

# Performance Watch

## What to Know About Early Action



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

### What is Early Action?

Early Action is a voluntary process through which schools and districts in Year 3 or Year 4 of Performance Watch can pursue an improvement pathway before the required state board-directed action in Year 5. An Early Action hearing replaces the Year 5 hearing.

- **PROS:** Increases school/district control over which pathway is selected (i.e., the board may only approve or deny the proposed pathway; it may not impose another pathway); accelerates access to key financial and technical supports.
- **CONS:** School/district preparation (stakeholder engagement, writing pathway proposal, board hearing) can burden leader and staff time and resources.

### What is the process for pursuing Early Action?

The steps below provide a general overview of the steps for engaging in Early Action. A school or district's unique context may create variation in the order in which the steps are taken.

#### Step 1: Consult with the School or District Accountability Committee (SAC/DAC) on whether to initiate the Early Action process.

- This group also participates in Step 5 below.
- Accountability Committee resources are available [here](#).

#### Step 2: Engage the broader community and school stakeholders.

- Activities could include sharing information, gathering feedback, and discussing the pros/cons and next steps in the Early Action process.
- Family-School-Community Partnership resources are available [here](#).

#### Step 3: Submit a written Letter of Intent for Early Action to the state board and Commissioner.

- This request should include:
  - the rationale for pursuing Early Action,
  - the timeline for developing a proposal and preferred hearing date, and
  - an explanation of how the community was engaged in the decision to pursue Early Action.

#### Step 4: Receive a State Review Panel visit to critically evaluate the school/district, if assigned by the Commissioner.

- If assigned, the State Review Panel typically conducts a document review and a site visit. This visit can be scheduled after a formal letter of intent is submitted (Step 3 above).
- The State Review Panel will submit a written evaluation to the state board and school or district 30 days prior to the board meeting.
- More information on the State Review Panel can be found [here](#).

#### CDE is here to support you.

Year 3 schools and districts are assigned a CDE **Support Coordinator** who specializes in navigating years on Performance Watch.

The Support Coordinator will explain each accountability pathway option and help your team to identify the best option for your school or district.

Support Coordinators can provide technical assistance, answer questions, and present to the local board, leadership, and staff, as needed.

Districts and schools planning for pathways are eligible to receive **pathways planning grants**. Districts and school implementing a directed action are eligible to receive **implementation grants**. Both grants are available through the Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) grant.



**Step 5: Identify the best pathway for improvement and develop a pathway plan document.**

- Use the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) Year 4 worksheet to document your thinking.
- Collaborate with your local accountability committee and base your pathway selection on stakeholder feedback.
- Available pathway options vary for schools, districts, and charter schools; see more [here](#).
- CDE offers templates and resources for pathway plan development. Guidance documents are available [here](#).

**Keep an Eye on Meeting & Planning Requirements.**

*Parent & Community Meeting Requirement:* State law requires Year 3 schools and districts to host a parent and community meeting to provide information and receive input on the school's accountability rating and next steps to improve.

*Year 4 Unified Improvement Plan:* The Year 4 [UIP submission](#) must include a worksheet identifying a pathway preference.

**Step 6: Submit the pathway plan and receive feedback from CDE.**

- Submit a draft pathway plan to CDE approximately 45 days before the hearing date.
- CDE will evaluate the draft plan using a rubric shared beforehand and provide feedback within 5 business days.
- The school or district may resubmit a revised plan after responding to CDE feedback, provided the final plan is submitted by the deadline (see below).
- Submit the final pathway plan to the board and CDE 30 days prior to the scheduled board meeting.

**Step 7: Receive public feedback on pathway plan.**

- An opportunity for the public to provide written public comment to the state board on the proposed pathway plan will open at least 30 days prior to the hearing and close four days prior to the hearing.
- Schools and districts are encouraged to share the public comment request with the local community.
- CDE will provide the state board with a summary of the public feedback.

**Step 8: With CDE, prepare for a presentation before the State Board of Education.**

- Presentation materials (e.g., power point presentation) are due 7-10 days before the board meeting.
- CDE Support Coordinators can provide details on needed components and samples from previous presentations.
- CDE will prepare a report for the board describing the school or district's performance data, history and context, feedback from public comment, and any other relevant information.

**Step 9: Present to the board, answer board member questions, and receive a "yes" or "no" from the board.**

- The board may only approve or deny the requested pathway; the board will not direct another pathway.
- If the board denies the request, the school or district is not bound to the proposal and will remain on Performance Watch until it receives an Improvement or Performance rating for two consecutive years.

**Step 10: Receive ongoing support and progress monitoring from CDE.**

- If the pathway is approved and the school or district continues to receive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings for one or two years (timing will depend on the board's final order), then:
  - The State Review Panel will evaluate the school or district's performance and recommend a pathway.
  - In the fall/winter following the Priority Improvement or Turnaround rating, the school or district will return before the board for a second hearing (rehearing) and directed action (pathway) by the board.
- See more about Performance Watch (i.e., the Accountability Clock) generally [here](#) and about how years accrue "on the clock" [here](#).

**See also:** [Colorado State Board of Education Administrative Procedures for Considering Early Accountability Actions](#)