

COLORADO ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCREDITATION, STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCE INEQUITY TASK FORCE

Proposed Working Definitions of Key Terms (September 26, 2023)

Academic Achievement Gaps

Persistent disparities in academic performance between groups of students. These gaps can show up in classroom grades, standardized-test scores, course selections, dropout rates, college-completion rates or other success measures.

Academic Inequities

- Conditions in schools that are unfair and/or non-inclusive and thus influence or predict students' success and performance. 'Unfair' means a school environment allows students' personal and social circumstances (such as gender, socio-economic status, race, ethnic origin, etc.) to be an obstacle to achieving potential. 'Non-inclusive' means a school is not meeting a minimum expectation for what all students should learn. [adapted from OECD's [Ten Steps to Equity in Education Policy Brief](#), 2014]
- Conditions in schools where students' racial identities influence or predict their success or performance. [adapted from Equity in the Center's [Awake to Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture](#), 2022]

Academic Opportunities (also see definition for Educational Equity)

Opportunities conducive to achieving educational outcomes via access to experienced teachers, rigorous courses, adequate time, inclusive and healthy learning environment, programs and high expectations for educational achievement. [adapted from the [American Institutes for Research](#) (2019) and U.S. Department of Education, [Office for Civil Rights](#) (2021)]

Accountability

Federal

[According to the U.S. Department of Education](#), "Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our Nation's schools."

Under the Elementary Education and Secondary Act, states must annually report school results and progress in these areas: (1) proficiency on state tests, (2) English-language proficiency, (3) growth on state tests, (4) an indicator of student success or school quality (such as postsecondary readiness or school climate/safety, and for high school only (5) graduation rates. Data in all five areas must be reported for subgroups. Using these indicators, states must identify and provide extra support to all schools in the bottom 5 percent of performers and to all high schools where the graduation rate is 67 percent or less (this category is called "Comprehensive Support and Intervention"). States, with districts, also must identify schools where subgroups of students are struggling ("Targeted Support and Improvement").

Colorado

Colorado's school accountability system consists of several interlocking elements. The system's theory of action includes an evaluation (i.e., performance framework, awards), assess needs and plan (i.e., Unified Improvement Plan, [public reporting](#), District and School Accountability Committees), implement (including supports and grants from the state) and intervene (e.g., state board intervention after five years on the accountability clock). These elements all inform the district accreditation process, along with other compliance indicators.

From the legislative declaration for the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (C.R.S. 22-11-102(3): *The general assembly concludes...that it is in the best interests of the state to adopt an aligned education accountability system for public education in this state that: (a) Holds the state, school districts, the institute, and public schools accountable on statewide performance indicators supported by consistent, objective measures; (b) Incorporates input from parents, educators, administrators, and the community in establishing clearly defined statewide academic performance objectives; (c) Reports performance in clear, readily understandable terms; (d) Is adaptable to accommodate and include additional data that become available as the state implements the "Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act", part 10 of article 7 of this title, including but not limited to data concerning school readiness and postsecondary success; (e) Recognizes and rewards areas of success, while also identifying and compelling effective change for areas in need of improvement; and (f) Ensures the availability of technical assistance, services, and support for public schools, school districts, and the institute to improve students' academic performance.*

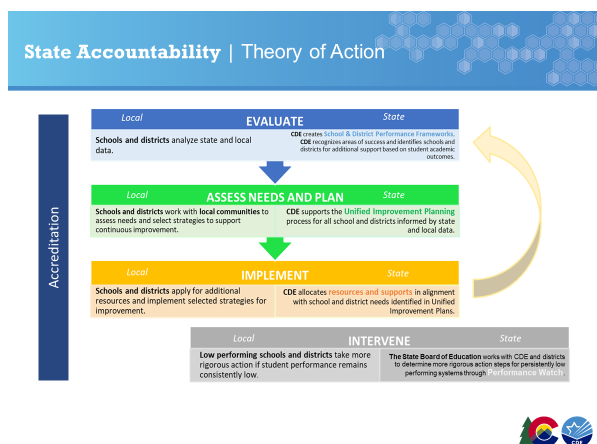
Accountability Framework (also known as District and School Performance Frameworks)

For districts, this is the framework used by the state to evaluate the level that districts meet the state's expectations for attainment on the performance indicators (i.e., academic achievement, academic growth, post secondary & workforce readiness). This evaluation determines the accreditation level (e.g., Accredited with Distinction, Accredited, Accredited with Improvement, Priority Improvement or Turnaround) for the district.

For schools, this is the framework used by the state to provide information about the school's performance based on the performance indicators. Schools are assigned a type of improvement plan (e.g., Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement Turnaround) based on their performance across all performance indicators.

Accreditation System

The intent of Colorado's educational accreditation system is to document that a district is in good standing with the state and remains in compliance as laid out by state statute and regulated by the state



board. The State Board of Education is responsible for the annual accreditation of school districts. Accreditation ratings are based on the results of each district's performance framework. Likewise, districts are responsible for accrediting their schools based upon the state's appraisal of the school's performance. After performance frameworks are released in the fall, all districts are responsible for verifying their district rating and school plan types in the Accreditation Form and ensuring their accreditation contract is up-to-date. Under some conditions, districts may submit additional evidence to adjust a school or district's plan type through the request to reconsider process. Once school and district plan types are finalized, the accreditation contract is signed by state and local leadership. This [website](#) provides more information, as well as houses a tool to access all districts' most recently signed accreditation contracts.

Continuous Improvement (or School Improvement)

Generally a process for ongoing efficiency and accountability to improve system implementation. The state has adopted this model to guide the Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) process. Aligned with the state accountability theory of action, the continuous improvement cycle consists of (1) evaluate performance (by gathering, analyzing and interpreting data about performance), (2) plan (improvement strategies based on performance data, root cause analysis and evidence-based strategies), and (3) implement (planned improvement strategies and adjust as needed). More information at [UIP website](#).

Educational Equity

Educational equity means (1) Parity among student groups in terms of educational outcomes or access to a resource. (2) A fit between resources and student needs. (3) Adequate effort to lessen the effects of structural disadvantages that disproportionately affect different student groups. *[adapted from the National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Developing Indicators of Educational Equity, [Monitoring Educational Equity](#) (2019)]*. (Also see academic opportunities above for additional context)

Student Growth (or Academic Growth)

For an individual student, academic growth is the progress shown by the student, in a given subject area, over a given span of time. It is a statistical model that requires two testing periods over time and then compares the growth to the student's academic peers.

[As part of the Colorado accountability system, CDE uses available state test scores to estimate an individual growth score, or student growth percentile. The student growth percentile suggests how a student's current test score compares with that of other similar students (students across the state whose previous test scores are similar). Growth is one of the performance indicators and is weighted the most heavily. Individual student growth percentiles are rolled up to determine a school or district's Median Growth Percentile (MGP). The state's MGP is typically at the 50th percentile. To learn more about the Colorado Growth Model, go to the [Growth FAQ](#).]

Student Achievement (or Academic Achievement or Status)

A proficiency score on an assessment. Achievement for an individual student is expressed as a test

(scale) score or as an achievement level. Academic achievement is one of the performance indicators in the performance frameworks used to evaluate schools and districts in Colorado. *[As part of the framework, Colorado currently uses the average score, or mean scale score, to measure achievement.]*

Small School Factor (or small N-count)

The federal Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII) derived from education records. Because of this restriction, there are times when data cannot be reported for a school or district because they do not have large enough student populations to share data publicly. Generally, CDE includes numbers of students at a school in its reporting when the n-count is 16 students or more (for achievement) or 20 students or more (for results from the Colorado Growth Model). For school improvement planning purposes, CDE has identified a number of [best practices for small systems](#).

Subgroups (or Disaggregated Group)

A demographic group of students. Colorado currently reports students on the performance framework reports for four student subgroups, including students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, minority students, students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Additional information is reported by race, ethnicity, gender and gifted.