching the accountability clock, meaning they are not meeting expectations on the performance frameworks, have access to more intensive support. These supports are matched to meet local needs, including CDE staff support and eligibility to apply for the Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) grant. The state's needs assessments drive the state system of support. Supports are voluntary but encouraged. If a site remains on the accountability clock for five years, the State Board of Education must intervene by ordering the local board to take action with the identified site (e.g., external management, innovation status, school closure).
- **Accreditation:** The State Board of Education is responsible for the annual accreditation of districts based on performance frameworks and other provisions. Currently, the state has focused on requirements related to budget and financial policies and procedures, accounting and financial reporting, school safety and the Gun-Free Schools Act. The State Board also assigns plan types to each school, but ultimately, local boards of education, the Charter School Institute Board, and BOCES Boards have the authority to accredit schools.
- **Awards:** Schools and districts can receive state awards for meeting specific criteria, such as academic achievement or growth scores. Some awards highlight exceptional progress with select student groups (e.g., MLs, Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible).

II. Academic Opportunities or Inequities

This report offers recommendations to improve the accountability system in a way that advances academic opportunities and addresses inequities. However, **the Task Force strongly believes the accountability system alone cannot advance academic opportunities or prevent academic inequities.** More must be done outside of the accountability system to ensure every Colorado student attends a school with high-quality teachers, strong curriculum and instruction, adequate funding, strong governance, modern, safe, and welcoming facilities and transportation, and an ecosystem that supports the work of schools, such as direct services and access to health and wellness supports. Critical ways to advance academic opportunities and address academic inequities are through allocating and effectively using resources by local school boards in response to community needs, allowing for innovation, and replicating effective practices.

Over several meetings, the Task Force generated a list of academic opportunities and inequities impacting academic proficiency achievement gaps and organized them into categories. Table 3 lists specific but non-exhaustive resource inequities (organized by important categories) experienced throughout Colorado's schools and districts.

Table 3

Colorado Resource Inequities

Resource Category and Description	Examples of Resource Inequities
Personnel: High-quality, well-trained, and experienced staff who have time and resources for ongoing professional learning and collaboration; the opportunity for innovation; and skill working with all students, including MLs, those with an IEP, and students who are below grade level.	● A school community was unable to hire a math teacher for multiple years because of fiscal and geographic limitations, which led to extensive use of online education ● Some schools and districts have trouble hiring a special education teacher or speech-language pathologist to provide services in person and/or virtually ● A shortage of special education teachers and culturally and linguistically diverse teachers means many schools and districts go without these staff and do not meet service minutes ● Rural areas have trouble attracting and retaining high-quality, certified teachers; pay scales cannot keep up with the cost of living ● The pandemic had a significant impact on schools' and districts' workforces
Curriculum and Instruction: High-quality, culturally relevant instruction and tasks aligned to	● Not all districts have access to training to implement new reading curriculum and instruction ● There is limited transparency around what high-quality

state standards; postsecondary/advanced learning opportunities; grade-level instruction and tiered supports; and high-quality assessments.	instructional materials or curriculum districts use ● Before and after school childcare, e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, can provide additional opportunities to catch students up on material; however, there is unequal access to these programs ● Some districts have funds for teachers to create curriculum outside of the school year; many do not, which leads to stale and ineffective curriculum
Funding: Provides adequate access to resources and helps meet priorities; includes grants, state and federal funding, donations and fundraising, and community or private partnerships.	● In areas with lower home values and limited commercial enterprises, funding from local property taxes is lower, and the state share of funding is higher ● Some districts have grant writers to gain more personnel or support; in other districts, the grant writer is the principal or bus driver
Governance: Local and state policies, laws, priorities, and incentives to protect students and enable educators to meet student needs. Districts and schools should be empowered to allocate resources to meet students' needs.	● It takes money and networks to run for and be elected to school boards; this can drive inequity ● Bills from the legislature are not always in tune with district priorities ● There is inequitable access to resources that support good governance and an understanding of the critical issues facing decision-makers ● Colorado is a diverse state. Policies and incentives that work best in large, urban districts are not always suitable for smaller, rural districts
Facilities and Transportation: Students have access to high-quality, modern facilities and transportation that allows them to access resources and supports.	● Not all students have equal access to transportation, which limits school options ● Small districts, including many charter schools, do not benefit from economies of scale
Family and Community Supports: Schools can access external assets, including strong culture, community school models, out-of-school-time supports, parent/family engagement, and support from postsecondary and business sectors.	● Schools may not have the vehicles set up to fully communicate and engage with families who speak languages besides English ● Schools may not have sufficient tools in place to provide families and communities with equitable opportunities to communicate their needs and preferences (e.g., reaching families who do not have internet access) ● There is a high level of chronic absenteeism across the state; some reasons include transportation challenges, COVID

	transmission, and lack of effective messaging about the importance of regular school attendance

As noted previously, the Task Force acknowledges that resource inequities cannot be solved solely by changes to the state's accountability system.

III.   Findings and Recommendations

Colorado's education accountability system is based on the belief that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate college- and career-ready. To this end, any effort focusing on the state accountability system must enhance what is already working for Colorado students and educators and remedy concerns by suggesting ways Colorado's accountability system can further advance academic opportunities and address inequities.

> *"I am hopeful that this work will influence positive change and, most importantly, identify much-needed updates that can bring our current system [to] a place that best serves public education in Colorado."*
>
> *~ Task Force member*

The following recommendations are guided by research and the rich expertise of this Task Force's practitioners, educators, leaders, parents, and advocates. While some recommendations may require a nuanced understanding of the state's accountability system, overall, these recommendations will:

- **Refine how the state accountability system rates schools and districts** (e.g., addressing some of the challenges that schools serving smaller student populations face, adjusting performance frameworks to reflect diverse student populations better, paying greater attention to achievement gaps between student groups)
- **Enhance the accountability system's Growth, Achievement, and Postsecondary Readiness Metrics** (e.g., adding a new sub-indicator to help parents understand the efforts their schools are making to prepare students for postsecondary success)
- **Modernize state assessments used for accountability** (e.g., adjusting state assessments to be adaptive and accessible in multiple languages, encouraging assessment participation, and improving the timelines for sharing results)
- **Improve data reporting and sharing for parents and communities, educators, education leaders, and policymakers** (e.g., creating a statewide dashboard that is user-friendly for multiple audiences)
- **Strengthen school and district improvement processes** (e.g., implementing a comprehensive approach to improvement planning—including a system of early identification and intervention; expanding and targeting how schools are recognized for their successes)

Many of the 30 recommendations are interconnected. For example, if the accountability system adds a new indicator to support postsecondary and workforce readiness (through the frameworks), changes would also be needed to communicate those results to parents and stakeholders through public reporting. The Task Force thought through these dependencies and now encourages policymakers to consider the interconnectedness of the recommendations while also paying attention to each recommendation on its own.

District and School Performance Frameworks

To advance equity in education, Colorado's accountability system should offer comparability between schools and districts while accounting for varying resource and contextual factors—such as differences between rural and larger school systems. Many factors go into assigning school and district framework ratings, which, in turn, must provide public reporting that offers transparency on how students are doing across various demographic groups. The Task Force identified multiple opportunities to strengthen the accountability system's ability to advance equity by identifying the following opportunities and challenges.

> **FINDING**
>
> **Current thresholds used to report results contribute to data suppression, impacting the calculation of ratings and public reporting**
> *See Recommendation 1 for solution*

The public needs a complete picture of how all students perform, including students from historically underserved groups and students in small schools or districts. Full transparency, however, must account for federal and Colorado laws protecting student privacy, such as in cases where it could be easy to connect a school's results with the scores of individual students. The accountability system has rules set by Colorado Department of Education (CDE) policy to protect student privacy when reporting results. When a school or district has too few students of a defined population (e.g., by race, Free/Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) Eligible, students with disabilities) at the school level or among distinct groups of students, the accountability system suppresses those students' results from statewide public reporting.

Federal law requires states to ensure public reporting does not reveal students' personally identifiable information (PII). As states are left to determine their public reporting thresholds, there is some variability in the thresholds that states have adopted, including some states using lower thresholds (e.g., Alaska uses 5) or others using higher thresholds for state reporting (e.g., Texas uses 25).[8]

To learn more about how CDE sets minimum thresholds for the Colorado Growth Model, see Appendix A.

In Colorado, the thresholds for determining whether to report publicly on a student group's results are:

- At least 16 students must have state data for academic achievement and Postsecondary Workforce Readiness-related measures (e.g., graduation rate and dropout)
- At least 20 students must have state growth data for academic growth

The guidelines for public reporting of data and the thresholds established for accountability purposes, while similar, are not identical. For example, before 2022-23, graduation rates were reported with no

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[8] Alliance for Excellent Education (2018)

data suppression rules, while only schools and districts with more than 16 graduating students had graduation rate data reported for accountability purposes. Other public reporting that is not also used in the accountability system utilizes different guidelines for public reporting. For example, pupil membership data reporting includes student groups with more than three students. It is important to note that data reporting thresholds for accountability purposes are not only to protect students' personally identifiable information but also to ensure stability and reliability in the metric.

These rules can also affect accountability results. When thresholds on the number of students are not met, CDE aggregates and publicly reports data over three years. CDE then uses multi-year frameworks as the official frameworks. An unintended consequence of the current thresholds is that data may be hidden. The three-year aggregation is an attempt to address this, but there are still schools without data and certain student groups and/or school results that could be hidden behind the overall performance of a school and/or district. Also, three-year aggregation does not always address the volatility associated with low numbers of students.

In addition, if a student group only meets CDE minimum thresholds, it will still account for the same number of points in the performance frameworks as a much larger group. For example, a school may have 21 students with growth scores who are MLs and 100 students with growth scores who are FRL Eligible, and each group will have the possibility of 1 point on the framework.

When schools do not have reportable data for any performance indicators, the school system is assigned Insufficient State Data (ISD) ratings. An ISD plan type is automatically assigned if the total participation rate is at or below 25% for English language arts/reading, writing, and math. An ISD plan type is also applied if reportable data are unavailable for all applicable performance indicators (i.e., achievement, growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness). For multi-level schools (i.e., combined elementary, middle, and/or high schools) and districts, ISD is assigned if one or more EMH levels do not have reportable data for any performance indicators. Schools and districts can request an ISD plan type if they have below 85% total participation on state assessments and can establish that the results are not representative of the total student population through the request to reconsider process.[9]

Using preliminary frameworks, 24 districts were assigned an ISD rating lower than the final ratings in 2023 (32); however, it is still higher than in 2019 (pre-pandemic). It should be noted that the 2024 data are still preliminary at the time of publication, and the number of ISD-rated districts will likely decrease when frameworks are finalized in December 2024.[10]

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[9] Colorado Department of Education (2024)
[10] Colorado Department of Education (2024)

Table 4
Preliminary District Ratings Trends Over Time (2019-2024)

## More District Ratings Have Improved Since Last Year
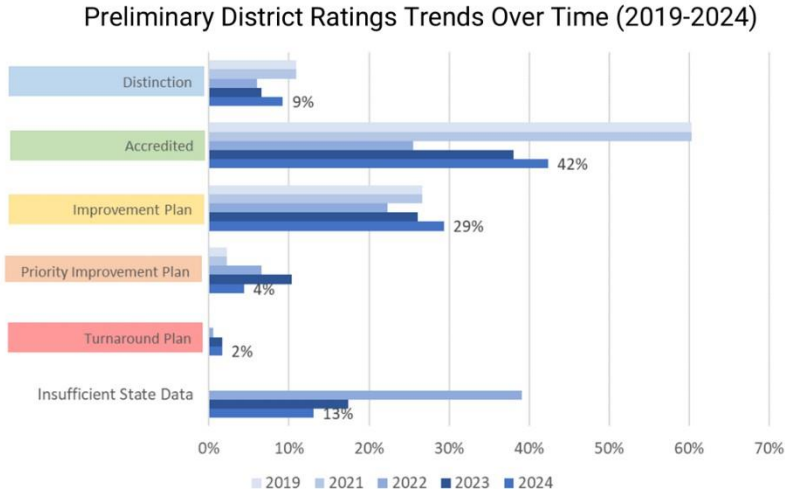
Summary: Slight decrease in ISD ratings compared to 2023. More districts at Improvement or higher than in 2023, but not as high as 2019. Lower % on clock than 2023.

Preliminary District Ratings Trends Over Time (2019-2024)

- Distinction: 9%
- Accredited: 42%
- Improvement Plan: 29%
- Priority Improvement Plan: 4%
- Turnaround Plan: 2%
- Insufficient State Data: 13%

Legend: 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

NOTE: Includes preliminary ratings for 2023 and 2024 and final ratings for earlier historical data. Frameworks were not calculated in 2020 and 2021; ratings were rolled over from 2019.

Table 5
Preliminary School Ratings Trends Over Time (2019-2024)

More School Plan Types Have Improved Since Last Year
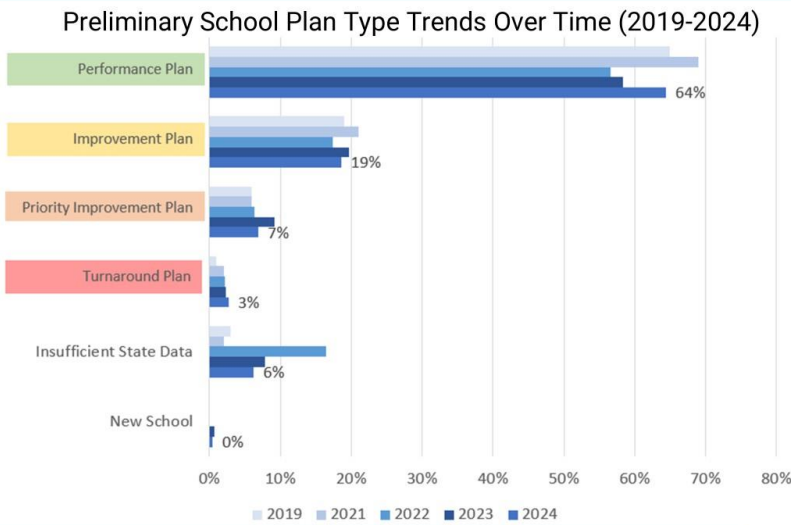
Summary: Similar trends as with districts. Decrease in ISD meant more schools earned plan types. Greater % earned Improvement or higher than in 2023 but not quite as high as 2019. Fewer schools on accountability clock compared to 2023.

Preliminary School Plan Type Trends Over Time (2019-2024)

- Performance Plan: 64%
- Improvement Plan: 19%
- Priority Improvement Plan: 7%
- Turnaround Plan: 3%
- Insufficient State Data: 6%
- New School: 0%

Legend: 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

NOTE: Includes preliminary ratings for 2023 and 2024 (excludes AECs) and final ratings for earlier historical data. Frameworks were not calculated in 2020 and 2021; ratings were rolled over from 2019.

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

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In 2019, no district and 25 schools were assigned an ISD rating. One district was eligible to choose its rating in 2019 because even with three years of data, it still did not have enough data to report publicly. When considering the n-size suppression rules that the state currently employs, the percentage of schools that have "all students" represented in achievement ranges from 83.1% (3-year science) to 97.2% (3-year Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) ELA). When disaggregated by student groups, the FRL Eligible and Students of Color groups are less likely to be suppressed than students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or MLs, as there are fewer students in the latter two student groups. The other performance indicators (i.e., growth and PWR) suppress schools more, given the complexity of the measures (e.g., growth requires each student to have at least two years of achievement scores).

More information about the analysis can be found in Appendix A.

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FINDING

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Certain students are counted multiple times across different disaggregated student group categories within framework indicators, which disproportionately impacts the ratings of some school districts
See Recommendation 2 for solution

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Under the current accountability system, certain students are counted multiple times across different disaggregated student group categories within framework indicators. This contributes to ratings of schools and districts serving higher percentages of these students being disproportionately impacted.

Currently, points are distributed for academic achievement and academic growth on assessments for all students and for the performance of individual student groups, including students who are FRL Eligible, students identified as Students of Color, MLs, and students with an IEP. Because students can belong to more than one of these student groups, their assessment data may be scored and considered for points under an indicator on the performance frameworks multiple times, thereby increasing the weight of their assessment scores.

An analysis by CDE was conducted using 2023 accountability data that shows that the relationship between the percentage of framework points and student characteristics (e.g., MLs, Students that are FRL Eligible, Students with IEPs, Students of Color) ranges from weak to moderate:

- **Achievement indicator:** The correlation between achievement and some identified student characteristics varied, with some groups having a weak correlation and others having a high correlation. Specifically, there was a high correlation between FRL eligibility and math and English language arts achievement scores. At the same time, other student groups (i.e., MLs, Students of Color, and students on IEPs) had a weak to moderate correlation.
- **Growth indicator:** The department's data analysis found very weak correlations or no relationship between growth and student characteristics.

- **PWR indicator:** The relationship between the PWR indicator and student characteristics ranges from very weak to no relationship. However, there is considerable variability when examining the sub-indicators (i.e., SAT, graduation, matriculation, dropout). For example, there is a strong relationship between poverty and SAT evidence-based reading and writing.
- **Plan-type assignment: When aggregating the performance indicators (e.g., achievement, growth, and PWR) together, the correlation between plan-type assignments and student characteristics is weak to moderate** because of the greater weight given to growth in the frameworks. Low participation rates and opt-outs likely impact some results.

For further details about CDE's analysis and the relationship between the percentage of framework points and student characteristics, see Appendix J.

FINDING 🔍

Students who have been recently exited from IEPs are not included in the Students with Disabilities group, which may mask the positive impact some schools are making with their students with disabilities
See Recommendation 3 for solution

The criteria used to include students with disabilities in the disaggregated student group categories for data reporting and framework-scoring purposes are not aligned with the criteria used for MLs. The criteria also exclude students who make academic progress and who no longer meet the eligibility criteria for an IEP. This may mask some schools' positive impact on their students with disabilities.

Currently, all public school students with disabilities are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). Some students with disabilities receive additional protection under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In Colorado's accountability system, only students eligible under IDEA are currently counted in the group of students with disabilities. This means that when students no longer meet the criteria for IDEA and exit their IEP, they are also excluded from this student group for data reporting and framework calculation purposes. While this rule is in line with federal requirements, this can have a negative impact on schools' and districts' performance ratings because these exited students' potentially higher achievement and growth scores, while still included in the "all students" category, are no longer included in the students with disabilities student group. Effectively, when schools and districts move students off IDEA eligibility the data reporting and framework calculations do not recognize these accomplishments within the students with disabilities student group. Likewise, because these students may still have a disability and may be eligible for accommodations despite no longer being eligible under IDEA, they should still be considered in the students with disabilities group. Elsewhere in the accountability system, MLs continue to be included in the English Learner student group for multiple years after they are redesignated.

For more information on how Colorado English Learners are included in Colorado's ESSA plan, please refer to Appendix A.

FINDING
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The accountability system experiences some volatility from schools and districts with low student numbers
See Recommendation 4 for solution

Schools and districts that serve a smaller student population may experience volatility in framework scoring and data reporting because of low student numbers.

The rules for calculating performance framework ratings and publicly reporting student results may create volatility for schools and districts that serve a smaller population. First, the number of students may fall below the threshold for public reporting, resulting in frameworks with few or no outcomes publicly reported. Systems with insufficient student numbers to report may only be evaluated on the highest-level sub-indicators. Additionally, suppose a school or district has a population of students similar in size to the public reporting threshold (e.g., 20 students). In that case, changes in small year-over-year student numbers may impact the reported data. For example, a school with 19 students with growth scores over three years has yet to have data available for public reporting but if that population increases by one student the following year, they will have publicly available data. Additionally, when a school or district has a small overall total population of students, each student will account for a larger percentage of the total population, which may significantly affect overall performance scores. While this is less visible for the academic achievement and growth indicators because of the use of the mean scale score and the median growth percentile, it is most pronounced for indicators that use percentage metrics, such as graduation and dropout rates.

FINDING
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The PWR measure could better account for the breadth of quality pathways available to students and better report on the pathways students are taking upon graduating from high school
See Recommendations 5, 6, and 7 for solutions

The PWR sub-indicators do not fully account for the breadth of quality pathways for students nor provide information on how schools and districts prepare their students for postsecondary education and the workforce.

Over the last decade, Colorado has made significant investments that have increased opportunities for students to gain PWR skills in high school. These investments have allowed more students to earn a quality, in-demand industry credential or postsecondary certificate, accumulate college credit attached to a defined PWR pathway, and gain relevant work-based learning or on-the-job training while in high school. However, even with investments in postsecondary workforce readiness programming, opportunities are only available to some students across the state for various reasons, including

programming costs, availability of qualified instructors and transportation. This creates inequities in students accessing opportunities. Many school districts also need clarification on the funding streams, which carry a high administrative burden. Every Colorado student should have these opportunities, and schools should prepare students to be ready for both postsecondary education and the workforce in a manner that is measurable and allows for recognition of the most effective programs in Colorado.

In 2022, the legislature created the Secondary, Postsecondary, and Work-Based Learning Integration Task Force (the "1215 Task Force") to study the impact and reach of Colorado's myriad of PWR programs and improvement opportunities. The 1215 Task Force concluded that the PWR sub-indicators do not fully measure how schools and districts prepare their students for postsecondary education and the workforce under Colorado's current accountability system.

In line with a future-oriented vision to make Colorado the national leader in offering students meaningful PWR opportunities, the accountability performance frameworks should be updated to improve the way PWR opportunities are measured, better reflect metrics that are measures of actual student outcomes in these areas of postsecondary and workforce readiness, recognize and reward schools for the ways they are preparing students for their futures beyond K12 education, and incentivize the growth of these PWR opportunities.

In addition to improvements needed to the way PWR opportunities are measured, recognized, rewarded, and incentivized within the accountability frameworks, the 1241 Task Force also considered the current approach to reporting graduation rates. The Task Force considered the extent to which current rules accurately capture all learners' experiences and backgrounds when counting toward graduation rates, and they found that some exceptions may be necessary—particularly for students with disabilities working toward extended evidence outcomes and receiving a certification of completion instead of a high school diploma.

> **FINDING**
>
> **The current overall weighting of framework indicators was not designed with the Task Force's recommendations in mind and may need to change as a result**
> *See Recommendation 8 for solution*

Given the District and School Performance Framework findings and the recommendations that follow, the Task Force considered whether a future review of the accountability system's weighting of indicators is necessary. Caution should be taken when making any changes to the weights for the framework indicators. Achievement and growth must still be considered together, and PWR remains an important indicator of student and education system success.

Recommendations for District and School Performance Frameworks

Recommendation 1: Lower student count thresholds for accountability calculations and reporting

Adjust CDE policies to include more students in performance frameworks and promote more transparent public data reporting.

Disaggregating results for students in historically underserved student groups in public reporting is extremely important. However, ensuring these smaller student groups receive adequate attention and analysis is challenging, especially when they fall below CDE's public reporting thresholds. CDE can enhance transparency in public reporting by lowering the thresholds for all framework elements and by changing aggregation rules to allow aggregation for growth across levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) when one level has insufficient growth data. Implementing this recommendation should ensure the state complies with existing laws and regulations to protect student privacy.

One concern around this recommendation raised by stakeholders representative of many schools or districts that serve small student populations is how lower student count thresholds for calculations and reporting may impact volatility, an issue that already exists with the current thresholds. Out of consideration for schools or districts with small student populations, primarily, this concern could be addressed with a thorough and complete study by CDE—including consulting with the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP)—on the impact of lowered thresholds on schools with small student populations. The study should explore how framework points and ratings change with the lower thresholds and evaluate the costs and benefits associated with these changes (with a focus on transparency and volatility). While individual schools and districts can see their student performance data and may have different criteria for determining if and when changes should be made to improve student outcomes, this study should also explore how the lowered thresholds might impact interpreting the data and the school and district continuous improvement efforts.

This recommendation positively addresses an increased transparency goal for student groups, but it could negatively impact the volatility of some schools with small student populations. Acceptance of Recommendation 2 would prevent this volatility impact, so the two recommendations should be considered together.

Recommendation 2: Combine student groups for ratings and disaggregate student groups for state reporting

Reporting disaggregated data is critical to identifying and addressing academic inequities between student groups. Yet to ensure the equitable impact of each student's data, points assigned through

the accountability system's framework should reflect a combined student group approach to growth and achievement.

This means only the all-student and combined student groups would be scored for points on the framework. This will ensure that scores for students included in multiple groups will not be counted multiple times toward a school and district's rating on each indicator of the accountability system. It will increase the likelihood that schools that do not currently have sufficient data on individual student groups will still have scores for all student groups within the combined group.

The combined student group would represent a distinct count of students falling into one or more individual student groups, including students who are FRL Eligible, Students of Color, MLs, and students with an IEP. This means that even if students belonged to more than one of these groups, they would only be counted once for scoring framework points.

For reporting purposes, CDE must continue to report student group performance (if it meets the minimum threshold), even if points are not tied to each student group on the performance frameworks.

For the detailed analysis supporting this recommendation, including implications on how this recommendation diverges from federal accountability and reporting, please refer to Appendix A.

	Recommendation 3: Expand the student with a disability group for calculating results

Expand the student with a disability group reported on the performance frameworks to include the combined count of students identified under IDEA and students that have exited from an IEP (as they no longer meet the eligibility criteria) for two years following their exit. Specifically, when a student is no longer eligible as a student with a disability under IDEA, that student, as currently allowed by federal accountability, will continue to be designated in the student with disability group for two additional years. This is similar to how MLs are counted. This will help ensure Colorado acknowledges that a student who moves off an IEP still needs support and that schools' and districts' performance frameworks are not negatively impacted because these students' performance is no longer included in the students with disabilities student group.

Counting SWDs for Two Years Post Exiting IEP

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes statutory language that allows counting MLs in the ML group for two years after gaining language proficiency (Fluent English Proficient exited). It is concerning that the federal statute does not afford the same flexibility to students with disabilities who have exited as it does for MLs. Students with disabilities who have exited an IEP must be removed from the students with disabilities group for ESSA identification purposes and reporting to the U.S. Department of Education and the public. However, it is important to count

students with disabilities up to two years after exiting an IEP, as this is in alignment to the way ML students are counted and reported.

- Unfortunately, the current Colorado ESSA State Plan, approved by the U.S. Department of Education does not count exited students with disabilities.
- The state must implement our ESSA State Plan as approved, for example if we were to count students who have exited their IEPs for ESSA identification purposes, it would jeopardize the state's ESSA funding (~$240 million per year).
- Nevertheless, there is nothing that prevents the state from providing numbers that satisfy the U.S. Department of Education, but also provides a count of students with disabilities up to two years of exiting an IEP. Such reporting should not compromise ESSA funding.

	Recommendation 4: Explore best practices and monitor the accountability system to identify and reduce issues of volatility that impact schools and districts with small student populations

CDE should explore best practices for minimizing volatility in small systems while monitoring the current system for volatility as part of implementing this Task Force's concurrent recommendations. Exploring best practices should include supplemental measures tailored for small schools and districts informed by the legislated Local Accountability System grant in Colorado, such as the Student-Centered Accountability Project (SCAP). Under SCAP, for example, participating sites still must participate in the state accountability system—but they are given some supplemental ways to share their local work (e.g., CDE posts their measures alongside the frameworks). A study commissioned by CDE could look at how other states address accountability for schools and districts with small populations of students within their state systems while controlling for the inherent volatility.

	Recommendation 5: Move SAT Reading/Writing and Math out of the PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator

In line with the 1215 Task Force's recommendation, move SAT Reading/Writing and Math achievement from the PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator. PSAT Reading/Writing and Math achievement are currently represented in the Academic Achievement indicator, and growth is included in the Academic Growth indicator for both PSAT and SAT scores, while SAT achievement is included in the PWR indicator. Moving the SAT achievement results from the PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator allows the PWR indicator to include other measures that better assess postsecondary and workforce readiness. It also brings consistency between PSAT and SAT achievement and growth results within the framework calculations.

Recommendation 6: Create a "Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Before Graduation" sub-indicator for PWR

Expanding on the 1215 Task Force's recommendations, add "College and Career Readiness Before Graduation" as a PWR sub-indicator in the accountability frameworks. A high school diploma is an important, foundational credential for future job and education prospects, and high schools serve a critical role in preparing students for postsecondary success. As such, the 1215 Task Force identified the shared vision that by the time a learner graduates from high school, they should have no-cost access to a high-value industry credential, college credit aligned to an intentional pathway, and a meaningful work-based learning experience. Accordingly, the 1215 Task Force recommended the inclusion of concurrent enrollment as a PWR indicator.

Creating a new sub-indicator, "College and Career Readiness Before Graduation," reflects activities throughout grades 9-12 that practitioners know to be impactful in preparing students for their chosen path after high school. The new sub-indicator provides schools and students with flexibility in the college and career readiness programs it offers for students. Recognizing that not all courses or work-based learning opportunities are currently created equal, this recommendation intends to provide all students with access to high-quality options that result in passing scores and meaningful credits and experiences, including but not limited to:

- Concurrent enrollment and CTE courses aligned with GT pathways
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- State-approved work-based learning experiences
- Industry-recognized credentials and postsecondary certificates (as defined by the Quality and In-demand Non-degree Credentials Framework)
- Early college programs resulting in college credential or degree

To further emphasize this recommendation's focus on high-quality options that lead to meaningful credits and experiences for students, the state should also consider:

- Opportunities reflected in Colorado's Work-Based Learning Continuum, including clinical experiences, internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, industry-recognized credentials, and on-the-job training that are vetted through the Office of Future Work's legislative mandate through SB22-140 to develop quality expectations for this continuum. This emphasizes the need to recognize and reward work-based learning opportunities with proven track records of success.
- Opportunities to incorporate existing diploma endorsements (PWR, Seal of Biliteracy, STEM) and establish processes for regular updates to the endorsements.
- Opportunities to expand the GT Pathways to include other measures like the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) and the College Level Examination

Program (CLEP), which is often used for second language learners.
- Aligning this indicator with courses currently included in the state's established Guaranteed Transfer Pathways General Education Curriculum. We do not have full insight into the transferability of all coursework, though we want to ensure that the state is prioritizing concurrent enrollment and AP and IB courses that will result in transferable college credits for students.

The future of work and the opportunities all students deserve to be ready for postsecondary education and the workforce are ever-changing. To complement the above sets of opportunities, districts should be able to propose additional quality PWR programs for State Board approval. In addition, the Task Force recognizes that some PWR opportunities may blur the lines between high school and post-high school (e.g., a fifth-year high school student at an early college). This recommendation intends to count opportunities before a student graduates high school; however, CDE should continue identifying ways to account for such cases through its accountability system.

A combination of approaches acknowledges that while all schools/districts are currently required to offer concurrent enrollment, it may take some time to develop the additional offerings necessary to meet the intent of this measure.

The Task Force recognizes the complexity of adding a new sub-indicator to the framework and appreciates that these changes mark the beginning of a new opportunity to measure a broader definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness success in school. To ensure that the work continues, data from the sub-indicator should be disaggregated, transparent, and made available at the student level, and it should be reviewed regularly. The student-level data review is intended to inform activities that ensure equitable access to and completion of postsecondary education pathway activities, to ensure that a disproportionate number of students achieving these indicators do not mask or skew the sub-indicator, to inform resource allocation decisions, and to evaluate the impact on smaller schools and districts, consistent with Recommendation 4. In line with the above, CDE should update data collection capabilities. Hence, it is more efficient for districts to report high-value industry credential attainment, work-based learning experiences, and other required reporting under this sub-indicator.

In addition, TAP should advise CDE and the State Board on the framework outcomes associated with recognizing schools and districts for each quality college and/or career readiness option an individual student successfully completes (e.g., passing grade, credential, certificate) while in high school versus recognizing the count of students completing one or more quality options.

CDE and TAP have an important role in ensuring the implementation of this recommendation is carried forward with fidelity to these goals. Consistent with CDE's practice of reporting new measures for one year for informational purposes, this new measure should require time to study its impact on the overall rating.

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<td>**Recommendation 7: Rename the PWR matriculation rate indicator and thus expand it to be more inclusive of high-quality postsecondary options**</td>
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Rename "matriculation rate" to "postsecondary progression" as a PWR sub-indicator and expand what is counted toward this sub-indicator to be more inclusive of the high-quality postsecondary options available to students. While recommendation seven is specifically designed to recognize the PWR opportunities available to students while they are *in* high school, this recommendation is intended to continue the state accountability system's recognition of how well schools and districts are preparing students for PWR opportunities *after* the traditional high school years. The Task Force recommends changing the current name of the "matriculation rate" sub-indicator to the "postsecondary progression" sub-indicator, as the former specifically refers to entry into a college or university and does not accurately capture the myriad of high-quality options available to students beyond high school and how K12 education can prepare students for postsecondary and workforce success. These options include but are not limited to post-high school enrollment or enlistment in:

- Career and technical education programs
- Extended high school options in current programs like ASCENT, P-TECH, and T-REP, where students continue to gain college credit beyond grades 9-12
- Associate's degree programs
- Bachelor's degree programs
- The military

The renamed "postsecondary progression" sub-indicator should continue to include learner progression data into post-high school enrollment into associate's degree programs, bachelor's degree programs, the military, and extended high school options in current programs like ASCENT, P-TECH, and T-REP where students are continuing to gain college credit beyond grades 9-12.

The Task Force also recommends that the renamed "postsecondary progression" sub-indicator begin to include learner progression data on additional high-quality post-high school opportunities reflected in Colorado's Work-Based Learning Continuum and other postsecondary education and training programs that meet identified quality criteria, such as alignment with those criteria required by the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

As the state moves forward with developing a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), as created in SB24-1364, we recommend that it can efficiently integrate individual district reporting to measure better the short-term and long-term outcomes of these program pathways. There is an opportunity to reduce the data burden on school and district data reporting and better measure the outcomes of PWR programs across the state. We recommend continued investment in and development of the SLDS to ensure students who graduate from the K12 system are both college- and career-ready. Efforts to measure program outcomes must consider the capacity of schools and districts to report data, especially

in cases where the SLDS will not have data. We also recommend using data matching with relevant sources to ease the burden of school/district data reporting.

Recommendation 8: Re-evaluate the weighting of frameworks with consideration to the Task Force's recommendations

As a matter of good practice and given the above changes the Task Force is recommending—such as creating a new PWR sub-indicator and taking other steps to address volatility in the accountability system—it is worth studying to see if adjustments can be made to have a "weak to no relationship" with student demographics. CDE, in consultation with national experts and with the TAP, should routinely revisit weightings (e.g., every five years) and make recommendations to the Colorado State Board of Education to adjust weights within the frameworks.

Areas for Further Study

Determine the possibility of including in the graduation count as graduates, students with disabilities working toward extended evidence outcomes (EEOs) and who are currently receiving a certification of completion. Approximately 10 percent of students with disabilities eligible under the IDEA work towards extended evidence outcomes. These are students identified as having severe intellectual or multiple disabilities (sometimes autism), and they typically enroll in public education at age three and attend school through the semester they turn 21.

- Districts can currently decide to count EEOs as graduates—it is a local district policy decision, and so a student's access to this opportunity is dependent upon the district in which they reside.
- If district policy allows, those students can be counted as a graduate in state reporting. If the district does not allow it, the state counts that student as a completer.
- Federal accountability and reporting only allows for these students to be counted as completers.
- In special education end-of-year reporting—regardless of whether the district has a policy to count EEOs as graduates or completers—these students are only counted as completers because Colorado aligns its reporting with federal definitions.

Key questions for further study include:

- Should Colorado also have a state accountability system where students with disabilities working towards EEOs and receiving a certificate be counted as graduates in the state accountability system?
- It may also be necessary to understand better what precludes students with profound disabilities from being counted as graduates in state reporting. For example, how much of the issue is due to some districts not making this option available to their students? What additional policy and support do districts need to make this opportunity available to all eligible students?

Assessments Used for Accountability Ratings

Assessments drive key elements of a high-quality, relevant education and serve different purposes for different stakeholders. Therefore, assessment is critical for any accountability system.

Changes to assessment have the potential to address some of the more significant challenges that the Task Force is considering more broadly related to the state accountability system. Within the accountability system's school performance frameworks, student academic achievement and growth—as measured by CMAS and the PSAT/SAT assessments—account for the most significant portion of a school or district's performance rating. This makes aligning state assessments to Colorado's academic standards necessary for state accountability.

To inform assessment-related recommendations connected to the accountability system, the Task Force sought input from stakeholders and experts; examined various assessment structures and designs (e.g., through-year assessment vs. end-of-year summative; state and local); researched how other states approach assessment for accountability; and, considered ways technology can enhance accessibility and performance for all students.

The recommendations below assume the state continues using a standards-based state assessment and maintains a singular state assessment system—in line with the Task Force's view. Proposed adjustments to the state assessment in subsequent recommendations do not require Colorado to pursue Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) from the Federal Department of Education.

For a more detailed analysis of what the Task Force members considered, researched, and decided on regarding the following assessment recommendations, please refer to Appendix A.

> **FINDING**
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> **Schools and districts need ways to decrease time on test administration while still being able to assess students' mastery of standards-aligned skills and knowledge**
> *See Recommendation 12, as well as Areas for Further Study for solutions*

Changes to the CMAS assessment in prior years reduced the total time spent on testing and prevented the state from reporting a Writing subscale score. Adaptive assessments or other assessment innovations may allow additional information to be reported validly and reliably. However, there may be some federal restrictions regarding the degree of permitted adaptability due to requirements that an assessment measure the student's performance related to the student's current grade-level standards.

In addition to adaptive assessments, other technological considerations may present opportunities related to the information gained from the state assessment and the student experience. For example, when the shift to computerized assessment occurred, all students were able to utilize additional accessibility features that were integrated into the testing platform. Similarly, the expanding capacity of artificial intelligence might be leveraged to decrease the amount of time required to score constructed

responses, a key component of the current state assessment, and thus provide assessment results to stakeholders more quickly. Additionally, adjustments to the state assessment based on available technology should be pre-scheduled at fixed intervals to ensure that the assessment continues to leverage new approaches and methods of assessment.

> **FINDING**
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> **Colorado's current assessment and accreditation system does not align with the research for students whose first language is not English[11]**
> *See Recommendation 9 for solution*

It is important that the state ensures access to accommodations appropriate for MLs. Currently, the CMAS assessment is available only in English and Spanish for these learners. A student is only eligible for a Spanish language version of a CMAS math, science, social studies, or CSLA (in place of ELA) content area assessment if the following three conditions are met:

1. The student is identified as Non-English Proficient (NEP) or Limited-English Proficient (LEP).
2. The student has received instruction in Spanish in the assessed content area within the last nine months. (This is defined as Spanish curriculum for Language Arts and as Spanish accommodations/supports for math, science, and social studies. This Distinction for math, science, and social studies is critical to making the Spanish versions of the assessments accessible to students in districts that do not provide Spanish instruction but are providing Spanish support.)
3. The student has received instruction in an English language development program for five years or less.

The CDE provides a CMAS Spanish Assessments Decision-Making Flowchart to help districts/schools determine eligibility supports.

Additional language options may be especially helpful in providing a more accurate reflection of a school's performance when it implements a research-based instructional model such as Dual Language Immersion.

However, since the state assessment is designed to assess the school's impact on student learning, additional languages may not further this objective as the language of instruction and assessment might differ. For example, language acquisition research points to the need for students to have access to 4–5 years of effective instruction before reaching grade-level proficiency.[12] Considering newcomers' age and developmental stage when arriving in Colorado will be critical to determining a student's ability to access the academic English language and grade-level assessment content at a given time.

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[11] Colorado Department of Education (2024)
[12] Thomas & Collier (2017)

FINDING	The state assessment's limited language options and accommodations features make it difficult for some students (e.g., MLs and/or students with disabilities) to demonstrate mastery of standards
	See Recommendations 9, 10, and 12 for solutions

Colorado public schools educate over 114,509 English learners. Sixteen districts offer dual language immersion programs where the language of instruction is not English. It is essential that students can demonstrate their knowledge of the content, separate from their understanding of English. When students are required to take a test in English, and they are not proficient in English, it is difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate their mastery of the content standards. In Colorado, we need to measure a student's understanding of English separate from their knowledge of the standards.

Accommodations and accessibility features are currently available on the state assessments to make them accessible and help all students demonstrate their mastery of the Colorado Academic Standards' expectations. Accommodations work to provide equitable access to the assessments and are available to students with disabilities and MLs who have a documented need. It is vital to ensure that students who need these accommodations are receiving them.

FINDING	Some school leaders, educators, and parents find state summative data less actionable, given the timing of receiving results
	See Recommendation 13 for solution

Given the role state assessments play in the accountability system, it is critical for results to be reported in a timely and transparent manner. School and district leaders use the data from state assessments for instructional and operational decisions and improvement planning.

Parent and community stakeholders engaged through the Task Force want the results of their students' state summative assessment results to be released faster. Currently, these results are publicly released around the same time as the state releases its accountability ratings. This occurs much later than parents would prefer, as it reduces the time they have to support their children ahead of the new school year.

In addition, if school districts use research-based practices to intervene in underperforming schools, results must be received early enough to help inform personnel and improvement efforts. For example, a school district might want to add additional personnel, change personnel or provide summer training for improvement. Because school district budgets and personnel timelines do not coincide with the release of assessment results, implementing improvement efforts is limited. Currently, schools and districts receive student-level achievement data files and aggregated summary files in June. Additional

reports are provided in July. Public release of results typically occurs in August. Districts and schools are encouraged to use their results for improvement and planning as soon as possible (currently in June/July). However, districts begin planning for the following school year much sooner than the summer.

<table>
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🔍</td><td>**Results from state assessments are a critical factor in school and district accountability, yet parents/guardians may opt their child out of assessment participation**
See Recommendations 11, 16, and 23 for solutions</td></tr>
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In 2015, Colorado adopted a law (HB 15-1323) that allowed individual parents to opt out of federally mandated state testing. This decision has created challenges with the current state and federal accountability systems implementation. Colorado's Consolidated State Plan must align with Federal accountability under ESSA and does not allow for an exception to the participation rate, including parental excusals or other nonparticipants. The state plan also must account for parent excusals along with other nonparticipants. For federal accountability, opt-outs are counted as non-participants and/or the lowest possible score. A school can have up to five percent of its students opt out of participating in assessments, and there would be no penalty for accountability purposes for the academic achievement indicator. If a school has 95 percent total participation, CDE does not have to assign the lowest possible score to any students. However, if only 85% of the students participated in the assessment, 10% would be assigned the lowest possible score on the academic achievement indicator when identifying schools for support and improvement under ESSA. Calculations are run first to identify schools based on actual performance. Then, calculations are done to adjust the scores for non-participants above 5% with the lowest possible score. Any schools identified under the second round are labeled as (their designation) followed by "due to participation."

HB 15-1323 also required school districts to adopt a policy on how parents can excuse their students from a state assessment. These policies must include information detailing how a student's parent may excuse the student from participating in one or more state assessments.[13] Additionally, this law prohibits a district or school from imposing negative consequences on students who opt out, and it also prohibits a district or school from imposing an unreasonable burden or requirement on a student that would discourage the student from taking the assessment. Since this policy was implemented, participation rates on the various state assessments have varied by district, school, grade level, and student groups for various reasons. In the 2023–24 school year, close to 115,000 students (just over 10% of students statewide), including more than 44,000 students in grades 3–8, were excused from participating in the state assessment. Of these 44,000 students in grades 3-8, over 26,000 were in middle school.

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[13] Colorado Department of Education, 2024

While not all schools and districts with low total participation result from coded parent excusals, there are schools and districts (5 districts and 46 schools based on data from 2022-23) with total participation rates at or below 25 percent. This low participation rate has resulted in the Insufficient State Data (ISD) rating or plan type. This rating/plan type is automatically assigned if the total participation rate is at or below 25 percent for both sections of the state assessment (English language arts/ reading and writing and math). Additional criteria can also result in the automatic assignment of an ISD plan type/rating (e.g., the school does not have any tested grades such as a K-2 school), and schools and districts can request an ISD plan type if they have below 85 percent total participation in state assessments through the Request to Reconsider process. The request to reconsider requires the district to demonstrate that the tested student population differs from their total student population.

There are schools and districts across the state that have a higher percentage of students who don't take the test—mainly because of organized opt-out efforts. Concentrated pockets of opt-outs skew the individual results of a school or district's data. While Colorado law does not allow schools or districts to encourage parents to opt their children out of taking the state assessment, nothing prohibits parents from organizing these types of opt-out efforts. While we identify this as a challenge, we are also aware that we are making recommendations in other places in this report that could impact this issue of opting out. Those include changing the rules for awards and the Distinction designation and changes to the state summative assessment. If these changes are implemented, the number of parents opting their students out may be reduced.

Assessments for Accountability Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to improve Colorado's required state summative assessments. They are grouped into categories, including increasing equitable access to assessments, participation in the required state summative assessments, more accurate and timely data, and some areas for further study.

Increasing Equitable Access to Assessments

	Recommendation 9: Develop assessments to assess content in languages other than English and Spanish

Create math, science, and social studies assessments in additional languages besides English and Spanish. Expand the Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) assessment beyond grades 3 and 4 and make Spanish high school-level state assessments available. Include home languages that are most represented in ML populations in Colorado. Spanish forms and local translations into other languages are already available for CMAS math, science, and social studies. Students should have access to these assessments (including the high school level state assessment exams) in additional languages rather than local agencies relying on local resources for translations. It is important to ensure that assessments are not just translated but are created to be accurate assessments in another language and are linguistically and culturally responsive. We should also make it easier for students to qualify to take assessments in other languages.

	Recommendation 10: Improve the accommodations for students by dividing the CMAS into smaller sections

Divide the CMAS assessments into sections to better evaluate the desired skills. This would allow for clearer accommodations for students. For example, within the reading assessment, include one section without accommodations to assess reading comprehension and one section with accommodations to assess listening comprehension (as required by a student's IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan).

Participation in the Required State Summative Assessments

	Recommendation 11: Clarify how schools can encourage or not discourage test participation

There needs to be clarity about what schools can and cannot do regarding encouraging and not discouraging participation in the state assessment. CDE should provide clear materials for communicating with families about the importance of the state assessments in supporting students, schools and districts and how educators can encourage participation within the boundaries of the current law. Communicate clearly what is not allowed regarding discouraging participation in the state assessment. CDE should follow up with schools and districts that are encouraging parents to opt their students out of state testing.

More Accurate and Timely Data

	Recommendation 12: Make the CMAS assessment adaptive

Make the CMAS assessment adaptive as permissible under the current ESSA requirements. Adaptive assessments present an opportunity to shift the way assessments are administered. In adaptive testing, the questions students encounter as they move through the test depend on how they answered the prior questions. Adaptive testing has the potential to assess knowledge and skills in less time and may offer an opportunity to measure individual student growth related to standards more accurately. For example, the most recent version of the digital PSAT/SAT provides a certain degree of adaptability based on student responses. In essence, an assessment can adjust the sequence of questions based on a student's correct and incorrect responses. This helps to pinpoint more precisely where a student is performing in relation to the standards and reduces test-taking time.

In addition, an adaptive CMAS assessment that may span more than one grade level should be considered so that student data results indicate which grade level the student met the grade level expectations. If the student does not receive a performance level based on grade-level expectations, this likely would require a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education if the adaptive CMAS covers grade levels below the original tested grade level (i.e., a fifth-grade student takes an adaptive assessment that covers standards within grades 4 and 5).

Consider how adaptive assessment technology might enable the state to add back the writing sub-score to state assessment reporting. A CMAS adaptive assessment, like the current PSAT/SAT, would require students, aside from those who need paper for accommodation purposes, to test on the computer. While this would reduce the number of mis-administrations and decrease the time required to produce assessment results, it could create a burden for schools with limited computer access and increase inequities. There must remain a way for students with special needs to receive accommodations, and we must be able to ensure support for schools and districts that need additional help to make this shift. This would require connectivity support, equipment improvements, and training.

	Recommendation 13: Improve the timeliness of assessment results

Action should be taken to improve the timeliness of state summative data so that it is provided quicker to school leaders, educators, and parents.

Individual student reports should be made available to families as soon as possible, even before public reporting is available. The Task Force discussed the possibility of sharing individual student results with

students and their families ahead of school and district reports (similar to what currently happens with the College Board assessments). School and district reports take longer to publish because they often require more time to put into an accessible and meaningful format.

This data, along with other local data, is needed to create school and district improvement plans, plan for appropriate professional learning, determine class placements and determine student interventions and supports.

Areas for Further Study

CDE should research and recommend action in the following areas related to assessment:

- **Continue to reflect on and adapt the state assessment to newer technologies.** Specifically, consider how technology, such as artificial intelligence, may/should impact state assessments (including scoring constructed responses).
- **Seek input on making modifications to the state's approach to non-federally required assessments, including:**
    - Maintain the Reading/Writing and Math assessments in grades 9 and 10 (PSAT 8/9 and 10), as these provide high school students with early indicators about their level of readiness and allow student growth to be reported and included within the high school and district frameworks.
    - Consider alternate approaches to meeting the federal requirement to assess grade 11 science, including embedding this assessment into the grade 11 SAT assessments, thus eliminating the grade 11 CMAS science assessment.

Public Reporting and Engagement

Several factors determine whether a state's accountability system is effectively reporting key information and adequately engaging parents, educators, policymakers and other key stakeholders. A data-driven, transparent accountability system is a core element of a great education system. Data must be timely and easily understandable to be actionable. Because different stakeholders, including school leaders, educators, parents, community members, and policymakers, all have an interest in school performance data with varied levels of understanding of the data, there should be multiple entry points to accessing the data and multiple ways of passively displaying and actively pushing out the data. There needs to be an intentional promotion of education data and a compelling "why" to engage parents and other stakeholders. A transparent accountability system with effective public reporting and engagement can result in a greater investment of time and energy from families, educators, community leaders, and policymakers in improving public schools. It is also a way to celebrate the fantastic progress in Colorado schools.

Please note: The Task Force also reviewed the state's existing stakeholder groups on the accountability system. To learn more about related findings, please see Appendix A.

The Task Force reviewed exemplary states' best practices around data reporting. Key themes that emerged are having a unified state dashboard with a clear vision for student success and corresponding indicators and having an intuitive flow for critical data to be displayed with the ability to obtain more detailed data easily.

By contrast, the initial dashboard presented on SchoolView.org does not provide an explanation or rationale for inclusion. Indicators such as attendance rates and student-teacher ratios are prominently displayed. At the same time, academic achievement and growth are unavailable without many clicks or by jumping to different versions of comprehensive dashboards on CDE's website. Different, narrowly tailored dashboards appear to be run by specific units (e.g., graduation rates). This makes it challenging to understand which dashboard should be the primary information source. In addition, no K-2 data exists for parents, community members and policymakers to review at a statewide level.

Several areas are outlined in this report that contribute to confusing data due to inconsistent variables. There is a lack of transparency regarding the comparability of schools/districts based on the lack of reporting different graduation requirements, opt-outs, insufficient data, etc. For example, CDE reports on graduation data; however, many people may not know that the actual graduation requirements across the state vary based on local decisions. So, while the graduation rate is accurately reported, it is not transparent that the bar for graduation varies across districts, with some districts having completely different requirements than others. While some of these inconsistencies are recommended in this report to be fixed, where they remain inconsistent, dashboards should make it clear when data is not comparable.

As the state develops a coherent, statewide dashboard, it will be essential to focus on key indicators that span the P-12 continuum. The Task Force also discussed creating space for local indicators to be displayed for users who want to learn about the local context, though in a way that would not confuse the state's accountability system and additional data that local districts may make available. Some, but not all, of the most essential indicators are identified in the findings below.

While Colorado reports an array of education data, several areas need improvement. Issues include accessing and understanding accountability data that the state regularly collects, as well as some stakeholders wanting access to data for informational purposes to help them be better informed about results, options and expectations (and the degree to which they vary) between districts—from early childhood through postsecondary workforce readiness.

Below are some important and representative examples:

- Colorado's SchoolView remains a difficult-to-navigate dashboard despite recent attempts to update it. Drilling down to pertinent data points, including academic achievement and growth rates, is not intuitive. Trend data is not easily accessible. When on a school district page, there is no clear way to view data for schools within the district.
- Colorado has identified strong early childhood programs as a significant factor contributing to quality schools. Yet, parents and other stakeholders find it difficult to understand progress and results.
- Parents and students have limited knowledge about the PWR opportunities that exist and how effective they are, and there is not equitable access across or within schools and districts to the variety of PWR opportunities available in Colorado. The 1215 Task Force rightfully identified that though Colorado offers many PWR programs, too often, these programs are not equitable, as not all students across the state have access to quality options. Parents and students are often unaware of what program options exist at their school, when they can access them, and how they can impact students' ability to graduate from high school with college credit or other work-based experience.

Since results from the state assessment are used in the Colorado accountability system and the extent to which students have participated in those assessments impacts the interpretation of aggregated data, CDE reports two participation rates: the total participation rate and the accountability participation rate. The total participation rate combines all the assessment records for each subject area (i.e., English language arts, math, and science) across all grade levels within a given school or district. It is included in the performance frameworks to provide context for interpreting how representative the reported results are likely to be of the entire student population. The accountability participation rate excludes

opt-outs from the numerator and denominator calculation. These rates are also included in the performance frameworks. If the district or school has accountability participation rates below 95 percent in two or more content areas, the overall rating is reduced by one level.

While parent excusals account for a large percentage of the total nonparticipants on the state assessment (about 81% of non-participants on the 2022-23 state assessment were parent excusals), there are other reasons why students may not participate or why student results may not be included in the performance framework. For example, a student who experiences a misadministration of the assessment (i.e., when a test is not administered in accordance with state guidelines) will not count as a participant.

FINDING

The labels assigned to schools and districts are confusing to stakeholders
See Recommendation 17 for solution

Schools are provided plan types with the following ratings: *Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, and Insufficient Data.* Colorado's ratings are not intuitively understandable and could be updated to help leaders, educators, parents and other stakeholders comprehend the overall data.

These ratings draw attention to plan types rather than how well the district serves its students and what types of supports are necessary for improvement. The names of these plans are confusing to communicate what they mean to local communities. The Task Force believes these labels need to better communicate to the school and district community what is happening.

Recommendations for Public Reporting and Engagement

While the Colorado public reporting system aims to be comprehensive, the Task Force identified several improvements. The following recommendations focus on the data the state should make available to all stakeholders and ways the state can make those data more purposeful, user-friendly and accessible to all.

Recommendation 14: Create one coherent statewide dashboard that includes local and statewide data aligned with statewide instructional and PWR priorities

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Initial steps should include taking inventory and conducting a landscape and taxonomy analysis of the different dashboard versions managed by CDE, determining the data points and presentation formats most useful to key stakeholders (e.g., parents, educators, community members), flagging what is duplicative, and identifying key accessibility features that would enable the dashboard to be accessible

to those with disabilities and for whom English is not their native language. This recommendation is congruent with the 1215 Task Force, which also recommended the creation of a public-facing dashboard with education and employment outcomes.[14]

The dashboard should prominently display all key indicators that map to Colorado's vision for student success and explain why those indicators matter. Where data is not comparable, the dashboard should clearly and transparently state that variables are inconsistent and, therefore, be cautious about making comparability claims. Key indicators should include, at a minimum, those outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Key Indicators for Statewide Dashboard

State Accountability Framework Data	
Important Indicators	**Notes**
State summative ratings (SPF/DPF ratings), including trends over time	● While statewide dashboards can convey a wealth of information on school and district performance, summative ratings help parents and stakeholders interpret the data easily.
Achievement and Growth data	● For all students, disaggregated by student group, with an indicator of which way the data is trending over time.
Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	● This section of reporting will need to be updated should PWR-related recommendations be implemented (e.g., moving SAT Reading/Writing and Math out of the PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator, creating a new sub-indicator, and/or re-naming a current indicator)
Additional Information: K-2 Learning Outcomes	
Important Indicators	**Notes**
Local K-2 measures as an addendum to state measures	● While the Task Force does not recommend incorporating K-2 measures into the performance frameworks (see Appendix A for additional context), it does recommend making K-2 student data available to stakeholders in a way that offers public information that is visually accessible without needing to be included in a performance framework rating. An essential consideration in designing this reporting

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[14] 1215 Task Force Report (2023, p. 9)

is to promote family engagement through details to the family.

- A grade-level disaggregated dashboard of K-2 data, particularly if it includes local assessments, can support system improvements without adding weight to the current model.
- The dashboard should be user-friendly and centrally display the percentage of students exiting READ Act against a district and state average.
- It should also include the following school-level data: whether ECE, Universal Preschool Colorado (UPC), or Pre-K is available, the Qualistar rating, if available, the percentage of students in the kindergarten classrooms who were students in UPC, TS Gold Data available for the term, five values that represent and are self-selected by each school (e.g., small class size, high mental health supports, multilingual programs, enrichment programs, etc.); and K-2 chronic absenteeism rates disaggregated between Kindergarten and a combined grades 1 and 2 category.

Additional Information: Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	
Important Indicators	Notes
Display of graduation rates on SPF/DPF	This must be consistent with data privacy rules and threshold requirements.
School and district graduation requirements	- This will provide greater transparency into the district's minimum expectations for its students, as well as which PWR opportunities individual districts are offering their students and how well they are preparing their students for postsecondary education and the workforce. - This recommendation is meant to supplement the 1215 Task Force's recommendation to keep the graduation rate in the PWR indicator, as graduating from high school is a meaningful milestone that sets students up for success in their postsecondary and workforce careers. The dropout rate should also be maintained in the PWR indicator, as it creates an essential incentive for school districts to engage and re-engage students toward completion.

Availability and outcomes of PWR programs	● Parents and communities should be able to see the options available and student success rates in those programs.
Matriculation information	● Results on the various pathways students are taking upon high school graduation (e.g., 2- and 4-year program, military, direct to industry) should be reported and disaggregated by school and/or district.
Additional Information: Local Indicators and Improvement Planning Metrics	
Important Indicators	Notes
A link to local indicators, if provided by school districts	● Note: Should disclose that these are local indicators selected by the district and are not part of the accountability frameworks since they are not comparable data points). ● While the state may provide some guidance on data integrity and transparency, the state is not responsible for validating or confirming the local data.

Additionally, where possible, the dashboard should link to resources to help stakeholders use the data (e.g., improvement planning resources linked to relevant metrics).

Given that some of the Task Force's reporting recommendations diverge from federal accountability reporting requirements, in cases where results being reported differ because of differences in Colorado and federal reporting, the dashboard should make it easy for stakeholders to see these differences and fully understand why these differences exist. For example, there could be a note next to schools identified for federal support with the federal accountability system's designations (e.g., comprehensive support, targeted support, additional targeted support and intervention) along with an explanation.

> **Recommendation 15: Enhance the user experience with reporting functionality and support that offers all stakeholders a comprehensive, accessible, and user-friendly way to utilize data**

A statewide dashboard should prioritize functionality and support that will aid all Colorado stakeholders—especially parents—in using the system. Where data is not comparable, the dashboard should clearly and transparently state that variables may be inconsistent and, therefore, data may not be comparable in aiding the public with accurately interpreting results.

Table 7

Dashboard Functionality Needs

Important Functionality and Needs	Notes
Searchability and customization	● The statewide dashboard should be easily searchable and customizable to meet the needs of different stakeholder groups (e.g., families, educators, community members). Stakeholders should be able to run customizable reports based on their own queries. All statewide, school, and district-level information should be easily searchable so that stakeholders can find the information they are looking for (e.g., schools that have math or dyslexia support and are achieving improved results) and give context for information like volatility in scores due to small numbers of students.
Efficiency of processes that schools and districts use to share data accurately	● The state should explore opportunities to support schools and districts in publicly reporting local assessment data, including district-created dashboards. The state should consider how to support districts that may not have the necessary resources to develop and create their own customized dashboards.
Training and support to stakeholders on how to utilize reporting functionality	● Include the development of tools, videos, and other options for helping stakeholders utilize data.
A public information campaign to launch and educate on the new dashboard	● In doing so, leverage media outlets, realtors, business leaders, faith leaders, and others representing local communities' cultures and language backgrounds to promote the data and tell the story of why it is essential and how stakeholders can engage with it. Encourage the use of gifts, grants, donations, and earned media to reduce fiscal burdens. Encourage districts and schools to share best practices for engaging stakeholders with the dashboard.

> ## Recommendation 16: Clarify which students count for participation so that there is more transparency in reporting

Review the process for determining which students count for participation rates and how to report better/share information about who is and is not participating in the assessment. Schools, districts, families and other stakeholders must understand who participates in the assessments and how the

resulting data is reported. This increased transparency should help interpret the data and help families see the importance of this data in determining how to support schools.

	Recommendation 17: Revise summative rating labels to improve differentiation and understandability

Colorado's ratings are neither intuitive nor provide sufficient levels of differentiation, especially at the upper end of the performance spectrum. They should be updated to help leaders, educators, parents, and other stakeholders comprehend the overall data. The Task Force was unanimous in its agreement that the names needed to be clearer but felt more time was necessary to identify the correct labels. The Task Force recommends that there be a process to research and gather stakeholder input regarding rating name changes.

Continuous Improvement

The following section includes all aspects of the continuous improvement process that is part of Colorado's accountability system. It begins with Improvement Planning, which ALL schools and districts participate in. The following section is Supports and Interventions, provided to schools and districts needing holistic or targeted support. Finally, we discuss awards recognizing and celebrating the schools and districts performing as expected or beyond.

Improvement Planning

Improvement planning is a foundational education practice. As part of the Education Accountability Act of 2009, Colorado requires all districts to conduct an improvement planning process annually to align efforts to "ensure all students exit the K12 education system are ready for postsecondary education, and/or to be successful in the workforce, earning a living wage immediately upon graduation."[15] As a state, we have not yet reached this goal due partly to varying requirements, opportunities, and resources among schools and districts. Colorado's improvement planning process allows schools and districts to reflect on how their major improvement strategies helped them meet the accountability requirements associated with their plan-type assignment and to plan improvements for the next year.

All Colorado's schools and districts—whether underperforming or exceeding expectations—participate in continuous improvement planning to manage their performance efforts. For example, schools that are exceeding expectations can use this process to help clarify priorities and reach new heights. A robust improvement planning process should require a continuous improvement cycle to effectively engage schools in ongoing improvement efforts that lead to improved student outcomes. By participating in this process, schools and districts provide transparency for stakeholders to see the focus areas. Participating in this process can also lead to early interventions for struggling students and support for schools in

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[15] Colorado Department of Education (2024)

danger of going on the accountability clock. Priority should be placed on providing interventions, support, and technical assistance to schools before they are placed on the clock.

The improvement planning process consists of several components, summarized in a public-facing Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). As part of the improvement planning process, schools and districts must:

- Analyze their current performance on the state assessment in the spring alongside previous assessment years' data to identify trends in performance;
- analyze the performance of student groups, which is essential for considering the efficacy of strategies being implemented;
- develop a set of major improvement strategies that are aligned with the results of their performance;
- develop accompanying action steps and implementation benchmarks, which are the adult actions that indicate progress toward implementing the strategy and
- establish long-term and interim goals to monitor the efficacy of the process over time.

Colorado's improvement planning process is intended to promote public visibility and transparency, offers schools and districts flexibility in what to prioritize and how to achieve improvements, helps schools and districts remain in compliance with state and federal requirements, and provides detailed plans to help improve schools and districts on the accountability clock. However, some of the data does not capture the complexity and nuance of the numbers behind the data. For example, graduation requirements are a local control decision, yet our system reports graduation rates as if they are all the same, which can be misleading.

> **FINDING**
>
> **Educators and leaders have noted that completing the state-required improvement planning template is cumbersome and incorrectly assume that completion of the template is completion of the improvement planning process**
> *See Recommendation 24 and Areas for Further Study for solutions*

CDE has already embarked on a process to streamline this form and will make a new UIP template available for school districts in the 2024–2025 school year. In addition, CDE has provided flexibility related to uploading other action planning documents instead of completing the entire UIP, allowing for submitting 90-day plans instead.

Though CDE has already updated the template, this Task Force believes additional changes could be made to ensure improvement planning focuses not only on compliance but actual continuous improvement, which will allow educators to link improvement planning processes to improved student outcomes. In particular, the UIPs could be more user-friendly to allow for greater engagement with the plans.

The Task Force also believes that the connection between district improvement planning and school improvement planning varies a great deal depending on the size of the district. For example, in small districts with only a couple of schools, the district improvement plan is tightly aligned to the school improvement plan. In a very large district, these processes are quite different, and a different template might be required.

CDE should continue to engage in a regular cycle of stakeholder input and revisions to the improvement planning template, including how plans for schools and districts could be differentiated to support improvement efforts more effectively. Additional modifications to the template may be considered in the future based on adopted recommendations from the Task Force. Because CDE is administering an optional, new streamlined UIP template for schools and districts this coming year, the Task Force is not recommending any specific changes to the template at this time. However, CDE should seek to incorporate regular feedback to improve this template, with an emphasis on making the template more accessible and user-friendly to external audiences, including teachers, parents, and school boards.

In order for educators to see the accountability system as a continuous improvement process, there has to be a focus on it year-round. It cannot just be about completing the plan once a year. It needs to be the center of driving practices toward improvement. The more invested the community is in the plan, the more likely there will be results.

> **FINDING**
>
> **Information to inform improvement planning is not provided in a way that is easily understood and actionable for school and district stakeholders; it is also difficult for stakeholders to monitor progress, resulting in uneven implementation of plans and strategies across school districts**
> *See Recommendation 18 for solution*

While this Task Force agrees that the current process is meant to promote visibility and transparency, this does not necessarily mean that the information is provided in a way that is easily understood and actionable for school and district stakeholders. It is important for stakeholders to be engaged with this process and to understand school and district strengths and areas for improvement. It is also important for there to be a clear way to monitor the success of plan implementation.

The review process does not currently include UIPs for all schools.   CDE offers feedback on UIPs if the school or district is on the accountability clock, but for these entities, feedback is not offered until months after submission. While this Task Force does not advocate for increased state oversight of the improvement planning process, resources should be streamlined to provide targeted resources and support for those districts and schools most in need of implementing effective improvement strategies. This would help ensure the improvement planning process leads to improved student outcomes.

Current resources limit support and interventions only for schools and districts already on the clock

See Recommendations 19 & 20 for solutions

Limited supports and interventions are available to schools and districts that are in danger of not meeting expectations. Some grant monies may be available, but the first priority is to provide funding to schools and districts with the most significant needs, as identified from the accountability frameworks. SB22-137 expanded access to school transformation grant programming to schools and districts in improvement in an effort to prioritize proactive engagement. However, the need is so great for the identified schools that there have not been enough resources to flow to sites that have the potential of being identified.

When schools and districts begin to struggle, they move into a Turnaround and Priority Improvement category and are put "on the accountability clock." CDE staff provide valuable expertise and technical assistance to this turnaround work. Schools and districts on the clock should receive intervention as early as possible so they can effectively move off the clock, and the supports they receive should be continuous and coherent as well as evidence-based.

Supports and Interventions

When schools are identified as priority improvement or turnaround, they are placed on the accountability clock. Below, you will see the current progression of schools on the clock.

Figure 2
Current Progression of Schools on Accountability Clock
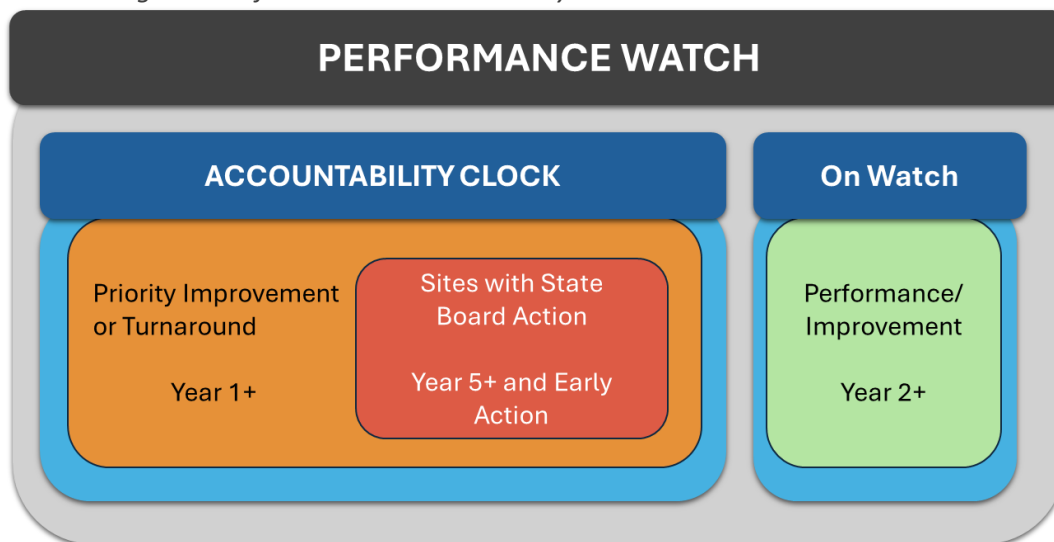
Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

In the fall of 2019, the state began implementing HB 17-1355, which made adjustments to the accountability clock (e.g., two years to exit the clock after at least two years on the clock and introduced the concept of On Watch). One important aim is to provide these schools and districts with resources and support that will sustain their progress and success.

The accountability frameworks provided the state with the opportunity to recognize successful schools and districts and serve as a model while also identifying struggling districts and schools so that they may receive additional support and increased monitoring.

Table 8
Distribution of 2024 Preliminary District Ratings

	Number of Districts	Percent of Districts
Distinction	17	9%
Accredited	78	42%
Improvement Plan	54	29%
Priority Improvement Plan	8	4%
Turnaround Plan	3	2%
Insufficient State Data	24	13%
Total	**184**	

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

Table 9
Distribution of Preliminary School Plan Types

	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools	
Performance Plan	1125	64%	
Improvement Plan	325	19%	
Priority Improvement Plan	120	7%	* Note that 94 AECs are not included in these counts as ratings are still pending
Turnaround Plan	47	3%	
Insufficient State Data	109	6%	
New School	8	<1%	
School Closed	13	1%	
Total	**1747**	--	

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

CDE has created a Theory of Action that guides its actions in providing supports and interventions for schools and districts. However, if the CDE offers this support and the schools and districts opt-out, this theory of action is not likely to be realized. To learn more about CDE's Theory of Action, see Appendix A.

It is important to remember that districts play an important role in school improvement efforts, including a responsibility to sustain them after grant funds directed for school improvement efforts to move schools off the clock expire. Schools and districts can also learn significantly from others by establishing structures like a community of practice to share exemplars and best practices.

The Governor has made financial investments to bolster proactive interventions during the last two years. The Task Force hopes that this investment will continue. The Task Force also discussed the need for the state to intervene before schools and districts enter Performance Watch. When early interventions are not enough, the state needs to be able to make stronger, bolder moves to turn around schools and districts on the accountability clock.

While there has been some success, we are failing to meet the needs of ALL our students. We must be bold and reimagine solutions for turnaround efforts in schools and districts so that all students experience success. The Task Force recognizes the logic within CDE's Theory of Action and has identified several areas to accelerate bold, urgent support and interventions when schools are on the clock.

> **FINDING**
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>
> **The State Board of Education (SBE) has limited tools for intervention with struggling districts and schools, and the tools do not include designing and implementing a robust improvement plan**
> *See Recommendations 22, 23, 26, and Areas for Further Study for solutions*

Two intersecting challenges need to be addressed: 1) Having the SBE approve a robust improvement plan presented by the district is not required, and 2) The SBE options for directed action are limited and may not correspond to the district or school's actual improvement plan components. Even when a school or district advances to Year 5 or higher on the clock, the options for the State Board of Education are limited (i.e., Management, Charter Conversion, Innovation, Community School Conversion, Closure, District Reorganization/Consolidation, Removal of Accreditation) and should be reviewed or expanded. The state review process is also limited. For instance, it only allows the state to consider the school and district leadership and capacity but does not give it the authority to demand new leadership. It is appropriate to consider the development and implementation of interventions schools and districts may take before the State Board intervenes.

Awards

Awards are perhaps one of the least understood and most underutilized aspects of our state's accountability system. Most Coloradans do not recognize awards as part of the system because when we think of "accountability," we focus more on consequences than recognition for success.

However, there is potential for awards to become a far more powerful component of our state's overall accountability system. This includes elevating the prominence of awards to feel more relevant and have

them serve as more meaningful tools for learning best practices. Many great things are happening in our schools, and if we can better leverage awards to highlight these successes, they can become a meaningful driver of change across our state.

<table>
<tr><td>FINDING
🔍</td><td>**There are success stories in our schools that should be more widely recognized and celebrated**
See Recommendations 27, 28, and 29 for solutions</td></tr>
</table>

Accountability does not always have to be about consequences. People are often far more motivated and driven by recognition. Awards should occupy a far more prominent place in our accountability system so that schools get the recognition they deserve. This may necessitate streamlining our current awards so that they are much more focused and, therefore, better understood. One of the most important things we can elevate as a state is those "off-the-curve" schools that are getting the best results for students who have historically been least well-served by our public education system. These schools are changing life trajectories, and we should all seek to learn from them and build on their successes. If better leveraged, awards could be a powerful tool for change by capturing, documenting, and disseminating the best practices that contributed to their success.

Awards should be strategically utilized to elevate other "less tangible" aspects and priorities of public education and values of the state, such as success in overcoming chronic absenteeism and setting up career-connected learning opportunities, etc. Many of the state's current awards focus on achievement and/or growth, with some also including consideration for special populations, for example, MLs or students who are FRL Eligible. A summary table of all awards currently offered by CDE can be found in Appendix K.

<table>
<tr><td>FINDING
🔍</td><td>**There is currently no prohibition against awards going to schools and districts with either low test participation or low performance across disaggregated student groups**
See Recommendation 29 for solution</td></tr>
</table>

Districts with low state assessment participation rates or high variances between results of groups of students (such as student groups historically underserved by the state's system compared to student groups adequately served) can still receive the state's prestigious Distinction rating. Participation and equitable outcomes should be necessary preconditions for award consideration. The Task Force asked CDE for a complete list of the most recent Distinction districts and how those districts' ratings might change when new business rules exclude districts that do not meet criteria for participation and disaggregated student performance. CDE provided the Task Force with a list of districts that received a 2023 Distinction rating but did not meet the new stated criteria. In addition, CDE provided a spreadsheet that delineated how the sites met or did not meet the criteria. Additional data points

included enrollment ranges for poverty and students with disabilities. The Task Force learned that the current accountability system considers district data over a three-year period, and this may allow a district to attain Distinction even if it does not meet one of the stated criteria in a given year. The Task Force also considered whether Distinction should be an option for school districts where the opportunities are minimal for students in terms of offered courses, technology, concurrent enrollment, CTE courses, co-curricular programs, etc.

> **FINDING**
>
> **The current awards we have are disparate and disconnected; as a result, it can be challenging to properly elevate them and effectively use them to tell the story of the positive outcomes happening in our schools and across our state**
> *See Recommendation 28 for solution*

Right now, it seems that awards are not connected to any concrete framework or vision for the state. Just like we have a clear structure for intervening with struggling schools and districts, we should have a clear structure for when and how we award success. The State Board and CDE should be clear in their vision for success so that all actions of the accountability system and the awards that are bestowed as a result align with this concrete vision for education.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

Given the stated concerns, the Task Force recommends the following actions regarding the continuous improvement process: improvement planning, supports and interventions, and awards.

Improvement Planning

> **Recommendation 18: Provide guidance to local boards on monitoring the improvement planning process**

CDE should work with CASB to provide guidance to local boards on when and how to review and monitor the improvement planning process. This will help to enhance implementation consistency and fidelity while avoiding increased oversight and compliance requirements from CDE. It will also involve the district and stakeholders (including SAC/ DAC) more in its improvement planning efforts and allow for UIPs to be reviewed in more public settings.

Supports and Interventions

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>**Recommendation 19: Implement a system of early identification and intervention**</td></tr>
</table>

Develop and implement an Early Indicators of Distress Evaluation recommended for all Prior to Clock schools that appear to be trending towards Year 1 identification and required for Year 1 schools likely to progress to Year 2. CDE may require a Diagnostic Review for these Year 1 Schools by a third party and/or with CDE. A district may, on its own, decide to conduct a self-assessment with an external reviewer(s) that have been vetted by CDE and have evidence of success.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>**Recommendation 20: Provide more support to schools starting in Year 2**</td></tr>
</table>

Beginning in Year 2, on the clock, the CDE will offer iterative support and ongoing feedback to schools and districts, beginning with the development of a comprehensive school improvement plan. The Plan will be reviewed, and CDE staff will provide feedback. In partnership with the District, CDE may make recommended modifications to the School Improvement Plan. The CDE recommendations will align with the Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement that address the resources, training, high-quality curriculum and materials, potential external partnerships, and potential partnerships with neighboring schools and districts. CDE needs to consider the district as a change agent and as the lever of change to improve the schools' outcomes.

Schools on the clock may be encouraged to include local data points such as local assessments for state board-directed action. For schools in years one and two on the accountability clock, the state will prioritize the grant to support using local assessment data to drive improvements to exit the clock.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>**Recommendation 21: Support schools and districts pursuing bold solutions to turnaround**</td></tr>
</table>

Time and resources cannot be wasted when supporting schools that need to be turned around. Many schools and districts around the country, and right here in Colorado, have turned around their low performance. CDE must design budgetary expectations for school turnaround and implement a funding sustainability plan and a plan to sustain efforts once funding is exhausted. They should drive resources to the schools most in need by ensuring the district plan details the allocation of resources in this way. The Legislature should allow School Transformation Grant funding to support the school's turnaround efforts and the district's efforts and vice versa. Consider adding funds under the statute that directs CDE

to "Support school districts, the institute, and charter schools in providing educator professional development and transforming instruction in public schools that are required to adopt priority improvement or turnaround plans for the immediate or preceding school year" to allow creativity in school improvement.

Some examples of plans that schools and districts could consider for additional funds include, but are not limited to:

- Management restructuring—including, but not limited to, changing leadership roles, bringing in new talent, making state school and district turnaround leader pools available for districts, establishing state-vetted partnerships with external support or management organizations, and enhancing governance practices.
- Creating a talent pipeline–Other states pay the salary of vetted turnaround leaders so schools can use their PPR on other activities. Colorado should intentionally explore what role the state can play around 1) leadership development (develop a turnaround leader pipeline) and (2) attracting talent, particularly in schools/districts on the clock (bonus/stipends for teachers working in schools on the clock.)
- Asset Restructuring—divesting underperforming programs and merging with other educational institutions.
- Collaborative Problem-Solving—involving community members in identifying problems and co-creating solutions; collaborating with community partners to share resources.
- Designing budgetary expectations for school turnaround and implementing a funding sustainability plan.
- Driving resources to the schools most in need.
- Ensuring the district plan details allocating resources to address the need.

Recommendation 22: Require schools and districts in Years 4 and 5 to bring a CDE-vetted plan that the State Board of Education approves and monitors the effectiveness of the plan

The plan must have both short-term objectives and measurable benchmarks, as well as yearly benchmarks for evaluation. It must also include clear budget allocations to support the turnaround needs of the district's identified schools and a financial sustainability plan. Consider the plan development and implementation of interventions schools and districts may take before the State Board intervenes.

Recommendation 23: Require schools and districts with "Insufficient Data: Low Participation" to create a corrective action plan

Schools and districts that have low enough participation in the state assessment that they receive a designation as "Insufficient data: Low Participation" will need to create a corrective action plan that is submitted to CDE. Areas that should be considered in this plan might include: What are you doing to educate your community about the importance of the test and encourage test participation? What are you doing to explain the implications of low participation rates? What are you doing to ensure staff are not discouraging participation? How are you working with organized external opt-out campaigns to ensure they have information on the importance of the state assessment? If, after three years, the school or district still receives this designation, they would need to come before the State Board of Education with their Corrective Action Plan.

Recommendation 24: Provide more professional learning according to school and district plans

Require CDE to analyze the Year 1+ School and District UIP strategies and data to determine what statewide professional learning and resources districts should consider as they implement their UIPs and to develop and support districts in accessing these resources. This would allow more informed planning and support for schools and districts.

Recommendation 25: Conduct an evaluation of external managers and CDE's management of the external management process

The CDE should be required to conduct an evaluation of external managers and the return on investment (cost of management vs. change in performance) to districts and schools, as well as how the CDE manages the external management process (e.g., Vet the partners and act as the contracting entity, as well as increase the ability/authority of the state agency to regularly check in with external partners on the progress of the end-of-clock pathway). The evaluation may include, but is not limited to, determining where external management has been effective and what components of evaluation were in place for effective management to have occurred. Based on this evaluation, districts may consider external management as a pathway if they, too, have the essential components for effective management to be in place. Consider providing state-pre-qualified providers and a state-operated contract agreement to support districts accessing providers.

Recommendation 26: Require schools and districts with State Board Action to convene and learn from their peers regularly

The legislature should require schools and districts with state board action to meet with, learn from, and share their progress with their peers. This could be done with a statewide convening or smaller

communities of practice. Schools should present their plan and the progress made toward their plan to one another. This holds schools accountable for reporting their progress and allows schools to learn from one another. This could be guided by the tenets of the Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement, and schools should be taught to consider how the 90-day short cycle planning, not just the 1-year plan, can be leveraged to move the needle.

Additionally, these check-ins should be attended by a team that includes the principal, superintendent, and/or principal supervisor district leader, with others required depending on the plan's contents.

The State Board of Education should delegate authority to CDE to approve small changes to SBE-approved plans that do not rise to the level of a formal board hearing. These plans must evolve and be adjusted as conditions in the school or district change. Flexibility will ensure that these plans are living and breathing documents that drive continuous improvement in the schools and districts. CDE should be required to provide regular updates to the state and local boards about changes that have been approved to provide transparency.

Table 10

Summary of Proposed Progression of Supports and Interventions

Prior to Clock
- Participate in the Early Indicators of Distress Evaluation.

Year 1
- Participate in a Diagnostic Review Self-Assessment.

Years 2-3
- School Improvement Plan submitted to CDE to determine recommendations.
- Plan defines the resources, training, curriculum, materials, external partners, etc.
- School holds community meeting to discuss plan and progress. CDE monitors plan.
- If CDE plan recommendations are followed, funding with District match awarded. If plan recommendations are not followed, no funding awarded (grant/ innovation funds, etc.).

Years 4-5
- School Improvement Plan submitted to CDE to determine recommendations.
- Plan defines the resources, training, curriculum, materials, external partners, etc.
- School and/or District holds community meetings to discuss plan and progress. CDE monitors plan.
- If CDE plan recommendations are followed, funding with District match awarded. If plan recommendations are not followed, no funding awarded (grant/ innovation funds, etc.).
- Participate in the State Review Panel (SRP) process.
- Year 4 schools and districts may request Early Action from the State Board of Education.

Recommendations for Awards

	Recommendation 27: Provide additional benefits for those receiving awards

To make awards more attractive and compelling, offer additional benefits for districts and schools that receive them. This could include statewide recognition, priority points on grants, priority participation in task forces and CDE advisory groups, presenting to districts, etc.

	Recommendation 28: Focus awards on state priorities and values

Target awards to ensure maximum impact and focus on state priorities and values. To the greatest possible extent, awards should be coherent with the accountability system. The awards should clearly focus on schools and districts achieving the best results for historically underserved students and families. The Governor's Bright Spot award or CDE's Connect for Success program could be strong models for this recommendation. We should consider including less tangible or leading indicators for academic achievement.

	Recommendation 29: Conduct and share research on best practices in Colorado schools

Ask CDE or others to research, document, disseminate, and reward the best practices in award-winning schools and districts, particularly those outperforming other demographically similar peers. Some examples of how CDE could do this include:

- Expand the Connect for Success program so that more schools and districts may partner with peers to improve student outcomes. Based on the High Achieving Schools study, Connect for Success is a service that supports participants in visiting High-Achieving Schools.
- Expand the Transformation Network so that more schools and districts may benefit from proven strong research-based practices in effective turnaround strategies.

Consider how to share further effective practices across the state, including, but not limited to, researching and evaluating the effective practices and strategies used by schools and districts that came off the clock and remained off the clock so that these systems are elevated and used as examples for other districts.

Recommendation 30: Change the rules on how districts can receive a Distinction designation

Implement business rules for awards eligibility that address when a district should be eligible to receive a Distinction designation.

Districts with low participation levels in state assessments can still receive a Distinction rating. Similarly, districts with overall high growth and achievement scores but low scores for specific student groups can also receive a Distinction rating. While this underlying disaggregated data is visible and present to the public, the effects of these scores essentially mask student group results behind a school or district's overall performance.

To make the awarding of a Distinction rating more centered on improving student results, the group recommends a new set of standard business rules that must be met to receive the Distinction rating. These include:

- Earn Sufficient points on the DPF to earn a Distinction rating.
- Student participation rates on assessments must be at least 85 percent (students that actually took the test)
- The "all students" group receives a rating of at least "meets" for academic growth
- The "all students" group receives a rating of at least "approaching" for academic achievement
- No individual student groups receive a "does not meet" rating for academic growth. And if we use a "super sub-group," no individual student groups have a median growth percentile (MGP) less than 35.

When a district has missed a Distinction rating because of low participation, be transparent, adding "due to low participation." This is to be transparent in reporting and to encourage participation. There could be further communication to families about this, saying that we may have received a Distinction rating, but we do not know because of low participation rates.

Areas for Further Study

- **Consider expanding the purpose of the State Review Panel (SRP).** These reviews should focus on being diagnostic in addition to evaluative. The SRP should include additional meaningful data in its report so that the SBE may best evaluate the Plan and/or identify the best directive action. Research whether SRP should evaluate holistic district systems, including budget, governance, operations, facilities, and enrollment patterns that go beyond academics. For schools and districts, at the end of the clock, the SRP should be assessing if the right district conditions are in place to foster success and, if not, diagnosing what the district can focus on to improve and take action, such as a change in leadership. This should all get reported back

to the State Board so that the results of the SRP district system evaluation can drive the supports/interventions. This would require a statutory change.

- **Monitor the use of the new improvement planning template to ensure it meets the needs of the schools and districts and continue to make improvements as needed.**

Accreditation

The Education Accountability Act of 2009 (S.B. 09-163) and H.B. 18-1355 authorize CDE to conduct an annual review of the performance of public schools and districts in the state. Based upon that evaluation, the Department then makes recommendations to the State Board of Education concerning the type of school improvement plan to be implemented in each school and the accreditation category and improvement plan for each district. The process for determining each district's initial accreditation rating, each school's initial plan type, and the process for submitting district and school plans are outlined in the Colorado District Accountability Handbook.

To learn more about what the Task Force studied regarding the current Colorado Accreditation System, see Appendix A.

If the accreditation of districts and schools in Colorado remains fully dependent on student outcomes as calculated in the performance frameworks, then an examination of the accreditation system should focus solely on improving the performance framework calculations and resulting assigned labels. The recommendations for the performance frameworks must be considered, and changes must be made before considering how and to what degree the performance frameworks should be used in accrediting districts and schools in Colorado.

The Task Force felt strongly that the accreditation process could not be thoroughly evaluated until the recommendations mentioned above were implemented and their impact evaluated. The Task Force believes that the next step would be to examine the accreditation process in light of any approved and implemented changes. Therefore, the only recommendation in this area is for further study at a later date to determine what should be done to better ensure the accreditation process is effective and helpful.

Areas for Further Study

- Once all improvements to the rest of the accountability system are made, conduct a group study on aligning and improving the accreditation system.

IV.   Conclusion

The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap to build on the successes of and improve Colorado's accountability system to benefit all learners across this state's diverse school communities. The Task Force encourages the Legislature, State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education, and all stakeholders to consider these recommendations and work steadfastly to implement them while considering how they may depend on and influence one another in practice.

The Task Force's rigorous work, detailed in this report, provides an exemplar of how stakeholders with different perspectives and backgrounds can work together in good faith to support all Colorado students.

> *"The Task Force members truly listened to each other and actively sought common ground. They modeled what is needed in our state (and country) to make progress on behalf of our children."*
>
> *~ Task Force member*

The Task Force looks forward to working with the Legislature, State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education, and other entities to implement and advance these critical recommendations.

V. Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Insights

District and School Performance Frameworks

Click here to return to the District and School Performance Frameworks findings and recommendations section.

Background on Colorado's threshold rules to inform accountability reporting and results. Colorado adopted minimum numbers for accountability reporting and results under its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Flexibility Waiver after in-depth data analyses by Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff and in consultation with CDE's Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). Moving forward with its ESSA plan, CDE consulted extensively with stakeholders from large and small districts, parents, advocacy groups, teachers, and school administrators through its Listening Tour, Accountability Spoke Committee, Hub Committee, and public survey responses to Colorado's State Plan. Concerted efforts to strike a balance between as much accountability for schools and disaggregated groups as possible while maintaining student data privacy and statistical reliability yielded renewed support for the current 16 (achievement and graduation rate) and 20 (growth) minimums.[16]

Estimate of how much overall data is masked. CDE provided the analysis below in response to a request by Task Force members to share an estimate of how much overall data is masked (i.e., what percentage of the overall student population) as a result of current n-size practices.

Achievement indicator. Across all Achievement indicator tests, 98% and 100% of students are represented when examining the "All Students" group. The percentages of schools represented are somewhat lower, ranging between about 81% and 95% using single-year data. Multi-year aggregations increase this range to about 83% - 97% of schools. When looking at demographic data at the student level, rates are similar for students who are Free/Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) Eligible and Students of Color. This is intuitive given that these are relatively large student groups. At the school level, we do find that the rate of schools being represented in the data for these groups with current minimum N-size restrictions is notably lower, particularly for single-year CMAS Science and PSAT data. Because Students on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Multilingual Learners (MLs) comprise relatively small student group populations, we see more substantial differences in representation for these groups. Ranges are between 86% - 91% at the single-year student level for most tests and 42% - 64% at the single-year school level. CMAS science has notably lower rates of representation due to substantial non-participation.

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[16] Colorado Department of Education (2023)

Table 11

Student and School Counts for Achievement Indicator[17]

Student Counts and Percent Represented w/ Miminum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students		FRL Eligible		Students on IEPs		Minority Students		Multilingual Learners	
		N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16
1 Year	CMAS ELA	316,402	99.8%	142,499	98.8%	40,981	87.8%	154,242	98.8%	54,731	91.1%
1 Year	CMAS Math	319,542	99.8%	144,547	98.8%	41,171	88.0%	156,981	98.8%	57,909	91.8%
1 Year	CMAS Science	135,782	97.9%	61,878	89.4%	16,314	32.7%	69,327	91.9%	22,914	74.0%
1 Year	PSAT ELA	109,637	99.4%	45,060	97.8%	10,606	86.0%	52,891	97.8%	12,733	91.8%
1 Year	PSAT Math	110,451	99.4%	45,564	97.8%	10,614	86.0%	53,650	97.9%	13,545	92.4%
3 Year	CMAS ELA	951,283	100.0%	383,380	99.8%	119,519	98.6%	459,660	99.8%	165,236	98.4%
3 Year	CMAS Math	957,242	100.0%	387,237	99.8%	119,802	98.7%	464,980	99.8%	171,779	98.5%
3 Year	CMAS Science	135,782	97.9%	61,878	89.4%	16,314	32.7%	69,327	91.9%	22,914	74.0%
3 Year	PSAT ELA	329,462	99.9%	116,279	99.4%	30,676	96.3%	155,853	99.5%	38,920	97.5%
3 Year	PSAT Math	331,391	99.9%	117,527	99.4%	30,699	96.3%	157,652	99.6%	40,847	97.7%

School Counts and Percent Represented w/ Miminum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students		FRL Eligible		Students on IEPs		Minority Students		Multilingual Learners	
		N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16	N_TOT	PCT_N16
1 Year	CMAS ELA	1,750	94.9%	1,729	86.4%	1,693	64.3%	1,729	84.3%	1,510	51.7%
1 Year	CMAS Math	1,751	94.8%	1,730	86.3%	1,693	64.6%	1,730	84.3%	1,516	53.4%
1 Year	CMAS Science	2,188	83.1%	2,122	57.2%	2,003	11.7%	2,107	61.7%	1,647	28.6%
1 Year	PSAT ELA	507	81.1%	496	69.2%	452	42.7%	494	64.0%	365	44.1%
1 Year	PSAT Math	507	81.3%	496	69.2%	452	42.7%	494	64.0%	367	45.5%
3 Year	CMAS ELA	1,761	97.3%	1,747	93.3%	1,725	87.9%	1,754	91.8%	1,597	74.6%
3 Year	CMAS Math	1,761	97.2%	1,747	93.2%	1,725	88.1%	1,754	91.7%	1,603	75.1%
3 Year	CMAS Science	2,188	83.1%	2,122	57.2%	2,003	11.7%	2,107	61.7%	1,647	28.6%
3 Year	PSAT ELA	518	91.9%	505	82.0%	486	63.6%	514	79.4%	419	58.2%
3 Year	PSAT Math	518	91.9%	505	82.0%	486	63.6%	514	79.6%	422	58.5%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

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[17] In this report, the term "Students of Color" is used instead of "Minority Students." However, the term "Minority Students" is used in the table above, and other graphs and tables throughout this report, as "Minority Students" is the official federal language.

Growth indicator. Growth data largely reflects similar trends as Achievement for the "All Students" group and, to some extent, for FRL Eligible students and Students of Color. Student-level representation rates are substantially lower for MLs and particularly for Students on IEPs. This may be due to the need for multiple consecutive years of data to calculate growth scores. Correspondingly, school-level representation for Growth is somewhat lower than for Achievement, especially for these student groups.

Table 12

Student and School Counts for Growth Indicator

Student Counts and Percent Represented w/ Miminum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students		FRL Eligible		Students on IEPs		Minority Students		Multilingual Learners	
		N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20
1 Year	CMAS ELA	241,338	99.5%	106,790	95.8%	28,631	58.5%	116,384	96.7%	40,033	83.5%
1 Year	CMAS Math	244,494	99.5%	109,406	96.0%	28,923	58.4%	119,401	96.9%	43,378	85.5%
1 Year	PSAT/SAT ELA	97,356	98.9%	36,909	95.3%	7,257	72.8%	45,656	96.6%	9,571	84.6%
1 Year	PSAT/SAT Math	141,197	99.4%	55,797	97.5%	11,323	84.4%	67,499	97.8%	15,758	91.5%
1 Year	WIDA	66,495	88.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Year	CMAS ELA	596,483	99.9%	240,332	99.2%	69,005	91.9%	283,735	99.3%	99,685	94.5%
3 Year	CMAS Math	566,128	99.9%	232,428	99.1%	65,728	91.5%	273,218	99.3%	100,819	94.8%
3 Year	PSAT/SAT ELA	277,329	99.8%	87,441	98.8%	19,946	90.6%	124,898	99.2%	26,876	95.2%
3 Year	PSAT/SAT Math	397,789	99.9%	132,511	99.3%	30,698	94.9%	183,051	99.5%	43,687	97.3%
3 Year	WIDA	179,204	96.9%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

School Counts and Percent Represented w/ Miminum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students		FRL Eligible		Students on IEPs		Minority Students		Multilingual Learners	
		N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20	N_TOT	PCT_N20
1 Year	CMAS ELA	1,735	92.0%	1,705	74.4%	1,673	27.7%	1,702	75.4%	1,476	37.1%
1 Year	CMAS Math	1,735	92.1%	1,705	75.0%	1,673	28.2%	1,702	75.8%	1,480	39.8%
1 Year	PSAT/SAT ELA	505	77.4%	486	59.3%	446	30.5%	488	58.2%	366	32.2%
1 Year	PSAT/SAT Math	509	80.9%	495	67.5%	461	40.8%	495	63.4%	381	41.5%
1 Year	WIDA	1,885	41.9%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Year	CMAS ELA	1,746	95.9%	1,722	87.9%	1,696	69.5%	1,732	86.8%	1,548	57.8%
3 Year	CMAS Math	1,745	95.6%	1,722	87.1%	1,699	69.5%	1,729	86.9%	1,550	58.8%
3 Year	PSAT/SAT ELA	511	88.5%	499	77.6%	473	50.7%	503	76.5%	412	49.3%
3 Year	PSAT/SAT Math	518	90.4%	507	80.7%	487	59.8%	512	79.5%	427	55.7%
3 Year	WIDA	1,976	63.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

PWR indicator. For PWR, we observe similar rates for "All Students" and FRL Eligible students across most sub-indicators but much greater variability when examining the smaller student groups. SAT representativeness for students on IEPs and MLs is considerably lower than other student groups, for example, particularly at the school level.

Table 13

Student and School Counts for PWR Indicator

Student Counts and Percent Represented w/ Mimimum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students N_TOT	All Students PCT_N16	FRL Eligible N_TOT	FRL Eligible PCT_N16	Students on IEPs N_TOT	Students on IEPs PCT_N16	Minority Students N_TOT	Minority Students PCT_N16	Multilingual Learners N_TOT	Multilingual Learners PCT_N16
1 Year	Dropout Rate	330,436	100.0%	120,154	99.6%	37,417	97.3%	168,056	99.7%	33,044	97.1%
1 Year	Graduation Rate	67,747	100.0%	31,452	98.8%	7,249	88.4%	32,072	99.7%	8,749	91.6%
1 Year	Matriculation Rate	61,860	98.8%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 Year	SAT ELA	54,636	98.0%	20,930	92.7%	4,498	68.9%	26,007	95.1%	5,209	79.3%
1 Year	SAT Math	55,007	98.0%	21,182	92.7%	4,506	69.0%	26,343	95.1%	5,576	79.8%
3 Year	Dropout Rate	977,452	100.0%	328,853	100.0%	107,659	99.5%	484,730	100.0%	96,224	99.1%
3 Year	Graduation Rate	153,202	100.0%	69,339	100.0%	17,167	98.4%	72,347	100.0%	20,632	97.9%
3 Year	Matriculation Rate	184,555	99.9%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Year	SAT ELA	161,488	99.7%	52,223	98.1%	12,915	87.5%	75,015	98.6%	15,736	93.1%
3 Year	SAT Math	162,312	99.7%	52,750	98.1%	12,934	87.6%	75,768	98.6%	16,556	93.5%

School Counts and Percent Represented w/ Mimimum N Size Suppression

Year Span	Measure	All Students N_TOT	All Students PCT_N16	FRL Eligible N_TOT	FRL Eligible PCT_N16	Students on IEPs N_TOT	Students on IEPs PCT_N16	Minority Students N_TOT	Minority Students PCT_N16	Multilingual Learners N_TOT	Multilingual Learners PCT_N16
1 Year	Dropout Rate	523	98.3%	517	88.8%	511	71.6%	522	87.9%	436	59.9%
1 Year	Graduation Rate	508	87.0%	504	68.9%	493	38.3%	500	68.2%	445	37.3%
1 Year	Matriculation Rate	503	82.1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 Year	SAT ELA	505	73.1%	481	53.6%	422	27.5%	477	55.8%	333	30.0%
1 Year	SAT Math	505	73.1%	481	53.6%	422	27.5%	477	55.8%	337	30.3%
3 Year	Dropout Rate	525	99.2%	522	95.0%	519	86.3%	524	95.4%	464	71.1%
3 Year	Graduation Rate	508	96.5%	504	89.7%	493	64.7%	500	83.2%	447	58.4%
3 Year	Matriculation Rate	507	94.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3 Year	SAT ELA	509	89.4%	495	74.6%	473	44.0%	498	73.1%	401	45.9%
3 Year	SAT Math	509	89.6%	495	75.0%	473	44.2%	498	73.3%	404	46.8%

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024

Combined Student Group Approach. To explore the impact of a combined student group approach, the Task Force selected 12 districts to model the combined student group designation in achievement and growth. All districts chosen for modeling met the threshold for total participation in assessments and represent different concentrations of poverty, district size, location, and current framework assignments.

Table 14
Combined Student Group Districts

Less than 40% poverty concentration	40–49% poverty concentration	50–59% poverty concentration	Greater than 60% poverty concentration
West Grand: small, Priority Improvement	McClave RE2: small, Distinction	Lake: small, Priority Improvement	Center: small, Priority Improvement
Garfield: medium, Improvement	Moffat RE7: medium, Priority Improvement	Harrison: medium, Accredited	Alamosa: medium, Accredited
St. Vrain: large, Accredited	Mesa: large, Improvement	D11: large, Improvement	Denver: large, Improvement

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2024 (Combined Groups of Students [Super-subgroup Performance Results Comparisons with Growth for 1241 TF 4.2024 2])

CDE provided information so the Task Force could compare framework assignments when students' scores are included in multiple student group categories and when students' scores are included only once in a combined student group.

The Task Force reviewed these data to determine if the adjustment to a combined student group in achievement and growth scoring achieved the following prioritized results:

- Addresses perceived "penalty" for serving historically underserved students that is caused by repeated counting of assessment scores for students who fall in multiple student groups;
- Ensures that important disaggregated data is reported accurately;
- Increases the number of schools that meet the minimum n-count required to be held accountable for disaggregated student groups, providing more information for small systems;
- Ensures that a consistent measurement is used to recognize the performance of individual students who are classified into one or more disaggregated groups;
- Ensures that this change does not exacerbate a less-diverse district's ability to mask the performance of disaggregated groups.

The data confirmed that the combined student group approach has a limited or modest impact on the rating system (6 districts increased; 2 decreased); 51 schools increased; 15 decreased). However, other

factors, such as opt-outs, low participation, insufficient data, and requests for reconsideration, may also influence the results and final ratings. Without these factors, the impact may be more significant than modest.

Reference to Colorado English Learners in Colorado's ESSA Plan. ESEA Section 3121(a)(5) requires that LEAs report on the number and percentage of ELs meeting the challenging state academic standards for four years after such students are no longer receiving Title III services. To meet this requirement, an LEA must report to the state on the academic achievement of an EL for each year of the four years after such student has achieved English language proficiency and no longer receives EL services. These data must include results on content assessments for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science. The students in this report must consist of all former ELs served by the LEA who have achieved English language proficiency and, therefore, no longer receive any EL services.

The ESSA plan states that Colorado English learners (ELs) previously identified as Limited-English Proficient (LEP) and who have been re-designated as Fluent-English Proficient (FEP) will continue to be included in the accountability calculations for the EL student group for an additional four years after Re-designation (Monitor Year 1, Monitor Year 2, Exited Year 1, and Exited Year 2). If a student previously Re-designated as FEP is determined to need additional language instruction services, the student will be reclassified as LEP.

Federal accountability and combined student groups. As of the writing of this report, CDE has tried to propose the use of a "super group," and it has not been approved. ESSA specifically requires the disaggregation of student group data and the inclusion of points in the identification process.

Implementing a combined student group would be an area of divergence between state and federal accountability results because CDE would not be allowed to implement this recommendation for federal accountability per ESSA and the ESSA identifications.

Federal accountability and students with disabilities. The definition of children with disabilities in ESEA directly references IDEA: "(4) CHILD WITH A DISABILITY.—The term 'child with a disability' has the same meaning given that term in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (see sec. 8101(4)).

The federal regulation that previously permitted the inclusion of students with disabilities for two years post their IEPs has been rescinded and is no longer in effect. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Once a student with disabilities exits an IEP, the student must be removed from the students with disabilities student group. The ESEA does not afford the same flexibility to students with disabilities as it does for English language learners."

Measures and Supports to Advance Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Before High School. Postsecondary and workforce readiness begins well before high school. Schools and districts can provide - and are already providing - meaningful opportunities for elementary and middle school students. For example, the state's Work-Based Learning Continuum identifies key ways schools and districts can

provide career awareness and exploration opportunities to build knowledge of available career pathways to inform career decisions. This includes opportunities like career counseling, career fairs, industry speakers, worksite tours, and project-based learning. The Task Force spoke with several school districts already incorporating this work into younger grades to increase this important exposure to all Colorado students.

However, the Task Force believes that these efforts to expose and support career interest development at the lower grade levels should not be subject to a formal assessment and/or included in school and district reporting measures at this time. Instead, the state should continue to support and develop career exploration and entrepreneurship learning opportunities for elementary and middle school students through ongoing resource development with state agency collaboration and potential future financial contributions from the state. For example, CDE could work in partnership with other relevant state agencies like the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE), and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) to create a menu of best practices or a resource guide for schools and districts best to adopt these practices in their local context.

It is also important to note that recent legislation, HB24-1364, has charged the state with conducting a fiscal study to see where consolidation and cost savings to the state for PWR programs may be possible, including opportunities for additional investments to ensure money is flowing to high-quality options that set students up for long-term postsecondary and workforce success.

Assessments Used for Accountability Ratings

Click here to return to the Assessments Used for Accountability Ratings findings and recommendations section.

To better understand some of the challenges and opportunities related to state assessments, the Task Force spent considerable time consulting with various stakeholders and experts. Broadly, the Task Force considered the amount of time spent on state and federal assessments, the quality of information obtained, the amount of time required to report results, the types of assessments included, and how assessment information is shared with various stakeholders.

The Task Force discussed various assessment structures, designs, and associated costs and benefits. One new assessment design that the group discussed was "through year" assessments. At a high level, through-year assessment models administer multiple tests throughout the school year as part of an assessment system designed to provide a single summative score meeting federal and state accountability requirements. The various tests are shorter in duration and are designed around a set of standards for that time of year. Results are provided quickly for educators to use to drive instruction as needed. However, many conceptual and technical challenges are associated with through-year assessments, including the relationship to curriculum and instruction, which is under local control.

The Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) pilot accountability system presented another option to consider. The IADA is a federally sponsored accountability system pilot in states that have previously established and operated an innovative assessment system. Under the IADA, Louisiana, which has a common curriculum in 70 percent of its parishes, developed an assessment system that focuses not only on skills and strategies that students have developed but also on students' knowledge base. Notably, Maine has utilized the NWEA MAP assessment as its state assessment, the local assessment tool used by many school districts throughout Colorado. Overall, it was noted that many of the changes being implemented via pilot opportunities throughout the country have been rolling out slowly, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there is limited information about the impact of this work. Additionally, as a pilot program, participation in the IADA requires the state to have two accountability systems in place (one for systems participating in the pilot and one for those not). Relatedly, assessment structure and design changes may require additional approval from the U.S. Department of Education, including updates to the Colorado state ESSA plan and waivers.

Local assessment data could also significantly change how assessment data is used in Colorado's current accountability system. The Task Force recognizes the value of multiple assessments (i.e., state and local assessments) and the different information gained through both parts of the system. There is an opportunity to include local measures within the "weight" of the framework, simply include them in the report, or possibly as a separate dashboard to provide additional context. The inclusion of local assessment data in the calculation of frameworks raises several unanswered questions for this Task Force, including:

- How can the accountability system create consistency when different measures are utilized from one district to another?
- Do specific criteria need to be established for schools to include local data?
- What would be the process for collecting and reporting local data, and who would be responsible for managing that task?
- How would the state address inequities related to the cost of purchasing assessment resources where a district might lack funding for a more robust assessment tool?
- Would including local assessment data create unintended consequences for schools and educators, such as increased pressure to demonstrate results versus using the data to make decisions about instructional practices?
- If providing local assessment data were optional, would schools choose to include it if the data was unfavorable?

CDE's Theory of Action for Supports and Interventions

Click here to return to the Continuous Improvement findings and recommendations section.

CDE adopted the Four Domains of Rapid Improvement to guide districts' and schools' improvement when on Performance Watch. Supports are distributed through tiers (e.g., universal, targeted, intensive) and are driven by CDE staff and improvement funding channels. Following the State Board of Education's order is required, as is CDE's monitoring of the implementation of the Board

order. However, district participation in the Department's support is encouraged but is only voluntary. It is unclear if there are any steps or opportunities where a model school or district could mentor a struggling school or district without resources and support to accommodate this collaboration.

The CDE Theory of Action for school improvement states:

If the Department…

- fosters key conditions and research-based turnaround principles,
- diagnose and structure-focused improvement planning,
- aligns, differentiates, and leverages the allocation of all funds to ensure equity and maximize impact,
- uses select data and indicators to track and monitor progress,
- actively supports new and growing turnaround talent development programs and
- pursues bold and urgent interventions and actions with schools and districts,

then…

- the lowest-performing districts and schools will become the highest-performing districts and schools as measured by the State Performance Frameworks.

Early Grade Indicators

Click here to return to the District and School Performance Frameworks findings and recommendations section.

Improvements in early learning can significantly impact long-term student growth and achievement, often at a lower cost than intensive interventions in later years.[18,19,20] Colorado must continue to support and expand quality early childhood programming for the success of our students. Family engagement in the early years is also essential.[21,22]

The quality of early-grade instruction and support for the whole child's development is imperative. Early education outcomes should include developmental indicators beyond literacy and math, such as cognitive and language development, social-emotional skills, well-being, etc. Early education should also include quality programming, such as family and community partnerships, explicit social-emotional instruction, qualified staff, and ongoing professional development. Early grade assessments are most effective when used diagnostically and with a body of evidence to target foundational skills development.

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[18] Foundation for Child Development (2013)
[19] The Education Trust (2014)
[20] National Bureau of Education Research (2022)
[21] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2020)
[22] NAEYC (n.d.)

Discussion of potentially incorporating early grade indicators into the state's performance frameworks. The Colorado Accountability System's District and School Performance Frameworks do not currently include K-2 outcome measures. However, early education was identified as a significant contributing factor to high-quality schools during the Task Force's initial brainstorming. Access to quality early education programs was seen as a potential opportunity to incentivize, and an inequity to address that was not currently captured in the framework portion of Colorado's accountability system. Through conversations with stakeholders, the Task Force found that schools with low growth and relatively acceptable achievement would most benefit from improvement strategies focused on early education strategies. Support to these schools identified through a state accountability system could be equipped with improvement strategies identified in high-quality early education programs.

Given the importance of early education on students' long-term success, the Task Force considered sufficient measures for early grades to include in the state's accountability system. The Task Force first defined "early grades" as K-2 only and did not include preschool/early childhood education (ECE). While quality preschool experiences, formal and informal, are foundational for the long-term academic success of students, a state accountability system, including preschool measures, would be difficult at this time. The most challenging factor is that the authority for educational accountability resides with the CDE, and a separate department, the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), supports pre-kindergarten opportunities. Given the different reporting systems and responsibilities, an accountability system crossing the two departments would be challenging to manage. The development and progression of the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) will resolve this challenge going forward. In addition, the Task Force recognizes that preschool and kindergarten are not compulsory, which limits public schools' responsibility over student performance. There are also a significant number of preschool providers outside of public schools that could not be accounted for in these measures.

The Task Force then considered measures that could be included in the performance frameworks that align with the Task Force's values on early grades education. The Task Force identified measures currently used by school districts to monitor early grades student growth and development; reviewed accountability frameworks from other states for inclusion of K-2 measures; studied the inclusion of K-2 measures in Colorado's local accountability grant systems; and consulted with early childhood and accountability experts. In addition, the Task Force considered stakeholder input, which emphasized a need from families for information about school performance focused on the early grades.

In particular, the Task Force considered data already required and reported outside of the accountability system in early grades, such as kindergarten readiness observational data (primarily *Teaching Strategies (TS) Gold)* and READ assessments (Dibels, iReady). The state does not require a math assessment outside of TS Gold kindergarten readiness. However, the use of current literacy and math measures for K-2 was not in precise alignment with the Task Force's values on early grades education. In particular, these early-grade measures are a single source of information rather than a body of evidence, and they are intended to be used diagnostically rather than as summative benchmarks. These tools used in conjunction with local teacher classroom formative assessments are valuable to inform instruction but used in isolation as group performance indicators are outside their intended use.

The Task Force also considered developmental factors beyond literacy and math as potential indicators, like social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development, all available from *TS Gold*. While these measures align with the Task Force's stated value to include other developmental measures, the instrument is designed to be informative for a developmental focus for caregivers and teachers rather than declarative. Furthermore, the tool is primarily aimed for use in preschool and kindergarten rather than the targeted grades of K-2.

Lastly, the Task Force studied K-2 chronic absenteeism as a possible indicator that could be aligned with the group's stated values. In particular, because early grades foundational skills are essential to future performance and the early investment can reduce the cost of intervention later, the Task Force recognized the importance of attendance for young learners. Engagement with family is also of high value to early grades, which is reflected in attendance. Kindergarten is not compulsory; therefore, the interventions for this grade are more limited than those available for grades 1 and 2. Because of this, it would be most beneficial to disaggregate chronic absenteeism data between Kindergarten and a combined grades 1 and 2 category.

Ultimately, the challenges associated with adding K-2 measures to Colorado's accountability system resulted in the Task Force not recommending including these measures in the accountability system's performance frameworks as a solution to incentivize academic opportunities and address student inequities. The measures the Task Force considered do not align with the priorities for early grades education and, therefore, would not improve the accountability system.

Public Reporting and Engagement

Click underline here to return to the Public Reporting and Engagement findings and recommendations section.

Existing Stakeholder Groups Engaged by CDE on Accountability. Five stakeholder groups, outlined below in Table 15, provide regular input and feedback into the accountability system, focusing on ensuring that CDE is designing systems that work for stakeholders. These groups should remain in place to continue to evolve and improve the system. CDE must continue to engage all stakeholders in feedback around the accountability system. CDE currently supports districts as they engage with their School Accountability Committees (SAC) and District Accountability Committees (DAC). CDE consults with statewide advisory groups, such as the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP), the Accountability Working Group (AWG), and a Statewide Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE). These groups regularly provide essential feedback on the system. At a minimum, these groups should continue to operate.

Table 15

Stakeholder Groups Engaged by CDE on Accountability

Group	Advisory to…	Summary	Notes for Consideration
School Accountability Committees	Principal, DAC, District	Families, community members and school representatives advise the principal on improvement planning development and monitoring, budget and other activities—more detail in the District Accountability Handbook (starting on p. 23).	Overall, SACs are moving forward and typically productive. Positive support could be helpful. Some responsibilities may be worth re-examining (e.g., input on the system for principal evaluation).
District Accountability Committees	Local School Board	Similar activities as SACs but at the district level. More detail in handbook (starting on p. 21).	Overall, DACs are moving forward and typically productive. Positive support from the Task Force could be helpful. Some responsibilities may be worth re-examining (e.g., input on measures for the system used for principal evaluation).
Technical Advisory Panel	Department of Education and State Board of Education	The Technical Advisory Panel for Longitudinal Growth (TAP) consists of state and national experts on longitudinal measurement of academic growth for state accountability purposes. It was convened by the Commissioner of Education to provide recommendations to the State Board of Education. The TAP was created in accordance with the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (SB-	Overall, TAP is moving forward and is typically productive. Positive support from the Task Force could be helpful.

		09-163). More details are available on the website.	
Statewide Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE)	Policymakers, the Department of Education and educators	SACPIE was established in 2009 and is the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education. The Colorado General Assembly found that it was in: "...the best interests of the state to create a state advisory council for parent involvement in education that will review best practices and recommend to policymakers and educators strategies to increase parent involvement in public education, thereby helping improve the quality of public education and raise the level of students' academic achievement throughout the state." (C.R.S. § 22-7-301(2), 2012). More details are available on the website.	Overall, SACPIE is moving forward and is typically productive. Positive support from the Task Force could be helpful.
Accountability Work Group	Department of Education (not legislated)	The Accountability Work Group has served as a policy advisory group to research and explore ideas supporting federal and state accountability policies and decision points (e.g., Every Student Succeeds Act implementation). This group seeks input from additional stakeholders in developing recommendations. It was first convened by the Commissioner of Education in 2014 to gather input on improving the state accountability performance framework reports. More details are available on the website.	CDE has chosen to convene this group to receive ongoing feedback on implementing accountability policies. Statutory authorization is not needed, but it may help the Task Force ensure that a group like this is leveraged.

Examples of States with Coherent Dashboards in line with the State's Educational Vision. *California* is an excellent example of a comprehensive, navigable, easy-to-understand dashboard. Moving through different screens to get more details is intuitive. Data are displayed through color-coded dials that are easy to interpret, and there is a border at the bottom of the webpage to provide a quick refresher on the performance dials if needed. The student group data page offers an easy way to understand performance differences by race, ethnicity, gender, and other characteristics. The district dashboard provides additional local context, including details on local indicators such as parent engagement, student satisfaction, school safety, and more.

Figure 3
California School Dashboard
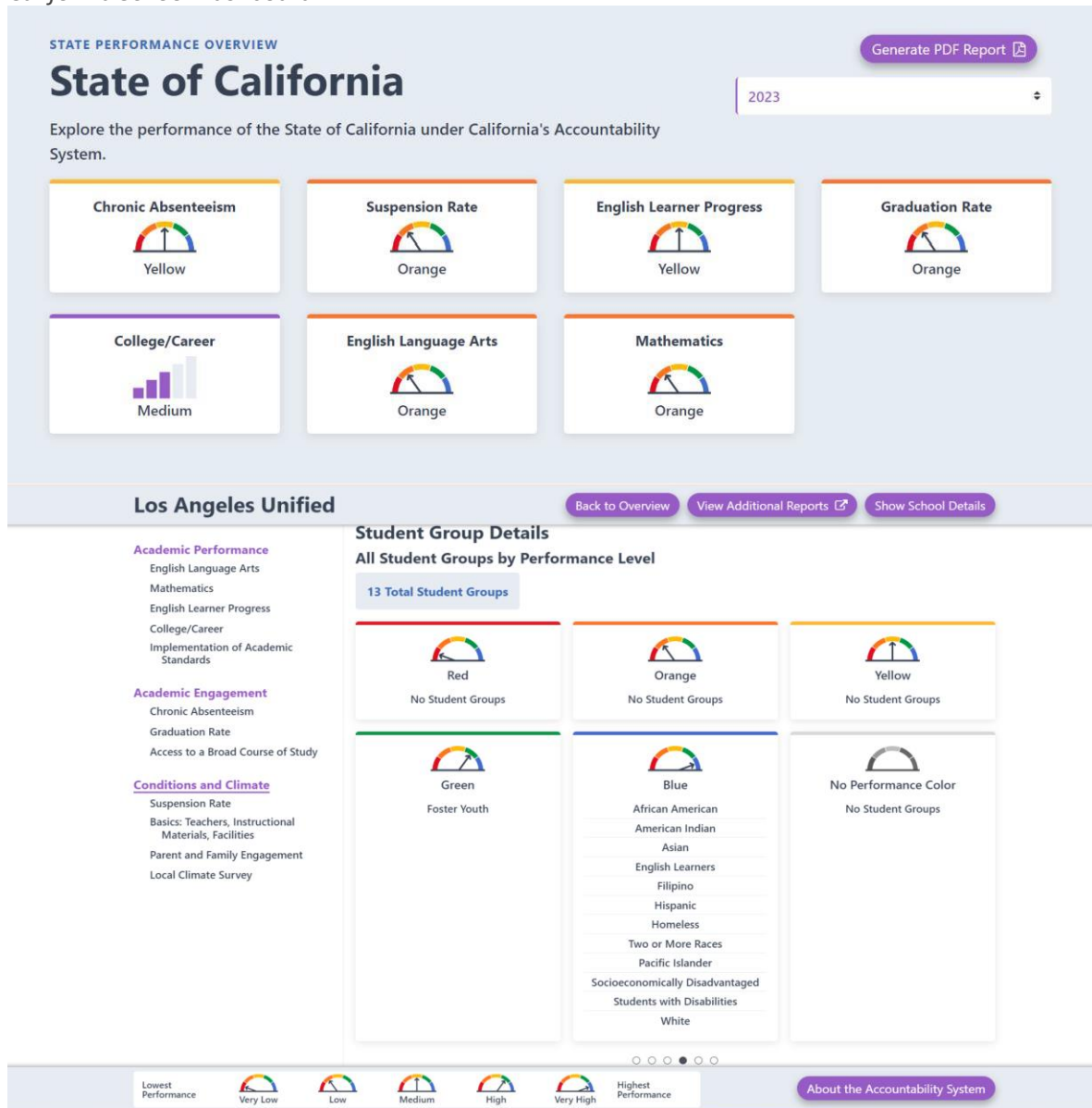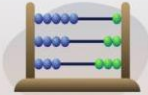
Source: California School Dashboard

Indiana. Indiana provides an excellent example of an education dashboard with a clear vision for student success. Their new Graduates Prepared to Succeed (GPS) site greets viewers with an overview of why the data matter, the state goals for students, and where students currently meet them. After the introduction, users can easily navigate to school- or district-level data, where color-coded performance dials similar to California's convey vital metrics. Clicking on any dial box gives a more detailed view of student group data. As with California, both current-year data and trend data are provided. Overall, the site is easy to navigate and conveys a coherent statewide theory of action regarding the critical milestones for students from pre-K through college and their careers. Thus, Indiana provides a north star for data display and conveys the "why." Lastly, FAQs are within easy reach on each part of the website, and the page links to more comprehensive, easy-to-comprehend underlined documentation of Indiana's indicators.

Figure 4
Indiana's Graduates Prepared to Succeed Dashboard

6TH GRADE MATH GROWTH	GRADUATION PATHWAYS COMPLETION	EMPLOYMENT & ENROLLMENT
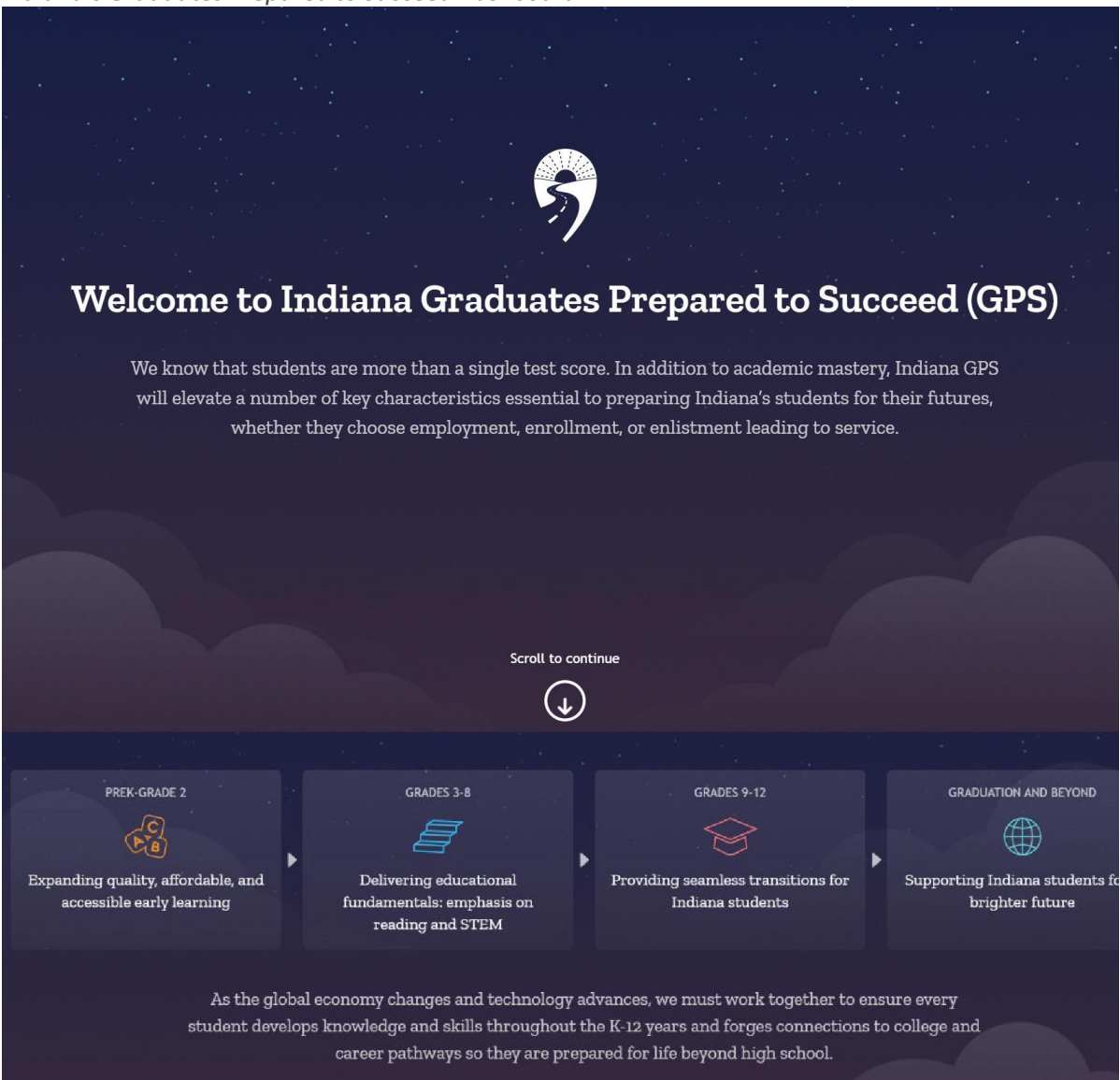
35% of Indiana sixth graders are meeting their math growth goals.

Full Report ›

89%
of Indiana students complete their graduation requirements.

Full Report ›

Over the course of a lifetime, Hoosiers with education beyond high school are likely to earn

$1,000,000

more than those with only a high school diploma.

Full Report ›

Where are we going?

3rd Grade Literacy
Percentage of grade 3 students showing proficiency on IREAD-3.

81.9% — 95%
2023 — 2027

Graduation Pathways Completion
Percentage of grade 12 students who complete graduation requirements.

89% — 95%
2023 — 2030

Employment & Enrollment
Percentage of grade 12 students employed or enrolled, *within Indiana*, one year after their expected graduation year. Goal TBD.

84.5%
2021

Indianapolis Public Schools
120 E Walnut St, Indianapolis, IN 46204 • (317) 226-4000 • Website

Grades PreK - 12th	22,027 Enrolled	67.6% Free/Reduced Lunch	School Corporation	Metropolitan

Benchmarked Headline Indicators

PREK-GRADE 2	GRADES 3-8	GRADES 9-12	GRADUATION AND BEYOND

Kindergarten Readiness
Percentage of students demonstrating the skills necessary to be considered ready to start kindergarten.

Coming soon

3rd Grade Literacy
Percentage of grade 3 students showing proficiency on IREAD-3. Goal: 95% by 2027.

60.6% ▼ 2.2%   State: 81.9%

Graduation Pathways Completion
Percentage of grade 12 students who complete graduation requirements. Goal: 95% by 2030.

79.9% ▲ 2.4%   State: 89%

Employment & Enrollment
Percentage of grade 12 students employed or enrolled, *within Indiana*, one year after their expected graduation year. Goal TBD.

TBD   TBD
76.9% ▼ 0.5%   State: 84.5%

PreK-Grade 2 Literacy
Percentage of PreK-Grade 2 students demonstrating progress in essential early reading skills from one year to the next.

Coming soon

6th Grade Math Growth
Percentage of grade 6 students meeting their individual growth targets on the math ILEARN. Goal: 45.8% by 2030.

19.9% ▲ 3.0%   State: 35.1%

College & Career Credentials
Percentage of grade 12 students earning high quality college and career credentials. Goal: 60% by 2030.

No data available
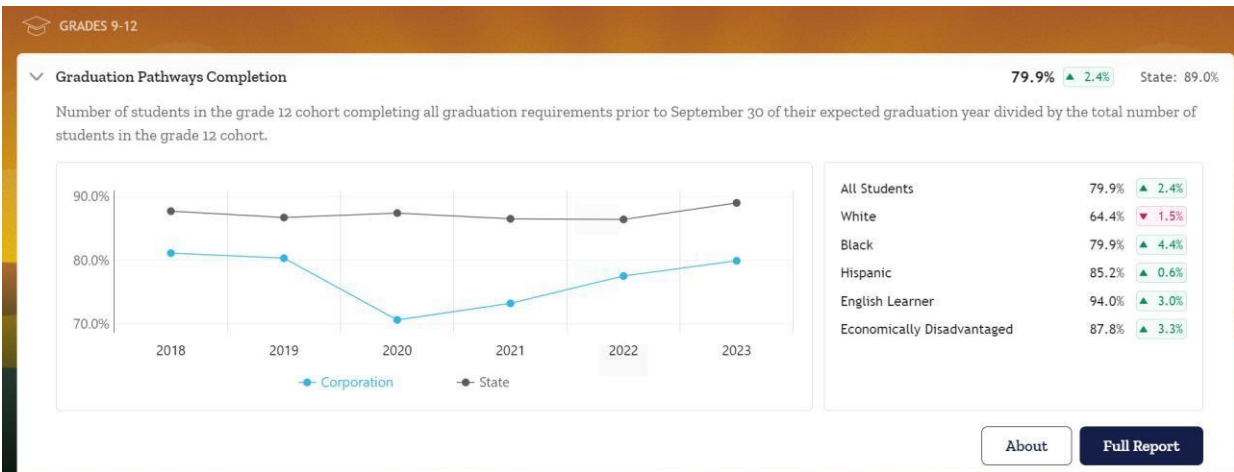
Source: Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed

Accreditation

Click here to return to the Accreditation Findings and Recommendations section.

To generalize, Colorado statute gives the State Board of Education authority to accredit districts and assign a plan type to each school while giving local Boards of Education authority to accredit schools based on the school plan types provided. CDE provides the following diagram to illustrate the process.

Figure 5
Accreditation Cycle
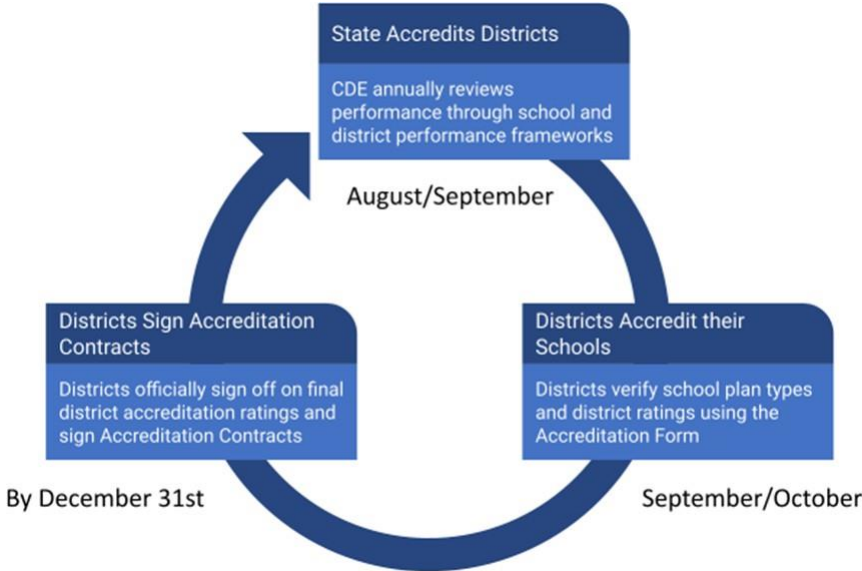
While statute CRS 22-11-30 (1) (2) assigns local Boards with the authority to **accredit** *schools*, the process must align with the accreditation contract and process established by the State Board to **accredit** *districts*. The law states that school categories for accreditation must be comparable to districts and adopt and implement plan types (performance, improvement, priority, or turnaround) that meet or exceed the state's expectations. To this end, CDE rules establish the accreditation process to provide

districts with accreditation plan types for each school, and the local Board must use these designations to accredit their schools or participate in the request to reconsider the process with evidence to support a different accreditation type.

Local boards accredit their schools, and they must consider the state-assigned plan types. Districts can have alternate criteria that meet or exceed what the state uses for plan type generation. CSI and DPS are good examples of this. Technically, a local board could not accredit a school for failing to meet additional local requirements. It is important to note that schools with low test participation circumvent this standard.

The request to reconsider a school must still be approved/accepted by the State Board of Education. The request to reconsider the process has eligibility requirements with limited conditions for application.

These include:

1. Body of Evidence
2. Accountability Participation Impact
3. Calculation Error
4. Impact of Alternative Education Campuses on the District Performance Framework
5. Districts with a Single School
6. Districts with a Closed School
7. Change to Insufficient State Data
8. Grade Reconfiguration

A second aspect of the accreditation contracts between the State Board of Education and Colorado school districts includes meeting the following provisions:

1. Budget and financial policies and procedures (assurance, no data required)
2. Accounting and financial reporting (assurance, no data required)
3. School Safety and Gun-Free Schools Act (assurance, no data required)
4. Periodic review and adoption of curriculum standards that meet or exceed state standards (assurance, but data from state assessment is further used as evidence)

Provision #4 is what is accounted for in determining a rating on the performance frameworks. Provisions 1–3 are accounted for through a district's self-determined assurance.

Colorado currently bases accreditation ratings on student outcomes (of those students that take the assessment) plus assurances in finances, safety, and Colorado academic standards and assessment participation, with the performance framework serving as the only measure. Colorado accreditation agreement provisions (#1–3 above) are the only conditions assigned to accreditation, and it is unclear, other than providing assurance, how these provisions determine accreditation. Information from CDE indicated that historically, accreditation has not been withheld from a district due to the failure to provide these compliance assurances, though letters of warning and support to complete the assurances are provided (for finance and safety, for example). Although rare, there are examples of decreased plan types that occur as a result.

FINDING

Colorado provides student outcome ratings through the performance frameworks and very minimal support for accreditation through the assurance of provisions process
See Areas for Further Study for solutions

A third and related aspect of accreditation is the identified challenges associated with the performance frameworks, including assessments, "n" size, trends across groups, and postsecondary measures, which directly impact the accreditation assignment by the State Board of Education. An example of the challenge of the interplay of the framework challenges and resulting accreditation plan types is a district that does not have an N-count large enough, even with 3 years of data, may still not meet the minimum public reporting thresholds. This occurs only for tiny districts that would never have a high enough N-count even after 3 years of aggregations to meet the growth reporting requirements (i.e., less than 20 students in 4th and 5th grade over 2017, 2018, and 2019). Only these districts that receive an Insufficient Data rating may enter an alternate request to reconsider the process and determine their own plan type. In a situation such as this, a district may choose to assign an accreditation of "Distinction" though no additional student outcome data is available for such a rating.

The Task Force believes that by adopting the recommendations that we have included in this report, these risks will be mitigated.

Appendix B: Task Force Charge

Per H.B. 23-1241, the Colorado Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force was created "to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system."

To complete this study, the Task Force, at a minimum, **shall consider:**

(I) "Academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps;
(II) improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities;
(III) promising practices in schools and school districts, and
(IV) recommendations for legislation or rules, as necessary."

To support the considerations of the Task Force, the Task Force **may review:**

(I) "The results of the statewide education accountability systems audit report described in section 2-3-127;
(II) the local accountability systems described in part 7 of Article 11 of Title 22;
(III) the results of the local accountability system grant program created in section 22-11-703;
(IV) the annual report and evaluation from the high school innovative learning pilot program created in article 35.6 of title 22;
(V) the results of the school transformation grant program created in section 22-13-103;

(VI) the interim and final reports from the secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration task force Created in part 2 of article 35.3 of title 22;

(VII) promising practices from other states as identified by Task Force members and

(VIII) leading indicators or instructional practices that could be added to the accountability measures."

In addition, the Task Force "shall consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations."

Lastly, the Task Force is required to submit to the education committees of the House of Representatives and Senate, the governor, the State Board, the commissioner of education, and the Department of Education an interim report with initial findings and recommendations by March 1, 2024, and a final report with findings and recommendations by November 15, 2024.

Appendix C: Task Force Membership

The following table lists the Task Force's members, the education stakeholder groups they represent, and who appointed them, according to the statute.

Table 16

Task Force Member Information

Name	Representing	Appointing Authority
Dr. Wendy Birhanzel (Chair), Harrison School District 2	Superintendent	House Speaker
Hon. Rebecca McClellan (Vice Chair), State Board of Education	State Board of Education	Senate President
Tomi Amos, KIPP Colorado Public Schools	Charter Network Leader	Governor
Dr. Rob Anderson, Boulder Valley School District	Superintendent (Urban)	Senate President
Amie Baca-Oehlert, Colorado Education Association	Statewide Teachers Organization	House Speaker
Pamela Bisceglia, AdvocacyDenver	Statewide Organization Specializing in Equity and Inclusion	House Speaker
Dr. Brenda Dickhoner, Ready Colorado	Charter School Institute (Governing Board Member)	Senate Minority Leader
Kathy Durán, Colorado Dual Language Immersion Network	Expert in English Language Acquisition and Bilingual Ed	Governor
Lindsey Gish, DSST Public Schools	Teacher (Middle School)	House Minority Leader
Alison Griffin, Whiteboard Advisors	Workforce Development and Education Organization	Governor
Dr. Don Haddad, St. Vrain Valley Schools	Superintendent	House Speaker

Dr. Rhonda Haniford, Colorado Department of Education	Colorado Department of Education	CDE Commissioner
Tammi Hiler, Office of Governor Jared Polis	Governor's Office Representative	Governor
Ted Johnson, Pueblo School District 60	District Administrator (Rural Accountability)	Senate Minority Leader
Erin Kane, Douglas County School District	Superintendent	House Minority Leader
Dr. Anne Keke, Aurora Public Schools	Local School Board Member	Senate President
Ryan Marks, Colorado Charter School Institute	District Administrator (Accountability)	House Minority Leader
Nicholas Hernandez, Transform Education Now	Statewide Parents/Families Organization	House Speaker
Tony May	Local School Board Member (Rural)	House Minority Leader
Dr. Robert Mitchell, Campo School District	Teacher (Rural)	Senate Minority Leader
James Parr, Montezuma Cortez RE-1 School District	District Administrator (Rural Accountability)	Governor
Catie Santos de la Rosa, Denver Public Schools	Teacher (Elementary)	Senate President
Mark Sass, Teach Plus Colorado	Statewide Teachers Organization	Governor
Dan Schaller, Colorado League of Charter Schools	Charter School Organization	Governor
Jen Walmer, Brighter Future for Colorado	Statewide Education Policy Organization	Senate President
Lisa Yates, Buena Vista School District	Superintendent (Rural Participant in Local Accountability System Grant)	Senate Minority Leader

Appendix D: Task Force Considerations and Activities

During its meetings, the Task Force considered essential components of the state's accountability system, past efforts to evaluate the system, and other educational priorities to develop its findings and recommendations. Per H.B. 23-1241, the Task Force was required to consider four items in its deliberations and review eight additional items.

Items the Task Force "Shall Consider"

Academic Opportunities or Inequities. Please review the Academic Opportunities or Inequities section to learn how the Task Force considered how existing academic opportunities and inequities in Colorado's education system impact academic achievement gaps.

Improvements to the accountability system*.* The Task Force was required to consider "improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities." To do this, the Task Force engaged CDE to learn more about Colorado's Education Accountability System and gain an in-depth understanding of its elements to consider potential improvements. Per H.B. 23-1241, "the Department shall provide information and staff support to the Task Force Chairperson to the extent necessary for the Task Force to complete its duties."

In particular, CDE reviewed the state accountability system's history, theory of action, and significant components for the Task Force. Throughout the Task Force's deliberations, CDE staff answered questions and conducted analyses requested by Task Force members. For example, CDE guided the Task Force through an exercise to examine correlations between accountability framework results and different student demographics and gave a brief overview of how participation in state assessments impacts a school or district's results on accountability frameworks. Of note is that CDE created the Accountability Reference Handbook for the Task Force, which tracks all questions asked by the Task Force to CDE and CDE's responses to these questions.

After extensive learning about the state's education accountability system, the Task Force members considered what is working and what could be improved for each element. These considerations were the foundation for the topics the Task Force prioritized to study in greater detail and develop recommendations.

Promising practices in schools and school districts. Per the statute, the Task Force was also required to consider "promising practices in schools and school districts" in its deliberations. Throughout its work, the Task Force reviewed the following promising practices:

- After developing an initial list of academic opportunities and inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps, the Task Force generated examples of how districts or schools successfully mitigated these identified inequities. These practices served as examples of how students can have equal access to academic opportunities.
- CDE shared background information and framing on the School Transformation Grant Program. This presentation shared the interventions that can support the improvement efforts of Turnaround Schools.
- Task Force members heard from representatives of the 1215 Task Force, who made recommendations for the accountability system's PWR indicator. These recommendations were relevant to the Task Force's deliberations and recommendations for the accountability system.
- CDE shared with the Task Force information on the Local Accountability Systems Grant, which grants "money to local education providers that adopt local accountability systems to supplement the state accountability system." Local accountability systems offer another avenue

to hold schools and districts accountable for student outcomes, while honoring the unique contributions these schools and districts offer their school communities.

Recommendations for legislation or rules. Lastly, the Task Force was required to consider "recommendations for legislation or rules, as necessary." After extensive learning about the state's education accountability system, the Task Force members considered what was working and what could be improved for each element. The Task Force then divided into small groups to study various aspects of the accountability system and other topics raised by the group and develop recommendations that could address the challenges and opportunities associated with each component.

Items the Task Force "May Review"

The Audit. The statute stated that the Task Force may review "the results of the statewide education accountability systems audit described in section 2-3-127 to support its deliberations." During the September 2023 meeting, the Task Force reviewed the legislatively commissioned Evaluation of Colorado's Education Accountability System (November 2022) report, conducted by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). The audit found that the "performance indicators and measures used in Colorado's statewide education accountability system provide a reasonable and appropriate basis for objectively measuring the performance of districts and public schools." However, the audit also points out inequities and areas for improvement in the current accountability system. The Task Force continued to refer to the audit throughout its deliberations to inform its findings and recommendations.

Local accountability system grant. The Task Force also had the option to review "the results of the local accountability system grant program created in section 22-11-703." As previously mentioned, at the April 2, 2024, meeting, CDE gave an overview of the Local Accountability Systems Grant, established by SB 19-204 "to provide grant money and flexibility to local education providers to enhance their local accountability and continuous improvement systems."[23]

Local accountability systems offer another avenue to hold schools and districts accountable for student outcomes while honoring the unique contributions these schools and districts provide to their school communities. It can:

- Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success;
- evaluate the capacity of the public school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success and
- use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a continuous improvement cycle.

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[23] Colorado Department of Education (2023)

Of note, the Local Accountability Systems Grant is not meant to be an alternative accountability system but a supplemental reporting approach. Participation in the Local Accountability Systems Grant does not replace the state performance frameworks or affect state plan types.

Task Force members also met with CDE's external evaluator of the grant program. The evaluation of the Local Accountability Systems Grant found that the grant successfully helped schools and districts identify additional measures that better reflected their communities' needs and supported local improvement efforts. An evaluation of the third year of the grant can be found on the CDE Website.

Following these presentations, Task Force members met with Local Accountability System grantees (e.g., district administrators) to learn about their experience with the grant program. Appendix L lists the districts participating in the first cohort of the grant and describes their projects.

Results of school transformation grant program*.* As noted previously, the Task Force chose to review the "results of the school transformation grant program created in section 22-13-103" to better understand how the accountability system can identify schools needing additional support and how this support can lead to school improvement. The most intensive support offered to schools under this Grant Program is the Transformation Network, a highly collaborative three-year partnership between schools, their districts, and CDE. At the December meeting, researchers from CU-Boulder shared their findings from the evaluation of the Transformation Network, which highlighted the conditions and practices that can lead to better outcomes in Turnaround Schools.

Interim and final reports from 1215 Task Force. As noted in the section on promising district and school practices, the Task Force also considered the "interim and final reports from the secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration Task Force created in part 2 of article 35.3 of title 22." At the January 9, 2024, meeting, the 1215 Task Force representatives shared their final recommendations and process for stakeholder engagement. Part of their recommendations focused on the accountability system's PWR indicator relevant to the current Task Force's efforts.

Members of the 1215 Task Force also sent a letter to the current Task Force, urging them to study the impact of a more comprehensive PWR element within the performance frameworks.

The recommendations relevant to the current Task Force's work are outlined in Table 17.

Table 17
1215 Task Force's Recommendations for Updates to PWR Measures in Colorado's Accountability Performance Framework

PWR Sub-indicator	Suggested Change
SAT Evidence-Based Reading/Writing	Remove from the PWR indicator
SAT Math	Remove from the PWR indicator

Concurrent Enrollment	Not currently part of the performance framework; add this as a sub-indicator in the PWR indicator
Graduation Rate	Keep in the PWR indicator
Dropout Rate	Keep in the PWR indicator; reduce the number of points so it is worth fewer points than the Graduation Rate
Matriculation Rate	Keep in the PWR indicator; modify reporting so military enlistment and industry credential attainment must be included. Consider increasing the weight of this measure, as it covers matriculation into a variety of beneficial PWR programs
District Option	Consider adding to the PWR indicator

To inform the 1215 Task Force's recommendations, Slalom Inc. facilitated a series of stakeholder engagements, including:

- Held panel discussions so the Task Force could hear directly from various stakeholder groups, including 20+ high school and college students, industry partners, K12 and postsecondary educators.
- Conducted four human-centered design (HCD) workshops, which served as critical inputs to the Task Force's recommendations and reflected the perspectives of key stakeholder groups.
- Received recommendation suggestions from 20 public survey submissions.
- Created a Future State Service Design Blueprint to support the recommendations. This tool illustrates the effective administering of PWR programs and clarifies how each recommendation impacts the learner journey.

Promising practices from other states. When studying the accountability system, the Task Force also considered "promising practices from other states as identified by Task Force members." In particular, the Task Force reviewed how other states have approached accountability and accreditation while still meeting the requirements of federal law. At the January 17, 2024, meeting, CU Boulder and the Center for Assessment presented other states' accountability systems, highlighting how states approach accountability differently and how states share common approaches. The cases included:

- **Oklahoma,** which, according to the presenters, has an accountability system that closely resembles ESSA's requirements.
- **Michigan,** which was presented as offering a dual system of accountability to meet federal requirements, with multiple views of student success.
- **California** was described as including a dashboard approach to share information on school performance.

The presenters also offered a list of design elements they emphasized are critical to any accountability system.

In addition to this presentation, Task Force members independently researched other states' accountability systems, such as Georgia and Indiana.

Leading indicators or instructional practices. Lastly, the Task Force discussed "leading indicators or instructional practices that could be added to the accountability measures." Specifically, they discussed the importance of instructional practices and the leading indicator of shifting adult practices during the discussions on the opportunities and inequities required for all schools to succeed. Task Force members discussed the importance of high-quality instructional materials, strong preparation and professional learning for teachers, and the support to collaborate and plan for quality instruction.

Appendix E: Stakeholder Consultations

H.B. 23-1241 required that the Task Force "shall consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations."[24] The Task Force conducted its stakeholder consultations in three primary ways:

- Panels conducted during Task Force meetings with fellow Task Force members, teachers, and parents
- A public comment survey disseminated in both English and Spanish
- Additional interviews and focus groups conducted with parents, students, educators, and other community stakeholders by the Task Force either during publicly scheduled Task Force meetings or in individual settings (e.g., parent advisory councils, board meetings)

Panels

At the March 2024 meeting, Task Force members with school- or district-level roles were allowed to share their experience with the accountability system and how the system impacts their ability to advance academic opportunities and address inequities. Task Force members shared their experiences in one of three groups: rural school systems, large school systems, and school systems that serve high percentages of diverse students. These panels allowed the Task Force to tap into the expertise and experience of their fellow members and incorporate these perspectives in their findings and recommendations.

At the April 2024 meeting, the Task Force hosted a conversation with teachers from Teach Plus Colorado and the Colorado Education Association (CEA). Teachers affiliated with these organizations offered the Task Force additional insight into educators' experience with the current accountability system and, when possible, on the issues currently under consideration by the Task Force. The teachers from Teach Plus Colorado shared findings and recommendations from their research on what teachers across the state believed the purpose of education should be and what constitutes a high-quality school. They also explained how other states measure school quality and student success through their accountability systems. The representatives from CEA shared the impacts of the current accountability system on both

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[24] Colorado General Assembly (2023)

urban and rural districts and how the accountability system impacts academic opportunities and inequities, particularly for Colorado's marginalized students. This presentation included findings from CEA's 2023 all-member survey.

Lastly, at the May 2024 meeting, the Task Force heard from parent representatives who included members of the Resident Leadership Council (RLC), School and District Accountability Committees (SAC/DAC) and the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE). The panelists spoke about where and how they received information about their student's school and district, what characteristics make up a high-quality school, and how parents can participate in holding schools and districts accountable, among other topics.

Public Comment Survey

The Task Force issued a public comment survey to gather feedback on Colorado's accountability system from March 27–April 28. It was offered in English and Spanish and shared on CDE's website and through various communications channels (including social media). The Task Force members also disseminated the survey to their networks using suggested email and social media messages. The survey ultimately recorded over 2,000 responses: 593 had at least one response to a survey question that was relevant to the Task Force's deliberations, and the other 1,429 had only partial or no information related to personal background (i.e., stakeholder type, region of the state) and zero response to the survey questions.

The survey primarily received responses from educators in the central part of the state who worked in suburban districts. In addition, of the top 10 districts the survey received the most responses from, all but one were from the top 20 most populous districts in Colorado. This means that most of the survey responses came from the most populous parts of the state.

Task Force members were given a tool for filtering and analyzing survey results by various demographics or topics of interest.

Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups Conducted Outside of Full Task Force Meetings

Task Force members were also instructed to consult with external stakeholders to gather further feedback on the accountability system. The facilitators provided Task Force members with a template for these consultations, which Task Force members conducted between full group Task Force meetings in either publicly-scheduled Task Force meetings or in individual settings, such as parent advisory councils or board meetings. Task Force members were asked to share notes from these consultations with the full Task Force so the information collected could inform discussions on each element of the accountability system.

The following groups and organizations were consulted during the stakeholder engagement process:

- Campo RE-6 district leadership

- Colorado Association of School Executives
- Colorado Department of Education
- Colorado Education Initiative
- Colorado Succeeds
- Douglas County School District school leaders and the District Accountability Committee
- Elliot Regenstein
- Fountain Fort Carson District 8 school leaders
- Harrison School District 2 administration, staff, parents, and students
- Higher Educators in Linguistically Diverse Education
- Members of the HB22-1215 Task Force
- Pueblo 60 District Accountability Committee members
- Rural Schools Alliance
- St. Vrain Valley school teachers, parents, students, and business leaders
- The Arc of Adams, The Arc of Pueblo, The Arc of Larimer, and The Arc of West Central Colorado
- The Association for Community Living in Boulder & Broomfield Counties

More broadly, the Task Force consulted superintendents, board members, district personnel, school leaders, staff, teachers, families, researchers, business leaders, and elected officials. The Task Force also specifically sought to incorporate the perspective of those from rural school communities, school leaders from elementary and middle schools, and the disability community, including individuals in the special education arena and parents of children with disabilities.

Appendix F: Task Force Meeting Cadence and Structure

From August 2023 to November 2024, the entire Task Force met 16 times and in small groups 27 times to conduct its work in accordance with the legislative charge. All but three meetings were held in person. All meetings offered Task Force members the option to join remotely for those who could not attend in person. All meetings were open to the public, recorded, and posted to CDE's 1241 Task Force website.

The first phase of the work ran from August 2023 to January 2024. In February 2024, the Task Force began its second phase of work, studying in detail elements of the accountability system and developing recommendations, as necessary, to address the challenges and opportunities associated with each element. Table 18 describes the focus and core activities of these two phases of work.

Table 18
Phases, Focus, and Activities of Task Force Work

Phase	Focus of Work	Core Activities
Phase 1: August 2023–January 2024	Task Force members engaged in learning to understand better the accountability system and what their	The Task Force heard presentations from: - CDE - Researchers from CU-Boulder who evaluated the Transformation Network

	recommendations might address.	● Representatives from the 1215 Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-Based Learning Integration Task Force ● Researchers from CU-Boulder and the Center for Assessment who researched other states' approaches to accountability
Phase 2: February 2024–November 2024	The Task Force considered the challenges, opportunities, and observations associated with each element of the accountability system and developed necessary recommendations to address these challenges and opportunities.	● Task Force members divided into study groups to consider in greater depth elements of the accountability system and begin developing recommendations ● Task Force members also engaged in stakeholder consultations to gather additional feedback on recommendations; these included panels at Task Force meetings, a public comment survey, and additional interviews conducted by study groups

The first phase of work culminated with the interim report, which included initial findings and recommendations, submitted on March 1, 2024, to the Education Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate, the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and CDE. The Task Force completed its work on November 15, 2024, when it delivered this final report to these same government officials.

Education First, a national education and policy strategy firm, served as the Task Force's facilitators. Per the legislation, CDE contracted with a facilitator to play a neutral role and guide the work of the Task Force. The facilitator role included managing Task Force deliberations that encouraged Task Force member participation and helped the group agree on recommendations; working with the chair and vice chair to set meeting agendas and objectives; and planning the overall arc and purpose of the Task Force's meetings. After every Task Force meeting, the facilitators also prepared public-facing summaries and drafted the interim and final reports.

Appendix G: Meeting Agendas

CDE's 1241 Task Force website provides all meeting agendas, summaries, and public-facing materials. The list below includes the dates of each Task Force meeting, meeting objectives, and agenda topics.

August 24, 2023

Objectives

- Understand the goals of H.B. 23-1241 and the Task Force's charge and responsibilities

- Begin to build working relationships with fellow Task Force members, the Task Force Chair and Vice Chair, and CDE staff
- Articulate what success looks like for the Task Force and reflect on individual roles in contributing to that success

Agenda Topics

- Welcome, Lunch, and Task Force Member Introductions
- Words from the Task Force Chair, Vice Chair and CDE
- Aligning on Purpose: Building a Mutual Understanding of H.B. 23-1241
- Envisioning the Future: An Initial Conversation on Quality Schools

September 26, 2023

Objectives

- Finalize group norms, common definitions and shared understanding of what is a "quality school," to guide the Task Force's deliberations moving forward
- Establish full group understanding of history, purpose, and goals of Colorado's K12 Accountability System
- Discuss recent legislative-commissioned evaluation of the accountability system and elevate relevant implications for the Task Force's work and goals

Agenda Topics

- Welcome and Adopt Task Force Norms
- Review and Consider: Accountability and Accreditation Terms and Definitions
- Working Agreement: What is a Quality School?
- Overview of Colorado's K12 Accountability System
- Debrief the Evaluation of Colorado's K12 Education Accountability System

October 17, 2023

Objectives

- Review group norms to guide the Task Force's deliberations moving forward
- Build connections among each other in relation to the Task Force's work
- Realign on the legislative charge of the Task Force
- Review and discuss a draft roadmap of upcoming meeting topics aligned to the legislative charge that includes the completion of the interim and final reports
- Discuss the Task Force's follow up questions to CDE on the current accountability system

Agenda Topics

- Review Norms
- Discussion & Activity
- Lunch and Small Group Activity
- Realign on Legislative Charge

- Review Roadmap
- CDE Accountability Follow-Up Presentation

November 3, 2023

Objectives

- Review norms and objectives
- Review progress to date and open questions
- Discuss and adopt a decision making process
- Refine and adopt the roadmap of upcoming topics aligned to the legislative charge that includes the completion of the interim and final reports
- Discuss and identify the academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps
- Develop a stakeholder engagement process

Agenda Topics

- Review Norms and Objectives
- Review Progress to Date and Open Questions
- Review a Decision Making Process for Today's Work
- Refine and Adopt a Roadmap for Upcoming Topics
- Discussion: What are the Academic Opportunities or Inequities that May Impact Academic Achievement Gaps?
- Develop Parameters for a Stakeholder Consultation Process

December 1, 2023

Objectives

- Create a shared vision for the interim and final reports
- Review the academic opportunities and inequities discussed at the November meeting, and determine which are at consensus for further discussion
- Review progress to date and open questions
- Examine promising practices in schools and school districts
- Advance plans for consulting with stakeholders and experts

Agenda Topics

- Revisit Academic Opportunities and Inequities
- Promising Practices (in Colorado and Across States): Part 1
- Promising Practices (in Colorado and Across States): Part 2
- Parking Lot Follow-up: CDE Data Exploration
- Looking Ahead: Future Meetings, Planning for Stakeholder Consultations, and Vision for Reporting

January 9, 2024

Objectives

- Revisit the latest version on resource inequities
- Examine the state's system for accountability and accreditation: What are the opportunities for improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities? To address inequities?

Agenda Topics

- CDE Presentation: Data Review
- Revisiting Resource Inequities
- Review Colorado's Accountability and Accreditation System
- Panel Discussion: 1215 Task Force's Findings and Recommendations
- The CO Accountability System: What is Working and What Could Be Improved? (Part I)
- The CO Accountability System: What is Working and What Could Be Improved? (Part II)

January 17, 2024

Objectives

- Review other states' accountability and accreditation systems to inform additional research and Task Force findings on Colorado's needs
- Begin to summarize findings on Colorado's accountability and accreditation system: Colorado's current accountability and accreditation system does X well in comparison to others and could do Y differently in comparison to other states
- Review a draft interim report: What suggestions to the report do Task Force members have after reviewing the draft?

Agenda Topics

- Continuation of January 9 Discussion on Accountability System
- Presentation: State Scan of Accountability Systems by CU-Boulder
- Small Group Discussion: Reflections on State Scan
- Small Group Work Time: Element by Element
- Whole Group Discussion: Colorado's Accountability and Accreditation System Needs
- Review Draft Interim Report

February 21, 2024

Objectives
- Review updates to the 1241 Task Force Road Map
- Review and offer final feedback on the interim report
- Form study groups to prepare findings, prepare stakeholder consultations, and consider recommendations to five focus areas within the frameworks

Agenda Topics
- Discuss Proposed Road Map Revisions

- Study Groups Work Time
- Cross-Study Group Collaboration Time, Groups 1–3
- Cross-Study Group Collaboration Time, Groups 4–5
- Review and Finalize Interim Report

March 12, 2024

Objectives
- Study the frameworks to draft findings and recommendations, as necessary
- Share with fellow Task Force members examples of how the accountability system impacts their efforts to advance academic opportunities and address inequities
- Develop plans to consult with stakeholders in order to strengthen findings and recommendations

Agenda Topics
- Discuss Proposed Road Map Revisions and Stakeholder Consultation Updates
- Whole Group Share Out: Experiences with the Accountability System
- Study Group Work Time and Working Lunch
- Cross Study Group Exchanges
- Study Group Work Time: Process Feedback and Plan Next Steps

April 2, 2024

Objectives
- Hear from teachers about their experience with Colorado's accountability system, and from local accountability system grantees about their work to supplement the state accountability system
- Study the frameworks to draft findings and recommendations, as necessary
- Share feedback with other study groups to refine findings and recommendations

Agenda Topics
- Discussions with Teachers
- Learning from the Local Accountability Systems Grant
- Study Group Work Time
- Study Group Exchanges
- Study Group Work Time: Process Feedback and Plan Next Steps

May 7, 2024

Objectives
- Hear from parents about their experience with Colorado's accountability system
- Review and consider input from public comment survey
- Draft opportunities, challenges, and observations on the accountability system's Frameworks
- If ready, begin to formulate recommendations

Agenda Topics
- Discussions with Parents
- Presentation: Dr. Erin Kane, Superintendent of Schools, Douglas County School District
- Orientation to Public Comments Survey Results
- Presentation and Consideration of Study Group Drafts
- Study Group Work Time: Process Feedback and Plan Next Steps

June 4, 2024

Objectives
- Increase familiarity with accountability-related advisory groups to CDE, and how they could be useful to the 1241 Task Force
- Prepare a full draft of background and recommendations for the frameworks
- Begin to examine other topics related to the accountability system

Agenda Topics
- Orientation to Colorado's Technical Advisory Panel and the Accountability Work Group
- Whole Group: Review Draft Background Sections (Assessment and Measures for High School)
- Whole Group: Begin to Review Recommendations Submitted Prior to Deadline
- Whole Group: Continue to Discuss Recommendations
- Small Group: Continue Drafting Recommendations and/or Begin to Study Other Topics
- Whole Group: Share Progress Updates

August 15, 2024

Objectives
- Share all feedback on the draft report
- Begin to make revisions to the draft report and identify additional work needed between now and September
- Understand the timeline and each person's role for creating the next draft

Agenda Topics
- Whole Group Pulse Check on Full Draft
- Whole Group Feedback on Draft Recommendations
- Small Group Work Time on Framework Recommendations
- Small Group Work Time on Other Recommendations
- Whole Group Synthesis

September 16, 2024

Objectives
- Consider the draft recommendations associated with Accreditation

- Work together to resolve comments that have been posted within the Draft 2 Google Doc under Frameworks, Assessments, and time permitting, Public Reporting/Engagement and Continuous Improvement
- Provide input on overall design and layout of report

Agenda Topics
- Whole Group Pulse Check on Draft 2
- Looking Ahead: Process for Completion
- Small Group Work Time and Whole Group Discussion: Frameworks and Assessments (time permitting, Public Reporting & Engagement and Continuous Improvement)
- Accreditation
- Time Permitting: Input on Layout and Design

October 18, 2024

Objectives
- Reach consensus on the report, and make revisions as necessary
- Understand next steps to finalize the report

Agenda Topics
- Introduction to Items for Discussion
- Top (gold-level) Recommendations
- Work Block: Writing Dot Points and Brief Break
- Intent of Recommendation
- Work Block: Writing Dot Points and Resolving Final Feedback
- Recap of Changes

October 22, 2024

Objectives
- Reflect on the Task Force process
- Celebrate and appreciate the contributions of the 1241 Task Force and its members
- Provide input into the layout and formatting
- Understand the next steps to finalize the report

Agenda Topics
- Debrief Consensus from Friday
- Key Messaging for the Executive Summary
- Design and Layout Brainstorming
- Reflections on the Task Force
- Next Steps and Closing Appreciations

Appendix H: Task Force Consensus Process and Study Group Membership

To develop the findings and recommendations outlined in this report, at the start of 2024, Task Force members organized into "study groups" focused on various aspects of the accountability frameworks,

other elements of the accountability system, and additional topics relevant to the Task Force's charge that were raised during Task Force deliberations for further study. Task Force members were assigned to study groups based on interests they expressed in a facilitator's survey. Task Force members were divided into the study groups, as seen in Tables 19 and 20 below.

Table 19

Round 1 Task Force Study Groups

Study Groups Round 1: Focus on the Frameworks				
Impact of n-size and participation rates on SPF ratings	**Recognition of trends between groups of students**	**Assessments used for accountability ratings**	**Measures sufficient for high school**	**Measures sufficient for early grades**
● Tomi Amos ● Dr. Brenda Dickhoner ● Tony May	● Amie Baca-Oehlert ● Dr. Wendy Birhanzel ● Pamela Bisceglia ● Dr. Don Haddad ● Dan Schaller ● Jen Walmer	● Kathy Durán ● Dr. Rhonda Haniford ● Ted Johnson ● Hon. Rebecca McClellan ● Ryan Marks ● Mark Sass ● James Parr ● Erin Kane	● Dr. Rob Anderson ● Alison Griffin ● Tammi Hiler ● Dr. Anne Keke ● Dr. Robert Mitchell	● Lindsey Gish ● Nicholas Hernandez ● Catie Santos de la Rosa ● Mark Sass ● Lisa Yates

Table 20

Round 2 Task Force Study Groups

Study Groups Round 2: Other Elements of the Accountability System		
Improvement Planning	**Supports and Interventions**	**Awards**
● Dr. Anne Keke ● James Parr ● Ted Johnson	● Pamela Bisceglia ● Dr. Rhonda Haniford ● Dr. Rob Anderson	● Dan Schaller ● Hon. Rebecca McClellan ● Tammi Hiler ● Kathy Durán
Public Reporting and Engagement	**Accreditation**	**Assessment Participation/ Opt-Out**
● Dr. Brenda Dickhoner ● Amie Baca-Oehlert ● Alison Griffin ● Tony May	● Lisa Yates ● Dr. Don Haddad	● Ryan Marks ● Lindsey Gish ● Dr. Wendy Birhanzel

Members spent significant time in their study groups during and between monthly Task Force meetings to share their observations, study the relevant challenges and opportunities, conduct stakeholder consultations, and develop recommendations, as necessary, on their assigned study group topic. Task Force members also received support from the CDE for research and analysis, as the statute allowed for CDE support to carry out task force work.

Though the Task Force conducted its work in these smaller groups, feedback from all Task Force members was solicited and incorporated into the background content and recommendations included in this report. Task Force members were also encouraged to attend other study group meetings outside of regular Task Force meetings, as they were able, and to share relevant information gathered from stakeholder engagements. In addition, throughout Task Force meetings, members engaged in full- and small-group shareouts to gather feedback on the findings and recommendations from the rest of the Task Force members. The purpose of the shareouts was also to keep all Task Force members fully apprised of each group's work so the Task Force could build connections across all content areas, ensure all topics of interest were being considered, and make any interdependencies or conflicts between the recommendations visible.

This process of sharing and incorporating feedback between study groups was repeated multiple times. Task Force members used the feedback to adjust their findings and recommendations.

Appendix I: Impact of Assessment Participation Rates on Performance Frameworks

Total participation rates and accountability participation rates are two different measures of assessment participation that are used differently under the state and federal accountability systems.[25]

The **total participation rate** combines all assessment records for each subject area across all grade levels within a school or district. Parent excusals are counted as non-participants, so total participation rates best reflect the actual percentage of enrolled students participating in testing. Under Colorado's state accountability system, the total participation rate is only included in the performance frameworks to provide context for interpreting how representative results are. Districts with less than 95% total participation in two or more content areas receive a "Low Total Participation" descriptor, and those with more than 95% total participation in two or more content areas receive a "Meets 95% Participation" descriptor. However, these descriptors do not impact framework calculations. The federal accountability system requires a minimum of 95% total participation in required content areas and grades.

The **accountability participation rate** excludes from the calculation those students who have parent excusals from taking assessments. Under Colorado's accountability system, if a district or school has accountability participation rates below 95% in two or more content areas, the overall rating is reduced by one level. The accountability participation rate is not used in federal accountability calculations.

When calculating Achievement under the state performance frameworks, students who did not test are not included. Similarly, for student growth calculations, students who do not have two consecutive years of assessment scores are not included.

Appendix J: References on Analysis of Plan Type Assignments and Student Demographics

CDE released analyses on the relationship between plan-type assignments (including each performance indicator - Achievement, Growth and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness (PWR)) in November 2023 and January 2024. More details can be viewed in the Analysis of SPF and Demographic Characteristics.

Here is a summary of the correlations:

Absolute Value of r	Strength of Relationship
r < 0.3	very weak or no relationship
0.3 <= r < 0.5	weak relationship
0.5 <= r < 0.7	moderate relationship
r >= 0.7	strong relationship

- **Achievement.** There tends to be a moderate relationship between achievement and the identified student characteristics. This is true across all school levels for MLs and Students of Color (although there is a strong correlation at the elementary level). There is a strong

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[25] Colorado Department of Education (2024)

relationship between achievement and poverty across all school levels. For students with IEPs and Gifted students, there was a weak to moderate relationship.

- **Growth.** Across the board, there tends to be a very weak or no relationship to demographic groups. The exceptions are moderate relationships in ELA/Reading and Writing for poverty at the elementary and high school levels, for Gifted students at the high school level, and then all groups in math at the high school level.

Table 21

Correlations Between Demographics and MSS/MGP

	Mean Scale Score				Median Growth Percentile			
	Elem	Middle	Elem+Mid	High	Elem	Middle	Elem+Mid	High
	English Language Arts							
% Multilingual	-0.57	-0.51	-0.56	-0.56	-0.2	-0.09	-0.15	-0.23
% Minority	-0.71	-0.6	-0.66	-0.64	-0.25	-0.11	-0.2	-0.26
% FRL	-0.82	-0.75	-0.79	-0.79	-0.33	-0.19	-0.29	-0.45
% IEP	-0.37	-0.47	-0.41	-0.52	-0.17	-0.2	-0.17	-0.28
% Gifted	0.49	0.57	0.49	0.6	0.22	0.2	0.19	0.44
	Math							
% Multilingual	-0.55	-0.5	-0.54	-0.48	-0.14	-0.09	-0.1	-0.3
% Minority	-0.68	-0.63	-0.65	-0.58	-0.18	-0.16	-0.17	-0.34
% FRL	-0.79	-0.78	-0.77	-0.71	-0.25	-0.27	-0.25	-0.45
% IEP	-0.36	-0.47	-0.38	-0.52	-0.16	-0.19	-0.14	-0.37
% Gifted	0.46	0.61	0.43	0.6	0.18	0.25	0.18	0.41

Note. Correlations are color-coded according to the magnitudes described at the beginning of this document: Green = very weak or no relationship; yellow = weak relationship; orange = moderate relationships; red = strong relationship

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

- **Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness.** Overall, the PWR indicator had a weak relationship with the different student groups, ranging from -0.29 (MLs) to -0.41 (FRL). However, when the PWR indicator is broken down to its sub-indicators, more variability between the different measures appears.
  - The SAT (EBRW and Math) tended to have a moderate relationship. The exceptions are math for MLs (weak) and EBRW for FRL (strong).
  - Graduation, dropout and matriculation, on the other hand, tended toward a very weak-to-weak relationship for all student groups.

Table 22

Correlations Between PWR, Demographics, and Achievement/Growth

	SAT-EBRW	SAT-Math	Grad	Matr	Dropout
% Multilingual	-0.51	-0.45	-0.11	-0.16	0.38
% Minority	-0.57	-0.52	-0.18	-0.23	0.43
% FRL	-0.75	-0.68	-0.2	-0.32	0.48
% IEP	-0.52	-0.5	-0.16	-0.31	0.33
ELA MSS	-	-	0.28	0.44	-0.53
ELA MGP	-	-	0.24	0.2	-0.29
Math MSS	-	-	0.35	0.51	-0.5
Math MGP	-	-	0.35	0.43	-0.3

Note. Correlations are color-coded according to the magnitudes described at the beginning of this document: Green = very weak or no relationship; yellow = weak relationship; orange = moderate relationships; red = strong relationship

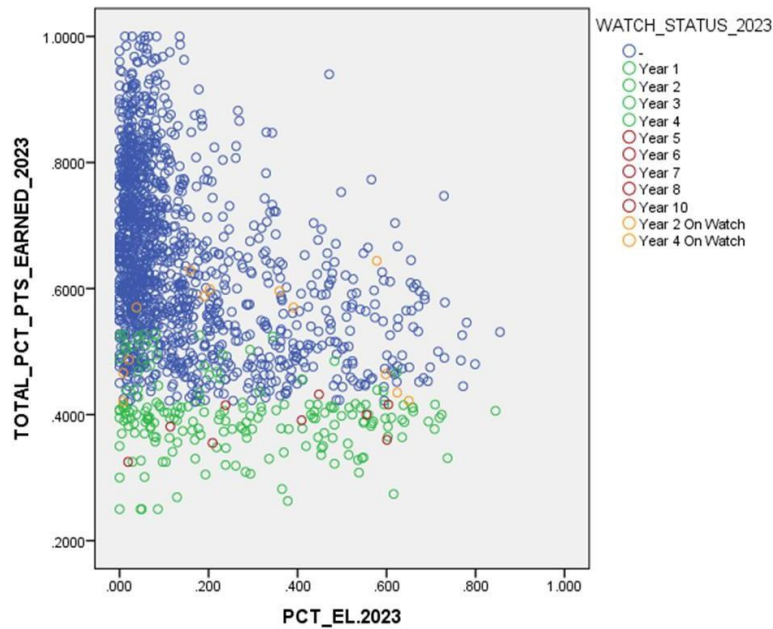Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

School Performance Framework plan type assignments were also visualized for the Task Force and summarized in the Accountability Reference Handbook. These graphs provided a closer look at schools on performance watch (e.g., Turnaround, Priority Improvement) and years on the accountability clock. Each dot represents a school. The higher the dot, the higher the percentage of points on the frameworks. The farther to the right, the more significant the percentage of identified student groups (i.e., MLs, students who are FRL Eligible, Students of Color, and students with IEPs).

- **Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points with Percent of MLs.**
Summary: Status on the clock (green and red), on watch (yellow) and not on the clock (blue) are equally distributed across schools serving all concentrations of MLs.

Figure 6

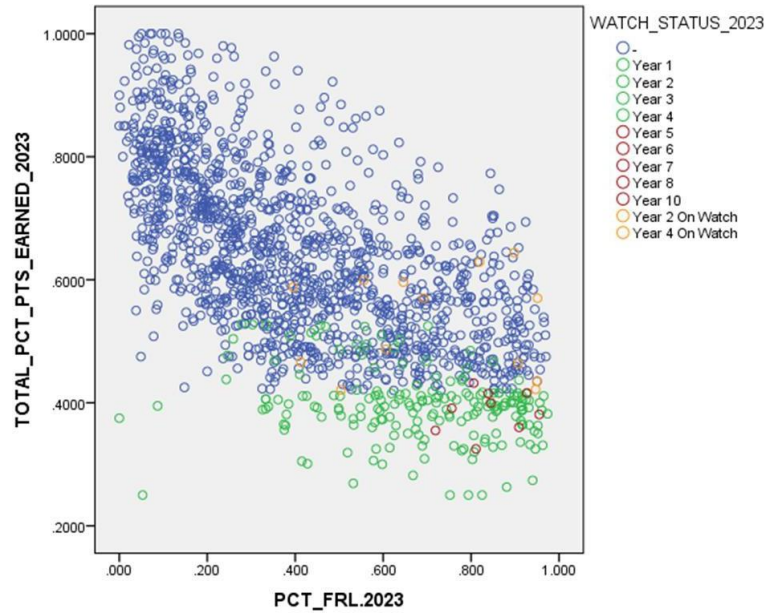*Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points with Percent of MLs*

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

- **Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points and FRL.** Summary: Note that there is a high frequency of schools that are not on the clock (blue) that also have a high population of students in poverty. There is evidence of some schools on the clock with a lower percentage of students in poverty. The schools much further along on the clock (red) gather around the higher end of the poverty scale.

Figure 7

Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points and FRL
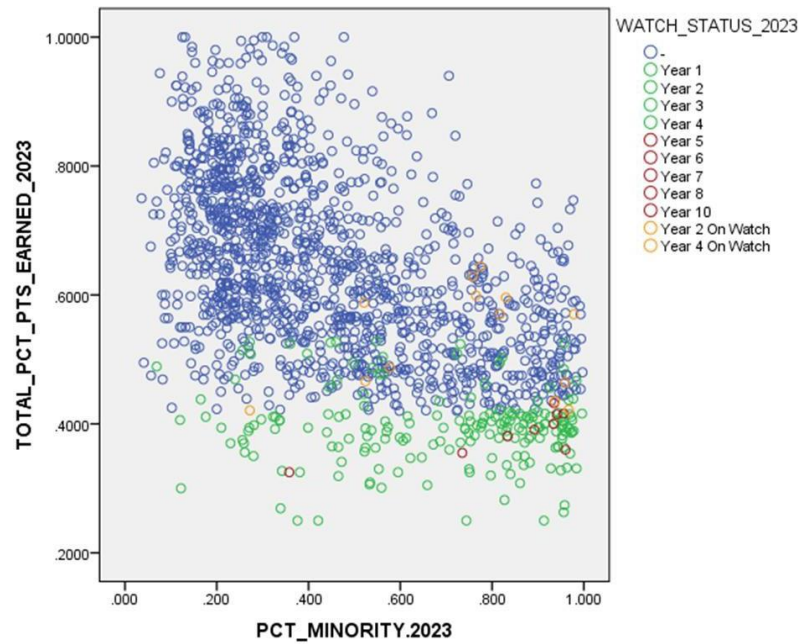

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

- **Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent Students of Color.** Summary: Similar to the FRL scatterplot, there is a high frequency of schools that are not on the clock (blue) that also have a high population of Students of Color. There are some schools on the clock with a lower percentage of Students of Color. The schools much further along on the clock (red) tend to cluster around the higher end of the minority scale.

Figure 8

*Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent Students of Color*

Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

- **Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent of Students with an IEP.** Summary: There is a weak (correlation = -0.131) relationship between preliminary framework points -- or clock status -- and percent of students with IEPs.

Figure 9

Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent of Students with an IEP
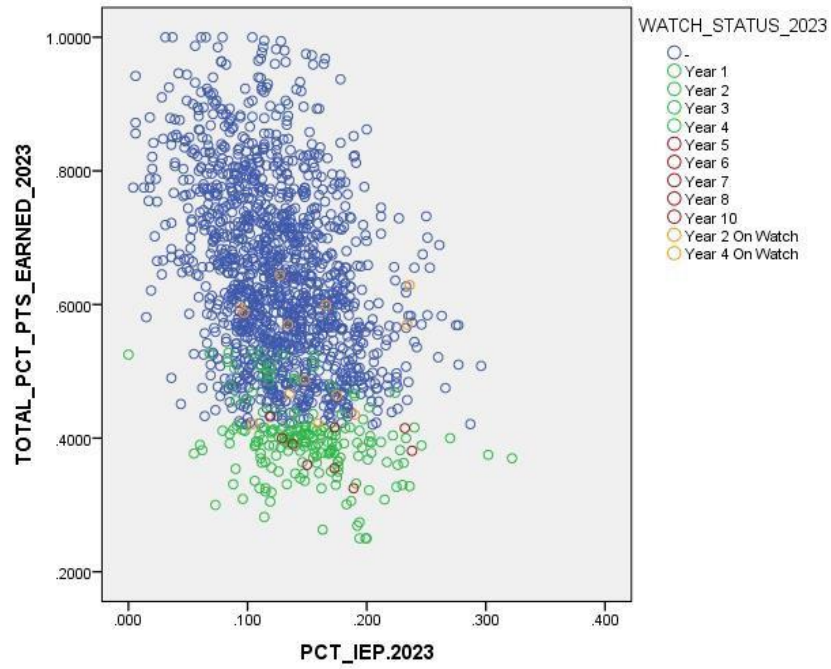
Source: Colorado Department of Education, 2023

Appendix K: Summary of Current State Awards

Table 23

Summary of Current State Awards

Award	Award Description and Criteria	Level of Award	Type of Data	Consideration for Special Populations	Approximate # of Awards per Year	Authorizing Body
National Blue Ribbon	Schools are eligible if they meet one of two criteria: • *Exemplary High Performing Schools:* Schools that are ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics or that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested. • *Exemplary Improving Schools:* Schools with at least 40% of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that have reduced the achievement gap by making the most progress in improving student performance in reading (English language arts) and mathematics on state assessments or tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.	School level	Achievement only	Yes	4-5	CDE submits to USED for final selection

	● *Note:* At least one third of nominations must be schools with at least 40% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.				
Colorado Centers of Excellence	Public schools in the state that enroll a student population of at least 75% that are at-risk pupils and that demonstrate the highest rates of growth, as measured by the Colorado Growth Model. On the school performance framework, these schools have demonstrated impressive results on the indicator relating to longitudinal academic growth.	School Level	Growth Only	Yes	10-20	CDE, as laid out in the state Accountability Act (C.R.S. 22-11-601)
Colorado Teacher of the Year	Each year, the Colorado Teacher of the Year Program honors an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled K12 classroom teacher to represent the entire profession in the state. The selected teacher will automatically become Colorado's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year competition, a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers.	Classroom Teacher	Nomination process	Not specifically named	1	CDE with entry into National Teacher of the Year process run by CCSSO
CLDE Academy Student Art Content	Discontinued during pandemic—plans to resume the award later this year.	Student				

CLDE Distinguished Administrator	Discontinued during pandemic—plans to resume the award later this year.	Administrator				
ELPA Excellence Awards	The English Language Proficiency Act Excellence Award program awards grants to districts and charter schools with evidence-based English language development (ELD) programs that achieve the highest English language proficiency and academic growth among English learners and the highest academic achievement for English learners who transition out of the English language development program. The ELPA statute requires CDE to identify Excellence Awardees using three criteria: ● Highest content growth for ELs in program, ● Highest language growth for ELs in program, and ● Highest content achievement for exited (former EL) students. Note: Discontinued in 2023-24, but may be reinstated by legislature.	Districts and Charter Schools	Achievement and Growth	Focus on MLs	10	CDE based upon state ELPA statute

Governor's Distinguished Improvement Award	For schools that demonstrate exceptional student growth. On the school performance framework, these schools "exceed" expectations on the indicator related to longitudinal academic growth at all grade levels.	Schools	Growth only	Nothing specified	100	CDE on behalf of the Governor
Green Ribbon Schools	A Green Ribbon Schools award will represent a healthy and sustainable school, recognized by parents, students, staff and governments at federal, state and local levels as an exemplary model of achievement in sustainability, health and environmental education.	School	Nomination process	If more than one school nominated, one school must have at least 40% FRL Eligible population.	1-5	CDE nominates to USDE for final selection
High School Academic Growth	The High School Academic Growth Awards recognize high schools that demonstrate the highest levels of students' academic growth in reading, writing and math, within each classification used by the statewide association for high school activities for the sport of football.	High Schools	Growth only	Nothing specified	5-10	CDE through C.R.S. 22-11-601
John Irwin Schools of Excellence	The John Irwin awards are given to schools that demonstrate exceptional academic achievement over time. These schools received an Exceeds Expectations rating on the Academic Achievement indicator of the School Performance Frameworks reflecting exceptional	School	Achievement only	None specified	200	CDE through C.R.S. 22-11-601

performance in Math, English Language Arts, and Science.					
Milken Family Foundation National Educator	Known as the "Oscars of Teaching," the Milken Educator Awards honor excellence and specifically target early-to-mid-career education professionals who are currently accomplishing great things and show promise that those accomplishments will continue.	Teachers and Principals	Nomination	None specified	1	Confidential selection process prepared by CDE and submitted to the Milken Family Foundation

National Distinguished Schools	Examples of superior, federally funded school programs for national recognition through the National ESEA Distinguished Schools program (recently renamed from its predecessor, the National Title I Distinguished Schools program). Schools are selected in one of following categories: ● Category 1: Exceptional student performance and academic growth for two or more consecutive years ● Category 2: Closing the achievement gap between student groups for two or more consecutive years ● Category 3: Excellence in serving special populations of students (e.g., homeless, migrant, English learners)	Schools	Achievement and growth	Yes. Must have a poverty rate of at least 35%. One category is dedicated to excellence in serving special populations.	2		CDE works in partnership with the National Association of ESEA Program Administrators
United States Senate Youth Program	Provides an annual opportunity for talented high school students with demonstrated leadership abilities to deepen their understanding of America's political processes and strengthen their resolve to pursue careers in public service.	High School Students	Application criteria	Nothing specified	2 Student Delegates and 2 Alternates		CDE reviews application in alignment with the Hearst Foundations United States Senate Youth Program Rules

Appendix L: Participating Districts in Local Accountability Systems Grant

Table 24

Participating Districts in Local Accountability Systems Grants[26]

Lead Applicant	Participating Schools and Districts	Local Accountability System Summary
Boulder Valley School District RE-2	● Canon City School District ● Greeley-Evans School District 6 ● Gunnison Watershed School District	Four districts in a variety of settings will be working together to measure the opportunities schools and districts provide to students (e.g., career and technical education programs, advanced coursework, extra-curricular, and a safe learning environment), with CU Boulder's Center for Assessment Design Research and Evaluation (CADRE) supporting the selection of measures, implementation, and evaluation of the project.
Delta County 50J - Vision Charter Academy		A charter school is partnering with Momentum to create a set of key indicators to measure their individually designed custom education approach in a way that can be expanded to any individualized education program in the state.
Buena Vista School District	● Akron School District ● Buffalo School District ● East Otero School District ● Frenchman School District (Fleming) ● Hanover School District ● Haxtun School District ● Holyoke School District ● Kit Carson School District ● La Veta School District ● Las Animas School District ● Monte Vista School District	The Student Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP) was approved by a SBE resolution in 2015, and includes 14 districts working together with Generation Schools, CU Denver and Battelle for Kids to align state and local accountability efforts by integrating additional indicators and peer feedback using System Support Reviews (SSRs) to support a focus on the whole child and enhance system capacity for stakeholder engagement. The goals of the proposal are to strengthen district capacity, improve the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the SSRs and focus on sustainability of S-CAP (e.g., onboarding, supplemental reports, ROI).

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[26] Colorado Department of Education (2020)

	● West Grand School District ● Wiggins School District	
Denver Public Schools		The district intends to support their Reimagine SPF committee in discussing and determining additional district wide measures within the thematic areas of Whole Child, School Culture, and Academic Achievement and Growth with an overarching focus on equity.
District 49 (Falcon)		The district will continue to enhance the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) using the Baldrige Framework and community input to focus on areas such as School Leadership, Student Learning, Educator Effectiveness, Student and Family Satisfaction, School Climate and Safety, and Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness. This will be connected to continuous improvement using Envisio.
Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8		The district has developed a Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) to determine effective instruction across its schools, and intends to work with WestEd to adjust the tool to support formative, descriptive, and comprehensive measures to inform improvement and implementation planning. The district will focus on developing measures within social-emotional learning, school culture and climate, and home/school partnership.
Garfield County School District 16		The district will partner with Marzano Academies to design a reporting system reflective of a competency-based and personalized learning system within the district using measurements of performance scales and competencies that is valid, comparable, and can be replicated across the state.
Jefferson County - New America	● Brady Exploration School (Jefferson Co)	A consortia of 11 Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) are partnering with Momentum to pilot the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)

School Lakewood	• Denver Justice High School (Denver) • Durango Big Picture School (Durango) • HOPE Online High School (Douglas Co) • Jefferson High School (Greeley) • New America School - Aurora (CSI) • New America Schools - Thornton (Adams 12) • Southwest Open School (Cortez) • Rise Up Community School (Denver) • Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs)	to align additional measures to each school's specific AEC programming and services, including evaluating student success and school capacity. Measures are focused in four areas: optional measures, opportunities measures, a multi measure of student reengagement index, and comprehensive school reviews.
Jefferson County Public School District		The district intends to measure and report on skills valued by the community, including: content mastery, critical thinking and creativity, civic and global engagement, communication, self direction and personal responsibility, agility and adaptability, collaboration, and leading by influence. Metrics, analytics and data displays will be developed to inform continuous improvement.
Northeast Colorado BOCES	Plateau School District RE-5 Revere School District Yuma School District 1	The BOCES and three districts intend to partner with Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) to develop cut-points to use the assessment as an accountability measure, align the unified improvement plan to NWEA and College Board Measures, develop a writing assessment, and develop a stakeholder monitoring tool to display results.

Westminster Public Schools	Brush School District RE-2J	Two districts intend to partner and work with Cognia, Marzano Academies, and CU Denver to design and implement a set of quality indicators that are aligned to competency-based practices and outcomes. The quality indicators will be used by internal quality review teams and can be replicated to other districts in the state.