



COLORADO
Department of Education

**Priority Improvement and Turnaround
Districts and Schools:
A Supplement to the CDE District
Accountability Handbook**

Updated September 2015

Colorado Department of Education

201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203

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Background

State law requires that the Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education hold all districts and schools accountable for student performance. The state annually evaluates student performance in districts and schools through a set of consistent, objective measures, and then uses this information to inform rewards, sanctions, and supports. With the passage of HB15-1323, the 2015-16 school year will be an exception to annual performance evaluations, as described in more detail in the next section. The state also holds districts and schools accountable through various program accountability requirements, including those under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The [District Accountability Handbook](#) describes these state and federal accountability requirements for all districts and schools, detailing stakeholder roles; accountability measures; plan development, submission, and review; and other accountability and reporting requirements for all districts and schools.

For the state's lowest performing districts and schools (those on Priority Improvement or Turnaround plans), there are unique requirements, sanctions, and supports, in addition to those for all districts and schools. As a result, CDE recognizes the need for an additional resource for districts and schools on Priority Improvement and Turnaround plans. The Department has developed this supplement to the Accountability Handbook to detail the critical information for a Priority Improvement or Turnaround district or school. This includes listing state statutory and regulatory consequences, timelines for actions on each year of Priority Improvement or Turnaround, implications for improvement planning and federal programs, and available supports. The supplement is organized around:

- Background information;
- Timeline and process overview; Annual requirements;
- Federal program requirements;
- Considerations and actions as schools and districts near the end of the Accountability Clock; and
- Supports.

This document is intended to build upon the information included in the Accountability Handbook.

Overview of the Accountability System during the 2015-16 School Year

The Colorado Legislature passed HB15-1323 in an effort to ease the transition to the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments, which include the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. The legislation significantly alters school and district accountability for the 2015-16 school year. Below is a summary of the major changes. In addition, CDE has published a [fact sheet with an overview](#) of the accountability changes on its website.¹ Please note that HB15-1323 supersedes HB14-1182, which specified guidelines for assigning accreditation ratings during the assessment transition. The information below should be considered the most current and accurate.

- CDE will not assign accreditation ratings for school districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2015-16 school year. All districts will continue to implement the plan type that they were accredited with in fall 2014.
- The State Board of Education will not assign school plan types in the 2015-16 school year. All schools will continue to implement the plan type that they were assigned in fall 2014.

¹ The HB15-1323 Fact Sheet on Accountability can be found at: www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/hb_15-1323_accountability_guidance

- As ratings will not be assigned in 2015-16, there will not be a request to reconsider process in fall 2015. The request to reconsider process will resume in fall 2016, and both 2014-15 and 2015-16 local assessment data may be submitted at that time.
- The 2015-16 school year will not count toward the calculation of consecutive years on the state accountability clock. The accountability clock resumes in 2016-17, which will count as if it were consecutive to 2014-15.
- Schools and districts will continue with the Unified Improvement Planning process and timeline (e.g., January 15 for review, April 15 for public posting) during the 2015-16 school year.
- CDE will report to the Joint Education Committees on the progress of using the new assessment data to calculate the performance of each school district, school, and the Institute.

How are schools and districts identified for Priority Improvement and Turnaround plans in a typical year?

It is important for districts, schools and local school boards to be aware of how the identification as Priority Improvement or Turnaround is made. Districts and schools assigned to a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan have the lowest performing student outcomes of all districts and schools in Colorado, according to the state's primary accountability tool: the District and School Performance Framework (DPF/SPF) reports. The DPF and SPF reports are based on four key Performance Indicators: achievement, growth, growth gaps, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Districts and schools on Priority Improvement or Turnaround plans tend to be falling short of state expectations for students in each of these areas. Priority Improvement and Turnaround plans make up approximately the lowest 9-10 percent of districts and schools (separately) in the state, based on their overall academic performance outcomes. An interactive online tutorial around the School and District Performance Frameworks can be accessed [here](#).

Since ratings will not be given in 2015, there will not be a request to reconsider process in fall 2015. In all other years, however, if a district disagrees with the Department's initial accreditation category for the district or disagrees with any of its school plan types, the district may submit additional information to the Department as part of the Request to Reconsider process by October 15th, annually. More information and guidance can be found [here](#).

The Accountability Clock

Entering the Accountability Clock

Pursuant to the Education Act of 2009, Article 11 of Title 22, C.R.S., a district or the Charter School Institute (Institute) may not remain Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan or Accredited with Turnaround Plan for longer than five consecutive years before the State Board removes the district's/Institute's accreditation. In State Board of Education rules, 1 CCR 301-1, section 5.07, the calculation of the five consecutive years begins July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the district/Institute is notified that it is Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan or Accredited with Turnaround Plan. The rules also specify that, for those districts that were placed by CDE in "Accreditation Notice with Support" or "Probation" status during the 2009-10 academic school year, the State Board will not allow the district to remain in Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan or Accredited with Turnaround Plan for a total of four consecutive school years before accreditation is removed.

The Education Act of 2009, Article 11 of Title 22, C.R.S., outlines similar consequences for schools. Schools may not implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan for longer than five consecutive years before the district or Institute is required to restructure or close the school. According to State Board of Education rules, 1 CCR 301-1, section 10.05, the calculation of the five consecutive years begins July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the school is notified that it must implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan.

These statutory timelines are referred to as the “accountability clock.” The processes associated with each typical year of the clock, from the notification/planning Year 0 to the final Year 6, including actions directed by the State Board of Education at the end of the Accountability Clock, are detailed in the [timelines](#) below.

HB15-1323 excludes the 2015-16 school year, during which accreditation ratings and school plan types will not be assigned, from the calculation of five consecutive school years for both school districts and individual schools. This one year pause means that the 2016-17 school year will resume where the 2014-15 school year left off. It should be noted, however, that CDE may recommend to the Commissioner and the State Board that a school district’s accreditation be removed if the school district is accredited with Turnaround Plan and has failed to make substantial progress, regardless of the number of years on the accountability clock. Similarly, if a public school fails to make adequate progress under its Turnaround Plan, the Commissioner at any time may assign the [State Review Panel](#) to evaluate the school’s performance and recommend pathways for restructuring or closing the school. The following table displays the progression of the accountability clock if districts were to remain in Priority Improvement or Turnaround status.

Accountability Clock Sequence for School Districts Based on the Accountability Pause in HB15-1323

If, on July 1, 2015, a district is entering:	Then on July 1, 2016, district will remain in:	On July 1, 2017, district may enter:	On July 1, 2018, district may enter:	On July 1, 2019, district may enter:
Year 2	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Year 3	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Loss of accreditation
Year 4	Year 4	Year 5	Loss of accreditation	-
Year 5	Year 5	Loss of accreditation	-	-

Exiting the Accountability Clock

The Accountability Clock is in effect for a district or school as long as it is assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan. The Accountability Clock stops for a district or school once the State Board adopts an SPF/DPF with a Performance or Improvement Plan. At that point, the district or school would be considered to have exited Priority Improvement or Turnaround status. If a district or school is on Turnaround and moves to Priority Improvement the Accountability Clock continues and is not reset.

If a district or school were to improve to a Performance or Improvement Plan assignment one year, then drop back down to a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan the next, the clock would restart at Year 1 on the following July 1. The Accountability Clock and associated year-by-year actions and consequences would begin again.

The Process: Year 0 through Year 6 – Districts

For districts accredited with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan, the table that follows describes the year-by-year actions within the Accountability Clock process. **NOTE: This timeline does not reflect the accountability pause that is in effect for the 2015-16 school year.**

Yellow rows = Activities for districts to complete

Gray rows = * Steps modified or will not occur in 2015-16 due to the assessment transition and the passage of HB15-1323

When will these events happen?								
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
July 1*	Accountability Clock	Accreditation contracts begin. The calculation of the five consecutive years begins July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the district/Institute is notified that it is Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan or Accredited with Turnaround Plan.	X	X	X	X	X	X
August 15*	Release of preliminary DPF report	CDE releases preliminary District Performance Framework (DPF) report to districts.	X	X	X	X	X	X
September*	Notification sent to districts	Notification of ratings sent to the districts. Ratings will be final, unless the district submits a Request to Reconsider. Communication will be sent to the Superintendent and Board President to confirm the accreditation rating and to outline the implications of a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan.	X	X	X	X	X	X

When will these events happen?								
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
September 1 (two weeks after release of DPF)	Release of preliminary UIP pre-populated report CDE Turnaround Support Manager assignment	<p>CDE releases preliminary UIP pre-populated reports that specify any accountability requirements that must be met in the district's UIP (e.g., districts with a Turnaround plan type must specify a required turnaround strategy).</p> <p>Each district with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type is assigned a CDE Turnaround Support Manager. The Turnaround Support Manager becomes a point of contact and broker of technical assistance opportunities for the district.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X
September 15*	Intent to submit a Request to Reconsider	Districts intending to submit a Request to Reconsider are asked to notify CDE (accountability@cde.state.co.us) by September 15 th so technical assistance can be provided.	X	X	X	X	X	X
September-October	Accountability Clock options	Follow-up visit from Turnaround Support Manager to plan for final CDE recommendation to the State Board if at the end of the Accountability Clock. District should be ready to suggest an action, as well. If the district is submitting a Request to Reconsider, this will happen in the winter/spring.						X
October 15*	Deadline for Requests to Reconsider Submission of data narrative for review (optional) Submission of plan for reposting on SchoolView (optional)	<p>District submits Request to Reconsider to CDE if it wishes to appeal its DPF accreditation rating or the SPF plan type for any of its schools.</p> <p>District may submit its revised data narrative to CDE for early review. This is optional and intended as a support.</p> <p>Available to all districts, the revised UIP may be submitted to CDE to post online. This is optional.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X

When will these events happen?								
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
October - November*	Finalization of Accountability Clock options	The superintendent, local board president and State Board of Education will be notified of the Accountability Clock actions CDE and the State Review Panel will recommend to the State Board.						X
November – December*	Release of final DPF report and final UIP pre-populated report	CDE finalizes the DPF accreditation ratings for districts based on Request to Reconsider decisions. The final UIP pre-populated report is released within two weeks after the final DPF release.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Winter- Spring	State Board directs district to take turnaround action Communication from CDE	CDE will present its recommendation to the State Board regarding which of the Accountability Clock actions to direct. State Board directs the district to implement one of the Accountability Clock turnaround actions to be in effect by June 30, based on recommendations from the State Review Panel and the Commissioner. The Commissioner will send a letter to the district, notifying the Superintendent and Board President of the Accountability Clock actions that have been directed by the State Board of Education.						X
January 15	Submit Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)	District submits current version of the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and required addenda to CDE by January 15. The UIP includes the Accountability Clock turnaround action the district will take as an improvement strategy. CDE reviews UIP and provides feedback to the district on its plan. The State Review Panel reviews a selection of the Turnaround plans and may also review Priority Improvement plans.	X	X	X	X	X	X

When will these events happen?								
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
January – March	CDE visits	If there is a new superintendent or a district has been Accredited with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan for the first time, the Commissioner and/or CDE executive leadership will contact the district to provide information and discuss technical assistance options and how to leverage current resources.	X	X	X	X	X	X
	CDE and State Review Panel review of UIPs	CDE and the State Review Panel review the UIPs for schools and districts on the clock, although with different criteria. Feedback from the CDE review is shared with districts. Districts must make a request to receive the Panel's review.						
March-May*	Finalization of Accountability Clock turnaround actions	For Priority Improvement or Turnaround districts ending Year 5: The Executive Director of School & District Performance and/or members of the CDE Executive Team will schedule a visit with the superintendent and local board of education to discuss implementation of the directed Accountability Clock turnaround action, based on a CDE recommendation and a report from the State Review Panel. The Commissioner will report the status to the State Board, including a discussion about the implementation plan for the directed accountability clock action.						X
March 30	Submit revised UIP	District submits UIP with revisions based on feedback from CDE review.	X	X	X	X	X	X
April 15	Submit final UIP	District submits final UIP for publication on SchoolView.org . CDE publishes the UIPs by June.	X	X	X	X	X	X

When will these events happen?								
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Ongoing	Schedule CDE visits and technical assistance	Turnaround Support Manager and districts schedule routine meetings and identify additional CDE assistance opportunities.	X	X	X	X	X	X
	State Review Panel visit	As funds are available, Panelists will visit each school and district at the end of the clock before making final recommendations to the Commissioner and State Board of Education.					X	X
June 30*	Accountability Clock	District takes the directed action or loses accreditation.						X

YEAR 6		
Timeline	Event	Description
TBD	District Accreditation	State Board of Education re-instates the district's accreditation rating, at the plan type determined to be most appropriate, once the district has implemented the required turnaround action.

The Process: Year 0 through Year 6 – Schools

For schools assigned to a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan (including AEC: Priority Improvement Plans and AEC: Turnaround Plans), the table that follows describes the year-by-year actions within the Accountability Clock process. **NOTE: This timeline does not reflect the accountability pause that is in effect for the 2015-16 school year. That preliminary timeline can be found in [Appendix A](#).**

Yellow rows = Activities for districts to complete

Gray rows = * Steps modified or will not occur in 2015-16 due to the assessment transition and the passage of HB15-1323

When will these events happen?									
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
July 1*	Accountability Clock	The calculation of the five consecutive years begins July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the school is notified that it must implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan.		X	X	X	X	X	
August 15*	Release of preliminary School Performance Framework (SPF) report	CDE releases preliminary School Performance Framework (SPF) reports to districts. This is the initial notification to the district that the school has been assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type. It will be followed up with a communication to the Superintendent and local board to notify the district of the school's preliminary plan type and to outline the implications of a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
September 1 (two weeks after release of SPF)	Release of preliminary UIP pre-populated report	CDE releases preliminary UIP pre-populated reports that specify any accountability requirements that must be met in the school's UIP (e.g., schools on a Turnaround Plan type must select a required turnaround strategy).	X	X	X	X	X	X	

When will these events happen?									
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Mid-September (no more than 30 days after the release of the SPFs)	Parent Notification	The district must send notification to parents in any schools on the clock with information about the school's plan type, UIP process and about the upcoming public hearing.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
September-December	Accountability Clock options	Follow-up visit from Turnaround Support Manager and/or field services representative to make a final recommendation to the State Board, regarding the appropriate Accountability Clock action. District should be ready to suggest their own recommendation. If there is a Request to Reconsider submitted for the school, then this will happen between January – February.						X	
September 15*	Intent to submit a Request to Reconsider	Districts intending to submit a Request to Reconsider on behalf of a school are asked to notify CDE (accountability@cde.state.co.us) by September 15 th so that technical assistance can be provided.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
September- October*	Information session for Priority Improvement/ Turnaround schools	CDE hosts an annual informational meeting for Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools, and strongly recommends that school leadership attends at least once. These half-day sessions will be offered regionally, with information provided on: SB-163 statute and rule, consequences of the Accountability Clock, the SPF, the UIP, and available supports.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
October 15*	Deadline for Requests to Reconsider Submission of plan for reposting on SchoolView	District submits Request to Reconsider to CDE if it wishes to appeal the SPF plan type(s) for any of its schools. The revised UIP may be submitted to CDE to post online. This is optional.	X	X	X	X	X	X	

When will these events happen?									
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Mid-October through Mid-December (at least 30 days after parent notification)	Public hearing	The local school board must hold a public hearing prior to adoption of the school's UIP.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
November*	Finalization of Accountability Clock options	The superintendent, local board president and State Board of Education will be notified of the accountability clock actions CDE will recommend to the State Board.						X	
November – December*	Release of final SPF report and final UIP pre-populated report	CDE finalizes its recommendation for SPF plan types to the State Board. The State Board adopts the plan type assignments.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Winter-Spring*	State Board directs district to take Accountability Clock action Communication from CDE	CDE and State Review Panel will make their recommendations to the State Board regarding which of the actions to direct. State Board directs the district to implement one of the Accountability Clock actions to be in effect by June 30, based on State Review Panel and Commissioner recommendations. The Commissioner will send a letter to the district notifying the superintendent and board president of the Accountability Clock turnaround actions that have been directed by the SBE.						X	
January 15	Submit Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)	District submits current version of the school UIP and required addenda to CDE by January 15 (schools participating in the Turnaround Network may have an accelerated timeline). The UIP includes the turnaround action the district will take with the school as an improvement strategy. CDE reviews UIP and provides feedback to the district on its plan. The State Review Panel reviews a selection of Turnaround plans and may also review Priority Improvement plans.	X	X	X	X	X	X	

When will these events happen?									
Timeline	Event	Description	Planning Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
January through March	CDE and State Review Panel review of UIPs	CDE and the State Review Panel review the UIPs for schools and districts on the clock, although with different criteria. Feedback from the CDE review is shared with districts. Districts must make a request to receive the Panel's review.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
April 15	Submit final UIP	District submits final UIP for publication on SchoolView.org . CDE publishes the UIPs by June.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
June 30*	Accountability Clock	District takes the directed action for the school.						X	
Ongoing	State Review Panel visit	As funds are available, Panelists will visit each school and district at the end of the clock before making final recommendations to the Commissioner and State Board of Education.					X	X	

* These steps will be modified or will not occur in 2015-16 due to the assessment transition and the passage of HB15-1323 but are expected to resume in 2016-17. See pages 3-5 of this document for an overview of the changes. Additionally, please visit the CDE website for the HB15-1323: School and District Accountability Fact Sheet at www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/hb_15-1323_accountability_guidance.

YEAR 6		
Timeline	Event	Description
July 1	Accountability Clock	District implements directed Accountability Clock turnaround action for the school, otherwise the district's accreditation rating may be lowered.

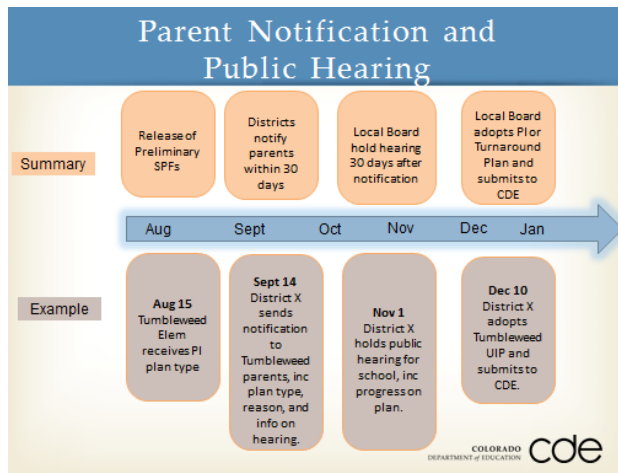
Annual Requirements

The following sections outline the annual requirements specific to Priority Improvement and Turnaround districts and schools. This includes annual improvement planning, parent notification requirements, accreditation contracts and implication for federal programs.

Parent Notification Requirements

For a school that is required to implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan, the district must notify parents of the students enrolled in the school of the type of plan that is required and of the performance results that led to that plan assignment. This notice must be given within 30 days after the district has received the initial plan assignment or, if the district appeals the initial plan assignment, within 30 days after the district receives the State Board's final determination. Because performance frameworks will not be released in 2015-16, schools will continue with their assigned 2014-15 plan type. Notification should be sent by at least September 30, 2015. The notice must include the timeline for developing and adopting the required plan and the date, time and location of a public hearing held by the local board of education, to review the plan prior to adoption. The date for the public hearing must be at least 30 days after the date on which the district provides the written notice. During these public hearings, the local board of education must also review the school's progress in implementing its plan during the preceding year and in improving its performance.

Sample timeline of Parent Notification and Public Hearing process



For a sample of a parent notification letter, please see [Appendix D](#).

Improvement Planning

During the state assessment transition in 2015-16, schools and districts are still expected to update and implement their improvement plans. Some adjustments, however, may be needed in typical practice (e.g., gathering available student data for updating trend statements). Guidance on improvement planning is available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip_guidance_during_the_state_assessment

[transition](#). UIP timelines also remain constant in 2015-16. Details on the timeline are provided at the end of this section.

As schools and districts with Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan types create a Unified Improvement Plan, it is expected that the plan demonstrate an understanding of the magnitude of the issues facing them. The data analysis should consider and respond to the Performance Indicators (i.e., academic achievement, growth, growth gaps, post-secondary workforce readiness) not met or approaching on the School or District Performance Frameworks. In some cases, this may mean that the school or district must address all four Performance Indicators and address that there are concerns across the system; rather than focusing on just one area. Furthermore, the action plan should be appropriate in scope, intensity and type. This is an acknowledgement that in order for schools and districts to exit Priority Improvement or Turnaround status, dramatic change is necessary.

For schools and districts with a Turnaround plan type, at least one of the state-required strategies must be identified, described in the UIP and implemented. Schools and districts must also complete a Turnaround addendum with the UIP. State required strategies include:

- Employing a lead turnaround partner that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with districts under similar circumstances. The turnaround partner will be immersed in all aspects of developing and collaboratively executing the plan and will serve as a liaison to other district partners.
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure within the district to provide greater, more effective support for district schools.
- Recognizing individual district schools as innovation schools or clustering district schools with similar governance or management structures into one or more innovation school zones and seeking designation as a District of Innovation pursuant to Article 32.5 of Title 22.
- Hiring an entity that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with districts under similar circumstances to operate one more district schools pursuant to a contract with the local school board or the Charter School Institute.
- Converting one or more district schools to a charter school(s).
- Renegotiating and significantly restructuring a charter school's charter contract.
- Other actions of comparable or greater significance or effect.

Timelines for submitting a UIP for schools and districts with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type

As improvement planning occurs on a continuous cycle, districts and schools should be reviewing and adjusting the existing improvement plan on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Typically, schools and districts begin revising the UIP in late spring or summer based upon local assessment data. As state level data is made available in the fall, schools and districts make another set of broader revisions. The plan must cover at least two years (the current school year and the next school year). However, Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools are required, by law, to hold a [public meeting](#) prior to the adoption of the UIP to solicit community input, concerning the contents of the plan.

Local school boards that are required to submit a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan must adopt a plan no later than January 15th of the school year in which it is identified for Priority Improvement or Turnaround. All schools and districts must use the Unified Improvement Plan template to address the requirements for a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan and to address any other applicable program planning requirements (e.g., ESEA programs, Gifted Education, state and federal grants).

No later than five business days after the local school board has adopted a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan, the local school board must submit the plan to the Department for review. The Department will evaluate the plan to ensure that it meets expectations for state and federal requirements.

Annual Submission of UIP for Public Posting

All districts must submit final Priority Improvement and Turnaround district and/or school plans no later than April 15th to the Department for publication on SchoolView. (Some flexibility has been provided for small, rural districts and schools with a Performance plan type. See the [Accountability Handbook](#) or the [Improvement Planning website](#) for additional details.) Some programs will also conduct program reviews of these UIPs. To accommodate schools and districts that would like to update the publicly posted plans sooner than April, CDE offers additional submission windows in the fall and winter. These windows are optional.

For a visual summary of the UIP timeline for Priority Improvement and Turnaround plans, refer to [Appendix E \(schools\)](#) and [F \(districts\)](#).

Additional Resources to Support Improvement Planning

Schools and districts looking for additional resources can visit the Improvement Planning unit's training [page](#).

District Accreditation Contracts

The Department must annually accredit all **districts** and does so through an accreditation contract between the state and the district. A district that is “Accredited with Improvement Plan,” “Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan” or “Accredited with Turnaround Plan” will have its contract annually reviewed and agreed upon. (For districts “Accredited with Distinction” or “Accredited,” accreditation contracts have a term of one year and are renewed automatically each July so long as the district remains in one of these accreditation categories.) The Department will send districts individualized accreditation contract templates annually, if the contract needs to be renewed. Signed contracts, by the superintendent and local board president, are due back to CDE at the beginning of June, in order to be signed by the Commissioner and State Board President prior to July 1. The parties to the contract may renegotiate the contract at any time during the term of the contract, based upon appropriate and reasonable changes in circumstances. Due to the passage of HB15-1323, accreditation contracts in 2016 will be based off of the 2014 accreditation ratings.

In some cases, a district may be assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan for factors other than academic performance outcomes. Districts must provide assurances that they are in substantial good-faith compliance with (1) the budgeting, accounting, and reporting requirements set forth in Articles 44 and 45 of Title 22, (2) the provisions of section 22-32-109.1, C.R.S., concerning school safety, and the Gun Free School Act, 20 U.S.C. 7151, and (3) all other statutory and regulatory requirements that apply to the district. For purposes of monitoring a district’s compliance with its accreditation contract, the Department may require information or conduct site visits as needed.

If the Department has reason to believe that a district is not in substantial compliance with one or more of the statutory or regulatory requirements applicable to districts, it will notify the local school board and the board will have 90 days after the date of the notice to come into compliance. If, at the end of the 90 day period, the Department finds that the district is not substantially in compliance with the application requirements, meaning that the district has not yet taken the necessary measures to ensure that it will meet all legal requirements as soon as practicable, the district may be subject to loss of accreditation and to the interventions specified in section 22-11-209, C.R.S.

Refer to the [District Accountability Handbook](#) for more information.

Federal ESEA Program Accountability

ESEA is the primary federal law affecting K-12 education. The Federal Programs Unit administers funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as well as a variety of other federal and state competitive grants and awards. The approval of Colorado's ESEA flexibility waiver enabled the state to more greatly align the identification process for federal accountability with the state accountability system. Colorado no longer uses Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data to identify districts for federal Title I accountability. To the extent possible, Colorado uses the state's accountability system to meet federal ESEA accountability requirements for districts and schools. In some instances, the state performance frameworks are the basis of federal accountability (e.g., identifying schools for public school choice), while in other instances additional criteria are applied to focus on targeted subgroups (e.g., identifying Title I focus schools). Consequently, the results of Colorado's School and District Performance Frameworks have significant implications from a federal programs perspective. The following sections outline the implications for federal programs.

ESEA, Title I, Part A

Title I, Part A is the largest federal program supporting both elementary and secondary education. The program's resources are allocated based upon the poverty rates of students enrolled in schools and districts and are designed to help ensure that all students meet challenging state academic standards.

Title I, Part A District Accountability Measures

Under the ESEA flexibility waiver, the Title IA Accountability measure, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), has been replaced with Colorado's District Performance Frameworks. Districts now receive one set of accountability data for both Title IA and state accountability. Therefore, districts that accept Title IA funds and are accredited with a Turnaround or Priority Improvement plan type are held accountable for meeting the following federal requirements.

Requirements for Districts

- For any Title IA district accredited with a plan type of Priority Improvement or Turnaround, 10% of the Title IA allocation may be set aside in the following school year for professional learning activities to address the identified Priority Performance Challenges (PPC) from the unified improvement plan. These funds may only be used for district-wide professional learning or to provide professional learning to the lowest performing school(s) in the district, and the funds must be used to address the areas in which the district or the school(s) are not meeting performance expectations.
 - These districts must complete the ESEA addendum in the UIP that will outline how the funds set aside will be used for professional learning activities to address the identified Priority Performance Challenges. UIPs will be reviewed by CDE during the January UIP submission window to identify how the LEA is addressing the identified PPCs through the use of these funds.
 - The strategies in the UIP that are reviewed and approved by CDE must be reflected in the Consolidated Application for federal funds.
 - CDE Federal Programs staff will engage with districts accredited with Priority Improvement and Turnaround plan types to improve the programs supported with federal Title IA funds.

- In the Consolidated Application, the LEA may describe the additional Title I, Part A support that is being provided to the schools with a Priority Improvement and/or Turnaround plan type within that LEA. This description must identify the specific needs that will be addressed by this support and provide the Title I expenses associated with the aforementioned.

Title I, Part A School Accountability Measures

The ESEA flexibility waiver replaced the previous Title IA school accountability measure, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), with Colorado's School Performance Frameworks (SPF). Under the waiver, three categories of schools are identified for federal accountability: Title I schools assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type, Title focus schools, and Title I priority schools. Title I Priority Improvement or Turnaround schools are identified using only the SPF results, whereas Title I focus and priority school identification includes additional criteria.

Title I Schools Assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan Type

Title I schools assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type as part of the state's accountability system must meet the federal accountability requirements outlined below (see the "Requirements for Schools" section).

Title I Priority Schools

Under the flexibility waiver, CDE must identify the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools as priority, based on achievement on the state assessment over a number of years or having a graduation rate below 60% for high schools. Priority schools must also have a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type assignment on the School Performance Frameworks. In Colorado, most priority schools are implementing a Tiered Intervention Grant (TIG). The TIG is a competitive grant (funded from 1003g of ESEA; see the TIG section later in this document) offered only to Title I priority schools. TIG schools must implement one of the seven reform models defined by the U.S. Department of Education: turnaround, transformation, restart, early learning, whole-school reform, state-determined (Secondary Success), or closure model. Each year, new TIG-eligible schools are identified and, if awarded a grant, are added to the state's list of priority schools. New TIG grantees are awarded funds and supports for five years, as long as one of the TIG models is being implemented with fidelity. Previously, TIG was a three-year grant.

Priority schools can exit priority status by earning at least 47% of their total framework points (combined Academic Achievement, Academic Growth to Standard, Academic Growth Gaps, and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness, if applicable), for two consecutive years. In the pending ESEA Waiver, CDE has requested to add the following exit option: Schools identified based on low graduation rates will be exited from priority status when they have attained a graduation rate above 60% for two consecutive years. This document will be updated when a final decision has been made.

Earlier cohorts of priority (TIG) schools have now completed the three-year TIG grant. With the exception of a few schools, most have met the exit criteria and are no longer considered priority schools. In addition to the current TIG schools, former TIG schools that have not yet met the exit criteria and are still among the lowest performing 5% continue to be considered priority schools and will be supported by CDE.

Priority schools (or TIG schools) are held to the additional federal requirements delineated below (see the "Requirements for Schools" section).

Title I Focus Schools

CDE must annually identify at least 10% of its Title I schools as focus schools based on the achievement and high school graduation rates of disaggregated groups over a number of years. A focus school is a Title I high school with a low graduation rate (less than 60%) regardless of plan type and/or a Title I school with a Turnaround or Priority Improvement plan type assignment with either:

- Low-achieving disaggregated student groups (i.e., minority, English Learners, students with IEPs, and students who qualify for free or reduced lunch) and/or
- Subgroup(s) graduation rates of less than 60%.

CDE is required to maintain a minimum of 66 schools (10% of Title I schools) on the focus school list. In a typical year, as schools exit the focus status, new schools are identified and added to the list. For the 2015-2016 school year, data from the 2014 state assessment was used to identify additional focus schools so that as schools exited focus status, the focus school count would not drop below the minimum requirements for the state. Title I focus schools are held to the additional federal requirements delineated below (see the “Requirements for Schools” section).

A Title I school can exit focus school status by meeting one of the following criteria:

- Two consecutive years of an Improvement or Performance school plan type on the School Performance Frameworks (either 1 or 3 year rating), or
- Two consecutive years of disaggregated student achievement data equivalent to a *meets* rating (either 1 or 3 year rating) for schools identified for low achievement of disaggregated group(s), or
- For schools identified for low graduation rates, two consecutive years of the Graduation Rate indicator rating of *meets*, based on the School Performance Frameworks (either 1 or 3 year rating).

More information about priority and focus schools can be found at:

www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/a.

Requirements for Schools

Requirements for Title I Schools with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan Types

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) and Public School Choice

LEAs must offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES) for *eligible* students and Title I Public School Choice for *all* students attending a Title I school with Priority Improvement or Turnaround plans. Students in these schools may be eligible for SES if they performed unsatisfactory or partially proficient on the state reading, writing, or math assessment, below grade level on the READ Act assessments, or are identified as Non-English Proficient (NEP) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) on the state English language proficiency assessment. During the 2015-2016 school year, eligibility can also be determined based on local assessments or a body of evidence that demonstrates area of need for SES.

Newly identified Title I schools do not have to offer SES and Choice using Title I funds in the year of identification but must make SES/Choice available to eligible students in the subsequent school year. It is important to note that LEAs may use local or state funds to meet this requirement. For example, if a Title I school was first identified as Priority Improvement in August 2014, then SES and Choice would not be required until the 2015-16 school year. At the district’s discretion, SES may be offered to parents of eligible students in a Title I school during the identification year.

Choice is provided as an option for families in districts with multiple schools per grade span. After the district identifies a minimum of two higher performing schools (that have not been assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type), parents can choose to send their child to one of these higher performing schools, with district-provided transportation using Title I funds (or local or state funds used to support a program that meets these requirements). If parents decide to have their child remain in the home school, the child, if eligible, may receive SES services. It must be made clear to parents in notification letters that choosing to choice out means that their student, who may be eligible for SES in the home school will not have access to this service in the new school.

During the identification year, LEAs must complete and submit an SES plan to CDE for implementation the following year. This plan must outline student needs; describe the process used by the district to select appropriate and effective SES programs; detail parent engagement in the selection process; and explain how the district will ensure that SES services are provided by qualified personnel. Additionally, school districts must provide to parents the option to choose from three SES providers, one of which must be an external provider. A letter must be sent to parents informing them of SES and Choice options at least 14 days before the first day of school. If a school moves up to Improvement or Performance status and is notified as such during a year when SES is being implemented, SES must continue to be implemented until the end of that school year. For example, if a school is notified in September 2016 that it has earned an Improvement Plan type, the school would continue to implement SES for the remainder of the 2016-2017 school year.

For more information regarding SES and Choice, please refer to the CDE guidance:

www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/fedprograms/dl/ti_psc-ti_ses-ti_a_regsandguidance_sesguid.pdf

Parental Notification Requirements

If a Title I school has been assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan, the LEA must notify the parents of each child enrolled in the school regarding the school's status. This notification occurs in the year after identification and is included as part of the SES/Choice notification. The Choice notification must explain:

- Why the school was assigned the specific plan type and how parents can get involved in addressing the academic issues that led to the identification;
- The parents' option to transfer their student to another school in the LEA that, in the current school year, has not been assigned with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan. District must provide at least 2 choices, where available;
- The efforts that the school and district are making to improve the academic success of its students;
- That the cost for Choice transportation will be paid for by the district; and
- The option for possible SES services if the student remains at the home school.

A sample notification letter, as well as additional information can be found at:

www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/psc.

The SES notification must include:

- The school's plan status;
- Who is available to provide the free tutoring;

- Each content area that is available for free tutoring;
- How to sign up for SES services; and
- The process for communicating back to parents about their student’s progress in the SES tutoring program.

A sample notification letter, as well as additional information, can be found at:

www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/ses.asp.

Requirements for Title I Priority and Focus Schools:

Focus schools must offer SES until they meet the exit criteria.

As part of the UIP process, priority schools awarded a Tiered Intervention Grant (TIG) must complete and submit the TIG addendum in the school’s UIP based on the reform model being implemented. Title I focus schools must address the low achievement and/or low graduation rates of disaggregated groups in the data narrative of the school’s UIP.

CDE will assist districts with Title I priority and/or focus schools with UIP development, implementation monitoring and prioritize these schools for additional support. CDE Federal Programs staff, in collaboration with Turnaround Support Managers, will assist districts with:

- A comprehensive needs assessment for priority or focus schools;
- Planning, plan implementation and progress monitoring; and
- Access to services, resources and information to help the school address its needs.

In addition, CDE will engage with districts that have focus and/or priority schools, to improve the effectiveness of programs supported with federal funds. In 2015-2016, CDE staff will continue to identify the changing needs of the school and/or district with 2014 Turnaround or Priority Improvement plan types and how federal funds can be more effectively leveraged in support of student achievement.

ESEA, Title II, Part A

Title II, Part A is intended to increase student academic achievement by improving teacher and principal effectiveness. These funds can be used to prepare, train and recruit highly-effective teachers and principals capable of ensuring that all students will achieve to high standards.

The approval of Colorado’s ESEA flexibility waiver enabled the state to align the identification process for Title IIA accountability (Section 2141c of ESEA) with the state accountability system. Colorado no longer uses Highly Qualified Teacher and AYP data to identify districts for Title IIA improvement. Districts that (1) accept Title IIA funds and (2) have been accredited with a plan type of Priority Improvement or Turnaround are identified for Title II Improvement under Title IIA accountability (Section 2141c of ESEA).

Identified districts must complete the ESEA addendum, which outlines how their Title IIA funds will be used in the following school year to address Priority Performance Challenges, Root Causes and/or identified gaps in equitable access to qualified and experienced teachers in the UIP. UIPs are reviewed by CDE during the January UIP submission window.

Additionally, districts must conduct an analysis of the equitable distribution of teachers (EDT) and address any identified gaps in the UIP. CDE provides data to support this analysis on SchoolView. If a gap is identified, it must be addressed in one of the UIP Major Improvement Strategies. CDE reviewers of the UIP will provide feedback on the plan to address the identified gaps to ensure that the requirement is met.

A district is no longer identified for Title IIA Improvement once the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation has been removed. However, the district is still expected to implement the plan that was approved from the previous year. The Federal Programs Unit will provide support for implementation during the Consolidated Application process and onsite reviews. In addition, Title IIA funds must first be used to provide additional supports in schools assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type, although a district's entire IIA allocation need not be budgeted in support of those schools. These supports must be above and beyond the supports provided to other schools in the district.

ESEA, Title III

The goal of the Title III program is to improve the education of English Learner (EL) students by helping them learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards. The program provides enhanced instructional opportunities for identified English Learners and immigrant students through supplemental Title III and Title III-Immigrant Set-Aside funding.

As a state recipient of Title III funding, the USDE requires Colorado to develop State Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). AMAOs are performance targets that all Title III grantees are expected to meet annually. There are three AMAOs. The first two consist of English language proficiency achievement and growth metrics as measured on the WIDA ACCESS for ELs assessment. The third AMAO is an academic achievement indicator based on academic growth on state reading, writing and math assessments, and graduation and assessment participation rates. In a typical year, all three AMAO targets must be met in order for the grantee to be considered to have met AMAO targets.

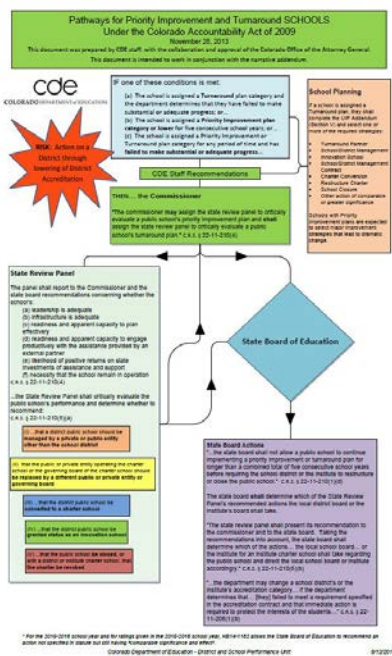
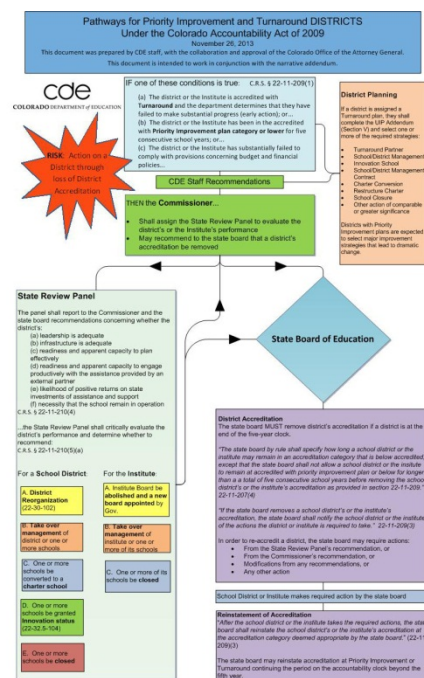
AMAO calculations for 2014-2015 are currently awaiting approval from the USDE. Colorado is part of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium and administered PARCC English language arts and mathematics assessments for the first time in spring 2015. This transition to new assessments clearly has implications for Colorado's Title III accountability, specifically AMAO 3. A proposal was submitted to U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in July 2015 requesting a waiver from calculating AMAO 3 using data from the first PARCC administration. The request also proposed calculating AMAO 1 and 2 as the Department has in years past. CDE will update the field and this handbook when a final decision from the USDE is available.

A district/consortium that accepts Title III funds is identified for Title III Improvement if it does not make AMAOs for two consecutive years. A Title III grantee that has been identified for Title III Improvement must develop its UIP to specifically address the factors that prevented it from achieving these AMAOs, as well as a description of the scientifically research-based strategies that will be implemented to improve the district English Language Development (ELD) program, and how the district proposes to spend its Title III allocation for these purposes. The addendum will be reviewed by CDE during the January UIP submission window.

Reaching the End of the Accountability Clock

Colorado law requires that the State Board of Education recommends specific action for any school, district or Institute remaining on a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan for five consecutive years. The State Board has discretion to take action prior to the end of the Accountability Clock for schools and districts with Turnaround plans.

This section outlines the steps that will take place as a school, district or Institute reaches the end of the Accountability Clock. Through this process, CDE staff members will work with the district or Institute to select a pathway, or action, which is best suited to create dramatic change. Additionally, the State Review Panel will critically evaluate the school, district or Institute's capacity to engage in dramatic change, and make a recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board as to which pathway it believes will produce that change. The graphic below shows the different pathways for Priority Improvement and Turnaround districts (blue) and those pathways for schools (green). Descriptions of these pathways are included in a [later section](#). Full-page versions of these flowcharts can be found in [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#).



State Review Panel

Created through the Education Accountability Act, the State Review Panel is a body of experts in the field that provides recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education on steps to take with schools and districts on the Accountability Clock. Panelists have expertise in school and district leadership, curriculum, assessment, instructional data management, program evaluation, teacher leadership, and school and district governance. Furthermore, attention has been paid to ensuring panelists represent the state geographically and have specialized knowledge (e.g., online programs, charter schools, disaggregated groups of students).

The State Review Panel is tasked with:

- Providing a critical evaluation of the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), including capacity of school/district to engage in dramatic change. The Panel shall review Turnaround plans and may review Priority Improvement plans.
- Providing recommendations to the Commissioner and State Board of Education on potential actions when a school or district remains on the Accountability Clock for more than five consecutive years or earlier upon request.

The State Review Panel does its work through document reviews (including an evaluation of the UIP) and site visits (including interviews with district and school leadership, local board members, staff and local community members). Panelists are expected to answer questions about the school's or district's leadership capacity to implement the needed change for rapid improvement, including:

- 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.

Based upon their document review and site visit, the Panel provides recommendations to the Commissioner and State Board of Education as they determine the required action(s) at the end of the Accountability Clock or early action. The following section describes the possible pathways for districts, the Institute and schools, per state statute, that the State Review Panel has to choose from.

Type of Required Action	Districts (C.R.S. 22-11-209)	Schools (C.R.S. 22-11-210)
District Reorganization	That the school district be reorganized pursuant to article 30 of this title, which reorganization may include consolidation	n/a

Change in Management	That a private or public entity, with the agreement of the school district, take over management of the school district or management of one or more of the district public schools	With regard to a district public school that is not a charter school, that the district public school should be managed by a private or public entity other than the school district
		With regard to a district or institute charter school, that the private or public entity operating the charter school or the governing board of the charter school should be replaced by a different private or public entity or governing board
Charter School Conversion	That one or more of the district public schools be converted to a charter school	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be converted to a charter school if it is not already authorized as a charter school
Innovation Status	That one or more of the district public schools be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to section 22-32.5-104 or that the local school board recognize a group of district public schools as an innovation school zone pursuant to section 22-32.5-104	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to section 22-32.5-104
School Closure	That one or more of the district public schools be closed	That the public school be closed or, with regard to a district charter school or an institute charter school, that the public school's charter be revoked

Pursuant to HB15-1323, CDE will not assign accreditation ratings or school plan types for the 2015-16 school year and the 2015-16 school year will not count toward the calculation of consecutive years on the state accountability clock. As such, only those schools and districts that have previously received site visits will be eligible for a return visit from the State Review Panel in 2016.

Additional details on the State Review Panel are available on the CDE website at: www.cde.state.co.us/uip/statereviewpanel.

Districts Pathways

The following sections describe the possible recommendations and actions that the State Board may consider and take regarding Priority Improvement and Turnaround **districts or the Institute**. For more information, see [Appendix B](#).

LOSS OF DISTRICT ACCREDITATION

If a district is accredited with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround rating for more than five years, the State Board of Education **MUST** remove the district's accreditation. If a district is accredited with a

Turnaround rating and fails to make progress under its Turnaround plan, the State Board **MAY** remove the district's accreditation earlier than five years. (1 CCR 301-1, rule 8.00)

The State Board annually accredits school districts and the Institute through establishing [accreditation contracts](#). Each contract has a term of one year and is renewed automatically so long as the accreditation category is Accreditation or higher.

Significance of loss of accreditation:

To date, the State Board has not removed a district's accreditation. However, this is a significant action by the State Board and might result in significant consequences and implications for a district, including:

- Impact on a district and its community, as a public indication that the district has not successfully improved the educational opportunities at one or more of its schools.
- In the event of the loss of district accreditation, CDE has the authority to suspend or restrict federal and/or competitive state funds.
- May trigger the district reorganization process.

Reinstatement of accreditation:

In order to reinstate accreditation, the State Board will determine the actions the district must take and notify the district or Institute. Such actions may be informed by recommendations by CDE staff, the Commissioner, and/or the State Review Panel, from a list of options included in statute. However, they are not limited to these recommendations and may be broad or narrow, at the State Board's discretion.

When the State Board reinstates accreditation, they shall reinstate accreditation with an appropriate accreditation rating. Pursuant to statute, the State Board will continue to annually review the accreditation ratings for each district, which will include districts with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround rating, beyond the initial five years. The State Board may remove the accreditation of a district or the Institute for an indefinite period of time. Until a district takes the action required by the State Board and the State Board reinstates accreditation, the district will operate without accreditation.

DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

If the department recommends removing a district's accreditation, the State Review Panel may recommend reorganization of a district. Under certain conditions, a school district reorganization planning process may be initiated, potentially leading to, but not limited to: a change in district boundaries, the formation of a new district, the election of a new LEA board, new governance and operating authorities, and more. Such a process begins when any of the following conditions exist and following when the Commissioner notifies local boards of education and appropriate committees:

- a) A school district board requires the appointment of such a planning committee.
- b) A committee presents a petition – signed by fifteen percent of that school district's eligible electors.
- c) The State Board declares a school district is no longer accredited and that it should be re-organized pursuant to C.R.S. § 22-11-209.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

District reorganization might be pursued in order to intervene in a district where persistent low-achievement may be caused by ineffective governance, or leadership by a district board of directors, or by district leadership. This path may also be pursued if a change in boundaries is desired.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- This pathway is intensive and would require one or more special elections to: approve the final plan; elect a new board of directors; and/or decide on financial issues C.R.S. § 22-30-114(1)(i). Significant community support would need to exist to reach voter approval for district reorganization.
- Cooperation across district boundaries may be required, if boundaries are to be changed with one or more adjoining districts.
- The community within and outside of the district would need to have a shared sense of urgency, belief, and desire to support dramatic improvement to address persistent low-achievement of its students through a reorganization.
- The organization planning process would require considerable time and energy from district and community members. It is likely that external partnerships would be needed to facilitate the process.

CHANGE DISTRICT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

The Education Accountability Act outlines a pathway whereby a district may change internal management structures and/or governance of low performing schools through partnership with a private or public entity. Per C.R.S. § 22-11-209(2), the State Review Panel may evaluate a school district and recommend: “That a private or public entity, with the agreement of the school district, take over management of the school district or management of one or more of the district public schools.”

Rationale for pursuing this path:

This path might be effective if district leadership and operating systems prove to be ineffective over a period of time. Through this pathway, a district board or superintendent might elect to transfer district management or management of one or more schools to an external entity. This pathway represents a continuum along which there are many variations to fit the unique context of a given district and its schools.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- A viable private or public entity would need to have capacity and willingness to take over management of the district or a number of schools.
- Willingness would be needed by a district board and/or leadership to engage in this path.
- Additional monetary resources.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

The State Review Panel and Commissioner may recommend conversion of one or more district schools to charter schools. The charter school may be authorized through the district or through the Institute.

1. Conversion of district school to charter school, 22-11-209(2)(i)(c)

Rationale for pursuing this path:

A district might convert a school to a charter school to provide more autonomy and flexibility to a school from statutory and regulatory requirements. These requirements may have created obstacles in the past. Successful recruitment of a new or existing charter school operator with proven success can ensure successful practices and positive achievement results. Furthermore, this option may provide a “fresh start” for a community.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- District support would be critical to ensure collaborative efforts and support within the district and community.
- Consideration should be given to how the district school would close or phase-out and how the charter school would open or phase-in. Funding equations must provide equivalent or greater funding for charter schools to operate effectively.
- The district would have to agree to authorize the charter application OR to release the district’s exclusive chartering authority (if in effect).
- The charter school might benefit from using a district facility or the facility of the phase-out school.

2. Creation of an independent charter school, 22-30.5-301

The State Board may recommend conversion of a public school to an independent charter school. If an independent charter school is to be organized, the State Board shall issue a request for proposals for the operation of an independent charter school which might be within a building that currently houses a public school of a school district.

The process to initiate an independent charter school in statute requires: the formation of a review committee, criteria for review, committee membership, proposal evaluation and selection. The State Board shall select an applicant to recommend to the local board of education. The Commissioner or the Commissioner’s designee shall assist the selected applicant in negotiating an independent charter with the local board of education pursuant to section C.R.S. § 22-30.5-305.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

The State Board might pursue this path when the local district is hesitant or lacks capacity to consider authorizing or allowing a promising charter school within the district and when such a charter school might have significant likelihood of providing an improved educational environment in the existing school.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- District support and cooperation would be important.
- An environment where there are one or more proven charter applicants and/or charter management organizations would be critical.
- Within this pathway, the independent charter school may have access to use an existing district facility at a low cost.

3. Creation of a new charter school:

A district may encourage the development and opening of a new charter school. Districts may create requests for proposals for new schools, recruit existing charter organizations, or develop charter school plans themselves. If a district has exclusive chartering authority (ECA) they have sole discretion about authorizing a new charter school. Districts may release ECA and/or may partner with CSI to authorize one or more schools through CSI or other authorizers. Districts' boards may also approve charter authorizations without removing their ECA. C.R.S. § 22-30.5-504.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

Opening new schools may provide opportunities to: create high expectations for students; hire new staff; and refresh communities. A number of charter schools and charter management organizations (CMOs) have proven records of success. Such charters may serve districts by providing model programs that can inform practices in other schools or programs.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- In order for new charter schools to be successful, certain conditions should be created to provide enough autonomy for site-based decision making. Such conditions might include:
 - Use of existing facility
 - Choice systems that allow families to opt in or out of different schools, with transportation
 - Equivalent or sufficient funding as district schools
 - Support by the local board
 - Authority to authorize internally or through the Institute

INNOVATION STATUS OR INNOVATION ZONE

The Innovation Schools Act provides a path for schools and districts to design and implement innovative ideas and practices to better meet student needs. Innovation schools can obtain waivers from state and local policies and collective bargaining agreements that challenge their ability to execute their ideas and enables flexibilities (e.g., governance, school personnel, and educational program).

Schools and districts may initiate the Innovation process which includes: innovation planning; a demonstration of at least 50% approval of administrators, staff and the School Accountability Committee (SAC); and ultimately district board and State Board approval. In addition, an affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of the affected teachers is required for waivers of local bargaining agreements. (C.R.S. § 22-32.5-109)

The State Board can require a Priority Improvement or Turnaround district to pursue Innovation status for one or more of its schools. The district may have to honor collective bargaining agreements for any displaced teachers depending on the details of the local agreements.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

Innovation schools can obtain waivers from state and local policies and collective bargaining agreements that challenge their ability to execute their ideas and enables flexibilities (e.g., governance, school personnel, and educational program). Instructional infrastructure, leadership, human capital, academic

performance and school governance are all causes of underperformance for which the innovation school pathway may be selected.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- Districts would have to be open to negotiating autonomies for their school.
- School communities, including administration, staff and SACs, would need to buy into the plan and a majority of these groups must be willing to provide the necessary consent for the plans.
- School leadership would need to have a clear method for identifying statutory and regulatory barriers that have created challenges for the school in the past, and would need to develop innovative strategies for changes to people, time, money, etc.
- Innovation status flexibility would need to address the root causes of the performance challenges in the school.

In the event that the requirements for Innovation status are too burdensome or not viable, a district board may request individual waivers from statute or rule, per C.R.S. § 22-2-117. A school principal may initiate such waivers but they must go through the district’s board.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

If a district is persistently low-performing on the district performance framework, it may become necessary to close one or more of its lowest-performing schools. Districts may make closure decisions at any time about their schools. Schools may be closed completely, or phased out over multiple years. Part of the closure process includes working with families to create a plan for successful future school enrollment options for all current students.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

School closure or phasing out of a school may be the best option when a school persistently fails to show adequate academic achievement for multiple years. In some cases, closing a school and opening a new school, with a new culture, program, and staff can re-invigorate a community. In other cases, students may be better served by attending other existing schools that have a proven track record.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- If a district chooses to close a school or is required to close a school, it will need to determine whether the school closes at once, or if it closes via a phase-out model.
- If a school is to be closed, careful consideration should be given to ensuring that better educational opportunities exist or are created for all affected students. Districts should take care to work with families to make a plan for future school enrollment for each student. A report entitled “Student and Family Support around School Closures: Lessons Learned and Future Recommendations” can be found [here](#).
- Phase-out and simultaneous phase-in plans may be a good option for ensuring future enrollment for students.

School Pathways

The State Board **is required** to direct action to local school boards concerning schools based on the State Review Panel's recommendations. The State Review Panel reviews schools with a distinct lens C.R.S. § 22-11-210(4) and makes recommendations per those articulated in C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5). Taking the recommendations into account, the State Board shall determine which actions the local board "shall take regarding the public school and direct the local school board or institute accordingly." C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5)(b). This is a distinct difference from the State Board's options for reinstating district accreditation.

The following section describes the possible recommendations and actions that the State Board may consider, one of which they must take regarding Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools. For more information, see [Appendix C](#).

The State Board does not accredit schools, districts accredit schools. The State Board may not direct a district to remove a school's accreditation; however the State Board may direct the district to take another action, such as converting one or more of its schools to a charter school, seeking innovation status for one or more of its schools, or closing a school. If a local board does not act upon or to the satisfaction of the State Board's recommendations, the State Board may lower the district's accreditation rating.

PRIVATE OR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (for District Schools)

The Education Accountability Act outlines a pathway whereby a district may change internal management structures and/or governance of low performing schools through a partnership with a private or public entity. Per C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5), the State Review Panel may recommend: "with regard to a district public school that is not a charter school, that the district public school should be managed by a private or public entity other than the school district." This pathway compels a district to utilize an outside manager and operator for a particular school or cluster of schools.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

This path might be effective if a school's leadership and practices prove to be ineffective over a period of time. Districts selecting this pathway agree to negotiate a contract with an external entity to manage and/or operate a school or network of schools. An external management partner might bring in different and successful practices, such as human resource management, instruction and assessment, student culture and climate, finances, schedules and time, parent engagement, and other areas of need agreed upon by the district and management partner.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- A viable private or public entity would need to have capacity and willingness to take over management of the one or more schools.
- Willingness would be needed by a district board and/or leadership to engage in this path.
- The district would need to have capacity to evaluate and hold accountable a management entity.
- Support of school community.

REPLACEMENT OF OPERATOR OR GOVERNING BOARD (for Charter Schools)

The State Board can direct the local board that the operator or governing board of a district or Institute charter school be replaced. C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5)(a)(II)

Rationale for pursuing this path:

If an operator or governing board of a charter school proves to be ineffective, the district or State Board should make decisive and timely changes. Charter schools, by contract, must fulfill their promises to serve students. It is incumbent on a local authorizer or the Institute to either hold operators and their governing boards accountable or to replace them.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- If a charter operator or governing board were to be replaced – rather than closed – a suitable replacement operator or governing board would need to exist in order to improve the conditions for the school’s students.
- Capacity of district to determine quality of an operator/governing board and hold them accountable.

CONVERSION TO CHARTER SCHOOL

The State Board can direct the local board that a district convert one or more of its schools to a charter school. (C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5)(a)(III))

Rationale for pursuing this path:

A district might convert a district school to a charter school in order to provide more autonomy and flexibility to a school from statutory and regulatory requirements, which may have created obstacles in the past. Successful recruitment of a new or existing charter school operator with proven success can ensure successful practices and positive achievement results. A conversion to a charter school might provide a “fresh start” to a community. The charter school might benefit from using a district facility or the facility of a phase-out school.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- District support would be critical in order to ensure collaborative efforts and support within the district and community.
- Consideration should be given to how the district school would close or phase-out and how the charter school would open or phase-in.
- Equivalent or sufficient funding as district schools
- The district would have to agree to authorize the charter application OR to release the district’s exclusive chartering authority (if in effect).
- Capacity of district to identify quality of an operator/governing board and hold them accountable for student performance.

INNOVATION STATUS

The State Board can direct a local board for a school to pursue Innovation School Status (C.R.S. §22-11-210(5)(a)(IV)). The Innovation Schools Act provides a path for schools and districts to design and implement innovative ideas and practices to better meet student needs.

Such a requirement by the State Board would still require approval of an innovation plan by the school's administrators, staff and by the district's board.

Rationale for pursuing this path:

Innovation schools can obtain waivers from state and local policies and collective bargaining agreements that challenge their ability to execute their ideas and enables flexibilities in the areas of governance, school personnel, and educational program. Instructional infrastructure, leadership, human capital, academic performance and school governance are all causes of underperformance for which the innovation school pathway may be selected.

Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- Districts would have to be open to negotiating autonomies for their school.
- School communities, including administration, staff and SACs, would need to buy into the plan and a majority of these groups must be willing to provide the necessary consent for the plans.
- School leadership would need to have a clear method for identifying statutory and regulatory barriers that have created challenges for the school in the past. They would also need to develop innovative strategies for changes to staffing, time, resources, etc.
- Innovation status flexibility would need to address the root causes of the performance challenges in the school.

SCHOOL CLOSURE OR REVOKED CHARTER

The State Board can direct the local board to close a school (C.R.S. § 22-11-210(5)(a)(V)).

Rationale for pursuing this path:

School closure may be the best option when a school persistently fails to show adequate academic achievement for multiple years. In some cases, closing a school and opening a new school, with a new culture, program, and staff can reinvigorate a community. In other cases, students may be served better by being dispersed to other schools.

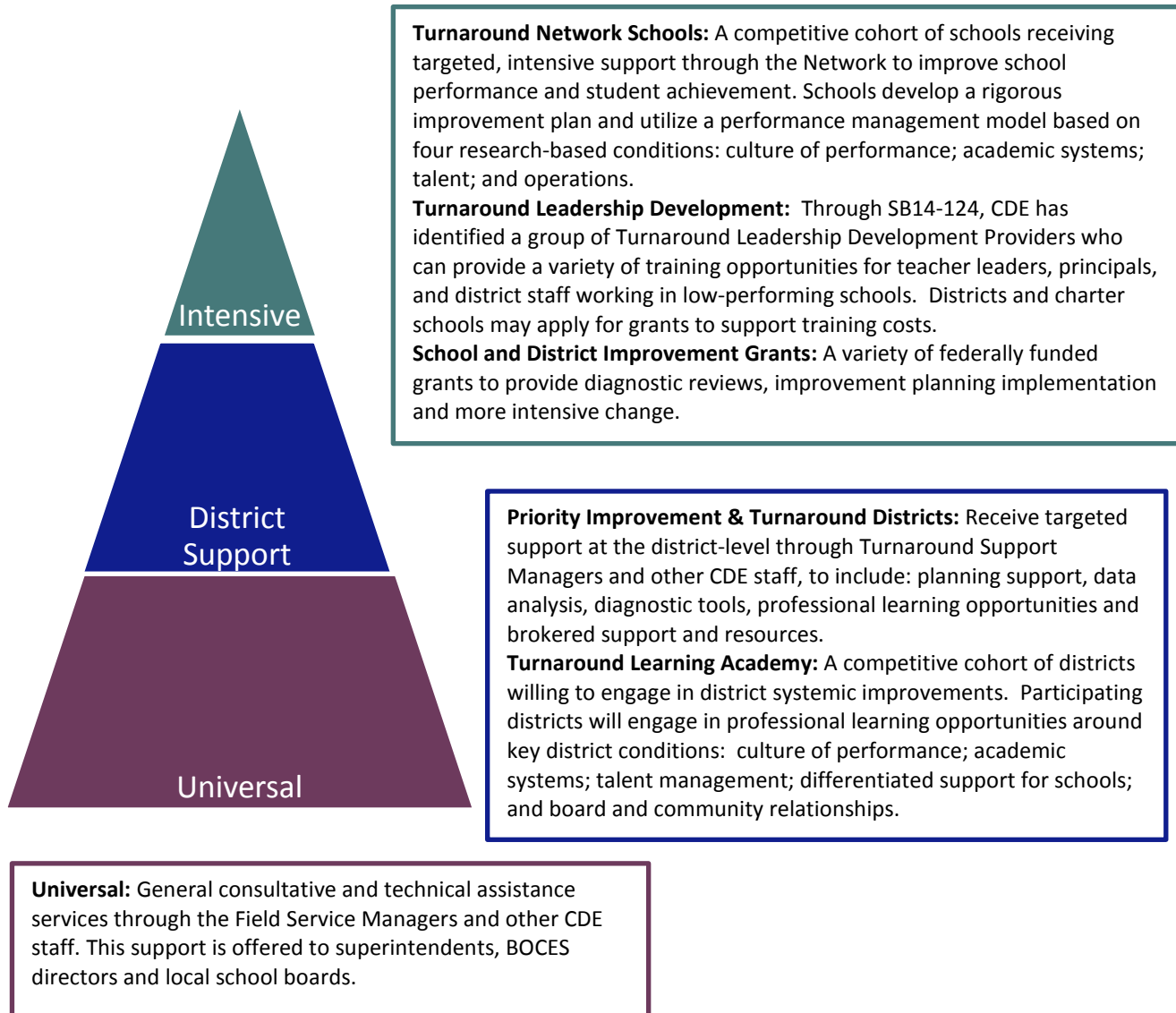
Conditions necessary for success in this path:

- If a school is to be closed, careful consideration should be given to ensuring that better educational opportunities exist or are created for all affected students
- If a district agrees or is required to close a school, it will need to determine whether the school closes at once, or if it closes via a phase-out model.
- Careful consideration must be given to the enrollment of all students from the closed school. CDE has supported the transitioning of students in some school closure instances.

Support for Dramatic Change

CDE offers a differentiated approach to support and intervention based on performance and need. This tiered approach focuses the most intensive support to the lowest-performing schools and districts and allows for greater autonomy for the highest-performing schools and districts. CDE believes this strategy and structure is necessary to provide high-quality support and maximize resources across the state.

The following graphic illustrates the levels of support offered by CDE.



Turnaround Network

CDE's School and District Performance Unit launched the Turnaround Network for schools, welcoming its first pilot cohort of schools in summer 2014. The Network is a commitment between CDE and local school districts to accelerate student achievement of some of the state's lowest performing schools through targeted diagnostic reviews and planning support; personalized professional learning opportunities; performance management; and supplemental grant funding. The goal of the Network is

to show evidence of strategies that yield rapid turnaround results and from which other schools/districts can learn.

The Turnaround Network uses a framework to support schools in developing a rigorous improvement plan that pushes on four-research based conditions: culture of performance; academic systems; talent; and operations. Network schools will make targeted investments in these four areas to improve school performance and student achievement.

More information about the Turnaround Network can be found [here](#).

District Support

CDE will continue to support districts with Priority Improvement or Turnaround accreditation ratings through the work of Turnaround Support Managers. These districts will receive targeted support and personalized professional development opportunities. This support may include the analysis of performance data, coordination of diagnostic review support, design and/or updating of Unified Improvement Plans, and the brokering of resources and services. CDE will consider differentiated approaches based on the number of Priority Improvement and Turnaround schools within a district and districts that are on Priority Improvement and Turnaround plans. Districts will be assigned and notified of their Turnaround Support Manager after the release of the preliminary performance frameworks.

Turnaround Learning Academy

The Turnaround Learning Academy will support improved academic achievement for Colorado students by working directly with central district personnel to explore challenges and best practices in district-level leadership of school turnaround. The Turnaround Learning Academy seeks to build capacity among district leaders while catalyzing systems-level change initiatives leading to differentiated support and oversight of turnaround schools by districts. The program will provide relevant, research-based professional development for district leaders who oversee key functions such as general academics, school supervision, curriculum, student services, accountability, student assessment, human capital management and community engagement. The Turnaround Learning Academy will be grounded in effective practices for adult learning and principles of successful change management. Program participants will benefit from a mix of facilitated group learning and individualized consulting at the district level. The intended outcome of Academy membership will be the redesign and alignment of key district level systems to support dramatic improvement of schools. Success will be measured through ongoing evaluation of systems using CDE's Conditions for Dramatic Improvement. More information about the Turnaround Learning Academy can be found [here](#).

Universal Support

Field Service Managers and other CDE staff will provide and/or broker general consultative and technical services to superintendents, BOCES directors and local school boards, as well as serve as liaisons between the Department and the field. Technical assistance may include: the analysis of performance data, the design and/or updating of Unified Improvement Plans, academic performance diagnostic reviews and training – to districts with academic performance challenges in their schools, as well as to higher performing districts. This is to ensure successful implementation of performance objectives

toward improving academic growth, achievement, closing of achievement gaps and enhancing postsecondary/workforce readiness. Field Service Managers are assigned to districts based on regional representation. A list of Field Service Managers and regions can be found [here](#).

Turnaround Leadership Development

Senate Bill 14-124, passed in 2014, established the School Turnaround Leaders Development Program. This program will offer grants to turnaround leadership development providers and to districts and charter organizations to fund participants in such programs. The program creates an opportunity to increase the options for school leaders, aspiring leaders, and district teams to become trained in serving in low-performing schools in order to see dramatic and accelerated gains in student learning. RFPs for potential providers are released in August and for participants (districts and charter schools) in November. More information about the grant program can be found at: www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/turnaroundleadership.

School and District Improvement Grant Eligibility

For districts and schools identified as Priority Improvement or Turnaround, there are specific grant opportunities to assist them in building capacity to increase student achievement. The grants have been created to lead schools and districts through an intensive, supported process of continuous improvement. They have been developed to address the most common challenges of low performing schools and in consideration of the practices of effective high-needs schools. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis. The following provides a description of some of the grant opportunities/intensive supports available to the lowest performing schools and districts.

Diagnostic Review and Planning Grant

Through a competitive process, CDE awards funds for appraisal and planning services to eligible Title I schools. These grant funds are used to support a Diagnostic Review and assistance with incorporating the recommendations from the review into the UIP. This grant is made available to Title I focus schools and Title I schools with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type.

Implementation Grant

Title I 1003(a) funds will provide grant opportunities for Title I focus schools and Title I schools with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type to strengthen their Title I programs and improve achievement in reading and math.

Tiered Intervention Grants

This grant program utilizes Title I 1003(g) funds to support districts that have Title I schools that perform in the lowest 5% on achievement based on state assessments or have graduation rates less than 60%, are assigned a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan type and have been identified as priority schools under the ESEA flexibility waiver. Since this is the lowest tier of schools, the intent of this grant is to provide funding for districts to:

- Partner with CDE in the implementation of one of the seven intervention models provided in the guidance for the use of Federal Title I 1003(g) funds;
- Increase the academic achievement of all students attending chronically low performing schools through the development of a coherent continuum of evidence based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs; and
- Utilize the support and services from external providers in their efforts to accomplish the above.

Periodic progress monitoring of schools occurs by CDE both onsite, by phone and by other electronic means.

Grant opportunities are provided throughout the year to meet the specific needs of schools and districts. For more information about these and other school improvement grant opportunities and eligibility, please visit: www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/sitig.

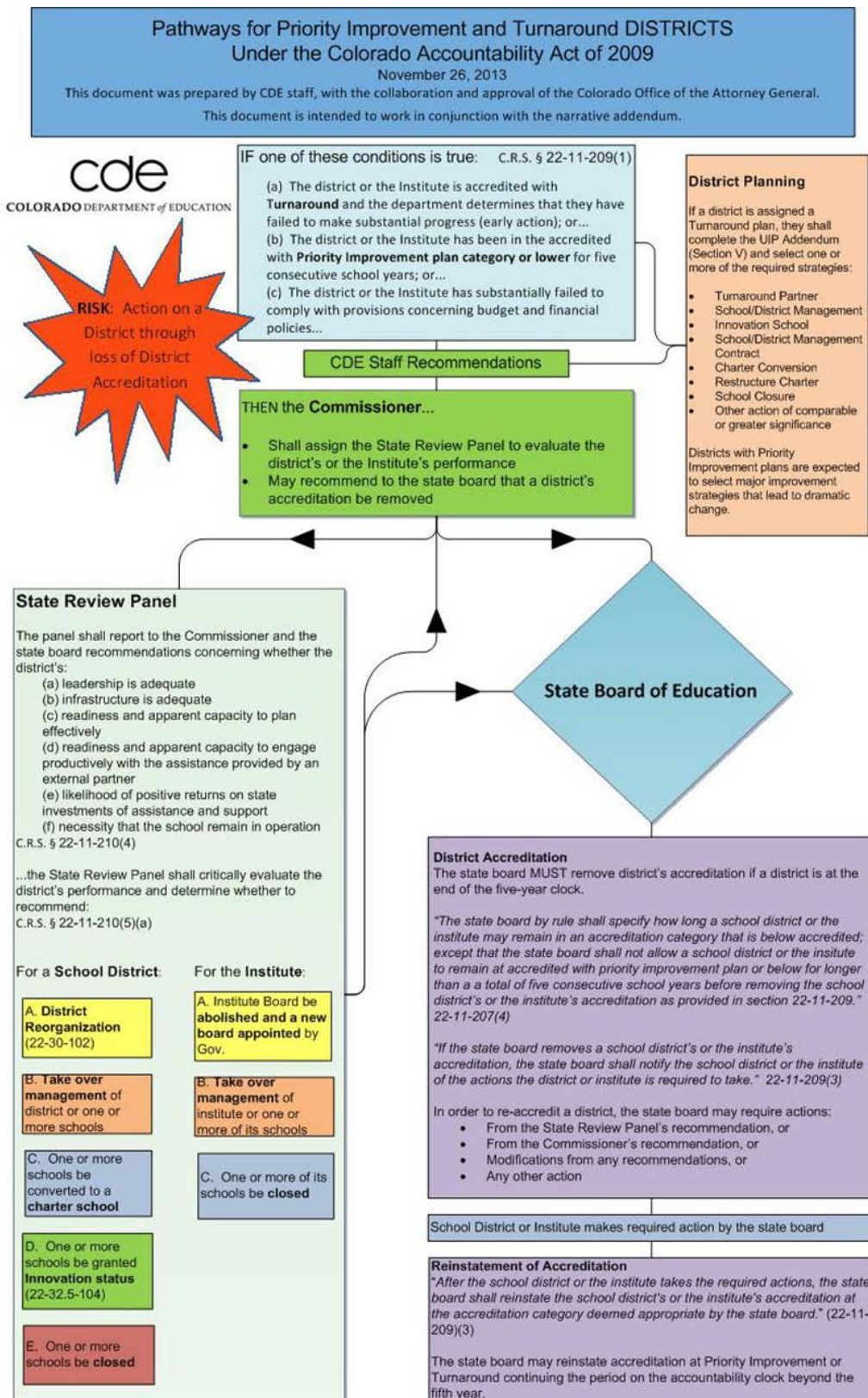
Appendix A: Assessment Transition Accountability Timeline 2014-2016

Yellow rows = Activities for districts to complete

Timeline	Description
September 2015	CDE releases the State Data Resource Report , which includes post-secondary and workforce readiness indicators (i.e., graduation rates, dropout rates, and ACT), ACCESS English language proficiency growth results and elementary and middle school CMAS Science and Social Studies achievement and participation results. The report will be available through the School and District Dashboards at this link: http://schoolview.org/dish/dashboard.asp .
Spring 2016	Informational SPF/DPF 2.0 expected to be shared with districts and schools, using CMAS results and enhanced frameworks.
Spring 2016	Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) that include the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments are administered.
Fall 2016	Preliminary 2016 SPF/DPF 2.0 framework reports expected to be released to districts.
October – December 2016	Requests to reconsider for 2016 plan types expected.
February/March 2017	Final 2016 plan types and accreditation ratings made public, based on current statutory requirements.

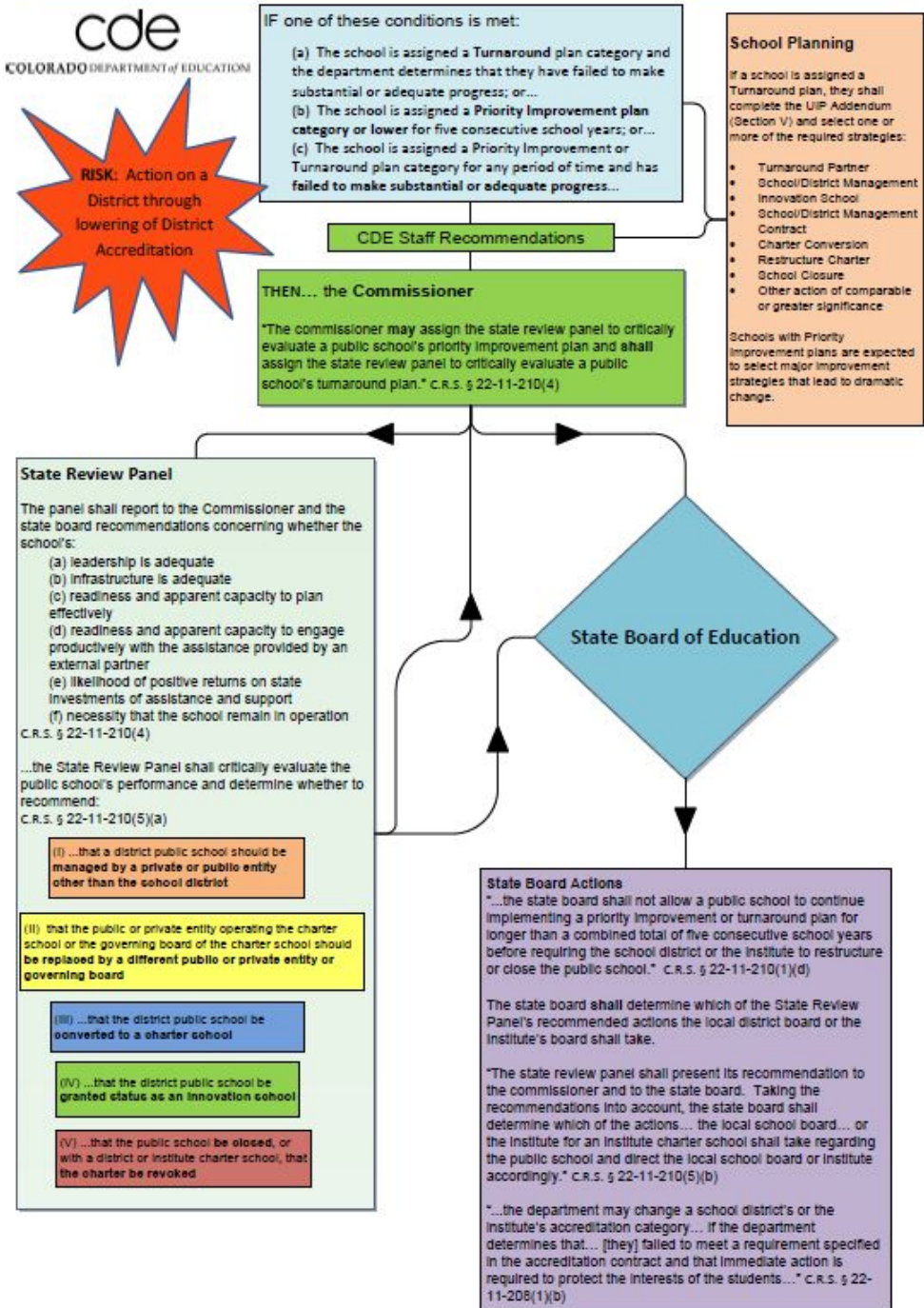
For a detailed list of data reports available to districts in the 2015-16 school year, please see this document: http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/sdr_fact_sheet_8_14_2015.

Appendix B: Pathways for Priority Improvement & Turnaround districts



Appendix C: Pathways for Priority Improvement & Turnaround schools

Pathways for Priority Improvement and Turnaround SCHOOLS
 Under the Colorado Accountability Act of 2009
 November 26, 2013
 This document was prepared by CDE staff, with the collaboration and approval of the Colorado Office of the Attorney General.
 This document is intended to work in conjunction with the narrative addendum.



* For the 2015-2016 school year and for ratings given in the 2016-2016 school year, HB14-1162 allows the State Board of Education to recommend an action not specified in statute but still having comparable significance and effect.

Appendix D: Sample Notification Letter to Parents

[District Address]

[Date—By September 30, 2015 and at least 30 days before public meeting]

Dear Parents,

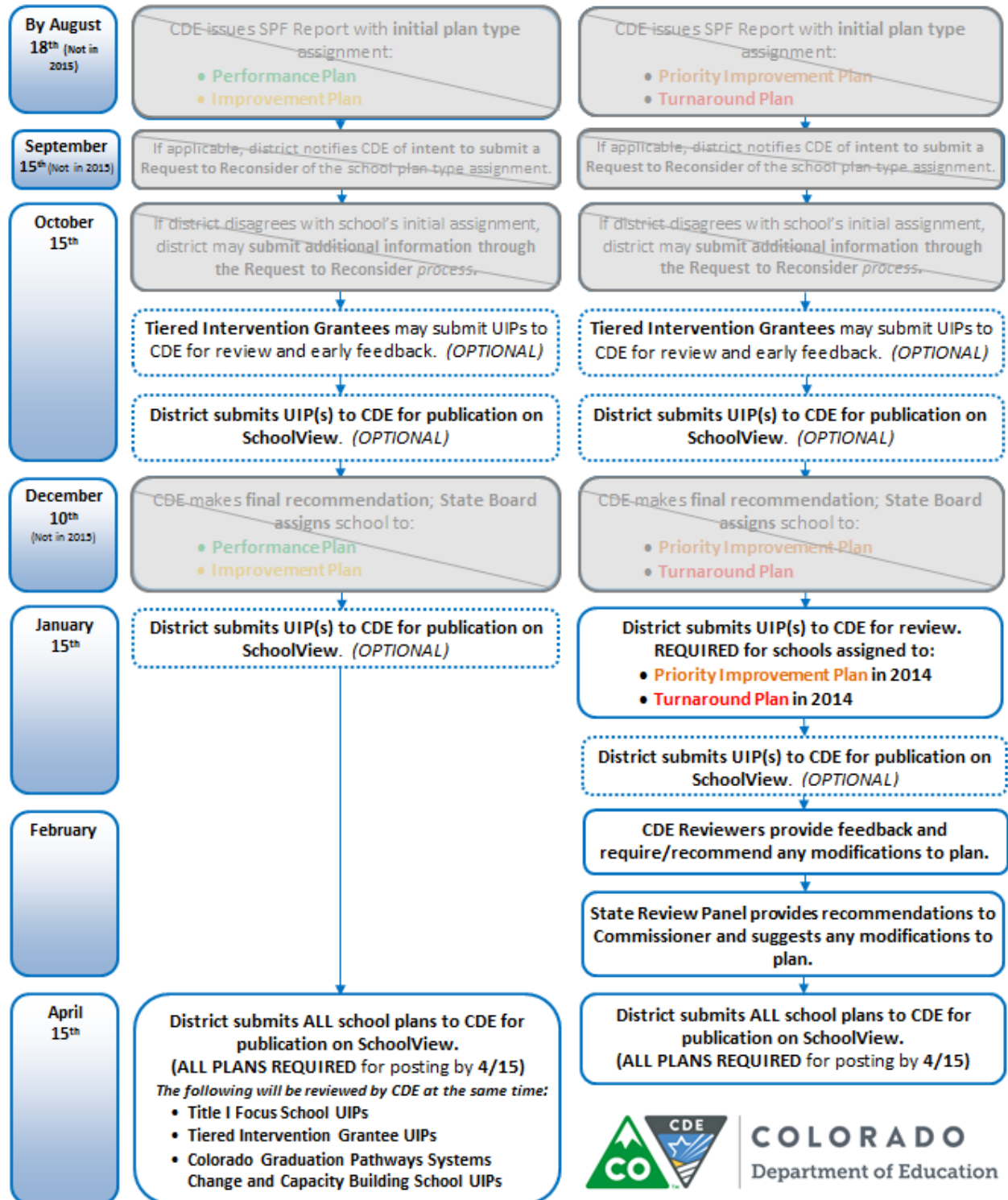
Pursuant to the Education Accountability Act of 2009, all public schools in Colorado are required to develop unified improvement plans (UIPs) that outline targets for performance outcomes and strategies that the school will implement to achieve academic improvement. Depending on performance, schools are expected to implement a performance plan, improvement plan, priority improvement plan, or turnaround plan. With the state transition to the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), new plan assignments will not be calculated in the 2015-16 school year; the 2014 plan type carries over for an additional year. Based on results from the Colorado School Performance Framework in 2014, [school name] will be updating its [PLAN ASSIGNMENT] plan during the 2015-16 school year.

The school was assigned to this plan type last school year based on low-performance in the areas of [insert measures where the school did not meet expectations]. Attached is the 2014 school performance framework report that describes how the school has been evaluated.

The district must submit [school name]'s UIP to the Colorado Department of Education on or before *January 15, 2015* for review. The UIP provides the school a focused improvement plan, including a data analysis on student performance and a detailed action plan. To meet that deadline, the UIP will be developed according to the following timeline: [insert dates of any benchmarks for conducting analysis and developing plans, participation in CDE and/or district trainings and final adoption of plan].

The School Accountability Committee will hold a public meeting to gather input from parents concerning the development of the plan on [date], at [time], in [location]. Prior to adopting a plan, the local school board will hold a public hearing on [date—at least 30 days after this notice is issued], at [time], in [location] to review the plan. For more information, please contact [name] at [contact information].

Appendix E: School Plan Assignments and Submission Timeline



Appendix F: District Plan Assignments and Submission Timelines

