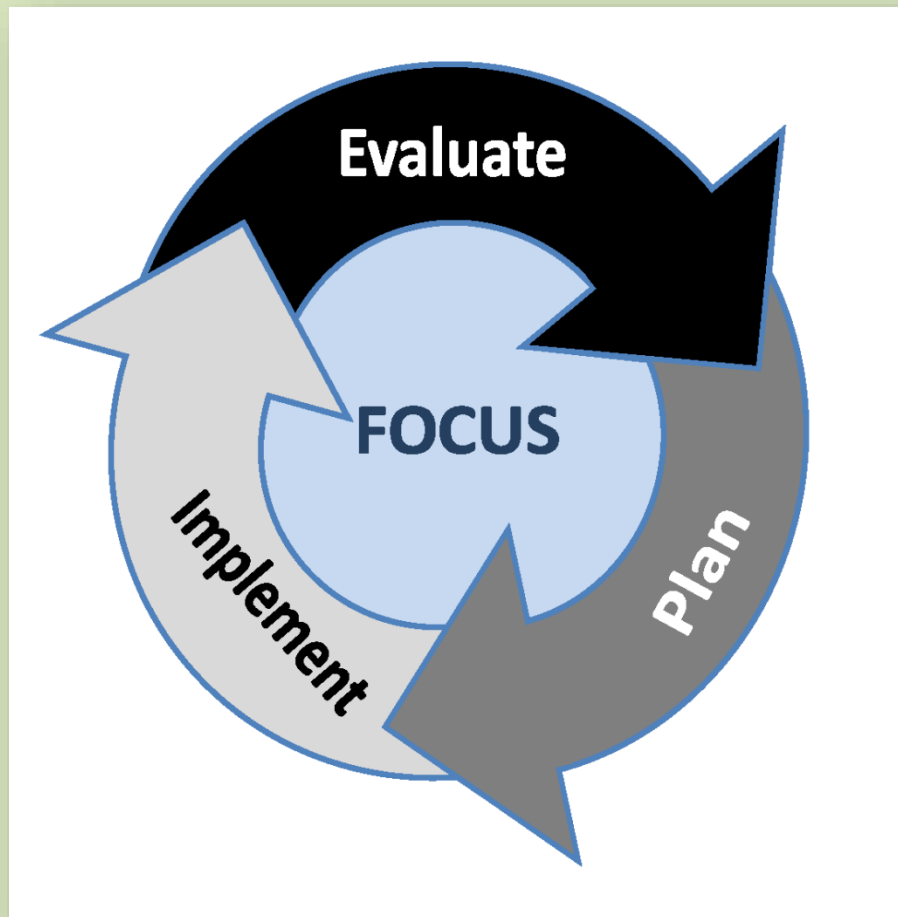




# Unified Improvement Planning Handbook

Guidance for Schools and Districts for Completing a Unified Improvement Plan





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This handbook was significantly updated for the 2019-20 school year. Previous versions of this handbook were developed in partnership with the Center for Transforming Learning and Teaching in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver.

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document was created to help school and district staff with the completion of their Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and supporting processes. The guidebook includes background information on key concepts, UIP requirements, samples from Colorado schools and districts, and recommendations for facilitating some of the planning processes.

Each section describing a part of the UIP includes:

- **Definitions/Requirements:** This section is described and includes program and legislative requirements to be incorporated into the plan.
- **Samples/Examples:** The highlighted samples are pulled from publicly posted UIPs that earned a “Meets Expectations” or “Meets Expectations at a High Level” on the UIP Quality Criteria Rubric. In some cases, minimal changes were made for this document to protect identity or use only relevant material. Those marked as “Examples” were created by CDE from a compilation of school and district information and data.
- **Recommended Processes:** Suggested activities, guiding discussion questions, and other considerations or resources are provided to use with staff that may be helpful in completing the UIP.

Notes are included throughout the document that provide additional information or advice for the online system and for schools or districts that have additional requirements. This includes schools and districts that are:

- On the State Accountability Clock (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround)
- Identified for support and improvement through Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted, Additional Targeted Support and Improvement)
- Serving grades K-2 and must meet the READ Act requirements
- Meeting program requirements in the UIP (Gifted Education, Title I)
- Are a recipient of a grant (EASI application, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, TIG)

## QUICK LINKS

This handbook links to a variety of resources to assist in the improvement planning process. Below are the three most common resources needed, the online UIP portal, SchoolView and the UIP resources. Additional resources are linked throughout the document and are summarized with their full URLs in appendix A.

	Description	URL
<b>Online UIP</b>	Link to online portal where all schools and districts work on their UIPs. Access must be granted by the district Local Access Manager (LAM) through CDE’s Identity Management.	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/idm">https://www.cde.state.co.us/idm</a>

<b>SchoolView</b>	Link to location where all school and district UIPs are publicly posted.	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance">www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance</a>
<b>Additional Assistance on UIPs</b>	For additional assistance and resources, visit the UIP website or contact the UIP team at CDE (email or phone).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip">www.cde.state.co.us/uiip</a></li> <li>• <a href="mailto:uiphelp@cde.state.co.us">uiphelp@cde.state.co.us</a></li> <li>• 303-866-6108</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Assistance on Performance Frameworks</b>	For additional assistance and resources on state accountability, visit the Performance Frameworks website or contact the ADA Team.	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks">http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks</a>
<b>Additional Assistance on ESSA Identification</b>	For additional assistance and resources on ESSA identification and requirements, visit the ESSA (Federal Programs) website or contact the ESSA Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi">www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essaplanningrequirements">www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essaplanningrequirements</a></li> <li>• 303-866-5243</li> </ul>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2009, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) introduced Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) to streamline school and district efforts to meet a variety of state and federal improvement planning requirements. The UIP reduces the total number of separate plans schools and districts are required to complete, with the intent of creating a single plan that has true meaning for local stakeholders. Adopting a common improvement planning approach has also enabled the state to shift from planning as an “event” to planning as a critical component of “continuous improvement” as evidenced by the goals and purposes of the UIP in Table A.

Table A: Goals and Purposes of the UIP	
<b>Alignment</b>	Aligns improvement planning requirements for state and federal accountability into a “single” plan focused on improving results for students.
<b>Best Practice</b>	Promotes best practices in improvement planning including using state and local data, engaging in a continuous improvement cycle and prioritizing a limited number of strategies.
<b>Documentation</b>	Provides a common format for all schools and districts to document improvement efforts, and for those on the state accountability clock (i.e., Priority Improvement and Turnaround) to demonstrate a coherent plan for dramatic change over time that CDE and the State Review Panel can review.
<b>Transparency</b>	Offers multiple stakeholders (e.g., staff, families, community members) access to information about school/district improvement efforts through public posting of plans on SchoolView.org.
<b>Supports</b>	Triggers additional supports through CDE, especially for schools/districts on the accountability clock.

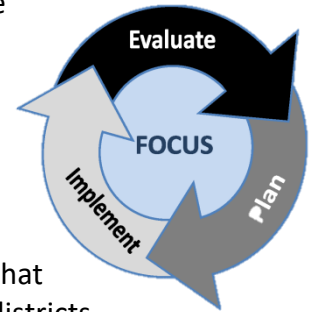
The *Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids* (S.B. 08-212) established the primary purpose of improvement planning as aligning efforts to *ensure all students exit the K-12 education system*

ready for postsecondary education, and/or to be successful in the workforce, earning a living wage immediately upon graduation. Over time, several other state and federal programs and grants (e.g., school improvement grants, Gifted Education, READ Act) have been woven into UIP processes, allowing schools and districts to simultaneously align compliance requirements with improvement efforts.

### Theory of Action

The “Focus-Evaluate-Plan-Implement” diagram (Graphic A) illustrates the theory of action behind Colorado’s approach to improvement planning – that by engaging in a *continuous improvement cycle* to manage performance, districts and schools will become more effective and student outcomes will improve. This cycle includes:

- *Focus* attention on the right things (performance indicators)
- *Evaluate* performance by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data about performance
- *Plan* improvement strategies based on performance data and root cause analysis
- *Implement* planned improvement strategies



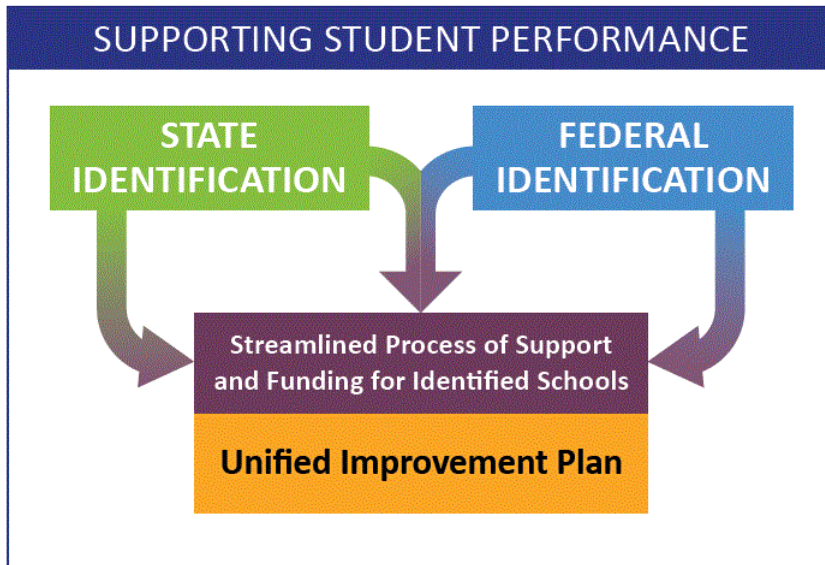
**Graphic A: Continuous Improvement Cycle**

Then, enter the cycle again multiple times throughout the school year to:

- *Evaluate* (or monitor) performance (based on interim measures) and implementation of major improvement strategies (based on implementation benchmarks) at least quarterly
- *Adjust* planned improvement strategies, *Plan*
- *Implement* revised strategies, as needed

## School and District Accountability System

For details on the state requirements, go to the [Accountability Handbook](#). For details on the Every Student Succeeds Act in Colorado, go to [ESSA in Colorado](#).



**Graphic B: Colorado Accountability System**

Colorado’s education accountability system is based on the belief that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed. Higher performing schools and districts have earned autonomy and can serve as models. While those that are struggling are eligible for additional supports and have additional requirements. Graphic B outlines the state’s system for accountability and supports for our lower performing systems. While the state and federal identification processes emphasize different

aspects of student performance, they work in tandem. For the most part, the state identification process gives a broader sense of how the overall system is operating; whereas the federal identification process shines a light on historically underserved populations. Regardless of how a school or district is identified, the state has created a common improvement planning approach and streamlined supports. The next section provides some detail on the state and federal identification processes.

### *State Identification*

Each year, the state evaluates the performance of all Colorado schools and districts through the School and District Performance Frameworks. This is intended to inform the overall state and individual communities about how well schools and districts are doing. The performance frameworks examine achievement and growth on state assessments, along with postsecondary measures such as graduation rates, drop-out rates, college entrance exams, and college matriculation rates.

The District Performance Frameworks (DPF) guide the Commissioner in accrediting school districts and determines the type of improvement plan that the district should write. Districts Accredited with Distinction and Accredited need to write a Performance Plan. The plan type is embedded in the name of the remaining district accreditation ratings.

Because local school boards accredit their schools, the department only provides plan types based upon the School Performance Frameworks (SPF).

Every school and district receives one of the ratings/plan type as outlined in Graphic C. The assigned plan type is based upon an examination of student performance indicators, including achievement, growth and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Priority Improvement and Turnaround are the two lowest ratings/plan types. Schools and districts with Priority Improvement and Turnaround plan types are considered to be on the Accountability Clock. While all schools and districts are expected to complete an improvement plan, schools and districts on the accountability clock are eligible for additional supports, must complete additional planning requirements and may receive directed action from the State Board of Education if they remain on the Accountability Clock. More details about the accountability clock are available in the [Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement](#).



**Graphic C: State Accreditation and Plan Type Categories**

### *Federal Identification*

Through ESSA, the lowest 5% of Title I schools are designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) based on the same three performance indicators: achievement, growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. More details on how Comprehensive Support is calculated are available in the [ESSA methods and criteria for identification](#).

Identification -- Graduation Rates. While graduation rates are embedded within the state’s DPF and SPFs, it is rolled up within the overall rating. ESSA, on the other hand, does have a special designation for high schools with lower graduation rates. Examining four and seven-year graduation rates, schools with a less than 67% graduation rate are identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement – Low Graduation rate.

Identification -- Performance of Historically Underserved Students. Under ESSA, CDE identifies schools in need of support based on performance of specific group(s) of students including English Learners, Students with disabilities, Economically disadvantaged, and Individual race/ethnicity categories. These are identified as Targeted Support and Improvement (TS) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATS). More details on how TS and ATS are calculated is available in the [ESSA methods and criteria for identification](#). The state identification system also considers how disaggregated groups of students perform (e.g., minorities, students with IEPs, students learning English), but those calculations are rolled up within the overall district and school performance frameworks.





## Completion and Review of Plans

Regardless of the plan type assignment/accreditation rating or ESSA identification, all schools and districts are required to complete a UIP. Each UIP is a two-year plan (covering the current year and subsequent year) that schools and districts develop after considering newly available state and local performance and implementation data.

***Note for Schools and Districts with a Performance Plan Type:*** Schools and districts that maintain a rating of Performance or higher are eligible to submit plans on a biennial basis if approved by their district. For more information, see our [Fact Sheet on biennial flexibility](#).

All schools and districts receiving plan type/ratings of Priority Improvement or Turnaround, or having been identified for Comprehensive Support (CS) and Improvement under ESSA must submit plans in January (see appendix B, F and G for official dates) for review by CDE. Plans from CS schools must be reviewed and approved by the school, LEA, and CDE. Formal feedback is available within approximately six weeks and may require plan revisions. Other schools and districts may request feedback on their plans at any time. Schools and districts on the Accountability Clock for multiple years may have their plans reviewed by the [State Review Panel](#) as a part of their recommendation process for directed action by the State Board of Education.

The UIP integrates accountability requirements for multiple programs and grants. CDE offices have agreed to monitor planning requirements using the timeline described above. This includes requirements for state accountability, the READ Act, Early Childhood Education, Family School Partnerships, Dropout Prevention, Turnaround Schools, Course Taking analysis, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Communities, Gifted Education, services provided through the EASI grant (i.e., ESSA School Improvement, state Transformation grants), and ESSA.

*Expectations for identified Schools under ESSA:* CDE will use the UIP to monitor CS plans (including the lowest 5% and low graduation). CDE will review plans to ensure that all requirements are being met. Districts are required to review, approve, and monitor implementation of improvement plans from schools identified for Targeted (TS) or Additional Targeted Support (ATS) and Improvement under ESSA. Districts may use the UIP to document associated requirements for TS or ATS schools. Notes about the requirements are included throughout this guidebook and in additional guidance from CDE.

More information about the plan review process is included in [Appendix B](#) of this guidebook. More information about the accountability process is available at the webpages listed below:

- [CDE accountability website](#): Overview information on the accountability system and how ratings are identified
- [Federal identifications](#): Specific information about how federal identification under ESSA are determined

## UIP FORMAT

The UIP is housed within the online UIP system and is organized into four tabs, with sections III and IV containing the majority of the content about schools' improvement plans and efforts.

**Table A: Sections of the UIP**

My School/ My District	I. Summary of School	II. UIP Info	III: Data Narrative	IV: Action Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeline</li> <li>• Summary of Plan</li> <li>• Submission Process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-populated Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Info (e.g., Contacts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Performance</li> <li>• Brief Description</li> <li>• Notable Trends</li> <li>• Priority Performance Challenges</li> <li>• Root Causes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major Improvement Strategies</li> <li>• Action Steps</li> <li>• Implementation Benchmarks</li> <li>• Target Setting</li> </ul>

Included on the [CDE UIP webpage](#) are instructions for accessing the online system, setting up access, and frequently asked questions.

### Expectations within the UIP

The structure and required components of the UIP are governed by statute and policy. These expectations are laid out within the Quality Criteria Rubric and are organized by five guiding questions that outline the major concepts of the improvement planning process. The questions aim to create coherence and enforce the importance of aligning all elements of the improvement plan. The guiding questions are:

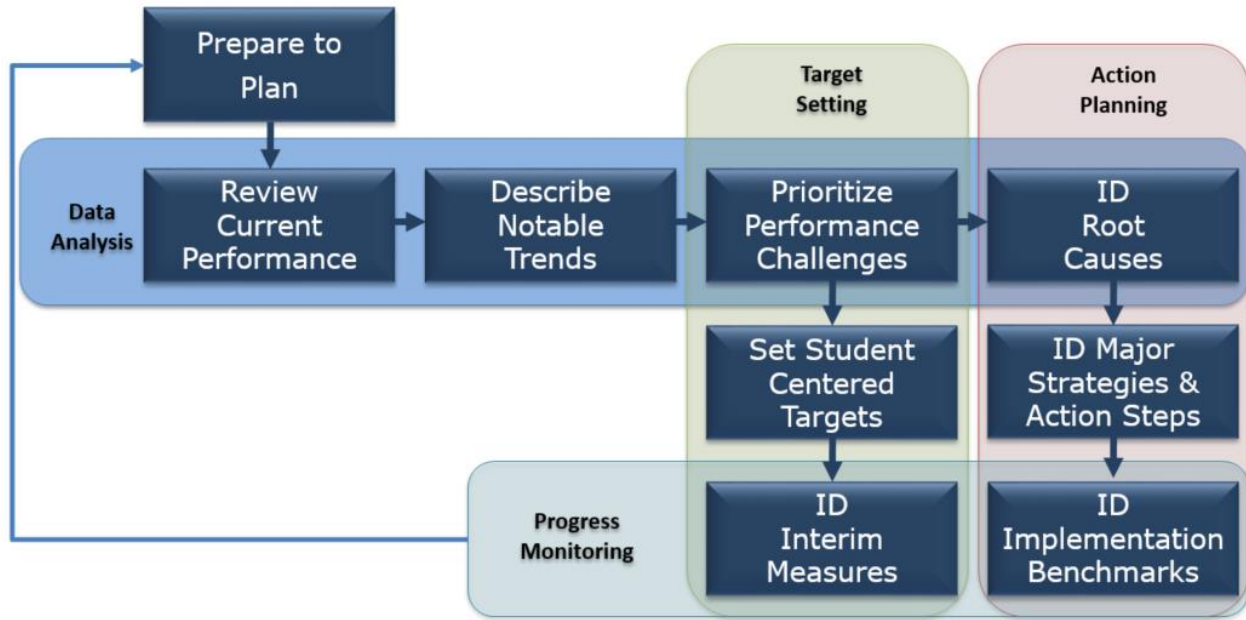
Does the plan...

- 1) Investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent performance challenges?
- 2) Identify root causes that explain the magnitude of the performance challenges?
- 3) Identify evidence-based major improvement strategies that have likelihood to eliminate the root causes?
- 4) Present a well-designed action plan for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?
- 5) Include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?

This UIP Handbook is a basic guide to support school and district stakeholders as they engage in an iterative, unified approach to improvement planning. The process includes a deep analysis of different types of data and prioritization of areas of focus (data narrative), key strategies and action steps (action planning), and benchmarks and targets (target setting and progress monitoring) to help the school or district monitor progress. Graphic D provides an overview of the process, with each box representing key steps that will be described through this handbook.

This handbook is intended to be used in conjunction with several other resources to strengthen school/district improvement planning processes, including: (1) the [School/District's Performance Framework Report](#), (2) local sources of data, (3) the [UIP Online System](#), and (4) the [UIP Quality Criteria Rubric](#).

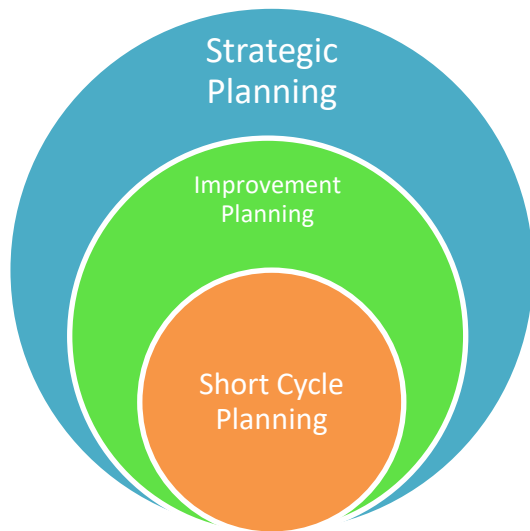
Graphic D: Unified Improvement Planning Flowmap



## PREPARE TO PLAN

### Approach to Planning

The UIP was designed to enable schools and districts to streamline accountability planning requirements into one plan, while also providing enough flexibility so that the process is



meaningful for that site. There are different types of planning that local sites may need to take into account when designing their planning system. Typically, districts will invest in a long-term strategic plan that articulates a vision over a five to ten year period. The improvement plan should build upon that strategic vision and provide a two-year operations plan that is more nimble at responding to performance data and implementation issues. Short cycle planning is even more responsive, because it often looks about three months down the road with very specific action steps to ensure there is urgency and high accountability.

For schools and districts identified through the state and federal accountability system the UIP becomes one of the main ways to document evidence of the school or districts' proposal for improvement and dramatic change. Therefore the plan should convey the system's sense of urgency for improvement, communicate with stakeholders the progress on previous years' action plans and detail a specific direction for the future. While CDE reviews these plans annually, the UIP archives the school/district's actions over time for the State Review Panel and the State Board of Education as they consider directed actions at the end of the Accountability Clock.

Districts are encouraged to think broadly about how to leverage the UIP process to build consistent practices for all schools. The plan may be reviewed by multiple individuals at the district level to ensure that key strategies are included. School plans may also be used as a data source to inform the district level UIP.

### Participants in the Planning Process

Planning at the school and district level should involve multiple stakeholders. The makeup of these planning teams will look different based on the school or district's unique needs and structures and should include representation from internal stakeholders (e.g., District and school staff, leadership, students) and external stakeholders (e.g., community members, families). Stakeholders may also be involved at different points during the process and in



different ways (e.g., small building team writes the full plan, department teams work on content specific trends, all staff participate in root cause analysis, families participate in surveys or focus groups to gather support on main initiatives).

In general, teams should consist of building leadership and teacher representatives, and should engage parent, student, community and district representatives. There are a few key areas that should be reflected:

- The School and District Accountability Committee (SACs/DACs) role in the improvement planning process has been defined by statute and state rule.
- Local boards must adopt the district’s UIP and any schools on the accountability clock.
- There are requirements surrounding [parent notification and public hearings](#) regarding the plan development for schools on the clock.

ESSA requires that plans are developed in partnership with stakeholders and that stakeholders play a meaningful role in the plan development process in an ongoing manner. For plans from schools identified as CS under ESSA, plans are required to delineate the stakeholders involved, as well as how, when, in what way, and how often, stakeholders partnered in plan development.

For more details on the role of Accountability Committees and local boards refer to the [District Accountability Handbook](#). For specific requirements for adoption of plans for schools and districts on the clock, refer to the [Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement](#).

The process used for engaging participants in the development of the UIP should be included in the *Brief Description* section of the UIP.

### **Create, Rewrite, or Update**

One of the first decisions a planning team must make is if they need to *create, rewrite, or update* their UIP.

*Create a New Plan.* If the school or district did not have a UIP in the prior year (e.g., new schools), the team will create a new plan. Given some of the unique circumstances of creating a UIP for a new school (e.g., absence of an SPF, limited or no trend data), there is additional [guidance for new schools](#).

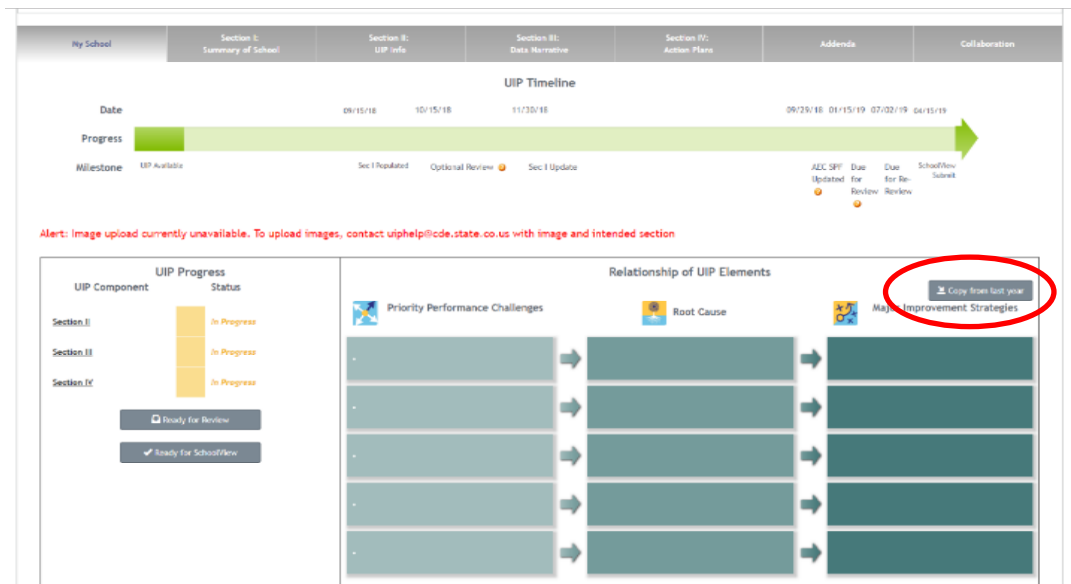
*Re-Writing a Plan.* Rewriting is similar to writing a new plan but applies to schools that have had a plan in previous years and should have student performance data to draw upon. This approach requires planning teams to fully engage in every planning step as if they did not have a plan the prior year. Some conditions that could lead a planning team to rewrite their UIP include:

- New leadership at the school that is not invested in the prior plan
- Limited or no staff involvement in development of the prior plan
- Performance results that suggest insufficient improvement or a decline in performance

- A plan that is out of step with current improvement strategies as enacted in the school or district
- Significant changes in resources (positive or negative) to implement improvement strategies
- Re-configuration of the school (e.g., combining two schools, grade level re-configuration)
- Feedback from the district, CDE or community stakeholders that suggests the plan needs substantial revisions

*Updating the Plan.* Updating entails adjusting, fine-tuning, or building upon the plan from the prior year. Schools and districts who are updating will need to update, at a minimum, the current performance section, progress on previous year’s targets, trend analysis, targets and action plans.

**Online UIP Tip:** Users can copy the previous year’s plan into the current year in the online system. Changes and edits can then be made to this plan.



### Gathering and Organizing Relevant Data

In preparation for improvement planning, planning teams should gather and organize relevant data from a variety of sources. Recommended data types are outlined in Table B and include:

- **Performance Data:** Performance data is focused on student outcomes and includes measures like student assessment achievement and growth results and educational outcome measures like dropout or graduation rates
- **Demographic Data:** Demographic data describe characteristics about the school and could include student measures such as “the percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch” and staff members such as “how many teachers are first or second year teachers”
- **Process Data:** Process data describe programs, strategies, and practices that may impact performance data as well as measures such as attendance and behavior that are predictive of other outcomes

- **Perception Data:** Perception data reflects the opinions and views of stakeholders and may include climate surveys, implementation surveys, or information from focus groups.

While the School and District Performance Frameworks (Frameworks) and ESSA profiles contain some of these information sources, the team should use data available from both local and state sources to get a full picture of performance. Local data can help provide context, deepen analysis, and strengthen the analysis of the Frameworks.

**Table B: Potential Data Types for Improvement Planning Organized by Types of Data**

Student Performance	Student Demographics	School Processes	Perception
Current Performance, Trends, PPC's, Targets/Interim Measures			
		Root Causes, Major Improvement Strategies/Action Steps, Implementation Benchmarks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Achievement and Growth from State and Local Measures</li> <li>• Graduation, Completion Rate</li> <li>• Matriculation to Higher Education</li> <li>• Credential Attainment Rate</li> <li>• Dropout, Re-enrollment, Recidivism Rates</li> <li>• Promotion, Credit Accrual</li> <li>• Grades, Course Failure Rate</li> <li>• Behavior Incidents</li> <li>• Health and Wellness Indicators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of Students</li> <li>• Enrollment and Grades Served</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Socio-economic status (e.g., Free and Reduced Price Lunch)</li> <li>• Race/Ethnicity</li> <li>• Learning needs (e.g., English Learners, Students with Disabilities, More than 3 years behind in credit attainment)</li> <li>• Length of time in school/program</li> <li>• Mobility Rates</li> <li>• Absenteeism (truancy, chronic absenteeism)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Reviews (e.g., Diagnostic Review, Connect for Success, Turnaround Network)</li> <li>• Structures/supports and External Partners (e.g., MTSS, PLCs, student support team, turnaround partner)</li> <li>• Staffing Patterns (e.g., turnover rates, years of experience)</li> <li>• Stakeholder Involvement (e.g., SAC)</li> <li>• Course Offerings and Student Course Taking Patterns (e.g., AP enrollment)</li> <li>• Budget (e.g. total grant/federal dollars received)</li> <li>• Program Offerings and Enrollment (e.g., transition services, counseling, apprenticeships, credit recovery, intervention)</li> <li>• Professional Development offerings</li> <li>• Dropout prevention policy/practices review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student perception (e.g., safety, engagement)</li> <li>• Community perception of school/students (e.g., parent surveys, focus groups)</li> <li>• Staff perceptions of teaching and learning conditions (e.g., TLCC)</li> <li>• Staff perception of student emotional and cognitive engagement</li> <li>• Observations of instructional practices</li> </ul>

## PLANNING PROCESS WITHIN THE UIP

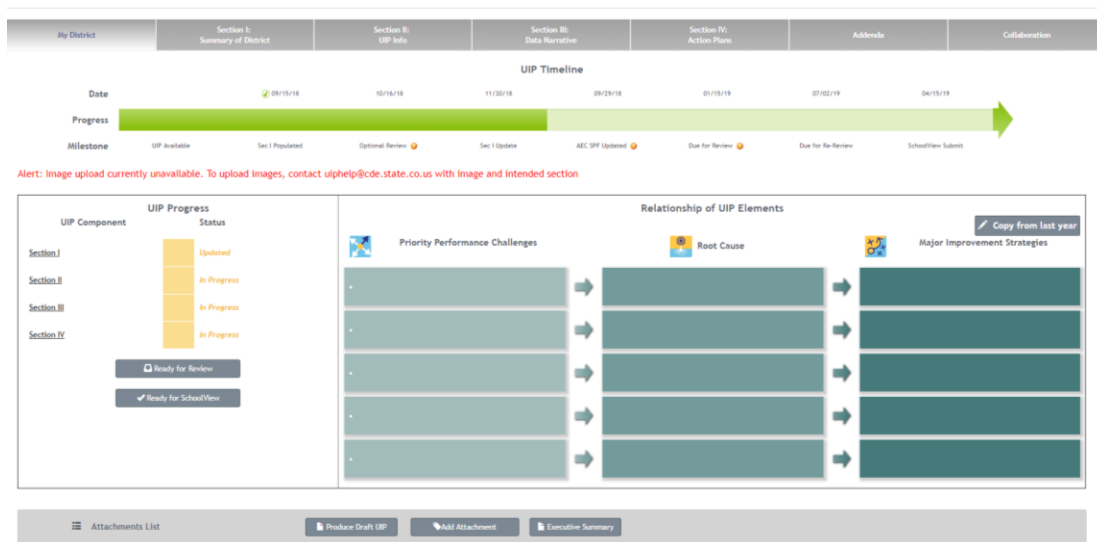
The sections described below match each tab in the UIP Online System.

### My School/My District

**Definition/Requirements:** This tab, shown in Diagram E should be the first that you view when logging into the UIP. It includes a timeline across the top, a summary of the key items that have been input into the plan, and options/buttons for attachments and submission. Key components of the system are described below.

- **UIP Timeline:** The timeline shows key dates and deadlines and the school’s progress towards meeting each of these milestones.
- **Relationship of UIP Elements:** This section shows the Priority Performance Challenges, Root Causes, and Major Improvement Strategies that have been input into the UIP.
- **UIP Progress and Submission:** This section shows progress on completion of each component of the UIP. This is also where the District selects “Ready for Review” and “Ready for Schoolview” when they are ready to submit their plan.
- **Attachments List:** There are three buttons in this section.
  - “Produce Draft UIP” will produce a PDF of the current inputs in the UIP. This can be helpful in sharing the plan with a wider audience that might not be able to log into the online system.
  - “Add Attachment” will show a pop-up window where users can add additional documents to their plan, which may include a progress monitoring tool or additional action plan.
  - “Executive Summary” will produce a one page PDF that summarizes the key components of the UIP.

**Graphic 5: My School Tab**







## Section I: Summary of School (or District)

**Online UIP Note:** CDE prepopulates Section I in the UIP Online System. Schools and districts do not complete this section.

**Definition/Requirements:** Section I includes a chart that outlines accountability expectations (state and federal), program requirements (e.g., READ Act, Course Taking Analysis), and a variety of grants expectations (e.g., 21<sup>st</sup> Century, EASI) that are customized specific to the school or district. Planning teams are advised to use this prepopulated report to understand the state and federal expectations and corresponding directions for completing the improvement plan.

## Section II: UIP Info

**Definition/Requirements:** Section II includes contact information for school and district leaders, and provides a text box for schools and districts to briefly describe the context. This description populates the first portion of the 1-page executive summary generated by the online system.

## Section III: Data Narrative

**Definition/Requirements:** Section III provides schools and districts with an opportunity to articulate the data analysis and builds the case for the proposed strategies in section IV (action plan). The data narrative section is organized by brief description, prior year targets, current performance, trend analysis, priority performance challenges, and root cause analysis. As each of those components of the data narrative are completed, the online system automatically populates each of those sections into the narrative.

- **Brief Description:** The Brief Description provides a summary of the school or district and background information that helps the reader understand the context, focus of the school, and process that the school or district used to involve stakeholders in the development of the UIP.
- **Prior Year Targets:** This section identifies targets from the previous year, performance in those targets, and reflection on what may have led to the progress achieved.
- **Current Performance:** Current Performance includes a summary analysis including performance against district, state, and federal expectations.
- **Trend Analysis:** Trends are provided that show direction of student performance across three or more years (if enough data is available and n-counts are large enough) for the school or district. Trends include a comparison point (e.g., local and/or state expectations, averages) to help determine if the trend is notable.
- **Priority Performance Challenges:** Priority challenges are selected from the analysis of current performance and trends. These are summary statements of the student performance issues that the school or district has decided to focus on for the remainder of the plan.
- **Root Causes:** Root causes are the underlying causes within the school or district system that may be driving each of the priority performance challenges.



This section, the data narrative, is sometimes referred to as the “data story.” This data story should tell how the team went from data analysis to the selected challenges to identifying potential root causes of performance. The data narrative sets the foundation and provides rationale for major improvement strategies and corresponding action steps in the next part of the plan.

### Step One: Brief Description

The Brief Description is an open narrative section that allows the school or district to provide relevant context that any reader should know. This section often includes the size and makeup of the staff and student body, particular improvement efforts or partnerships that the school has, and any substantial changes that have occurred at the school (e.g., a principal change).

This section should also include details on how the school completed the development of their UIP, including how stakeholders (e.g., building leader, classroom staff, School Accountability Committee) were involved in decisions and/or how information was shared.

#### Sample #1: UIP Development Process

*At the end of each school year our team reviews the goals of the UIP. Upon review, changes are implemented to refine the process and set new goals that are in-line with expected outcomes based upon the previous years' data results. The major driver of our UIP development process was the School Performance Framework and our student achievement data. The school leadership team, including teacher leaders, analyzed the data and set strategic goals around MAPs, student and parent engagement, SAT and PSAT. We also worked to gain parent feedback through our CSC meetings on our UIP goals and will continue to solicit feedback from parents throughout the year through these meetings. The UIP is an ongoing document that is visited each week to monitor the school's progress. Stakeholders are required to input data each month to update areas of growth and continued need. The CIG team will also monitor and give feedback on progress every 6 weeks.*

#### Sample #2: UIP Development Process

*The UIP was written as a collaborative effort that started with our Leadership Team in September. This representative group completed data analysis on both local and state data. The information was shared with the staff and we had staff discussion to provide feedback. Our School Accountability Committee (SAC), was given a description of our proposed goals and we discussed the rationale for why the goals were chosen. SAC was given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback for our UIP. Our SAC is made up of 5 and 4 are staff members. Parents of students on IEPs, 504s, Advanced Learning Plans, and those not in any program are represented. Staff represents teacher of primary, intermediate, specials, and classified/support staff.*

**Note for ESSA identified Schools:** Schools identified as CS schools should ensure that their planning process and UIP details the range, frequency, and depth of engagement with stakeholders, including district staff, school leadership, teaching staff, and family members.

## Step Two: Review Current Performance

**Definition/Requirements:** The goal of the current performance section is to provide a summary of overall performance in relation to district and state expectations. This should include how the school or district is performing on accountability measures (e.g., state performance frameworks, ESSA support and improvement indicators, local accountability measures). If relevant, this may be where the school or district introduces other local measures that validate or refute state measures.

### Avoiding a Common Pitfall

The Current Performance section should be brief and just focus on performance on accountability measures. This is not where the analysis of student data begins. Otherwise, the trend analysis will feel very redundant!

At a minimum, the current performance section should include:

- Summary analysis of indicators that are included on the **School/District Performance Framework**
- **ESSA identified:** If a school is identified under ESSA, an analysis of the performance for all ESSA indicators related to the reason for identification should be included.
- Discussion of performance on local expectations or measures (interim assessments, attendance, behavior). In some districts, local accountability measures are identified to supplement or even surpass state and federal expectations.
- *Note:* If a school or district submits a request to reconsider to the state, this may be a good place to share some of the same analysis – not to convince the reader, but because it may provide deeper insights into current performance.

**Recommended Processes:** Planning teams should review the school or district Performance Framework and the [School Dashboard](#) or [District Dashboard](#) to identify where expectations were met and what areas were associated with the overall performance rating. Additionally, School Profiles that include the data elements and results on ESSA indicators should be reviewed for any ESSA identified schools. Preliminary frameworks and ESSA identifications are available through District Syncplicity accounts in August of each year, while the data that is included in these ratings, such as assessment scores and graduation rates, are updated in the School and District Dashboard. Once ratings are finalized in November and December, the frameworks and ESSA ratings will be posted publicly. The initial identification of patterns may include the following categories:

- Overall performance rating and year on the accountability clock (if applicable)
- Indicator and sub-indicator areas and if the school/district met or exceeded local, state and federal expectations
- Indicators and sub-indicators where the school/district fell short of local or state averages

**Sample #1: Current Performance**  
*From a Colorado Elementary School*

*Results from the 2017- 18 school year indicate that the school ‘does not meet’ for English Learners, FRL eligible, and student with disabilities in terms of achievement on CMAS ELA and MATH, earning only ¼ of the points allotted for each area. Native English speaking children who do not receive free/reduced lunch are the minority sub group. Mean scale scores are not shared for groups as they comprise n<16. The performance of students in this group either meet or exceed district and/or state expectations while students identified as 'minority' do not meet on MATH and approaching on ELA. Our improvement focus continues to be on literacy, math, and language learning for all students. The challenges we face are significant and include high mobility, low attendance, or attendance punctuated by late arrival and early dismissal, and high poverty. Overall, student performance remained flat in terms of CMAS ELA and Math.*

**Sample #2: Current Performance**  
*From a larger district*

*In 2018, the district was accredited by the Colorado State Board of Education with an Improvement Plan. The district accredited 16 schools at the performance level, 11 at the improvement level, two at the priority improvement level and no schools at turnaround. The district provides additional oversight and support for schools on priority improvement or turnaround or those designated as Comprehensive Support, Targeted Support, and Additional Targeted Support.*

**Summary of District Performance Framework**

*The District Performance Framework indicates that the district is "Approaching" in Academic Achievement, Academic Growth and Academic Growth Gaps, and state expectations in Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness.*

	<i>District</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Academic Achievement</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Does Not Meet</i>
<i>English Language Arts</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>
<i>Math</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>
<i>Science</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Does Not Meet</i>
<i>Academic Growth</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>
<i>English Language Arts</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Meets</i>	<i>Approaching</i>
<i>Math</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>	<i>Approaching</i>

Participation Rate	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Graduation Rate	Meets	N/A	N/A	Meets
Disag. Grad Rate				
F/R Lunch	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Minority	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Students w/ Disabilities	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
English Learners	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Dropout Rate	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Colorado SAT	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching

**Overall Magnitude of the District’s Performance Challenges**

*Even though the district moved out of Priority Improvement into Improvement in 2013 and stayed at Improvement since that time, our performance challenges persist. We continue to perform below state expectations both in achievement and growth, especially our subgroups, which comprise the majority of our student population.*

**Prior Year Targets**

**Definition/Requirements:** The goal of this section is to help teams identify progress on previous targets and identify if there are any particular strategies that may have led to progress. The section involves two steps:

**Section III:- Reflection on the Prior Plan** Complete & Ready to submit

Directions: Review student targets and Major Improvement Strategies from the previous year and provide a summary of what was successful and what may need to be updated or adjusted for this year. Consider to what extent improvement efforts in the past year impacted performance. For instance, were the strategies and action plan implemented as intended, and if so, did it have the desired effect?

Prior Year Student Targets  
Section will populate if user copies over prior year plan

---

Prior Year Major Improvement Strategies  
Section will populate if user copies over prior year plan

Reflection on Prior Year Student Targets and Major Improvement Strategies: Provide a summary of the progress in implementing the Major Improvement Strategies and if they had the intended effect on systems, adult actions, and student outcomes (e.g. targets).

The first step is to detail each target from the previous year and the performance on the target. If using “copy” from last year, the targets will auto-populate.

The second step is to provide an overall reflection on the targets for each section. This should include analysis of what may have led to meeting or not meeting the targets and whether these results justify continuing with current major improvement strategies and action steps.

If progress is evident over time the positive results may provide a compelling case for continuing with the existing activities. If results are not as strong as intended, it may make a case for changing course or adjusting implementation. These decisions can be articulated in the next text box.

Based on the reflection and evaluation, provide a summary of the adjustments that will be made for this year's plan.



### Sample #1: Targets and Reflection

**Prior Year Target:** Students will attain the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile of growth in ELA

**Performance:** Students achieved a 43<sup>rd</sup> percentile in ELA CMAS and 52<sup>nd</sup> percentile on PSAT.

**Prior Year Target:** Students will attain the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile of growth in Algebra all areas tested.

**Performance:** Students achieved a 32.5% growth percentile in Algebra.

**Reflection:** Our students did not meet growth targets. Intervention groups were targeted for after school tutoring; however, additional measures can be implemented to progress monitor student performance and growth. Students practiced reading samples and writing responses, consistent with those on Common Core assessments; however, the samples of PSAT/SAT conceptualizing informational text was lacking. Teachers were given the task to use formative data to inform their instruction and students' assessment results were to be used to target areas of weakness. Additional formative checks within lessons need to be increased with fidelity and monitored by administration including added PD in formative checks. Students at the lowest level of ELA ability were provided additional scheduling of an ELA literacy class to allow for double the instruction. The levels of intervention can be monitored more closely to determine effectiveness of the literacy programs. There was an increased use of Tier 1 best practices to raise the rigor through peer observation and collaboration; however an MTSS process needs to be formalized to structure Tier 1 interventions that work per common subjects and grade levels. Additionally, there was a focus on increased practice of solving real-world problems with embedded mathematical operations and practice describing the thought process used to solve problems in each math lesson needs to be implemented on a daily basis.

### Sample #2: Targets and Reflection

**Prior Year Targets:**

- 80% or more of Kindergarten students will Exceed or Meet grade-level expectations as measured by the Middle of Year writing performance tasks.

- The percent of 1st and 2nd grade students who are below grade level on text-dependent writing will decrease from 93% at the beginning of the year to 25% at the end of the year as measured by the Middle of Year writing performance tasks.
- In grades 3rd-5th, 60% or more of students will Exceed or Meet grade-level expectations as measured by English Language Arts PARCC.

**Performance:**

- 85% of Kindergarten students met or exceeded expectations as measured by middle of the year performance tasks.
- By the end of the year, there were 44% were not proficient in 1st grade and 75% in 2nd grade on the middle of the year performance task.
- 63% of students in 3-5 were proficient or advanced on ELA PARCC.

**Reflection:** Last year, we had a school-wide focus on LDC work, where we increased our understanding of text dependent writing and intentionally planned using grade-level standards. In grades 3-5, we started to use claim, evidence, reasoning response format and in grades K-2, time was spent deconstructing tasks. On district performance tasks, the rubrics were not aligned K-5 and to standards, and as a result scores did not reflect student progress. We didn't spend time analyzing tasks as a school to ensure valid and reliable scores.

### Step Three: Identify Notable Trends

**Definition/Requirements:** To identify notable performance trends, teams should compare data over time and against set comparison points (e.g., district or state averages, state cut points). Notable trends can include both positive and negative performance patterns and should describe the following elements:

- Measure and metric about which trend is being described
- Content area(s)
- Students included in the trend (e.g. grade levels, disaggregated groups)
- Direction of the trend
- Amount of change in the metric
- Time period over which trend was observed
- Description of what makes the trend notable

Performance Indicator	Measure	Content Area	Metric(s)	Student Groups	Amount	Time Period	Trend Direction	Notability (comparison point)
Achievement	CMAS	Math	Mean Scale Score (MSS)	All middle school students	2015 = 703.5 ; 2016 = 705.7 2017 = 712.4	2015-17 (3 years)	slight increase	State Expectation = 734.3; almost 22 point difference.

**Trend Statement**

Middle school students are trending upward in CMAS math achievement between 2015 and 2017 (2015 = 703.5; 2016 = 705.7; 2017 = 712.4). While going in the right direction, this is a notable trend because it is well below the state expectation (734.3 MSS) by more than 20 points.

**What makes a trend notable?** Planning teams should indicate the basis for determining if a trend is “notable”. This should involve comparing the performance of the school/district to an external reference or comparison point. These comparisons can be criterion- or norm-referenced, in that they can answer one of two questions:

- *How did we compare to a specific expectation or standard (criterion-referenced)?* The team should consider minimum state or federal expectations. The minimum state expectations, or “meets”, are listed on the [reference page](#) at the back of performance frameworks. For higher performing schools and districts, it may be more appropriate to raise the comparison to the “exceeds” rating as a comparison point. The “approaching” rating may be a good marker to gauge as a way to demonstrate progress, but it is still not defined as meeting state expectations.
- *How did we compare to other schools, districts, or grades (norm-referenced)?* Planning teams can make a norm-referenced comparison to determine if a trend is notable by comparing the school performance trends to the district and/or state trends in the same content area over the same time period. In addition, if the trend is focused on a disaggregated group, the trend can be compared to the trend for the school overall for the same time period.

How did we compare to a specific expectation?	How did we compare to others?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State expectations (e.g. meets on SPF)</li> <li>• Cut points for assessment performance levels (e.g. 750 on CMAS ELA/Math)</li> <li>• Grad guidelines cut points (district specific)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State average</li> <li>• District average</li> <li>• Out group v. in group (FRL to Non-FRL)</li> </ul>

In addition to examining the performance framework and other state data, the team should examine local data to expand what is known about students. For many districts, given the timing of receiving the frameworks, there is most likely local data that can be examined first to identify patterns and then comparing with summative indicators when they are available.

**Avoiding a Common Pitfall**  
 The UIP should include state and local data. There is a myth that UIPs should only contain data available through the performance frameworks or through the state. On the contrary! Use whatever data you can to tell your story.

**Recommended Process: How to identify notable trends.** Identifying notable trends involves analyzing multiple points of data for each performance indicator, including grade level data and deeper disaggregation of student group data than what is included in the Frameworks. It may be easier to compile information into one table (Table C) to be able to look at changes over time. A sentence or two interpreting the data is still needed that summarizes these trends.



Table C: Notable Trend Example			
	2014	2015	2016
School	15%	14%	16%
State	2.4%	2.5%	2.3%

*The dropout rate for the school has remained relatively stable (15%, 14%, and 16%) between 2014 and 2016. This is notable as it is much higher than the state average for the same time period and above state expectation.*

In addition, planning teams should start with their existing trends, look at the most recent performance data, add the most recent performance data to their trend statements, and determine if the direction and magnitude of the trends remain the same. Teams can then determine which trends are notable by using

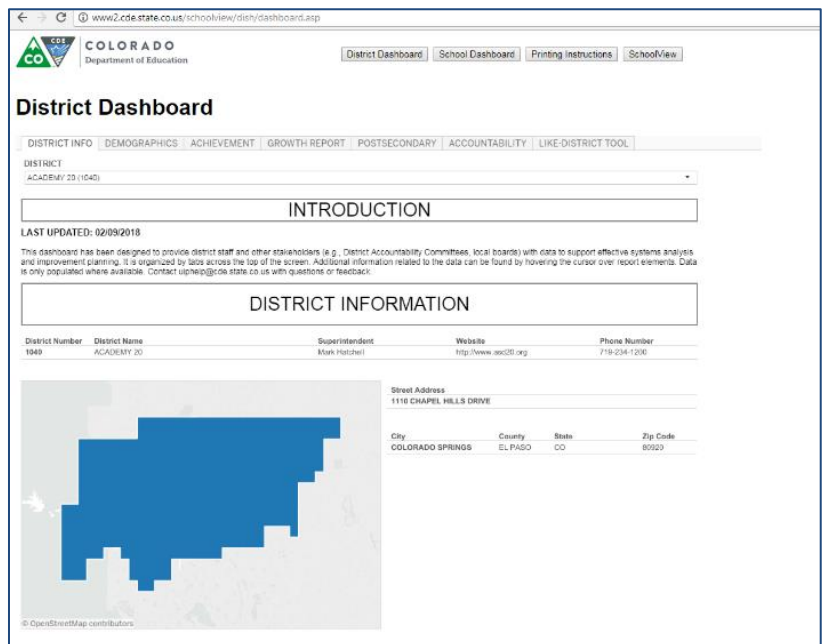
criterion data (e.g., minimum state expectations) or normative data (e.g., comparing to district-wide).

**UIP Online System Tip:** Record all trends (notable or not) in the online system. Using the check box function, mark only those that are notable. This allows the planning team to capture all trends identified through the data analysis, but only select trends that will frame the focus for later improvement planning.

**School and District Dashboard:** This tool

(a snapshot of the cover page is Diagram F) has been created to pull information from multiple years of Frameworks and other sources in a format that is easier to analyze over multiple years. It has achievement, growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness data, as well as background information on student enrollment, attendance, and accountability sub-indicator detail over time.

**Diagram F: DISH: District and School Dashboards**



**Small Student Populations and Student Privacy.**

While CDE recommends that plans refer to numbers and percentages to strengthen the data story, protecting student identity must take priority. If the number of students is very small, then the public may be able to determine information about individual students, or Personally Identifiable Information (PII). For example, of the five students with an IEP, one of them is Native American. This scenario becomes a concern under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). CDE has determined that state produced data reports should only be reported publicly when the n-size is 16 students or more for achievement data and 20 students or more for growth data. Districts are able to create thresholds for reporting their own data.

Small schools and districts are still expected to engage in analysis of data for their students, even if the number of students in a particular disaggregated group is only one. It may mean that the reporting done in the UIP be modified to avoid sharing PII. For example, a description of the data analysis process and the findings may be provided in the UIP, and the more detailed numbers and percentages related to performance trends are not shared in the public plan. Context should be provided in the data narrative (e.g., text box in the trends section).

As an additional flexibility for small systems, there is a provision that allows for small districts (under 1200 students) to request to submit a single plan for all the schools and the district. While a single plan may be selected, the accountability requirements for each of the schools as well as the district must be addressed in this plan. See [Unified Improvement Planning Guidance for Small Systems](#) for suggestions for how data analysis can be conducted and reported for smaller numbers of students and information about combined plans.

<b>Samples: Notable Trends</b> <i>The following contains samples pulled directly from UIPs and those that are a combination from multiple plans.</i>
<i>Growth in math is trending upward for middle school students on CMAS between 2015 and 2017 (2016 = 48<sup>th</sup> percentile; 2017 = 57<sup>th</sup> percentile). This is notable because the increase in growth (above the state average of 50<sup>th</sup> percentile) suggests that the school may affect its low achievement if this growth trend is sustained.</i>
<i>The graduation rate has increased by 8 percentage points from 2014 to 2016 and is now at 85%, which is now above the state average.</i>
<i>For a school with a small N-size: Less than half of elementary students are meeting state expectations in English Language Arts in each of the last three years (2016, 2017 and 2018). Numbers and percentages cannot be shared because of small n-counts, even after aggregating data up to the school level.</i>
<i>Students are stable in math proficiency on college and career readiness as measured by SAT in 2016-2017 and the ACT in 2015-16 and 2014-15. The 2015-16 ACT math proficiency was 44% (21) while the 2014-15 ACT math proficiency was 42% (20). This is a notable trend because proficiency is below the state readiness expectation in 2016-17 by 19pts (530) on the SAT and exceeding the Colorado average by 10pts (501).</i>
<i>Students are increasing in English Language Development on ACCESS Overall Scores between 2015 and 2017 (2015:47<sup>th</sup> percentile, 2016:63.5<sup>th</sup> percentile, 2017: 68<sup>th</sup> percentile), and are now above the district performance (District 2015: 45<sup>th</sup> percentile, 2016: 56<sup>th</sup> percentile, 2017: 58<sup>th</sup> percentile) by 7 percentile points.</i>

**READ ACT:** If a school is serving students in grades K-3, an analysis on the number of students with significant reading deficiencies and their progress, and progress toward students reading on grade level by grade 3 ([READ Act](#)) is required.

Sample Noteable Trend for READ Act:

Over the last three years, there is between 68-72% of students at benchmark. The number of students consistently in the intensive range (SRD) have decreased, with less than 25% of students in the strategic range of support.

## Step Four: Prioritize Performance Challenges

**Definition/Requirements:** Prioritizing performance challenges may be the most critical step in the entire planning process, as it sets the tone for each of the subsequent steps. The planning team will need to identify which of their notable trends represent strengths to build upon, and which represent challenges that need immediate attention for improvement. Priority performance challenges should be selected from trends that are a concern for the school/district and describe the most appropriate areas and magnitude of focus that will lead to improvement. They should be specific statements about *student* performance.

**They are *not* action steps that need to be taken, or concerns about budget, staffing, curriculum, or instruction.**

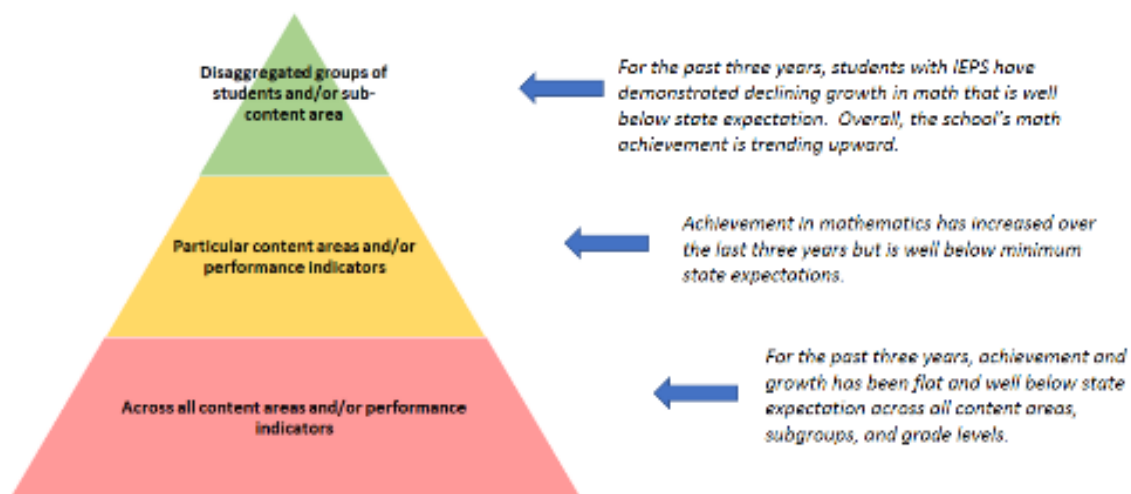
### Helpful Reminder:

Priority performance challenges focus on student-level data. At this stage in the planning process, resist the temptation to jump straight into identifying adult actions. Prioritizing clear performance challenges now will help the planning team select more effective improvement strategies later.

It is recommended that planning teams identify no more than three challenges that will focus improvement efforts. Too many identified performance challenges will dilute the school/district's efforts over the course of the year.

### Magnitude

Priority performance challenges should correspond to negative trend statements and address the magnitude of the identified need. It is important to note that a single priority performance challenge may combine more than one negative trend statement. For instance, both the growth and achievement of 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language learners in math may be combined as a single priority performance challenge. As indicated in the chart below, the identified challenges will vary depending on what the school or district finds in their data analysis of student needs.



Some schools may have challenges across all content areas and will have Priority Performance Challenges that match them while others will focus challenges on a specific content area or student group.

After identifying the priority performance challenges, the team should indicate the rationale for prioritizing and why these challenges are at the appropriate magnitude. Planning teams should also consider the magnitude of the challenge. To gauge magnitude, the team may consider responding to these questions:

- Which performance challenges are contributing to identification for accountability?
- Are the performance challenges of the school/district something that affects 15%/50%/85% or more of the students in the school?
- Are significant performance challenges evident across all content areas?
- Are significant performance challenges evident across all disaggregated groups?

**ESSA identified schools:** For CS schools identified through ESSA, it is expected that at least one of the performance challenges addresses the reason for identification.

***Recommended Process: How to Prioritize Performance Challenges***

When updating a plan from a prior year, planning teams should first consider if the most recent performance data suggests a need to revise priority performance challenges (e.g., did performance improve to the degree that a previously identified priority is no longer a challenge? Have other performance challenges become a higher priority?).

If the planning team agrees that the UIP needs to be re-written or if the priority performance challenges need to be updated, potential options to help with decision making include:

- Select challenges that did not meet state or ESSA expectations.
- Focus the list: Determine which negative trends to combine because they are similar or reflect different ways to measure the same performance challenge. In some cases, trends may be combined across different performance indicator areas (growth and achievement) but within the same content area.
- Rank the challenges in order of urgency.
- Vote among the leadership team or the SAC/DAC.
- Remove challenges that don't cover the magnitude of the overall school/district performance challenge.
- Select challenges that may impact or improve multiple areas if improved.
- Achieve consensus on the top three to five priorities and then engage in additional conversation as needed (e.g., through cycles of proposal(s) made by someone in the group, discussion/modification of the proposal).

Non-examples	Priority Performance Challenge (PPC) Samples
<p>We need to focus on school climate and adopt attendance policies.</p> <p>Issue: Jumps to action planning and not student focused.</p>	<p>Student engagement levels continue to be low as evidenced by low attendance, behavior challenges, and student survey feedback.</p>

Non-examples	Priority Performance Challenge (PPC) Samples
No differentiation in mathematics instruction when student learning needs are varied. Issue: Framed as a root cause.	Mathematics achievement (Mean Scale Score-MSS ranging from 705-713) and growth (MGP ranges from 30 <sup>th</sup> to 22 <sup>nd</sup> percentile) in 5 <sup>th</sup> grade have declined over the last three years and have been well below minimum state expectations.
Decline in writing achievement Issue: Too general	Writing performance, including growth (MGP 25) and achievement, (MSS: 717-720) has been stable and below minimum state expectations for over five years across all grade levels (3-5).
The graduation rate is going down. Issue: Too general	The graduation rate of male students has declined over the last 3 years from 84% to 78% and is now below the overall state average.

### Step Five: Determine Root Causes

**Definition/Requirements:** This step identifies the underlying causes behind the priority performance challenges. Root causes are statements that describe why the challenges exist and are the deepest underlying cause(s) of performance challenges. These statements also describe how these underlying cause(s) can be impacted by the school or district. Dissolving the cause(s) would result in elimination, or substantial reduction, of the performance challenge(s). Root causes are not student attributes (such as poverty level or student motivation), but rather relate to systems design and what could focus improvement efforts. A cause is a “root” cause if:

- (1) The problem would not have occurred if the cause had not been present,
- (2) The problem would not reoccur if the cause were corrected or dissolved, and
- (3) Correction or dissolution of the cause would not lead to the same or similar problems.<sup>1</sup>

Root causes become the focus of major improvement strategies. It is critical for root causes to reflect the magnitude of the performance challenge faced by the school or district and be within the control of the school or district to impact.

There is also a narrative section that should detail the rationale for how these root causes were selected and verified. Root causes are often verified based off of surveys, focus groups, and observations of staff.

**Recommended Process: How to identify root causes.** A recommended process to explore root causes is described in the text box on this page. In general, the process for examining root causes resembles a funnel, starting with the broadest thinking possible about causes related to

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<sup>1</sup> Preuss, Paul. 2003. School Leader’s Guide to Root Cause Analysis. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

each challenge and systematically narrowing and then deepening the collective understanding until the team arrives at a root cause.

While it is described as a series of steps, the process of identifying a root cause is iterative – planning teams may need to move back and forth among the steps in the process. For example, the team may be applying criteria to narrow their explanations when they realize that they had not identified a viable explanation in the earlier brainstorming step.

There are numerous [facilitation tools](#) on the CDE UIP website to help with different steps in the root cause analysis:

- **Brainstorming and Organizing:** [Circle Map](#) and [Tree Diagram](#)
- **Narrowing:** [Criteria](#) and [The Five Whys](#)

#### **Identifying a Root Cause process:**

- **Select:** Identify one or a couple of closely related priority performance challenges (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> grade math achievement and growth have both declined over the past three years).
- **Context:** Consider the school/district context, including process and perception data (e.g., equitable access to high quality teachers, school climate surveys, TLCC survey results, or Multi-Tiered System of Support reviews).
- **Brainstorm:** Identify possible explanations (causes) for the priority performance challenge(s). This is the time to encourage team members to think outside of the box and to get all of their thoughts on the table about what may have caused the challenge.
- **Organize:** Group like causes together (or categorize the explanations).
- **Narrow:** Apply criteria to narrow the explanations to those that are actionable. This includes removing those explanations that are outside the control of the school or district.
- **Question:** Deepen the thinking to ensure the identified causes are “root” causes. One tool to help planning teams deepen their thinking is the “why...because” process.
- **Finalize/validate:** Once the team believes they have identified a *root cause*, they should validate their root cause with other data sources. This step is critical because sometimes explanations that seem to reflect the best current thinking of the planning team may not hold up once they review additional data. Additional data sources typically include types of data other than student performance data.

<b>Sample #1: Root Cause(s)</b> <i>From a Northeast Colorado elementary school</i>	<b>Sample #1: Rationale</b>
<p><b>Lack of Best First Instruction and Pervasive Quality Drift</b></p> <p><i>There is a lack of consistent and deep implementation of common high effect size instructional practices. Weekly professional development is provided to teachers to support best first instruction, but teachers lack the consistent implementation of these practices. As a result of quality drift, students are not exposed to grade level content. Throughout classrooms, students are not exposed to rigor.</i></p>	<p><b>Focused Leadership Solutions</b> was hired to do Diagnostic Review in September to assess the current status of the school's professional practices while providing recommendations to the school to improve academic achievement and the current professional practices. The results of this Diagnostic Review were presented to staff on October 24th identifying the school improvement priorities and bringing to light root causes for low academic achievement and growth.</p> <p>Administration and staff reviewed the findings and found the school system lacks Best First Instruction (and Pervasive Quality Drift), which includes sub categories of standards based instruction, instructional context, instructional practices, meeting individual needs and students as learners. Best First Instruction focuses on aligned, integrated, and research-based instruction that engages students in learning to mastery. We also recognize that systematic Tiered Support is not yielding substantial results. Tiered support includes systems of tiered supports, multiple learning opportunities and family/community partnerships. Tiered Supports focuses on a comprehensive system of tiered academic and behavioral support to enable students to master grade-level expectations.</p>
<b>Sample #2: Root Cause</b>	<b>Sample #2: Rationale</b>
<p><b>Lack of classroom-based engagement</b></p> <p><i>Staff lack the appropriate tools to engage and build relationships with students in our classrooms, particularly our male and African American students that supports a positive classroom environment and culture where students are enthusiastic about learning.</i></p>	<p><i>One, the large number of referrals issued to the identified population of students. The majority of behavioral infractions are taking place in the classroom, a block of which lasts a duration of 100 minutes four days of the week and 77 minutes on Wednesday. Additionally, male students and African American students are highly overrepresented. Only 43% of staff agreed on the TELL survey that school leadership communicates clear expectations to students. Only 44% of staff agreed on the TELL survey that school leadership makes a sustained effort to address staff concerns about managing student conduct.</i></p>

## Section IV: Create Action Plans

The Action Plan section includes three distinct processes:

- 1) **Major Improvement Strategies and Action Steps:** This should include Major Improvement Strategies, research that supports their effectiveness, and action steps with associated information that will ensure implementation (e.g., key personnel, resources, timeline).

- 2) **Implementation Benchmarks:** Benchmarks describe what will be observed in adult actions or systems if the strategy is being effectively implemented. High quality benchmarks describe both completion (e.g., 100% of teachers received weekly lesson plan feedback) and quality (e.g., At least 75% of classrooms score Meets or Exceeds on the student engagement rubric during walkthroughs).
- 3) **Targets and Interim Measures:** Targets capture the student outcomes that measure summative performance targets. Interim measures describe the checks over the course of the year that would indicate the intended progress is being made.

## Major Improvement Strategies and Action Steps

**Definition/Requirements:** One to three major improvement strategies should be identified in each plan. More strategies beyond those numbers will stretch efforts too thinly and the school/district will risk ineffective or inconsistent implementation. The description of the strategy should include what successful implementation will look like, the research supporting the use of the strategy, and address the performance challenges and root causes.

### Magnitude

Overall, major improvement strategies must be of the appropriate magnitude given the overall performance challenges. For instance, a school/district with performance that does not meet state expectations for many or all of the performance indicators/sub-indicators should consider broad, systemic strategies. A school/district that is focusing its efforts on a small group of students or content areas may focus their strategies towards meeting the needs of this group.

### Evidence-Based Interventions

Selected major improvement strategies should be research- and evidence-based interventions. There should be evidence that using these strategies has previously led to improvements in student performance, and that this intervention would be effective in the context of the school where it is being implemented. The plan should describe what research or evidence the strategy is based on and why it was selected for use.

The most recent federal legislation, ESSA, defines evidence-based interventions and CDE requires Strong, Moderate, or Promising levels of evidence for ESSA identified schools. The criteria defines four categories of research as outlined below. The first three require findings of a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes:

- **Strong:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (e.g., a randomized approach)
- **Moderate:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (e.g., a matched approach)
- **Promising:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias
- **Evidence-Building:** Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes. Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.



Additional Requirements:

- **Turnaround:** Pursuant to Colorado state law, schools with a turnaround plan type are required to select at least one of the enumerated turnaround strategies intended to result in dramatic change. Further details are included in [Appendix D](#).
- **ESSA identified:** Schools identified through ESSA must ensure that they have strategy/strategies that directly addresses/address the reason(s) for ESSA identification. Schools also must ensure that strategies are meeting the definition of evidence-based interventions.

Sample #1: Major Improvement Strategies <i>From a front range middle school</i>	
<b>Title</b>	<i>Create and maintain a culture of using Data to Drive Instruction</i>
<b>What success will look like</b>	<i>Create data-driven culture in which assessments and instructional tasks are analyzed effectively as a source to inform current student understanding and generate targeted instructional plans.</i>
<b>Research supporting this strategy*</b>	<i>This approach is informed by the book by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo called “Driven by Data,” which lays out a framework for data driven instruction and professional development activities needed to build the framework. The book is based off of experience and research around effective ways to use data and the best ways to provide training on its use. This approach is a good fit for our school as our leadership team has been trained in the approach and all schools in our district are using a data team process this year.</i>  <i>Using a consistent and systemic approach for developing data-informed instructional plans and using data for progress monitoring student performance in an ongoing manner will help ensure that we are improving the overall performance of all students which contributed to our school being identified as CS-Lowest 5% under ESSA.</i>
Sample #2: Major Improvement Strategies	
<b>Title</b>	<i>Increase the positive climate and culture with consistent PBIS implementation.</i>
<b>What success will look like</b>	<i>Incorporate brain based activities to support academic achievement and increase positive student participation and behavior through systematic school wide approaches. Staff and students will have 90% attendance rates. Family involvement will increase due to the many options for involvement. Families will continue to be an active part of the decision making process within our school. Total school enrollment will continue to increase.</i>
<b>Research supporting this strategy*</b>	<i>There is gold standard evidence (“Strong” under ESSA) that suggests that when the key components of PBIS are implemented, it can lead to improved feelings of school safety, reduction in behavioral referrals and improved student academic performance in elementary schools. <a href="http://www.pbis.org/research">http://www.pbis.org/research</a> This approach will be a good fit for our school given the alignment to our need and the desire by our staff to find solutions to behavior challenges.</i>

*\*Note: The research section was added and not included in the original sample taken from either school’s schools’ UIP.*

## Action Steps

**Definition/Requirements:** The specific action steps required to carry out each major improvement strategy should respond to and be aimed at eliminating or correcting the root causes, and ultimately eliminating each of the district’s or school’s prioritized performance challenges. Each major improvement strategy will include specific, sequential action steps that include a title, point person, date, and resources needed.

### Helpful Reminder:

The UIP is a planning document that should span at least a two-year period. The plan should provide details on actions for the current and the next school years.

The UIP is a two year action plan that should have action steps for both years included. It is common for more specific actions to be included for Year 1 and more general action steps included for Year 2. However, schools/districts are also encouraged to consider ways to phase in actions over time to avoid overwhelming staff. *(Note: Plans should include more than the number of actions steps in the samples below.)*

Sample #1: Action Steps	
<b>Major Improvement Strategy</b>	<i>Clear Universal Instruction for All</i>
<b>Action Step 1</b>	<i>Staff will identify grade level mastery skills prior to aligning them to essential standards in both literacy and math</i>
<b>Action Step 2</b>	<i>Team leaders and facilitators will provide professional development focused on unpacking standards, establishing team norms, and the EAA protocol</i>
<b>Action Step 3</b>	<i>Provide whole staff facilitation training intended to set teams/departments up for success in 2018-19</i>

Sample #2: Action Steps	
<b>Major Improvement Strategy</b>	<i>A focus on common behavioral expectations in all areas of the school</i>
<b>Action Step 1: Year 1</b>	<i>PBIS team will develop a set of common expectations</i>
<b>Action Step 2: Year 1</b>	<i>Staff members will receive training on the expectations and develop plans for teaching students within their classrooms, in hallways, etc.</i>
<b>Action Step 3: Year 2</b>	<i>PBIS team will identify additional interventions that are needed</i>
<b>Action Step 4: Year 2</b>	<i>PBIS team will research potential curricula/lesson plans around social emotional learning that can help meet the needs identified in year 1.</i>

## Implementation Benchmarks

**Definition/Requirements:** Schools/Districts identify implementation benchmarks in their plan that should be monitored throughout the year (e.g., at least quarterly by School/District Accountability Committees) to determine if improvement strategies are being implemented with fidelity and are having the desired effects.

Implementation benchmarks are measures of the fidelity of implementation of the major improvement strategy and provide checkpoints to ensure that activities are effective as expected. Implementation benchmarks are not student performance measures (e.g., assessment results/interim measures); rather, they reference adult actions or system factors. Teams may consider outputs or completion benchmarks (e.g., professional development sessions held) in addition to benchmarks focused on outcome or quality (e.g., new instructional strategy implemented in 75% of classrooms after a training). In identifying implementation benchmarks planning teams should include:

- Evidence that the expected outputs and outcomes are occurring
- Timeline that changes are expected
- Metrics and tools used to measure the changes (e.g., surveys, attendance, observations, rubrics)

### Helpful Note

Historically, implementation benchmarks were tied to each individual action step. To help with focus and feasibility, CDE has shifted the connection to major improvement strategies. Both approaches are allowable and can be accommodated in the online UIP.

### Samples: Implementation Benchmarks

*At least 75% of classrooms will have high levels of rigor as measured by our instruction rubric during monthly observations.*

*50% of teachers by December and 100% by March will have excellent or advanced implementation on the student engagement rubric.*

## Target Setting

**Definition/Requirements:** Based on the analysis and identification of priority performance challenges in the previous step, schools and districts should identify targets for two years and interim measures for multiple times within a year that will help measure progress on implementation of the major improvement strategies.

Each target and the associated interim measures should respond to the priority performance challenges identified in Section III, using the same metrics to which they respond.

### Comparison Points

Comparison points, as referenced in the notable trend step in Section III, are a useful tool for establishing targets and associated interim measures. Minimum state expectations, provided in the Framework scoring guide, serve as an initial comparison point for target setting. In general, target setting should use criteria-referenced comparison points -- those that answer the question, “How did we compare to a specific expectation or criteria?” Minimum state expectations are the minimum value for which a rating of “meets” would be assigned for the state metric included in the Frameworks for each sub-indicator. In addition, target setting can use norm referenced comparison points – those that answer the question “How did we compare to the grade level/district/state average?”

### Interim Measures

Once annual performance targets are set for the upcoming two years, districts and schools must identify the interim measures they will use within the school year to determine if progress is being made. Interim measures should be local performance data that will be available at least twice during the school year, provide data about the same students, use the same metric (e.g., growth, achievement), and be the same content area as the performance target.

Descriptions of interim measures should include: the assessment/performance measure that is administered, the frequency of the data, and the metrics (e.g., % scoring at a particular performance level).

When setting targets, consider:

- Does the target move the school or district aggressively towards state and federal expectations?
- Is the target realistic for the time period?
- Does the target align to the performance challenge?

Additional Requirements:

- **READ Act:** Schools serving students with significant reading deficiencies should have targets for reducing the number of students and for ensuring that students are reading on grade level by grade 3.
- **ESSA:** Targets should be set for the indicators that are the reason for identification. For instance, a high school identified because of their low-graduation rate should have a target for graduation rate.

#### Example of an Aligned Performance Target

**Priority performance challenge:** Both achievement (mean scale score from 733 to 724) and growth (MGP from 30 to 22) in 5th grade mathematics have declined over the last three years and have been well below state expectations.

#### Performance targets for 2019-20:

For 5<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics, increase the mean scale score to 735 and increase the median growth percentile to 50.

**Note for all users:** At this time, there is no state penalty each year for missing annual student centered performance targets set in the UIP.

### Recommended Process for Progress Monitoring (Implementation Benchmarks and Interim Measures)

CDE recommends that planning teams develop a calendar and plan to regularly review interim measures and implementation benchmarks, and evaluate progress during the year. These check-points can be included as action steps. During these regular check-ins, if progress is not being made, teams can evaluate whether planned strategies and action steps have been implemented fully, or if they were but did not have the impact and adjustments need to be made to the plan. Planning teams should consider both and, if needed, revise their plan during the school year to respond to interim measures and implementation benchmarks.

In addition, many teams break implementation benchmarks down even further so that they can monitor changes each quarter and review alongside interim measures of student outcomes. An example is included below that shows an interim measure that will be assessed every quarter and one implementation benchmark broken down by quarter.

	Quarter 1 (By Sept 15)	Quarter 2 (By Dec 15)	Quarter 3 (By Feb 15)	End of Year (CMAS Window)
Interim Measures	MAP test #1	MAP: At least 60% of students meeting growth goals	MAP: At least 60% of students meeting growth goals	CMAS: A mean scale score of at least 740 and MGP of 55.
Implementation Benchmarks	50% by Q1 classrooms will have excellent or advanced implementation on the student engagement rubric.	65% by Q2	85% by Q3	100% by mid-April

### Alignment of Action Plan Components – Sample

While the UIP is divided up into individual components, the plan is designed to build upon itself across each component and ensure there is alignment throughout. An example of how to create alignment in the action plan is identified below with notes for each component.

Sample UIP Components		CDE Notes
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Root Cause</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Lack of an aligned teaching and learning cycle and tools for assessment.</i></b></p> <p><i>While we have identified a curriculum and are seeing signs of movement, there is more work to do. Site visits to other similar schools demonstrated that the level of rigor in our instruction is not comparable. Furthermore, we don't have common formative assessments. Our TLCC data reveals that less than a majority of staff (47%) are using formative assessments and using assessment data was the #1 request for professional development.</i></p>		<p>The root cause identifies what might be preventing the school from moving forward and provides verification that this cause is common and needs to be addressed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Major Improvement Strategy</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Strengthen the teaching and learning cycle.</i></b></p> <p><i>Description: Adopt a common formative assessment and invest in effective professional development that supports a common approach to the teaching and learning cycle.</i></p> <p><i>Success will look like: If implemented well, teachers will understand how to analyze specific student data for instructional gaps and adjust instruction accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>Research supporting the strategy: Our strategy is based off of descriptive research studies that identified the key pieces of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement. For professional development, the work will be ongoing and job embedded (e.g., aligned coaching, informal classroom observations and feedback).</i></p>		<p>The Major Improvement Strategy is aligned directly to addressing the root cause and includes what success will look like and the research that is guiding the strategy approach.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Benchmarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Classroom observations will show that 100% of staff are progressing from experimenting (fall) to consistently implementing (spring).</i></li> <li>• <i>The quarterly staff survey will show that staff feel supported in implementing this new practice.</i></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Provide Professional Development to teachers and building leaders</i></li> <li>• <i>Create a coaching calendar to ensure follow-up from PD</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify the processes and agenda items that PLCs will use to discuss results and adjust instruction</i></li> <li>• <i>Set up a schedule for staff to visit each other's classrooms to observe new strategies</i></li> </ul>	<p>The Implementation Benchmarks will help the team to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy and the Action Plan includes key steps that need to occur for the strategy to be effective.</p>



# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Hyperlinks Referenced in UIP Handbook

This list includes the full text of hyperlinks included throughout the UIP Handbook.

Hyperlink	URL
Accountability Handbook	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountabilityregulations">https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountabilityregulations</a>
Accountability webpage	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountability">http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountability</a>
Biennial Flexibility in UIP Submission	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip_biennial_flexibility_2018-19">http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip_biennial_flexibility_2018-19</a>
Circle Map (Priority Performance challenge and root cause strategy)	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/circlemap">http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/circlemap</a>
District Dashboard (DISH)	<a href="http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/dashboard.asp">http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/dashboard.asp</a>
ESSA methods and criteria for identification	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi">http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi</a>
Five Whys Protocol (Priority Performance challenge and root cause strategy)	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/thefivewhys.pdf">http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/thefivewhys.pdf</a>
Framework Reference/Scoring guide	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2019-framework-scoring-guide_080319">https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2019-framework-scoring-guide_080319</a>
Narrowing Criteria (Priority Performance challenge and root cause strategy)	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/criteriafornarrowingexplanations.pdf">http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/criteriafornarrowingexplanations.pdf</a>
New schools Guidance	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiiprocessfornewschools">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiiprocessfornewschools</a>
Parent notification and public hearing requirements	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/parent_notification_fact_sheet_august_2018">http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/parent_notification_fact_sheet_august_2018</a>



Hyperlink	URL
Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountabilityregulations">https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountabilityregulations</a>
READ Act (Early Literacy Office)	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy">https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy</a>
School Dashboard (DISH)	<a href="http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/schooldashboard.asp">http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/dish/schooldashboard.asp</a>
School/District's Performance Framework Report	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks">http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks</a>
State Review Panel	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/statereviewpanel">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/statereviewpanel</a>
Tree Diagram (Priority Performance challenge and root cause strategy)	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/treedialogram">http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/treedialogram</a>
UIP development facilitation tools	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/rootcauseanalysis">http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/rootcauseanalysis</a>
UIP Guidance for Small Systems	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uipguidanceforsmallsystems2018">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uipguidanceforsmallsystems2018</a>
UIP online system	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip-online-system">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip-online-system</a>
UIP Overview webpage	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip</a>
UIP Quality Criteria Rubric	<a href="https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip_general_resources">https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip_general_resources</a>

## Appendix B

### Summary of UIP Review Process

The UIP process and the template were designed to allow schools and districts to meet multiple state and federal improvement planning requirements and some competitive grant reporting requirements. The UIP can be used to document the following program requirements:

- Plans to address literacy skills of K-3 students (READ act)
- Analysis of and plans to address any discrepancies in course taking
- Plans to meet the needs of gifted students
- Plans for schools with a rating of Priority Improvement or Turnaround
- Plans for ESSA identified schools (Comprehensive Support (CS) for state review and Targeted Support for local review)
- Plans for some grant programs (e.g., 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers)

#### ***Who will review school and district plans?***

The state does not typically review and provide feedback on all school and district plans, unless requested. Plans are reviewed for a variety of reasons and by different groups for each.

Overall, districts are expected to review all school plans before submitting them to CDE for review and/or public posting. The other groups vary by school rating:

- Local school boards must adopt Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans and the principal and superintendent must adopt school Performance and Improvement plans.
- CDE staff will review all school and district plans in Priority Improvement or Turnaround.
- CDE staff will review all school and district plans identified under ESSA for CS.
- All district plans are subject to review by the Gifted Education Office.
- The State Review Panel, appointed by the Commissioner and State Board of Education, will review all Turnaround Plans while the school or district is on the accountability clock. The State Review Panel will review Priority Improvement Plans for schools and districts at the end of the accountability clock to build a body of evidence to support their recommendation for directed action by the State Board of Education. They may review plans at earlier points on the accountability clock.

#### ***Who is on the State Review Panel?***

The [State Review Panel](#) was created as part of the state accountability system. State Review panelists are Colorado based educators with expertise in the field. They apply for and are appointed by CDE's Commissioner with the approval of the State Board of Education.

#### ***What is the timeline for review and feedback of plans?***

There are two main dates for submission of plans.

- **January 15:** Schools and Districts in Priority Improvement or Turnaround on the state accountability clock and/or identified as a CS school under ESSA will submit plans for feedback by mid-January for review.
- **April 15:** All schools will submit plans no later than mid-April for public posting, unless the school/district is exercising [biennial flexibility](#).

**Note for All Users:** *While the state deadline is in April for public posting, most school systems find that a more natural planning timeline begins in the spring when local data is available. With the release of state data and the performance frameworks in the summer, plans can be validated. This way the plan is ready for implementation at the beginning of the school year. Because of the transition to the online UIP, plans can be posted at any point during the school year.*

### **What criteria will be used to review plans?**

A rubric based on the UIP Quality Criteria has been created by CDE staff that is used to evaluate and provide feedback on UIPs. This criteria is based around five guiding questions.

Does the plan...

- ① Investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent performance challenges?
- ② Identify root causes that explain the magnitude of the performance challenges?
- ③ Identify evidence-based major improvement strategies that have likelihood to eliminate the root causes?
- ④ Present a well-designed action plan for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?
- ⑤ Include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?

Based on Colorado's *Education Accountability Act of 2009*, in addition to the Unified Improvement Planning Rubric, the State Review Panel must also consider the following in their review of Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans:

- Whether the district's/school's leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results;
- Whether the district's/school's infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement;
- The readiness and apparent capacity of the district/school personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student academic performance;
- The readiness and apparent capacity of the district/school personnel to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner;



- The likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the district's/school's performance within the current management structure and staffing; and
- The necessity that the district or school remain in operation to serve students.

## Appendix C

### UIP State Data Resources

CDE maintains a variety of data sources for state level data. These resources can be accessed through summary documents or through the links below:

- Helpful data sources for Improvement Planning:  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/accessingdata>
- CDE Data Resources for Education Stakeholders:  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/data-resources-handout-2018>

#### Common UIP State Data Resources

**Schoolview** This is a centralized hub with access to a wide variety of state level data and tools that schools and districts can use to analyze current performance and create improvement plans.

**School and District Performance Frameworks** The frameworks are official annual reports produced by CDE that are used for accountability and planning purposes. This is the same location where district and school UIPs are publicly posted.

**TLCC survey** The Teaching and Learning Conditions in Colorado survey is a statewide, anonymous survey intended to support school, district, and state improvement planning, as well as research and policy. Statewide results are posted and school and district results are sent directly to districts.

**School and District Dashboard** The two dashboards provide multiple years of data including achievement and growth data, post-secondary readiness data, demographics, and enrollment/attendance data.

**PWR Data Sources (PDF)** This document contains a compiled list of data sources that are state collected and reported as well as local data that could be collected by the district that can be valuable in assessing high school students' progress and post-secondary workforce readiness.

## Appendix D

### Required School and District-Level Turnaround Options

Improvement Strategies identified in school UIPs with a Turnaround plan type must, at a minimum, include one or more of the following as required by Colorado's Education Accountability Act of 2009. Schools/districts are also expected to include the selected strategy within major improvement strategy and/or action steps.

- Employing a lead turnaround partner that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances, which turnaround partner will be immersed in all aspects of developing and collaboratively executing the plan and will serve as a liaison to other school partners;
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure within the school to provide greater, more effective support;
- Seeking recognition as an innovation school or clustering with other schools that have similar governance management structures to form an innovation school zone pursuant to the Innovation Schools Act;
- Hiring a public or private entity that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances to manage the school pursuant to a contract with the local school board or the Charter School Institute;
- For a school that is not a charter school, converting to a charter school;
- For a charter school, renegotiating and significantly restructuring the charter school's charter contract; and/or
- Other actions of comparable or greater significance or effect, including those interventions required for low-performing schools receiving school improvement grants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, section 1003G (i.e., turnaround model, restart model, school closure, transformation model).

## Appendix E

# Planning Terminology

Term	Definition
<b>Academic Achievement Or Achievement</b>	<p>A proficiency score on an assessment. Achievement for an individual is expressed as a test (scale) score or as an achievement level.</p> <p>Academic achievement is a performance indicator used to evaluate schools and districts in Colorado. Colorado uses the average score, or mean scale score, to measure achievement.</p>
<b>Academic Growth</b>	<p>For an individual student, academic growth is the progress shown by the student, in a given subject area, over a given span of time.</p> <p>Academic growth is a performance indicator used to evaluate schools and districts in Colorado.</p>
<b>Academic Peers</b>	<p>Students currently in the same grade, being tested in the same subject, with a similar achievement score history in that subject. For the Colorado Growth Model, these are a particular student’s comparison group when interpreting his/her student growth percentile.</p>
<b>ACCESS for ELLs</b>	<p>ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) is a secure large-scale English proficiency assessment for K-12<sup>th</sup> graders identified as English learners (ELs). The assessment measures student achievement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension standards in English.</p>
<b>Achievement Level</b>	<p>Descriptions of score levels on an assessment, using ranges of scores, separated by cut-points. On the CMAS assessments, for example, the five achievement levels are: 1-did not yet meet expectations, 2-partially met expectations, 3-approached expectations, 4-met expectations, and 5-exceeded expectations.</p>
<b>Accountability Clock/Performance Watch</b>	<p>Refers to the number of consecutive years a school/district is permitted to remain in the two lowest accountability categories (Priority Improvement and Turnaround). Also referred to as the 5-year-clock.</p> <p>Note: In 2019, the term “Performance Watch” will replace the term Accountability Clock. A school or district in Priority improvement or Turnaround (PI/T) is on performance watch. After receiving two consecutive PI/T ratings, a school or district must receive an Improvement rating or higher for two consecutive years to exit performance watch. After five years of consecutive or nonconsecutive PI/T ratings while on performance watch, the state board must direct the school, district or Institute to take one of the actions, or pathways, outlined in statute.</p> <p>More details, including actions directed by the State Board of Education at the end of the Accountability Clock, are detailed in the <a href="#">Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement to the Accountability Handbook</a>.</p>
<b>Action Step</b>	<p>Something done to make progress toward goals. Action steps are created for each strategy and identify resources (people, time, money) that will be brought to bear so that goals and targets can be reached. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Additional Targeted Support (A-TS)</b>	<p>School identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) based on having at least one student group performing in the lowest 5% for that student group.</p> <p>If the school does not exit this category within 3 years of identification and is supported with Title IA funds, the school would become Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) under ESSA.</p>
<b>Average</b>	<p>A summary of a collection of numbers, calculated by adding all of the numbers together and dividing by how many numbers were in the collection. Also known as the mean.</p> <p>See also: <i>Mean</i></p>
<b>Baseline</b>	<p>The initial value of a metric against which future values are compared to determine if progress is being made toward goals.</p>
<b>CoAlt: ELA and Math (DLM)</b>	<p>Colorado Alternate Assessment: ELA and Math Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) is the standards-based assessment used to measure academic content knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics for students with significant cognitive disabilities.</p>
<b>The Colorado Growth Model</b>	<p>The Colorado Growth Model is a statistical model to calculate each student's progress on state assessments. The Colorado Growth Model expresses annual growth, for an individual, with a student growth percentile in language arts, mathematics and English proficiency. For a school, district, or other relevant student grouping, student growth is summarized using the median of the student growth percentiles for that grouping.</p>
<b>Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)</b>	<p>Colorado's assessments created to measure the Colorado Academic Standards. They include assessments in ELA, math, science and social studies.</p>
<b>Colorado SAT, PSAT10, PSAT09</b>	<p>Colorado has given a college entrance exam each spring to all 11th graders enrolled in public schools since 2001. All Colorado 9<sup>th</sup> graders are administered the PSAT09; 10<sup>th</sup> graders are administered the PSAT10; and all 11<sup>th</sup> graders have the opportunity to take the SAT. These assessment results are used in the accountability system.</p>
<b><a href="#">Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS)</a></b>	<p>Schools that are identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), based on one of the 3 following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performing in the lowest 5% of Title I schools;</li> <li>• Having a graduation rate below 67%; or</li> <li>• Having at least one chronically underperforming student group.</li> </ul>
<b>Consolidated Application [ESEA]</b>	<p>Colorado's grant application process for LEAs to apply for ESEA (also known as ESSA) funds.</p>
<b>Cut-Score Or Cut-Point</b>	<p>The number required for a school or district to attain a particular level of performance on the performance framework reports. The cut-point for each performance indicator level is defined on the performance framework scoring guide.</p>
<b>Disaggregated Group</b>	<p>A demographic group of students. Colorado reports student academic growth, on the performance framework reports, for four historically disadvantaged student groups: students eligible for free/reduced cost meals, minority students, students from major races/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and English learners. Additional information is reported by race, ethnicity, gender, and gifted.</p>



Term	Definition
<b>Disaggregated Graduation Rate</b>	Graduation rates are disaggregated by student groups. On the performance framework reports, disaggregated groups include students eligible for free/reduced cost lunch, minority students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. See also: <b>Graduation Rate</b>
<b>District Performance Framework (DPF)</b>	The framework with which the state evaluates the level to which districts meet the state’s expectations for attainment on the performance indicators, and makes an accreditation level determination.
<b>Drop-Out Rate</b>	The Colorado dropout rate is an <u>annual</u> rate, reflecting the percentage of all students enrolled in grades 7-12 who leave school during a single year, without subsequently attending another school or educational program. It is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts by a membership base, which includes all students who were in membership any time during the year. District Performance Frameworks use the grades 7-12 rate. School Performance Frameworks only include dropout rate at the high school level (grades 9-12).
<b>ELs</b>	English learners – includes FEP, NEP, and LEP students.
<b>Equitable Distribution of Teachers (EDT)</b>	The requirement in ESSA that LEAs examine and address the issue that inexperienced, ineffective, and out-of-field teachers are more likely assigned to teach low-income and minority students. EDT analyses are conducted and sent to LEAs via Syncplicity. Guidance and methodology are posted on the CDE website.
<b>ESSA</b>	Every Student Succeeds Act, the version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorized in 2015.
<b>ESSA Indicators</b>	The performance of all students, English learners (ELs), students with disabilities, students of poverty, and students from major races and ethnic groups are evaluated on the following indicators as a part of the ESSA identification process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language arts (ELA) achievement and growth</li> <li>• Math achievement and growth</li> <li>• English language proficiency (of ELs only)</li> <li>• Graduation rates (of high school students only)</li> <li>• School Quality and Student Success Indicator, in Colorado defined as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism for elementary and middle school (data will be used beginning in the 2020-2021 school year)</li> <li>○ Drop-out rates for high schools</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>FELL (Former English Language Learner)</b>	Students that have been formally exited from an English language development program for more than two years.
<b>Fluent English Proficient (FEP)</b>	This is the highest level of English proficiency designations for English learners, and split into four sub-designations: FEP, Monitor Year 1; FEP Monitor Year 2; FEP Exited Year 1; FEP, Exited Year 2. Students at this level are able to understand and communicate effectively with various audiences, on a wide range of familiar and new topics, to meet social and academic demands in English. They are able to score comparably, in content areas, to native speakers, but may still need some linguistic support. Compare to: <b>NEP, LEP</b>

Term	Definition
<b>Framework Points</b>	<p>The point values schools/districts can earn on each performance indicator included in the SPFs/DPFs. Framework points define the relative weighting of each performance indicator within the overall framework. They can be directly understood as percentage weights of the indicators when the school or district has data on all three indicators.</p> <p>For elementary and middle level schools only, framework points possible are: 40 for Academic Achievement and 60 for Academic Growth.</p> <p>For high schools and districts with high school levels, framework points possible are: 30 for Academic Achievement, 40 for Academic Growth, and 30 for Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness.</p> <p>When a school/district does not have sufficient data to calculate a score on a particular performance indicator, the remaining indicators are used, and their weighted contributions change.</p>
<b>Framework Score</b>	<p>The sum of the framework points a school or district earns on all performance indicators on the school/district performance framework. The framework score determines a school plan type or a district accreditation category.</p>
<b>Graduation Rate</b>	<p>Colorado calculates "on-time" graduation as the percent of students who graduate from high school within 4 years of entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade. A student is assigned a graduating class when they enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and the graduating class is assigned by adding 4 years to the year the student enters 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The formula anticipates that a student entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade in fall 2016 will graduate with the Class of 2020.</p> <p>On the 1-year District/School Performance Framework reports, districts/schools earn points based on the highest value among the following graduation rates: 4-year, 5-year, 6-year, and 7-year. For District/School Performance Framework reports, the "best of" graduation rate is bolded and italicized on the Performance Indicators detail page.</p>
<b>Growth Percentile</b>	<p>See Student Growth Percentile.</p>
<b>Improvement Plan</b>	<p>The Educational Accountability Act of 2009 requires all schools and districts in Colorado to implement one of four plan types: Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, or Turnaround.</p> <p>Schools that earn 44% - 56% of their SPF points will be assigned to the "Improvement Plan" category.</p>
<b>Implementation Benchmark</b>	<p>A measure (with associated metric) used to assess the degree to which action steps have been implemented. This is a component of the UIP process. See also: <b><i>Measure</i></b> and <b><i>Metric</i></b></p>
<b>Interim Measure</b>	<p>A measure (and associated metric) used to assess student performance at various times during a school year. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>
<b>LEA</b>	<p>Local Educational Agency; this can be a School District, BOCES or the lead school district in a multi-school district consortium.</p>
<b>Limited English Proficient (LEP)</b>	<p>This is the middle English proficiency designation for English learners. LEP students are able to understand and be understood in many to most social communication situations, in English. They are gaining increasing competence in the more cognitively demanding requirements of content areas; however, they are not yet ready to fully participate in academic content areas without linguistic support.</p> <p>Compare to: <b><i>NEP, FEP</i></b></p>

Term	Definition
<b>Major Improvement Strategy</b>	An overall approach that describes a series of related maneuvers or actions intended to result in performance improvements. This is a component of the UIP process.
<b>Matriculation Rate</b>	A measure of students that enroll in higher education opportunities following high school. The matriculation rate is a postsecondary workforce readiness sub-indicator in the DPFs/SPFs. It reflects all high school graduates that enroll in a career and technical education program, or 2- or 4-year higher education institution during the summer or fall term following high school graduation.
<b>Mean</b>	A summary measure of a collection of numbers, calculated by adding all of the numbers together and dividing by how many numbers were in the collection (commonly known as the average). See also: <b>Average</b> .
<b>Measure</b>	Instrument(s) to assess performance in an area identified by an indicator.
<b>Median</b>	A number that summarizes a set of numbers, similar to an average. When a collection of numbers is ordered from smallest to largest, the median is the middle score of the ordered list. The median is therefore the point below which 50 percent of the scores fall. Medians may be more appropriate than averages in particular situations, such as when percentiles are grouped.
<b>Median Student Growth Percentile Or Median Growth Percentile (MGP)</b>	Summarizes student growth by district, school, grade-level, or other group of interest. It is calculated by ordering the individual Student Growth Percentiles of the students in the group of interest and determining the middle score. See also: <b>Median</b>
<b>Metric</b>	A numeric scale indicating the level of some variable of interest. For example, your credit score is a metric that companies use to decide whether to give you a loan.
<b>Non-English Proficient (NEP)</b>	The lowest English proficiency designation, for English learners. NEP students may be just beginning to understand and respond to simple routine communication in English, or they may be beginning to have the ability to respond, with more ease, to a variety of social communication tasks. Compare to: <b>LEP, FEP</b>
<b>Normative Growth</b>	One student's growth understood in comparison to that of similar students. The Colorado Growth Model describes growth, normatively, as how each student's progress compares to other students with a similar achievement history—his/her academic peers.
<b>Participation Rate – Accountability Determination</b>	Percentage of students, in a school/district, taking required state assessments; excluding Parent Excuses and counting NEP EL newcomers not testing in English Language Arts as participants. On the performance frameworks, schools/districts that do not meet the minimum 95% accountability participation rate in two or more subject areas are assigned a plan type one category lower than their framework points indicate.
<b>Participation Rate – Population Representativeness</b>	Percentage of students, in a school/district, taking required state assessments; including: English Language Arts, Math, Science, PSAT, and SAT.
<b>Percentage/Percent</b>	A way of expressing a fraction in a single number. For example, 1 out of 17 is 5.9%.

Term	Definition
<b>Percentile</b>	<p>A percentile is a way of showing how a particular score compares with all other scores in a dataset by ranking ranges of scores from 1 to 99. The higher the percentile, the higher ranking the score is among all the other values. Each range of scores represents 1% of the pool of scores.</p> <p>For example, if your vocabulary knowledge is at the 60th percentile for people your age, that means that you are higher in the distribution than 60% of people – in other words, you know more words than 60% of your peers. Conversely, 40% know more words than you do. The percentile is useful because you do not need to know anything about the scales used for particular metrics or tests – if you know that your percentile was the 50<sup>th</sup>, you know that your score is right in the middle of all the other scores, an average score.</p>
<b>Performance</b>	<p>General term used to encompass growth and achievement. Used to discuss both student and school level of attainment.</p>
<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<p>A specific component of school or district quality. Colorado has identified three performance indicators to evaluate all schools and districts in the state: student achievement, student academic growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness.</p>
<b>Performance Plan</b>	<p>The type of plan required for schools that already meet the state’s expectations for attainment on the performance indicators. Schools that earn at least 56% of their SPF points are assigned to the Performance plan category.</p>
<b>PHLOTE</b>	<p>A data element used to represent students that have a primary or home language other than English.</p>
<b>Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)</b>	<p>The preparedness of students for college or a job after completing high school. This is one of the performance indicators used to evaluate the performance of schools and districts in Colorado. This indicator includes graduation, dropout, and matriculation rates and Colorado SAT scores.</p>
<b>Priority Improvement Plan</b>	<p>One of the types of plans required for those schools that do not meet the state’s performance standards. Schools that earn 34% - 44%, of their SPF points are assigned to a Priority Improvement Plan category.</p>
<b>Priority Performance Challenges (PPC)</b>	<p>Specific statements about the school’s or district’s student performance challenges, which have been prioritized. (Does not include statements about budgeting, staffing, curriculum, instruction, etc.). This is a component of the Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) process.</p>
<b>Rating</b>	<p>On the performance framework reports, CDE’s evaluation of the extent to which the school/district has met the state’s standards on the performance indicators and their component parts. The rating levels on the performance framework reports are: Does Not Meet, Approaching, Meets, and Exceeds.</p>
<b>Root Cause</b>	<p>The deepest underlying cause(s) of a problem or situation that, if resolved, would result in elimination or substantial reduction, of the symptom. If action is required, the cause should be within one’s ability to control, and not a purely external factor such as poverty that is beyond one’s ability to control. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>
<b>SASID</b>	<p>State Assigned Student Identifier Number – the number that Colorado uses to identify students in public schools.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Scale Score</b>	Exact test score - this is considered a measure of student achievement. Such scores are calculated from participants' responses to test questions. On CMAS, students receive a scale score in English language arts, math, science and social studies. See also: <b><i>Achievement</i></b>
<b>School Performance Framework (SPF)</b>	The framework used by the state to provide information to stakeholders about each school's performance based on the key performance indicators: student achievement, student academic growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness. Schools are assigned to a type of improvement plan based on their performance across all indicators.
<b>School Plan Type</b>	The type of plan to which a school is assigned by the state on the SPF report. The school plan types are: Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, and Turnaround. This is also the type of plan that must be adopted and implemented, for the school, by either the local board (Priority Improvement or Turnaround) or the principal and superintendent (Performance or Improvement).
<b>SEA</b>	State Education Agency (Colorado Department of Education)
<b>State Review Panel</b>	A panel of education experts appointed by the commissioner to assist the Department and the state board in implementing the Education Accountability Act of 2009. The State Review Panel may review Priority Improvement Plans and Turnaround Plans for schools and districts, which may include a site visit. The State Review Panel must review all schools and districts nearing the end of the Accountability Clock.
<b>Strategy</b>	Methods to reach goals. Which strategies are chosen depends on coherence, affordability, practicality, and efficiency and should be research-based. This is a component of the UIP process.
<b>Student Growth Percentile (SGP)</b>	A way of understanding a student's current growth in achievement based on his/her prior scores and relative to other students with similar prior scores. A growth percentile of 60 in math means the student's growth exceeds that of 60% of his/her academic peers. Also referred to as a "growth percentile."
<b>Target</b>	A specific, quantifiable outcome that defines what would constitute success in a particular area of intended improvement, within a designated period of time. This is a component of the UIP process.
<b>Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)</b>	Schools identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), based on having at least one student group that is consistently underperforming on at least 3 of the ESSA indicators.
<b>Test Participation</b> <b>Test Participation Rate</b>	See <b>participation rate</b> .
<b>Turnaround Plan</b>	One of the types of plans required for schools that do not meet state expectations for attainment on the performance indicators. Schools and districts that earn 34% or less of their SPF points are assigned to a Turnaround plan category. In Colorado's state accountability system, schools assigned to the turnaround plan category must engage in one of the following strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a lead turnaround partner that uses research-based strategies and has proven successful working with schools under similar circumstances, which turnaround partner will be immersed in all aspects of developing and collaboratively executing the plan and will serve as a liaison to other school partners.</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reorganize the oversight and management structure within the school to provide greater, more effective support.</li> <li>• Seek recognition as an innovation school or cluster with other schools that have similar governance management structures to form an innovation school zone pursuant to the Innovation Schools Act.</li> <li>• Hire a public or private entity that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances to manage the school pursuant to a contract with the local school board or the Charter School Institute.</li> <li>• For a school that is not a charter school, convert to a charter school;</li> <li>• For a charter school, renegotiate and significantly restructure the charter school’s charter contract.</li> <li>• Closing a school.</li> <li>• Investing in research-based strategies focused on early learning and development to address any deficiencies identified in the early childhood learning needs assessment. This may be done in combination with at least one other research-based strategy named in this list.</li> <li>• Other actions of comparable or greater significance or effect, including those interventions required for low-performing schools under the ESEA of 1965 and accompanying guidance (turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model).</li> </ul>