



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Dwight D. Jones
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Dear Superintendents:

Aligning Colorado's accountability system for schools remains a top priority for the department of education. Information generated today by our three accountability systems—the accreditation process, the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting system, and the School Accountability Reports (SARs)—often provides conflicting or at least confusing results and messages.

To this end, we are working closely with members of the Colorado State Legislature on a bill that we expect will lead to a more cohesive system of accountability and support. Attached is a summary of the bill as it is currently being drafted. This document was prepared by CDE staff in conjunction with the bill's sponsors, Sen. Evie Hudak (D) and Sen. Keith King (R). This summary is being released in advance of public circulation of the actual bill.

In developing this proposal, one of our goals is to move away from the arbitrary targets for proficiency established by No Child Left Behind. We also want to ensure that we provide adequate support to districts and schools to build the capacity to succeed.

The proposed bill would place results from the Colorado Growth Model at the core of an aligned system of accountability and support. The proposed bill would also capitalize on a recent announcement from the U.S. Department of Education certifying the Colorado Growth Model as eligible for inclusion in a pilot that is evaluating the feasibility of using growth models for NCLB reporting purposes. The Colorado Growth Model fills an important gap in the current accountability system required by NCLB. To close achievement gaps, we must eliminate gaps in the rates at which various groups of children grow academically. To do that, we need to ensure that our neediest students grow faster—gaining more than a year's growth in a year's time—so they catch up.

Unfortunately, we have serious challenges to confront together. Data from the Colorado Growth Model shows that only a small percentage of students not yet proficient are making enough progress to catch up to proficiency. In reading, only 30 percent of students are making enough progress; in writing, 26 percent; in mathematics, just 13 percent. These are not promising numbers.

Because AYP focuses on each school's percentage of students who score "at proficiency" each year, it creates an over-anxious focus on students "on the cusp" of proficiency. We have learned, however, that a student's proximity to proficiency is not related to his or her rate of growth and that many students already proficient are

not able to keep up. In other words, focusing on the achievement level of only some children distracts attention from the progress made by all children.

In addition to presenting a more coherent accountability system to all of our constituents (parents, teachers, school staff and administration, community members and all taxpayers), the department is seeking to create a system that encourages teachers to focus on maximizing every child's progress toward ambitious standards. We believe our federal accountability system also should measure whether the needed growth is taking place.

We will keep you posted on progress of the bill as it is introduced and as it moves through the legislature. In addition, CDE staff is planning regional visits around the state to communicate with you in person about the proposed bill.

If you have any comments or questions about the bill summary, please let me know or send your comments directly to Rich Wenning, Associate Commissioner, who is handling comments on this bill for me. He can be reached at Wenning_R@cde.state.co.us or 303-866-6764.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dwight D. Jones', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Dwight D. Jones
Commissioner of Education

Accountability Alignment Bill Summary (Hudak-King)

The Accountability Alignment Bill builds upon and incorporates:

- HB-07-1048, which established student academic growth as the cornerstone of Colorado's educational accountability system
- SB-08-212, which establishes readiness for Postsecondary and Workforce success as Colorado's overarching goal for all students
- SB-00-186, by updating its core concepts in recognition of lessons learned and new technology, while retaining its high expectations and accountability for student results
- Revised district accreditation process established by CDE last year in cooperation with school districts across the state
- Recent approval by the U.S. Department of Education of the Colorado Growth Model for AYP purposes

The major purposes of the bill include:

1. Aligning conflicting accountability systems into a single system that passes federal muster
2. Modernizing and aligning reporting of state, district and school performance information
3. Creating a fairer, clearer and more effective cycle of support and intervention
4. Enhancing state, district and school oversight of improvement efforts

In accomplishing these purposes, the bill eliminates the "CSAP penalty" and weighted index. The bill also updates Colorado's language about education to emphasize capacity building rather than judgments.

Widespread support for change exists:

- A poll of superintendents (n=50) conducted by CDE last year showed:
 - 85% supported using the new district accreditation process at the school level if the U.S. DoE allowed us to use the Colorado Growth Model for AYP purposes
 - 82% supported eliminating the weighted index in favor of simply reporting the percentage of students scoring at each performance level
 - 84% supported using the "four quadrant" Colorado Growth Model chart as the primary approach for communicating about school performance as we create the next generation of school accountability reporting

1. Align conflicting accountability systems through common performance indicators, enabling a single accountability system for state and federal purposes

- Establishes an expanded set of State Performance Indicators for the state, districts and schools
 - Student academic growth (measured by the Colorado Growth Model)
 - Student achievement levels (measured by the percent of students scoring advanced, proficient, partially proficient and unsatisfactory)
 - Extent of achievement gaps based on income and ethnicity
 - Postsecondary readiness (measured by graduation rates and ACT/PWR)
- Performance indicators selected to be consistent with the revised district accreditation process and federal expectations

- Requires the Colorado State Board of Education to adopt statewide targets on each and report results

2. Modernize and align reporting through 21st century technology and improved public disclosure and access

- Builds on the highly interactive Colorado Growth Model displays to provide State Performance Reports, District Performance Reports and School Performance Reports
 - Provide results on the state education performance indicators and data required by state and federal law
- Creates the performance EDGE (Education Data and Growth Exchange), a web-based portal for the public and educators to access all publically reported data about state, district and school performance and characteristics
 - Allows print summaries and export for secondary analysis
 - Reduces school and district reporting burden

3. Enhance oversight of improvement strategies for low-performing districts and schools supported by a State Review panel appointed by commissioner

- Creates authority for the Commissioner to appoint a State Review Panel to evaluate district and school improvement strategies and make recommendations on needed interventions

4. Create a fairer, clearer and more effective cycle of support and intervention

- Provide high quality CDE service and support: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning; (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation; (3) evaluation and feedback on district and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability, including turnaround support for chronically low-performing districts and schools
- Assign district accreditation categories and school improvement categories based on results related to state targets for State Performance Indicators and overall state performance. In assigning accreditation categories, also consider duration of district or school performance challenges and progress made under current improvement efforts
- Align district accreditation categories with levels of support and improvement required while retaining six levels of performance categories
 - Level 1: Accredited with Distinction
 - Level 2: Accredited
 - Level 3: Accredited with Improvement Plan
 - Level 4: Accredited with Priority improvement Plan
 - Level 5: Accredited with Turnaround Plan
 - Level 6: Unaccredited – State Board determines whether situation warrants district reorganization, external management, conversion to a charter school or school closure
- Expect districts to assign accreditation categories to schools in a manner that is aligned with and meets or exceeds the rigor of the state system for districts

Accountability Alignment Bill Summary Detail on System of Accountability, Support and Intervention

- SBE will annually re-affirm or revise statewide targets for achievement on the Performance Indicators: (1) student longitudinal growth, (2) student levels on statewide assessments, (3) the extent of achievement gaps, and (4) postsecondary and workforce readiness.
- SBE will promulgate rules defining the criteria by which CDE will assign districts to accreditation categories.
- In creating district accreditation contracts and charter school institute (CSI) accreditation contract, the commissioner will confirm that districts/CSI establish an accreditation system for their schools that is aligned with and meets or exceeds the rigor of the state's accreditation system for districts.
- CDE will provide high quality service and support to districts and schools, with increasing state involvement based on need and resource availability.

Level One	CDE	Assign the "Accredited with Distinction" category to districts that meet or exceed statewide targets on the Performance Indicators or that exceed statewide achievement on the Performance Indicators. Provide high quality CDE service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability.
	All school districts and CSI that are Accredited with Distinction	Each District Accountability Committee and CSI must create a District or CSI Performance Plan that includes: (1) ambitious but attainable district-wide and school-by-school targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, taking into consideration the compilation of the school performance plans created by schools under their supervision, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based strategies, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity.
	All public schools.	Each School Accountability Committee must adopt a School Performance Plan that includes: (1) ambitious but attainable school-wide targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based strategies, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity. SAC will meet quarterly to discuss the extent to which school leadership, personnel and infrastructure are advancing school plan implementation or other progress pertinent to school's accreditation contract.

Level Two	CDE	Assign the "Accredited" category to districts that generally meet statewide achievement on the Performance Indicators. Provide high quality CDE service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability.
	All public school districts and CSI that	Same as for Level One

Discussion Draft – January 21, 2009

	are Accredited	
	All public schools.	Same as for Level One
Level Three	CDE	<p>Assign the "Accredited with Improvement Plan" category to districts that approach but do not meet statewide achievement on the Performance Indicators. In assigning that category, CDE will consider the duration of district or school performance challenges and progress made under current improvement efforts.</p> <p>Provide high quality CDE service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability.</p>
	All school districts and CSI that are Accredited with Improvement Plan	<p>District Accountability Committee must recommend a District Improvement Plan to be approved by the local board. CSI must adopt a CSI Improvement Plan. Such plans shall include: (1) ambitious but attainable district-wide and school-by-school targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, taking into consideration the compilation of the school performance plans created by schools under their supervision, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based strategies that are appropriate to address the needs of the district, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity.</p>
	All public schools of which CDE requires a School Improvement Plan and to which district must assign an accreditation category that is comparable to the categories established for districts.	<p>School Accountability Committee must adopt a School Improvement Plan that includes: (1) ambitious but attainable school-wide targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based remedial strategies that are appropriate to address the needs of the school, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity.</p> <p>SAC will meet quarterly to discuss the extent to which school leadership, personnel and infrastructure are advancing school plan implementation or other progress pertinent to school's accreditation contract.</p>

Level Four	CDE	<p>Assign the “Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan” category to districts that substantially do not meet statewide achievement on the Performance Indicators. In assigning that category, CDE will consider the duration of district or school performance challenges and progress made under current improvement efforts.</p> <p>Provide high quality CDE service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability.</p> <p>Commissioner also may assign State Review Panel to critically evaluate District or CSI Priority Improvement Plans and School Priority Improvement Plans. The panel shall evaluate and report to the Commissioner and Board regarding: (1) the present adequacy of leadership for change to improve results; (2) the present adequacy of district infrastructure to support school improvement; (3) the readiness and apparent capacity of school and district personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student achievement at the school; (4) the readiness and apparent capacity of district and school personnel to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner; (5) the likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the school’s performance within current management structure and staffing; and (6) the necessity that the district or school in question remain in operation to serve district students.</p>
	All school districts and CSI that are Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan	<p>District Accountability Committee must recommend a District Priority Improvement Plan to be approved by the local board. CSI must adopt a CSI Priority Improvement Plan. Such plans shall include: (1) ambitious but attainable district-wide and school-by-school targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, taking into consideration the compilation of the school performance plans created by schools under their supervision, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based remedial strategies that are appropriate to address the needs of the district, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity.</p>
	All public schools of which CDE requires a School Priority Improvement Plan and to which district must assign accreditation category comparable to the categories established for districts.	<p>School Accountability Committee must adopt a School Priority Improvement Plan that includes: (1) ambitious but attainable school-wide targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) specific research-based remedial strategies that are appropriate to address the needs of the school, and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement strategies with fidelity.</p> <p>SAC will meet quarterly to discuss the extent to which school leadership, personnel and infrastructure are advancing school plan implementation or other progress pertinent to school’s accreditation contract.</p>

Level Five	CDE	<p>Assign the “Accredited with Turnaround Plan” category to districts that chronically fail to meet or fall far below meeting statewide achievement on the Performance Indicators. In assigning that category, CDE will consider the duration of district or school performance challenges and progress made under current improvement efforts.</p> <p>Provide high quality CDE service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. Provide support with increasing CDE involvement based on need and resource availability.</p> <p>Commissioner also will assign State Review Panel to critically evaluate District or CSI Turnaround Plans and School Turnaround Plans. The panel shall evaluate and report to the Commissioner and Board regarding: (1) the present adequacy of leadership for change to improve results, (2) the present adequacy of district infrastructure to support school improvement, (3) the readiness and apparent capacity of school and district personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student achievement at the school, (4) the readiness and apparent capacity of district and school personnel to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner; (5) the likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the school’s performance within current management structure and staffing, and (6) the necessity that the district or school in question remain in operation to serve district students.</p>
	All school districts and CSI that are Accredited with Turnaround Plan	District Accountability Committee must recommend a District Turnaround Plan to be approved by the local board. CSI must adopt a CSI Turnaround Plan. Such plans shall include: (1) ambitious but attainable district-wide and school-by-school targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, taking into consideration the compilation of the school performance plans created by schools under their supervision, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) one or more of the turnaround interventions enumerated by statute (e.g., employing lead turnaround partner, clustering underperforming schools and obtaining status as an “innovation school zone,” etc.), and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement interventions with fidelity. These plans must be reviewed by State Review Panel and obtain SBE approval.
	All public schools of which CDE requires a Turnaround Plan and to which district must assign an accreditation category that is comparable to the categories established for districts.	School Accountability Committee must recommend a School Turnaround Plan to be approved by the local board. Such plans shall include: (1) ambitious but attainable district-wide and school-by-school targets that are aligned with the targets established by SBE, (2) trends, (3) needs assessment, (4) one or more of the turnaround interventions enumerated by statute (e.g., collaboration with a lead turnaround partner, obtaining status as an “innovative school,” etc.), and (5) resources (local, state, or federal) to implement turnaround interventions with fidelity. These plans MUST be reviewed by State Review Panel, if funds are adequate, and MUST obtain SBE approval.
		SAC will meet quarterly to discuss the extent to which school leadership, personnel and infrastructure are advancing school plan implementation or other progress pertinent to school’s accreditation contract.

Level Six	CDE and SBE	<p>CDE will recommend to SBE that a district become unaccredited if it fails to make substantial progress under its Turnaround Plan.</p> <p>The Commissioner assigns State Review Panel to critically evaluate whether to recommend that: (1) a district be reorganized (which may include consolidation), (2) a district or school in the district be managed by a private or public entity, (3) a school in the district be converted to a charter school, or (4) a school in the district be closed.</p> <p>In evaluating these options, the panel shall consider: (1) the adequacy of leadership, (2) the adequacy of district infrastructure, (3) the readiness and capacity of school and district personnel, (4) the likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve performance, and (5) the necessity that the district or school in question remain in operation.</p> <p>Commissioner makes recommendation to the SBE; SBE makes its determination on actions to be taken by district.</p> <p>CDE will provide high quality service and support to schools and districts/CSI: (1) ready access to data and research to support interpretation, decisionmaking and learning, (2) consultative services on best practices for improvement and implementation, and (3) evaluation and feedback on district/CSI and school plans. CDE will provide support with increasing department involvement based on need and resource availability.</p>
	All school districts that lose accreditation.	
	All public schools that lose accreditation.	