



# Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) **THE COLORADO PLAN**

## Summary Report

April 2017



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

## ESSA - The Colorado Plan

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed in December 2015 as the nation's new federal education law, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act, and thus putting states into action to develop systems and policies to implement the law's requirements.

ESSA was passed with the intention of shifting the country's education law from relying on federal oversight to giving states more flexibility and more decision-making power at the local level. The law requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability and special help for struggling schools. Colorado is fortunate that many of these areas already have been addressed in state law and rules passed by the Colorado State Board of Education.

After a year of work with its stakeholders, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is proud to release this overview of Colorado's ESSA state plan that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (USDoE) in the spring of 2017. This summary is intended to provide a clear explanation of the issues addressed in [Colorado's plan, which can be found here](#).

As part of ESSA, each state had to conduct significant outreach to collect input for their plans. CDE engaged with thousands of Coloradans in the development of the plan through 2016 and the early part of 2017. This process provided Coloradans a chance to closely examine the state's education system, adjust some priorities and gather feedback about what is working and what should be changed.

### Here are highlights from that engagement process:

- A statewide tour traveled to seven sites around Colorado and also included one virtual meeting, reaching approximately 1,500 people to discuss how Colorado can implement ESSA.
- Overall, state officials held more than 170 gatherings and received about 5,000 comments on the state plan.
- A hub-and-spoke committee process was created to develop the state plan. About 130 community members joined seven topical spoke committees that held 30 meetings altogether since August 2016. A hub committee with more than 20 statewide leaders held nine lengthy meetings to develop the recommendations.
- A draft state plan submitted for public review and given to the governor's office in March received hundreds of comments. A final draft was sent to the governor's office for further review and received final approval from the State Board of Education. The approved plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in the spring of 2017.

## Colorado's Vision for Education

From the start of O.J. Goldrick's 1859 mud-walled schoolhouse on the banks of Cherry Creek, Coloradans have shown a pioneer spirit for innovation, individualism and support for our diverse students. While that one-room schoolhouse has morphed into more than 1,850 traditional and charter school programs, the same spirit of creativity and community investment can still be found today.

For a decade, Colorado has been at the forefront of education innovation – an endeavor that meshes well with many of the requirements of the new federal education law. For that reason, Colorado did not need to substantially hit the reset button on its education system to implement ESSA's requirements. Many structures were already in place – clear and rigorous college and career-ready standards, an assessment system that measures progress toward those standards, a robust accountability system that targets supports where needed and a fair teacher evaluation system with a formative focus.



Colorado's most recent notable education reform efforts began a decade before the state submitted its ESSA plan, when the first of a series of education laws were passed designed to better understand how students, schools and districts were performing.

In 2007, [the state legislature passed House Bill 07-1048](#) that established student longitudinal academic growth as a key measurement in the state's educational system. The Colorado Growth Model examines how individual students or groups of students progress from year to year on state standards compared to other Colorado students with similar score histories on state assessments. Next, in 2008, [the legislature passed Senate Bill 08-212](#), known as Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids or CAP4K. The landmark legislation mandated the state to create a seamless system of rigorous college- and career-ready academic standards and add strong assessments that measure progress toward those high standards.

A year later, in 2009, [the Education Accountability Act](#) became law, creating a system to hold the state, districts and schools accountable for performance on the same set of indicators and related measures statewide. The bill required strong consequences along with intensive supports to be applied when performance fails to meet minimum state expectations over a prolonged period of time.

In 2010, [Senate Bill 10-191 established a new way to evaluate educators](#) with the ultimate goal of continuously supporting educator professional growth, and, in turn, accelerating student growth. The bill required student-level data to be used to plan instruction and direct intervention resources. These data, along with other student growth measures, and measures of professional practice, are used to evaluate teachers and principals.

As these legislative efforts show, the focus on continued improvement toward the goal of college- and career-readiness for all students remains at the core of Colorado's system of education accountability. Over the years, Colorado has built a single, comprehensive system using education priorities in standards, assessments, accountability and supports, and educator effectiveness, providing a clear picture of where the goals are being met and where they are not.

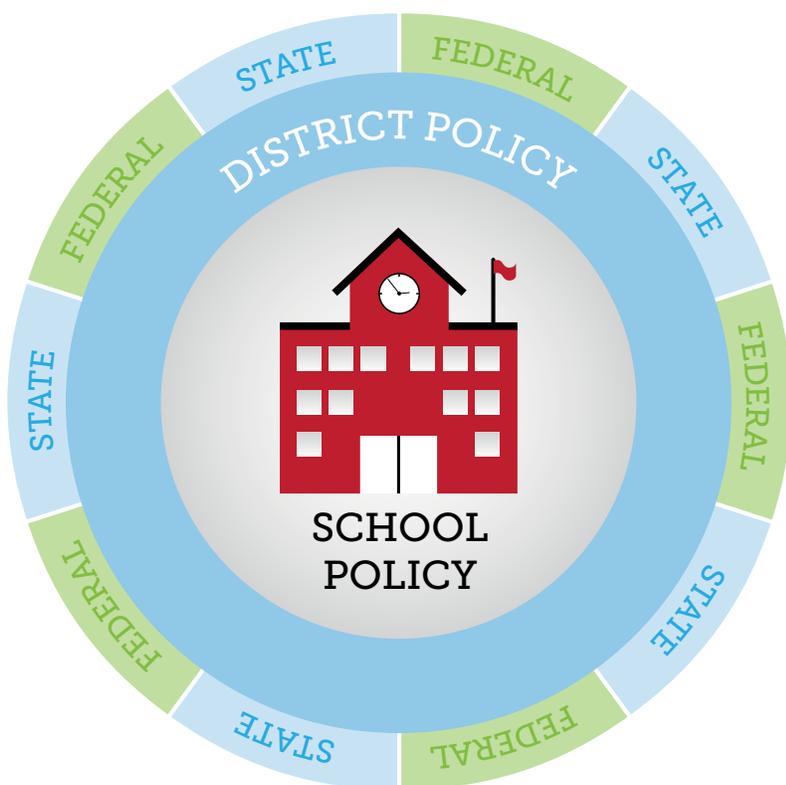
Today, the state has an innovative, challenging and streamlined education system intended to help every student succeed after high school. Indeed, the state’s system mirrors a similar charge outlined in ESSA’s stated purpose, “to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.”

Colorado policy makers and educators have embraced forward-thinking educational policies that recognize and honor the interactions between local, state, and federal policies, procedures and practices. Federal and state policies supplement and support school and district policies. Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education (USDoe), the Office of Civil Rights, and the Office of Special Education Programs, have authority over how specific federal programs function within a state, district, or school.

State laws and regulations also have direct impact on schools and districts and statewide educational priorities. Moreover, in Colorado, many state laws are more directive than what the federal government requires. So Colorado law is of primary importance for CDE and school districts.

The elected State Board of Education’s duty is to promulgate and adopt policies, rules, and regulations concerning general supervision of Colorado’s K-12 schools. Local school boards and charter school boards carry a great deal of responsibility for making specific policies that guide the schools under their purview.

The day-to-day decisions around curriculum, methods of instruction, calendar, course offerings, etc., are determined by the school and district leadership directly.



**SCHOOL/DISTRICT POLICY**

- Curriculum
- Instructional methods
- Day-to-day structure
- Hiring teachers
- Local assessments, etc.

**STATE POLICY**

- Licensure requirements
- Standards
- Specific state assessments, etc.
- State accountability

**FEDERAL POLICY**

- Broad goals for students
- Civil rights requirements
- Broad outline for assessments
- Requirements for standards, etc.
- Federal accountability



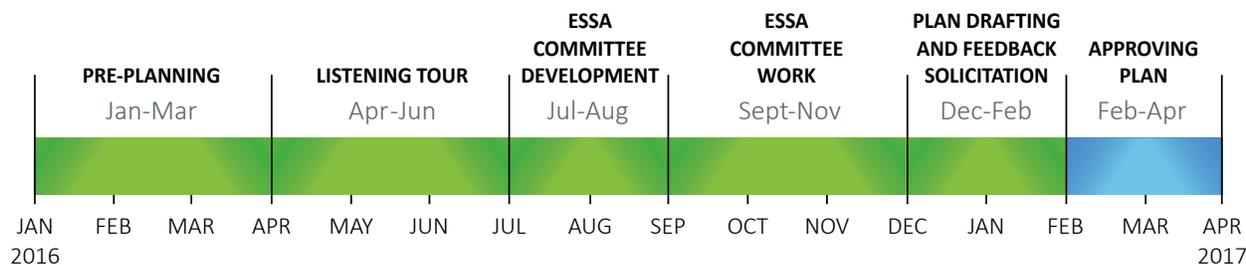
In addition to the guidance provided by legislation, CDE developed four strategic goals that highlight shared core values for the education system in Colorado. These goals are represented throughout the ESSA state plan.

1. **Start Strong** - Every student starts strong with a solid foundation from preschool through third grade.
2. **Read by Third Grade** - Every student reads at grade level by the end of third grade.
3. **Meet or Exceed Standards** - Every student meets or exceeds standards.
4. **Graduate Ready** - Every student graduates ready for college and careers.

## Colorado’s ESSA Plan

Since the passage of ESSA, Colorado has engaged stakeholders around the federal legislation and will continue that engagement in implementing the plan. CDE understands that working in concert with stakeholders is not just about meeting requirements outlined in a law but is a best practice for the long term to ensure a strong statewide educational system that meets the needs of every student in Colorado.

**How Colorado’s Plan Was Developed** (Stakeholder consultation: ESSA template Section 2.0. Consultation and Performance management): Encouraging broad-based community input and feedback was a key component to the development of Colorado’s ESSA plan.

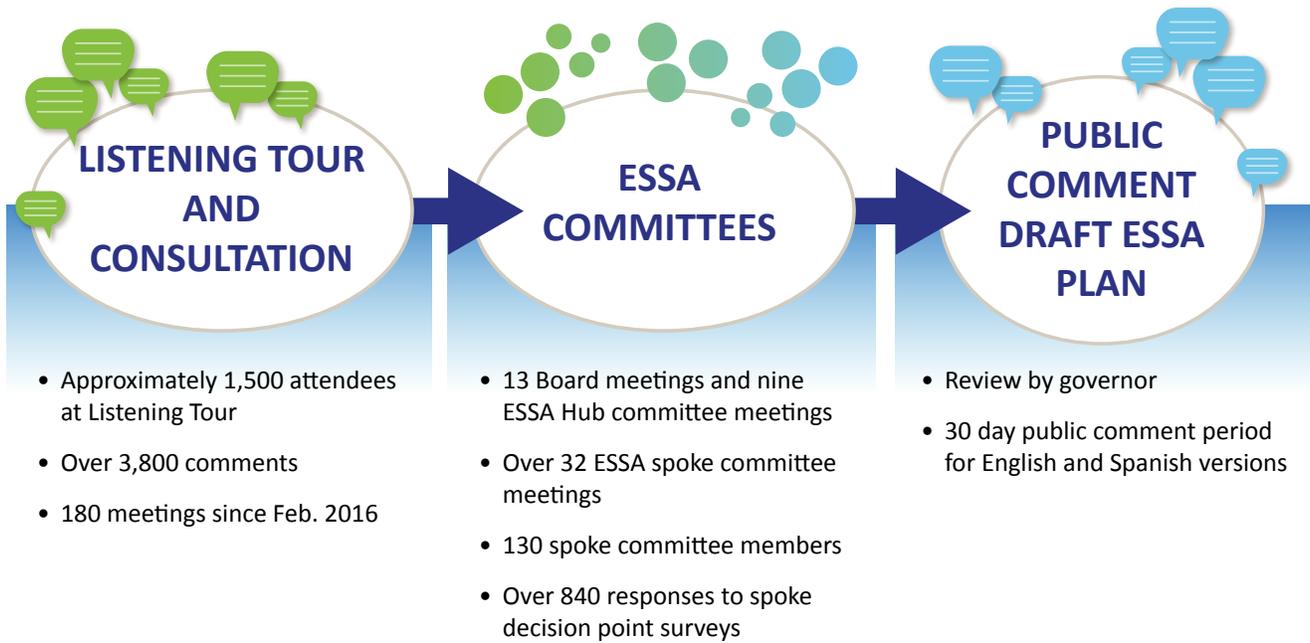


**January 2016-July 2016:** CDE launched a statewide tour that visited seven sites to discuss the development of the plan with approximately 1,500 attendees. Since February 2016, the state has held more than 170 meetings on ESSA and received approximately 3,800 comments about the plan.

**July 2016-December 2016:** In July, 2016: CDE created a hub-and-spoke committee process to consider every aspect of the ESSA guidelines. About 130 community members joined seven topical spoke committees that held 30 meetings altogether since August 2016. The hub committee with more than 20 statewide leaders held nine lengthy meetings. Committee members gave generously of their time, made tough decisions and have endeavored to make thoughtful recommendations to the State Board of Education. The public also provided about 840 responses on crucial decision points through online surveys.

**January 2017-April 2017:** CDE staff, using gathered input from involved groups, wrote and posted an online draft of the state plan and incorporated public comments into the final plan as appropriate. The plan also was reviewed by the governor’s office and received approval from the Colorado State Board of Education before being submitted to USDoE in the spring of 2017.

In addition to the hub-and-spoke committee meetings, the state met with a wide variety of stakeholders to gather broad-based input on how Colorado could implement key areas of ESSA. The collaboration with school districts/



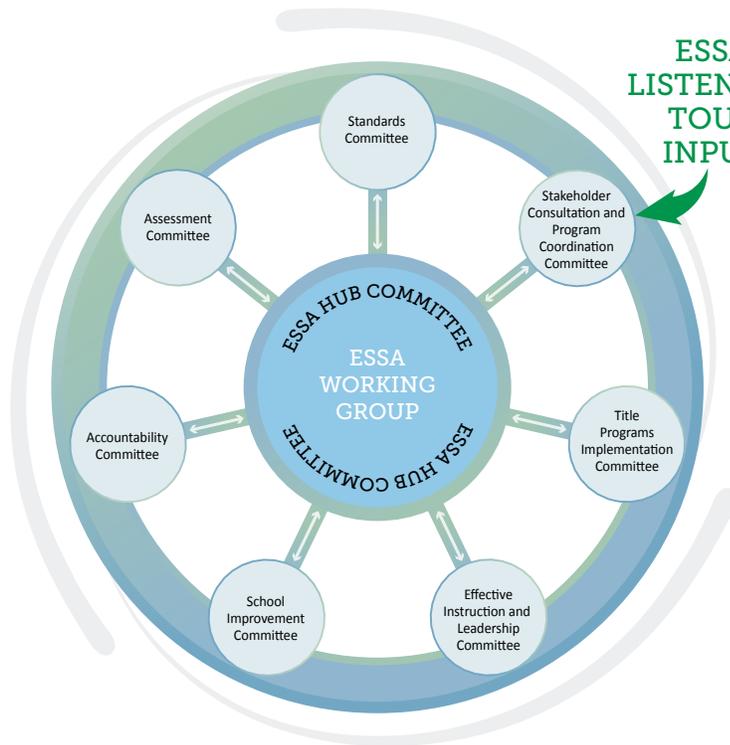
BOCES personnel, teachers, parents, community members, and other stakeholders further enriched Colorado’s plan. [A complete list of the meetings, topics and the stakeholder groups that were involved can be found here.](#)

CDE is committed to continuing engagement with these groups and other members of the educational community as we move through the implementation of Colorado’s ESSA plan. In addition, CDE will continue to partner with the ESSA [State Committee of Practitioners \(CoP\)](#) to administer Colorado’s ESSA Plan. The CoP advises CDE in carrying out its responsibilities under ESSA and ensuring two-way communication between CDE and the preK-12 education community in Colorado.

As part of the ESSA Listening Tour presentation, CDE staff included a proposal for an ESSA hub-and-spoke committee structure for state plan development. The formal, central hub committee would have direct oversight of the state plan draft with input from ESSA topical spoke committees that would review ESSA requirements within the context of Colorado law.

The goal of each spoke committee was to thoroughly vet drafts with constituency groups as needed and appropriate and consider and respond to feedback from the ESSA Listening Tour. The spoke committees would regularly provide updates to the ESSA hub committee and review plans with the hub committee throughout the process. Each spoke committee would be led by CDE staff members and use existing committees and groups when reasonable and add members based on interest and need. The spoke committees were organized around the proposed USOE rules for state plan requirements:

- |                             |   |                                      |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Stakeholder Consultation | 4. Accountability                       | 7. Title Programs and Implementation |
| 2. Standards                | 5. School Improvement                   |                                      |
| 3. Assessments              | 6. Effective Instruction and Leadership |                                      |



**APPROVAL\***

- Colorado Department of Education
- Governor’s Office
- State Board of Education
- ESSA Committee of Practitioners

\* List of approvers is dictated in the federal law.

**CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR INPUT THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS**

- General Assembly
- School Districts
- Education organizations
- Advocacy Groups
- Parents, students & community

Each spoke group met numerous times to review what was required by the ESSA law and how that would fit in with existing Colorado laws and regulations. In the sections below are the comparisons between what ESSA required and what is already in Colorado state law. Also included are decision points that were needed to implement ESSA in Colorado and the discussions that informed those decisions.

This remaining portion of this overview is structured around the work of the spoke committees and describes ESSA requirements, Colorado state law and the decision points that were discussed for standards, assessment, accountability, school improvement, effective instruction and leadership, title programs and implementation. There is also a “what we heard” section in each of the categories where feedback that CDE has received from stakeholders is summarized. The comments listed are not exhaustive, and a link is provided for those who wish to read the complete list of comments submitted to CDE.



# STANDARDS

## Attachment A, ESSA template

The standards group is focused on the implementation and alignment of Colorado Academic Standards (CAS).

### ESSA Says:

- States must adopt challenging academic standards in math, reading or language arts, and science as well as standards for English language proficiency

### Colorado Law and Policy Says:

- Senate Bill 212: Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K)
- Have standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, visual arts, performing arts, physical education, world languages, English language competency, economics, civics, financial literacy, computer science, alternative achievement
- Colorado’s standards must:
  - ◆ Align with career and technical education (CTE) to the extent practicable
  - ◆ Include development of 21st century skills
  - ◆ Be comparable in scope, relevance, and rigor to the highest national and international standards

## Key Standards Decision Points

### ESSA Requires:

- Colorado must adopt challenging academic standards in math, reading or language arts, and science as well as standards for English language proficiency.

### Decisions:

- Colorado already has adopted and is implementing challenging standards in the content areas required by ESSA as well as in other content areas required by state law: comprehensive health and physical education, dance, drama and theatre arts, music, social studies, world languages, and visual art

## Standards Continued

### What We Heard:

- Standards should be minimally challenging for all learners but gifted learners should have learning opportunities to best match their needs.
- Identification of giftedness in English Learners must also occur.
- CDE ought to provide guidance for implementing standards with students who are twice exceptional.
- The Colorado Academic Standards ought to align closely with Colorado's early learning and development guidelines.
- Colorado's Academic Standards should include content areas beyond those in the state assessment system.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)

### Next Steps:

- According to Colorado state law, the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) must be reviewed and revised on or before July 1, 2018, and every six years thereafter. From spring 2017 to spring 2018, CDE will engage committees for each of the 10 content areas in the CAS and English language proficiency. The committees will review the standards and provide recommended revisions for the public and the State Board of Education to consider. The [standards review and revision process](#) will conclude by July 2018.



# ASSESSMENTS

## ESSA template Section 3, Academic Assessments

State summative assessments are used to determine whether students have mastered grade-level academic standards. The assessments provide a snapshot of student performance and can be aggregated to the group-, school-, district- and/or state-level to provide a system-wide gauge of student content mastery.

ESSA Says:	Colorado Law and Policy Says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing in grades 3-8 in English language arts and math</li> <li>• Testing at least once in high school in English language arts and math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing in grades 3-8 in English language arts and math</li> <li>• Testing three times in high school in English language arts and math                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Testing in grade 9 in English language arts and math</li> <li>◆ Testing in grade 10 in English language arts and math using pre cursor to college entrance examination</li> <li>◆ Testing in grade 11 using nationally recognized college entrance examination</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing in science once at each of the elementary, middle and high school levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing in science once at each of the elementary, middle and high school levels</li> <li>• Testing in social studies once at each of the elementary, middle and high school levels on a sampling basis</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language proficiency examination for all current English Learners (K-12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English language proficiency examination for all current English Learners (K-12)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments aligned to State Academic Standards</li> <li>• Assessment scores indicate whether student is performing at grade level</li> <li>• Allows out-of-level testing for grade 8 mathematics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards</li> <li>• Assessment scores indicate whether student is performing at grade level</li> </ul>

## Assessments Continued

### Key Standards Decision Points

#### ESSA Requires:

- States must indicate whether they intend to use the exception for students in grade 8 to take end-of-course high school assessments.
- States must identify languages other than English that are present to a “significant extent” and “make every effort” to develop tests in those languages.

#### Decisions:

- Colorado will continue to use the exception for students in the grade 8 to take end-of-course high school mathematics assessments.
- Colorado will define languages other than English that are present to a significant extent as “5 percent or 1,000 persons, whichever is less, of the state grade-level English learner population.” Spanish is the only language other than English that is present to a significant extent in Colorado. Colorado has Spanish language assessments for all CMAS math and science tests and Spanish language arts assessments for grades 3 and 4.

#### What We Heard:

- Create a more holistic and consistent approach to measuring student progress toward meeting the standards. Develop a system that is more formative and uses a body of evidence to measure student progress.
- Expand the advanced math flexibility beyond eighth grade.
- Expand the number of transadaptions of tests so they are available for all home languages found in the state or provide additional strategies for serving English language learners from language groups for which transadaptations would not be appropriate or practicable.
- Leverage assessments viewed as more instructionally relevant, such as interim and college placement assessments.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)

## Assessments Continued

### Next Steps:

- Colorado will continue to administer high school end-of-course mathematics exams to advanced grade 8 students as well as to grader 7.
- Colorado expects to move to a new grade 9 assessment in 2018. The implications of this change, as well as any resulting from other changes to the assessment system on the use of the high school end-of-course assessments in middle school, will continue to be reviewed.
- Colorado will monitor the home and instructional languages of students on an ongoing basis. Should a group approach the criterion established, Colorado will pursue additional native language accommodations as appropriate.
- The two largest Native American home languages for English Learners in Colorado are Navajo (90 students across the tested grades with no grade exceeding 19 students) and Ute-Southern Paiute (30 students across all grades with no grade exceeding eight students). While providing written transadaptations for these students is not practical, CDE will connect with the most impacted districts to review the effectiveness of available accommodations.
- As Colorado engages in its standards revision process, future assessment design options will continue to be discussed.



# ACCOUNTABILITY

ESSA template: Section 1.0 Long Term Goals, Section 4: Accountability, Support and Improvement for Schools, 4.2 Comprehensive Support and School Improvement

Colorado’s accountability system was created to provide consistent information about academic performance of schools and districts in order to direct resources and support to those struggling and learn from those showing success. Colorado holds schools and districts accountable for both achievement on state standards, as measured by the state assessment system (the actual score on a test) and growth (the progress individual students make on attaining those standards). For high schools, measures of postsecondary workforce readiness are also used to describe performance, including graduation rates, dropout rates, matriculation rates and college entrance exam scores.

<p><b>ESSA Says:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statewide accountability system that measures:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Achievement for all content assessments for all tested grades</li> <li>◆ Growth measure for elementary and middle school levels, optional at high school</li> <li>◆ Progress in attaining English language proficiency</li> <li>◆ Four-year graduation rate, extended rates optional</li> <li>◆ Another measure of school quality or student success</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Colorado Law and Policy Says:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement results on state content assessments must be included</li> <li>• Growth in English language arts and math is required, English language proficiency growth is also included</li> <li>• Four-year and extended graduation rates, along with drop-out rates and matriculation rates</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for reporting results for all students and separately for disaggregated groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability for major disaggregated groups, reporting aligned with federal requirements</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes state-determined long-term goals and interim targets for each measure which are consistent across all students and disaggregated groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State board sets annual targets for performance levels</li> <li>• Identification of low-performing schools for support, and if progress is not made, eventual state board-directed action</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holds schools and districts accountable for assessment participation of 95% of students</li> <li>• Produces a single summative accountability rating that allows meaningful differentiation between schools based on performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95% participation rule excludes parent refusals</li> <li>• Results in meaningful differentiation among schools based upon single summative accountability rating (rating types defined in state law)</li> </ul>



Accountability Continued

ESSA Says:	Colorado Law and Policy Says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a single summative accountability rating that allows meaningful differentiation between schools based on performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide meaningful differentiation among schools based upon single summative accountability rating (rating types defined in state law)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify of low-performing schools for additional improvement and supports performing at grade level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify low-performing schools for support, and if progress is not made, require state board-directed action</li> </ul>

**Key Standards Decision Points**

**ESSA Requires:**

- Establishment of long-term goals and interim measures for English language proficiency for English Learners and academic achievement and graduation rates for all students and each of the following student groups:
  - ◆ Students with disabilities
  - ◆ Economically disadvantaged students
  - ◆ English Learners
  - ◆ Students from major race/ethnic groups
- Definition and measurement of progress toward English language proficiency and a policy on testing English Learners.
- An “other indicator” to define and measure school quality or student success.
- A minimum number of students for accountability reporting.
- An accounting of students from all major races and ethnicity in accountability.
- Methodology and criteria for identifying and exiting schools for comprehensive support/improvement.
- Methodology and criteria for identifying schools for targeted support and improvement.
- An explanation of how states will include the 95 percent participation requirement as part of their accountability systems.

## Accountability Continued

### Decisions:

- Colorado will base targets for interim progress and long-term goals on averaged scale scores and base long-term goals on historical state data.
- English language proficiency will be based on growth on the English language proficiency statewide assessment (WIDA ACCESS).
- Students enrolled in a U.S. school for less than a year and are classified as Non-English Proficient (NEP) will be exempted from statewide assessments. Those classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) or Fluent English Proficient (FEP) will take the tests.
- In the short term, Colorado will use the reduction of chronic absenteeism for elementary and middle school students as the “other indicator,” which would require updated state legislation. In the future additional measures will be investigated in partnership with stakeholders.
- Colorado will use a minimum N of 16 for student achievement and a minimum N of 20 for student growth reports. CDE will use individual disaggregated racial/ethnic groups and a combined group for any racial/ethnic groups that do not have enough students in that group (have less students than the minimum N).
- The lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools and high schools with graduation rates below 67 percent will be identified for comprehensive support. Schools will exit after three years if they no longer meet the criteria that led to their identification.
- Any Title I schools that have been labeled as consistently and chronically underperforming, defined as not meeting expectations on any of the indicators in the accountability system for three consecutive years for that student group, will be identified as needing comprehensive support.
- Any schools with consistently underperforming student groups, defined as not meeting expectations on at least three indicators in the accountability system, will be identified for targeted support and improvement. Districts will determine the timeline and criteria for schools to exit the targeted status.
- Schools and districts with accountability participation rates of under 95 percent will be required to address participation data as part of their Unified Improvement Plan. Ratings will be lowered if accountability participation rates fall below 95 percent in two or more content areas. The accountability participation rate will not include parental excusals.

## Accountability Continued

### What We Heard:

- Measures of school quality and/or student success for accountability purposes should include attendance, climate and school culture.
- To address the challenges with participation rates, students must see value and purpose of taking the assessments and how they can be used for their ultimate benefit.
- Gifted and talented students are underrepresented in the accountability system.
- ESSA plan does not explain how Colorado will meet reporting requirements.
- CDE should monitor and evaluate the impact of the school identification methodology and criteria over the next few years.
- Consider the current performance of student groups when establishing long-term goals and interim measures.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)

### Next Steps:

- Colorado will implement the required changes to the state accountability system over the next two years. Additional stakeholder feedback will be gathered and used to inform future decisions.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

ESSA template Section 2.2 System of Performance Management, Section 4.1 : Accountability System, Section 4.2 Identification of Schools, Section 4.3 State Support and Improvement for Low-Performing Schools, Section 6.0, Supporting All Students, Section 6.1 Well-Rounded and Supportive Education

Accountability systems need to be coupled with school improvement requirements and supports in order to achieve the goals. In Colorado, there is not a one-size fits all solution. It is understood that leadership, school culture, academic systems and community engagement are key components to a school's success.

### ESSA Says:

- School improvement should be locally driven
- School improvement should use evidence-based strategies
- School improvement should be aligned to Title fund expenditures
- State must set aside up to 7% of Title I to support turnaround schools programs
- Support focused on Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement schools

### Colorado Law and Policy Says:

- Education Accountability Act of 2009, HB 22-11-208, (2) requires CDE to provide support to schools and district with the lowest three accountability ratings, based on needs and state resources
- A Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) focusing on addressing the root causes of the school's performance challenges is required for all schools.

### Key Standards Decision Points

### ESSA Requires:

- Explanation of how Colorado will allocate the required 7 percent of state Title I funds for schools identified for improvement.
- Explanation of what supports and direct services Colorado will offer districts with identified comprehensive and targeted schools.
- How will Colorado define, determine, and establish "evidence-based" interventions?

## School Improvement Continued

### Decisions:

- Colorado will support schools using a “needs-based” approach and will consolidate multiple school improvement grant applications into a single, annual application process. A yearly updated list of evidence-based interventions, strategies and partnerships will be offered as a resource and reference for districts and schools.
- Colorado will align existing strategies and develop new strategies for comprehensive and targeted support for based on schools’ needs. Technical assistance will include but not be limited to:
  - ◆ Needs analyses and diagnostic review opportunities, improvement planning support, performance management tools and processes, community engagement, differentiated support for each school’s unique context, high-quality professional learning, evidence-based strategies, and cycles of reflection, analysis, and planning. School districts may also design their own intervention systems that meet the evidence-based criteria.
  - ◆ The state will assemble a list of evidence-based interventions, strategies, and partnerships that can offer support to the range of needs in identified schools. The list is intended to be a resource and reference rather than a required selection list and will evolve over time to incorporate the most recent research and will be structured to gather and disseminate users’ feedback and input on their experiences with the selected strategies, partnerships, or interventions.

### What We Heard:

The majority of responses indicated that participants would like CDE to play a more integral role, both directly and indirectly, in school improvement planning.

- A frequently suggested form of support for schools on improvement was professional development and professional learning services from CDE. Respondents believed that in order to effectively implement changes as part of the school improvement process, administrators and school leaders could benefit from CDE-sanctioned professional development.
- Some respondents stated that CDE should continue to offer direct services to districts in support of their school improvement efforts through a number of existing CDE initiatives, including the Turnaround Leadership Academy, Turnaround Network, Connect for Success, and Diagnostic Reviews and Improvement Planning opportunities.
- Conversely, feedback has also been given that some schools/districts have adequate infrastructure to build their own supports and models to turn their own schools around. The approach needs to accommodate this need for flexibility.
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement (e.g., local boards, parents, and school staff) needs to be expected and supported throughout the entire turnaround process.
- Districts and schools use an aligned preschool through grade 3 (P-3) early learning approach as a core school turnaround strategy. Early learning should be included in the needs assessment and early learning staff should be included in the implementation (e.g., trainings) and monitoring of the LEA plans.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)



## School Improvement Continued

### Next Steps:

- With stakeholder partners, CDE will continue to design (or redesign) and implement our state system of support for low-performing districts and schools to be more effective at raising student learning and more streamlined for users.
- Continue to improve alignment of funding and theory of action.



# EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND LEADERSHIP

## ESSA template Section 5, Supporting Excellent Educators

This section focuses on how to attract, prepare and support the professional education community to best serve our students.

### ESSA Says:

- Highly qualified teacher requirements should be eliminated, deferring to state law for teacher credentials, requirements
- The flexibility waiver that linked evaluation systems to student growth should be eliminated (unless a state uses federal funds to implement those systems)
- Low-income and minority students must have equitable access to experienced, in-field, and effective educators
- More flexibility should be allowed in the use of Title II funding for teacher/leader recruitment and retention

### Colorado Law and Policy Says:

- Teachers must hold a valid teaching license unless the school or district has obtained a waiver from C.R.S 22-63-201
- Districts and charter schools have local discretion in the qualifications (beyond a teaching license) that they require for hiring purposes
- S.B. 10-191 determines how educators are evaluated in Colorado and also defines an effective educator for ESSA purposes

### Key Effective Instruction and Leadership Decision Points

### ESSA Requires:

- Explanation of how Colorado defines an “inexperienced teacher,” “ineffective teacher” and “out-of-field teacher.”
- District-developed plans to address any disproportionate rates of effective teachers.
- An explanation of how to improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in identifying students with specific learning needs and providing instruction based on the needs of such students.

## Effective Instruction and Leadership Continued

### Decisions:

- An “inexperienced teacher” has 0-2 years of experience teaching in a K-12 setting.
- An “ineffective educator” has received an annual evaluation, based on Colorado’s Educator Quality Standards, that results in a rating of “Ineffective” or “Partially Effective.”
- An “out-of-field teacher” will not hold at least one of the following in the subject area in which they have been assigned to teach:
  - ◆ Endorsement on a Colorado teaching license
  - ◆ Degree (B.A. or higher)
  - ◆ 36 semester hours
  - ◆ Passing score on State Board of Education approved content exam
- Colorado will continue to use the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) to meet the local plan requirement.
- CDE will provide virtual and in-person professional development tied to the identified needs of students. This professional development will be offered on an ongoing basis in order to ensure all Colorado educators have the opportunity to participate.

### What We Heard:

- A large majority of respondents suggested CDE create and/or enhance state offerings of professional learning opportunities as a form of support.
- Some participants also suggested CDE support more time, stipends, and other incentives for teachers to be able to participate in ongoing professional learning.
- The majority of participants who responded to this question believed teachers should be required to demonstrate competency in the subject area they teach in addition to holding a license.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)

### Next Steps:

- CDE will continue to work with legislators, school districts and institutions of higher education to support the recruitment and development of educators across Colorado.
- CDE will work on building supports for teachers to enhance their abilities to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all students (e.g., culturally responsive training, whole child support).
- CDE will develop and distribute guidance to support districts with the implementation of the in-field definition and associated option of 36 credit hours.

## TITLE PROGRAMS AND ASSURANCES

### ESSA template 6.0

The Title programs at CDE are in charge of oversight for the federal monies that are granted to school districts based on their populations of students who qualify for services.

#### ESSA Says:

- Section 8304 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the ESSA, provides that each State Educational Agency (SEA), in consultation with the governor of the state, that submits a consolidated state plan or individual program plan under the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, must have on file with the secretary a single set of assurances

#### Colorado Law and Policy Says:

- Colorado has passed specific state laws covering the education of students with disabilities and students who are English language learners. Those statutes along with the federal laws govern how schools work with those students
  - ♦ The English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) (HB14-1298)
  - ♦ Exceptional Children's Educational Act

### Key Title Programs and Assurances Decision Points

#### ESSA Requires:

- Colorado must provide the required general and program-specific assurances.
- A decision of whether CDE will retain 3% of Title I funds to make Direct Student Services grants available to school districts and BOCES.
- A decision of whether Colorado's Identification and Redesignation procedures and criteria for English Learners need to be revised.

#### Decisions:

- CDE will provide a set of assurances to the USDoE related to general administrative procedures as well as program-specific requirements. These assurances apply not only to CDE but also to school districts.
- CDE will not retain 3 percent of the Title I grant award because it would take funds away from districts that do not have the most struggling schools.
- Colorado already has in place procedures for identifying and entering and exiting and redesignating English Learners. These will remain unchanged. However, CDE will work with stakeholders to establish the criteria for redesignation.

## Title Programs and Assurances Continued

### What we heard:

- An overwhelming majority of responses who were against reserving the 3percent pointed to concerns of relinquishing local control over how funds are spent
- Responses in favor of the 3% reserve thought that the funds would directly benefit schools and students most in need of direct services.
- Clarification and specific guidance should be communicated to the field, including whether the State of Local Education Agency (LEA) can reserve any part of the funds for administrative costs, which LEAs would be eligible for these funds, whether the activities will be state-run or locally dictated, and detailing allowable costs and activities.

### Next Steps:

- CDE will continue to work with school districts to develop criteria for district plans on how they will spend their Title funds.
- Based on feedback, CDE has identified the following areas of interest: Career and Technical Education, early learning, healthy students, well-rounded education, and supports for teachers and students. CDE will continue to work with stakeholders on how to provide continued assistance for these priorities.

## WELL-ROUNDED AND SUPPORTIVE EDUCATION

ESSA template 6.1, 6.2

Included in section 6 of the template is a subsection that requires an explanation of the activities and supports that Colorado has in place to ensure that students receive a well-rounded education.

### ESSA Requires:

- States must describe how they will use Title IV, Part A, funds and funds from other programs to ensure that all children have a significant opportunity to meet challenging state academic standards. This section didn't require any decisions. Rather, it asked the state to describe its system and how it uses federal funding for these specific groups:
  - ♦ Low-income students
  - ♦ Lowest-achieving students
  - ♦ English Learners
  - ♦ Children with disabilities
  - ♦ Children and youth in foster care
  - ♦ Migratory children
  - ♦ Homeless children and youth
  - ♦ Neglected and delinquent youth
  - ♦ Immigrant children and youth
  - ♦ Students in rural and low-income schools
  - ♦ American Indian and Alaska Native students
  - ♦ Gifted and Talented students

### Decisions:

- CDE considers the focus on a well-rounded education within ESSA as an affirmation of the state's four goals. (See page5) The state is committed to providing a rich and balanced educational experience including subjects beyond the state's assessment system. CDE works to ensure that all students are prepared for success in society, work and life by providing excellent leadership, service and support to schools and districts across the state.
- CDE staff collaborates across departments to identify areas of need within LEAs and to develop guidance and technical assistance that will support the continuum of education from preschool through the grade 12.

## SUPPORTS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF STUDENT GROUPS

Educators in Colorado have detailed information about the educational performance and learning needs of the specific groups of students in their district and schools. This information allows them to design appropriate and effective academic support through the implementation of evidence-based strategies that meet the specific needs of these subgroups of students and ensure a well-rounded education for all students. CDE collaborates across offices and units to assist districts in identifying appropriate strategies based on their needs.

- **English Learners:**

- ◆ Colorado uses Title III grants to improve and enhance the education of English Learners (ELs). Also, the state's ELPA act provides additional funding for districts. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

- **Students with Disabilities:**

- ◆ The Federal Programs Unit collaborates with the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) in identifying supports for students with disabilities. This unit administers both the state's Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for children with disabilities. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

- **Foster Care Education:**

- ◆ This program is dedicated to ensuring that students in foster care are achieving academically through course completion, advancing to the next grade, accruing credits toward graduation, and on a path to post-secondary success. These efforts are organized by the State Coordinator for Foster Care Education. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

- **Colorado Migrant Program:**

- ◆ The Migrant Education Program (MEP) provides supplemental support to eligible migrant children and youth. The purpose of the MEP is to ensure that migratory children are not penalized in any manner by disparities among curriculum, graduation requirements, academic content and student academic achievement standards. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

- **Students Experiencing Homelessness (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education):**

- ◆ The programs implemented by districts and BOCES create initiatives and provide resources to address the barriers faced by homeless children and youth in accessing and succeeding in school. Colorado state law supports the federal requirement for each to district to appoint a legal homeless liaison. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

- **Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk:**

- ◆ This program provides funding to support the education of youth in state-operated institutions and provides assistance to school districts that work with local facilities that serve adjudicated youth. ([More information regarding these supports can be found here.](#))

## Supports to Meet the Needs of Student Groups

### What we heard:

- Respondents felt it was important for students to have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities and exposure to a whole range of subject matter, including the arts, music, language, financial literacy.
- The respondents also highlighted the importance of choice. This includes students having the ability to choose various subject matters and content areas.
- Stakeholders wanted the ESSA state plan to include early childhood education (learning and care environments through the third grade) to illustrate the importance of these formative years in contributing to success in school.
- Many respondents placed emphasis on the importance of social/emotional learning, whole child, whole school, whole community, resilience and perseverance.

[SEE A FULL LIST OF COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS HERE](#)

### Next Steps:

- CDE's Office of Standards and Instructional Support consists of content specialists in the arts, comprehensive health and physical education, literacy, mathematics, social studies, science/STEM/computer science, and world languages. These content specialists will continue to engage and act upon requests and needs of their respective content area stakeholder groups or think tanks to inform state and local implementation of ESSA.
- Through technical assistance to districts, CDE will encourage districts to describe their existing plans and services for children transitioning into preschool, and transitioning from preschool into kindergarten, as part of the LEA's needs assessment.
- CDE's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness will provide guidance on developmentally appropriate assessment and teaching practices for children in preschool through the grade 3. This will include resources and technical assistance on the use of Colorado's Early Learning and Development Guidelines.