



## Turnarounds in Colorado: Partnering for Innovative Reform in a Local Control State

February 2013



Robin Baker, PhD  
Kelly Hupfeld, JD  
Paul Teske, PhD

Center for Education Policy Analysis • Buechner Institute for Governance • School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado Denver

Paul Hill, PhD

Center on Reinventing Public Education • University of Washington – Bothell

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Doing Turnaround Right – Lessons from across the Country .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Turnaround in Colorado – the Policy Context .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Landscape of Low-Performing Schools and Districts in Colorado .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Decision Points for Colorado .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Recommendations for Next Steps .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Appendix A – References and Resources	
Appendix B – S.B. 163’s Accountability Framework	
Appendix C – Schools Assigned Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans	
Appendix D – Districts Accredited with Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans	
Appendix E – Potential Policy Changes	
Appendix F – District Root Cause Analysis	
Appendix G – Developing Procedures for Turnarounds	
Appendix H – Sample Decision Criteria for Selecting among School Turnaround Interventions	
Appendix I – Potential Partners and Providers	
Appendix J – Types of Technical Assistance Needed by Schools and Districts	

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Colorado’s Governor, Legislature, and State Board of Education are unified in an ambitious commitment to graduate all kids from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Colorado has a lot of work to do to meet this commitment, and possibly the most critical next step is reforming or replacing the most persistently low-performing schools in the state.

The goal of Colorado’s education system is to ensure that all children have access to a high quality school and the opportunity to receive an excellent education. But for too many students – urban, suburban and rural schools – that expectation is not being met.

There are a number of schools that fail, year after year, to meet the state’s requirements for satisfactory performance. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is determined to confront and correct the issue. As detailed in this report, CDE has the will and the authority, though not all the necessary resources and infrastructure to implement a highly-effective school turnaround system.

It is widely held in the education profession that turning a chronically low-performing school into a high-performing school is the most difficult of all tasks. Many strategies have been tried; few have succeeded. However, the enormity and complexity of the problem is not a valid excuse for failing to solve it, and CDE must lead the way.

Turnaround is a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that: a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization.

#### Mass Insight

The single most important and telling measure for school turnaround work is whether or not students move from poor to satisfactory academic performance in a relatively short period of time. There is also a critical funding component related to reconstituting, closing and opening schools, but leveraging strategic partnerships to find, develop and deploy highly effective school turnaround professionals, more than anything, will be the driver of success.

Meeting this challenge can only be done collaboratively – by engaging multiple entities with skills and experience to collectively design, implement and execute new policies and practices. This is a unique and particularly sensitive task in Colorado – to embed statewide quality standards while respecting and working within the constitutional context of local control.

Many of our state’s schools do an excellent job preparing students for successful lives and careers, but many schools do not. In Colorado, over 82,000 students – about 10% of all students in the state – attend schools that are persistently low-performing. A system for reversing this trend is among the state’s most pronounced unmet needs.

Schools that fail to meet the needs of their students for years, even decades, have been a stubborn challenge for school reform. Pouring funds into these schools to implement the usual school improvement strategies has been, quite literally, a waste of money. The realization that these schools require a completely different approach has been brought to light through recent research, and is reflected in this report.

---

## TURNING AROUND PERSISTENTLY FAILING SCHOOLS

National attention to school turnarounds has increased greatly in the past 10 years, fueled by more meaningful federal and state policies on accountability for chronically low-performing schools.

This is good news for Colorado. There are several school turnaround examples around the country that are promising and provide valuable lessons.

The characteristics of turnarounds have been well-documented, and these are the realities Colorado must face in creating a viable school turnaround system:

***Effective school turnarounds require fundamental change in the school.***

Chronically low-performing schools are not likely to be turned around solely by interventions that tinker around the edges, even if these interventions are based on actions that are generally considered to be good educational practice. To meet the expectation that dramatic improvements will occur within one to two years, successful turnarounds generally require a *fundamental disruption in the culture and practices* of the school. This disruption allows effective turnaround practices to occur, and also signals the commitment to dramatic change.

***Effective school turnaround leadership is essential to realizing fundamental change.***

Making the significant changes necessary to accomplish turnaround requires a specific kind of leadership, one that combines *entrepreneurial attitudes and a focus on results*. Leadership styles that are successful in schools functioning at higher levels may not work at all in turnaround situations. This is true in other sectors as well as in education. As a result, effective school turnaround leadership must be intentionally recruited and cultivated.

***Effective school turnaround leaders take actions that result in dramatic improvement.***

In successful turnarounds, the turnaround leader takes actions that result in quick wins in areas most obviously in need of intervention, such as school culture, effective staffing, student discipline, and physical facilities. These quick wins reinforce the perception of dramatic change, and are followed by a *relentless focus on improving student learning* through continuous data analysis and instructional adjustments based on results.

***Turnaround leaders cannot implement fundamental change unless they are operating in an environment that supports autonomy and flexibility.***

Turnaround leaders must have the ability to quickly diagnose the issues facing the school and to implement sweeping changes that quickly address these issues. This autonomy must extend to decisions around staff, scheduling, curriculum and instruction, and the like. Districts must be able to provide this environment, or if they cannot, schools should be chartered or otherwise given flexibility.

---

***Turnarounds are hard, and a degree of failure is to be expected.***

The challenges of turning around low-performing schools should not be underestimated. Most turnaround efforts fail, something that is true for other sectors as well as education. The state and districts should be prepared to try new interventions for failed turnarounds.

***Turnarounds require strategic and determined political leadership from the top.***

Turnarounds are generally chaotic and painful for communities. It is difficult to admit that a school has failed, and the dramatic changes required by turnaround are often viewed with suspicion and fear. Strategic leadership and communications from outside as well as inside the school can help people understand the urgent need for turnaround in context and lessen anxiety about change.

This report discusses Colorado's current ability to effectively implement successful school and district turnarounds.

In Colorado, nearly 14,000 students attend schools that have been assigned Turnaround Plans, the lowest category of performance assigned by CDE. Another 67,000 attend schools that have been rated as Priority Improvement, the second lowest category of performance. Although many of these students attend schools in the Denver metro area, low-performing schools are located throughout the state in a variety of sizes and geographic locations.

Colorado also assigns performance ratings to its districts – 26% of all Colorado students attend schools in districts that have been rated as Priority Improvement or Turnaround.

As in other states, Colorado has invested significant federal, state, and local funds in incremental efforts to turn around low-performing schools. These “light touch” interventions typically involve coaching and training for staff, and may include introducing different school models with the current staff. These efforts, and their failures to result in dramatic and sustainable improvement, have been well-documented, both in Colorado and nationally. No one doubts that these actions were taken by educators who cared very much about their students – but it cannot be denied that the vast majority of these efforts have not succeeded.

---

## COLORADO'S OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS

In order to meet the state's obligation to transform failing schools and districts into high-performing teaching and learning organizations, CDE must lead the way with bold initiatives to:

- recruit proven turnaround leaders and organizations to Colorado
- train and incubate new talent to staff turnaround schools and districts
- create the infrastructure and systems for turnarounds to succeed

One of the documented challenges to successful turnaround strategies is the lack of school leaders who can implement innovative change in a complex community and political environment. CDE and its partners must:

- partner with proven leadership development organizations to deliver leadership training that is specifically tailored to the hard-to-fill staffing needs at turnaround schools and districts
- encourage, support and incubate new organizations to bolster the human capital pipeline

In addition, CDE must have the political support it needs to effectively utilize the tools provided by Senate Bill 09-163, the Educational Accountability Act (S.B. 09-163), which provides a menu of available actions regarding schools and districts that are eligible for state-mandated turnaround interventions. The turnaround of schools is by necessity disruptive in the short term in order to achieve long term benefits for students.

With strong support, CDE would have the authority and flexibility to direct interventions in persistently low-performing schools and districts. To act on this authority, CDE will need to evaluate its structure and resource allocation and create strategic partnerships across the state.

---

## MODELS OF SCHOOL TURNAROUND

Colorado is one of many states trying to solve the school turnaround problem. CDE will need to craft a tailored approach that navigates all of Colorado's unique circumstances and condition. Despite the challenges around turnaround schools, there are a number of promising efforts around the country that yield valuable insights.

### ***Recovery School District***

- *Louisiana*
- *Tennessee*
- *Michigan*

Under a Recovery School District model, the state creates a new entity that has the powers of a traditional school district and is typically given great authority and autonomy to operate and/or contract with other providers to run schools for the purpose of turning them around and preparing them to return to their home district. The idea of removing failing schools from their home district into a recovery district with more resources and focus has a clear appeal, but also raises some challenges, as detailed in the full report.

### ***Turnaround Academies and Lead Partners***

- *Indiana*

In this model, the state does not create a new school district, but instead creates another type of organization or structure that has the same purpose – overseeing the school while it is undergoing turnaround and creating an environment most likely to lead to turnaround success.

This model, as implemented in Indiana, provides that schools in their sixth consecutive year of academic probation are subject to mandatory turnaround actions, determined by the state board of education. These actions may include closing the school, merging it with a nearby school, terminating the principal and staff, bringing in new management, and/or other actions recommended by the state department of education.

If the school is not closed and is taken over by the state, it is designated a Turnaround Academy and will be operated by a Turnaround School Operator (selected through a state RFP process).

If a school is not closed and is not taken over by the state, the district works with a Lead Partner to turn the school around. Lead Partners are also authorized by the state.

---

## **Commissioner's Turnaround Network**

- *Connecticut*

The Commissioner's Turnaround Network, operated out of the state's School Turnaround Office, is authorized to manage a set number of schools. In Connecticut, it is set as a maximum of 25 schools, selected from schools performing in the bottom 40%, with preference given to volunteers and those whose collective bargaining agreements are expiring.

The school turnaround office enters into contracts with nonprofit or higher education turnaround operators; the district can be a partner in the turnaround or the school turnaround office serves as a temporary trustee for the school.

Teachers reapply for their positions or return to the home district. While collective bargaining agreements remain in effect, they may be modified, and disputes are settled by an arbitrator.

## **Partnership Zone**

- *Delaware*

A Partnership Zone is a network of a fixed number of the state's lowest-performing schools. Schools in the Partnership Zone stay with their districts, but are monitored and supported by the state department of education's School Turnaround Unit.

Districts with Partnership Zone schools are required to enter into an MOU with the department of education that provides for autonomy deemed necessary to implement the turnaround model.

Partnership Zone schools that have collective bargaining agreements must "address" provisions in the agreement that could negatively affect turnaround implementation; if the parties are unable to agree, the state's secretary of education chooses between the sides. Districts are also required to create a governance structure for the turnaround work that involves either setting up a district turnaround office to lead turnaround or selecting an external lead partner to work with the turnaround school.

All of these models have factors that raise various questions and concerns. There are financial and political considerations. There is the question of whether new legislation is needed. There are unique issues presented by rural turnarounds. And a fundamental question remains of how and when to return schools to their original district. All of these are factors that must be addressed in the search for solutions.

However, *it is important to note what we know doesn't work, and that is a "light touch" approach.* The more incremental models of turnarounds have limited data and none show dramatic successes. There are few positive results from models that implement coaching, increase in training, or focus on new programs. While they might make initial sense, they are simply too minor to turn around a failing school or district. A failing school is simply not in a position to benefit from incremental efforts that yield results in more functional schools. If that were the case, earlier interventions, including the transformation model that is part of the menu of federal turnaround options, might have worked.

---

## EXPLORING THE CRITICAL QUESTIONS

This report asks pertinent questions about the difficult but necessary work of turning around chronically low-performing schools and districts in Colorado, and also presents information and insights that guide toward answers and solutions. The full report provides detailed data and analysis, but in brief, these are the initial questions that Colorado must ask and answer in pursuit of a systemic school turnaround solution.

### ***How can Colorado aggressively and successfully turn around failing schools?***

CDE will need to act differently, and decisively, when it comes to school turnarounds. The new approach to turnaround needs to incorporate the lessons learned nationally, tailored to the unique Colorado context. In particular, successful turnaround in Colorado will require:

- A state policy environment that balances the constitutional values of state oversight and local control in service of providing excellent schools to all children
- State and local policies that provide the accountability, direction, and flexibility needed for dramatic school change
- A role for the state that represents the best use of its authority and strengths and allows it to align turnaround with other key statewide initiatives and resources
- A role for districts in which the district understands the urgency of turnaround and is empowered at the outset to lead dramatic change in its schools
- Roles for other public and nonprofit organizations as lead partners, turnaround school operators, and turnaround leadership providers
- A broad coalition of education stakeholders who provide leadership and guidance for turnarounds in the state

### ***Who should direct Colorado's statewide school turnaround plan?***

The most dramatic turnaround efforts occurring in other states have involved the creation of an independent organization that oversees and sometimes directly operates turnaround efforts in schools placed in the district, usually with the oversight of the state department and/or board of education. This type of organization, referred to in this report as a state recovery organization (SRO), can take the form of a new school district. Other states use the state department as the SRO.

Currently, school turnaround work is being directed by the School and District Performance Unit in CDE. The state could continue to have CDE fill this role, or could decide to create a new state recovery organization with the powers of a district, or could decide to use an existing organization as the state recovery organization, or even some combination of the above.

For example, the Charter School Institute is already a state agency with the authority of a school district. Other options that have been raised are the Colorado Legacy Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works with the Department of Education on state initiatives and innovation, or a new nonprofit funded primarily with foundation investment, such as a New Schools for Colorado-type organization.

---

***Where will political and strategic leadership come from?***

Lessons from turnarounds in other states make it clear that improving failing schools is a contentious and painful process. Visible and active leadership at the state level is critical to building public awareness and support for turnarounds. In Colorado in particular, where resources are low and local control plays a big role in how well reforms are implemented or not, a unified message will be particularly important. If the education community is divided, cooperation among the districts and the state will be weakened, and a challenge to the law on local control grounds becomes virtually inevitable. This report discusses various ways to answer these questions.

***Who should be responsible for the day-to-day operation of turnaround schools and districts in Colorado?***

It is important to distinguish between the state recovery organization (or organizations) and the entities that will serve as turnaround operators responsible for the day-to day operations of schools placed in turnaround. Turnaround operators are typically third parties who take over school operations for the purpose of quickly lifting the school out of crisis. Research is clear that successful turnaround operators must be committed to dramatic and substantial change – in true turnaround situations, incremental changes are a wasted effort. Any state committed to school turnaround must plan for a certain number of schools to be taken over by effective third-party turnaround operators. Finding such operators is another challenge.

***How should low-performing schools and districts be prioritized for assistance and intervention?***

It is estimated that 10 schools, two districts, and a BOCES are eligible for immediate intervention under S.B. 09-163 because of failure to progress under a Turnaround plan. Another 25-30 schools and eight to 10 districts are likely to reach five consecutive years in the lowest two categories if they continue on similar trajectories in their next two annual plan assignments.

How will the system manage its “caseload?” If fewer than all eligible schools and districts will be in turnaround at any given time, what will the decision criteria be for identifying the more urgent cases? The experiences in other states suggest that Colorado’s system should focus on a handful of particularly troubled schools for immediate action rather than trying to give equal attention to all eligible schools.

---

## RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

To create an effective and efficient school turnaround system, the to-do list for Colorado includes nine initial items. These action steps are examined and explained in detail in the full report and serve as a prioritized checklist, or a roadmap, for creating a comprehensive school turnaround system for Colorado.

**1. Identify the key individuals and organizations who will lead the implementation of S.B. 09-163.**

CDE is already leading the way in implementing S.B. 09-163, and the State Board of Education will also play a critical role. The state should consider whether creating new recovery organizations or empowering existing organizations to serve in this role will improve the state's ability to leverage limited resources. The Governor and the state legislature should also be tapped for leadership in building the necessary capacity.

**2. Develop procedures that ensure that the State Board of Education is provided with comprehensive information and analysis.**

The State Board of Education is the entity responsible for determining the appropriate intervention for the lowest-performing schools and districts. To do this well, members of the State Board will need to rely on comprehensive information about each school and district context, including student data, prior reform efforts, district leadership capacity, available third-party providers, available funding sources, and the like. The turnaround oversight coordinator will need to develop systems to ensure that this information is reliably collected and analyzed. Currently S.B. 09-163 provides that a State Review Panel is to evaluate this information and make recommendations to the State Board of Education. If this route is used to provide analysis to the State Board of Education, the State Review Panel's membership and procedures will need to be carefully planned and implemented to ensure credibility and comprehensiveness.

**3. Determine the number of schools and/or districts in need of turnaround and assess the state's capacity to deploy teams to those units.**

The state will need to estimate the optimal number of schools and districts engaged in active turnaround, review the likely demographic and geographic context for these schools and districts, and develop an understanding of the most effective turnaround partners for these schools. The state should also be prepared to consider the capacity of local districts to lead turnaround efforts and encourage those efforts when they are likely to be of high quality, both as a matter of efficiency and as an appropriate balance between state oversight and local control.

**4. Develop a supply of high-quality third-party lead partners and turnaround operators for school and district turnaround efforts.**

After estimating the capacity and needs of the system, the state should develop an RFP process that will help create a steady supply of third-party partners and operators. This process should set the foundation for clustering turnaround schools and districts in similar situations, such as charter management organizations for newly-opened and/or newly-converted charter schools, or struggling schools in high-poverty urban districts. Districts overseeing turnaround initiatives will need experienced lead partners for guidance.

---

**5. Establish talent development pipelines to identify, train, and recruit principals and teacher leaders.**

These leaders will have specialized training in the area of school turnaround, and be properly incentivized to work in turnaround schools and districts. These turnaround pipelines should include:

- Routes that train current educators who demonstrate talents and interests in line with successful turnaround leaders
- Routes that train persons from other sectors to become school turnaround leaders
- Routes that train turnaround school leadership teams
- Routes that recruit proven turnaround school leaders on a national basis
- District-developed routes that train turnaround school leaders for district turnaround initiatives in larger districts with substantial numbers of failing schools

**6. Identify and implement policy changes that allow the state, districts, and schools to more fully take advantage of the desired turnaround policy.**

A dramatic new approach, such as creating a new recovery district, will likely require new legislation. Even if the current framework of S.B. 09-163 is retained, there are glitches that could interfere with some of the statutory turnaround options. The following legislative amendments are recommended to ensure the goals of S.B. 09-163 are achieved:

- Provide that turnaround operators for schools and districts directed to implement mandatory turnaround interventions are given maximum autonomy in the areas of staffing, scheduling, curriculum, etc
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround may be directed to implement one or more of the statutory options
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround interventions may be directed to close and restart
- Provide that districts accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans lose exclusive chartering authority
- Provide that schools converted into charter schools as a result of turnaround may be district-authorized charter schools, independent charter schools, or Charter School Institute-authorized charter schools, depending on the circumstances
- Clarify that the state may direct that schools may be placed into a network of similarly-situated turnaround schools, in addition to other actions
- Clarify how and under what circumstances schools may be returned to district management
- Provide that the School District Organization Act does not require a vote of electors to approve a reorganization or consolidation plan resulting from turnaround

---

**7. Develop a turnaround coalition comprised of advocacy and practitioner groups.**

The coalition will advise CDE on its turnaround work, assist with turnaround work where appropriate, engage in a coordinated communications strategy designed to raise public awareness around turnaround and school improvement, and build public support both for the state’s turnaround system generally and for local turnaround efforts.

**8. Build state and local capacity for both general and targeted technical assistance to schools and districts.**

Provide help to schools and districts not on Turnaround status for the purpose of decreasing the numbers of schools and districts that eventually need to be placed on Turnaround and increasing the numbers of schools and districts that effectively serve students. Focusing on a tiered system of supports that allows support to be differentiated based on need will ultimately be the most cost-effective way for the state to keep higher-functioning schools and districts out of turnaround. In implementing this recommendation, the state should expect that much of the technical assistance needed will be common across reform initiatives and should be coordinated.

**9. Build an effective funding model.**

To ensure quality implementation, calculate the projected cost for the components listed above, and solicit investments from the state, the U.S. Department of Education, national and local foundations, and other partners. In doing so, the state should plan for both short-term priorities and long-term sustainability. Many of the actions described in this report can begin without additional funding, and this recommendation should not be read to delay implementation until full funding for long-term implementation is achieved.

All stakeholders and decision makers involved in creating and deploying Colorado’s system for turning around schools and districts should consider two key points.

First, *the needs and best interests of students should be the first consideration and the driving factor of decision making.* This requires adults to have the courage to actively make dramatic changes for the benefit of students when warranted, and to consider other approaches in circumstances where dramatic change is not feasible or beneficial for students. In other words, those involved should strive to “do no harm” to students in low-performing schools, whether that harm be through inaction or inappropriate action.

Second, the turnaround initiative in Colorado is one of many exciting and promising reforms. In the past few years, the state has passed legislation aligning its P-20 education system, updated its content standards, created a new way for schools to operate autonomously, passed a new educator evaluation system that makes student growth the primary indicator of performance, and developed a new education accountability system. Colorado is in the process of developing new assessments and promoting more personalized learning in schools. To the extent possible, *decisions made about implementing a school turnaround model should align with the state’s critical work on other initiatives.* This allows for the efficient use of limited resources, and also reinforces the importance of all the reforms currently underway.

---

## CONCLUSION

If Colorado is to build on its impressive record of student-focused reform and innovation, then policies and practices for turning around persistently low-performing schools and districts must be a top priority. Transforming low-performing schools into high-performing schools, or closing them and opening new ones in their place, is the call to action of this report. The children deserve it, and improving Colorado's civic and economic quality of life depends on it.

In this new era of turning around low-performing schools and districts, Colorado has many advantages. The state benefits from a policy environment that promotes the essential conditions for turnaround – credible identification of low-performing schools and districts, broad authority for a variety of different approaches to turnaround, multiple options for external operators, including a state chartering authority, and clear consequences for failure to improve.

Colorado has a nationally-recognized data system that allows many factors to be taken into consideration when assessing school and district performance. There is a rich and varied landscape of education stakeholders who are, for the most part, aligned in seeking real improvements for children. And, Colorado has a reputation for reform and quality of life that is attractive to talent across the country.

To be sure, there are major challenges that line the road toward school and district turnarounds. It is not a well-funded state, neither in terms of state funding, nor in terms of local foundation capacity. The infrastructure for implementing new policies is not optimal. The substantial reform policies that Colorado adopted in recent years are constructive, even transformative, but also a challenge for districts and schools who are struggling.

To reverse the trend of chronically low-performing schools, Coloradans must muster the political will, make the financial investment, and brace for the tough love that is necessary to successfully turn them around. Though every effort must be made to constructively engage students, parents, faculty and local communities, the turnaround process will likely be contentious. But delivering on the commitment to graduate all kids from high school prepared for college and the workforce requires putting the needs of students above the preferences of adults.



## ABOUT THE REPORT

This report was commissioned by Get Smart Schools and the School Turnaround Study Group, a coalition of interested individuals and organizations including:

Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Legacy Foundation, Anschutz Foundation, A+ Denver, Colorado Children’s Campaign, Colorado League of Charter Schools, Charter School Institute, Colorado Succeeds, Daniels Fund, Democrats for Education Reform Colorado, Donnell-Kay Foundation, Teach for America, Stand for Children Colorado

The purpose of the report is to identify the challenges and opportunities for Colorado to implement a comprehensive, innovative school turnaround system. The full report contains extensive data and analysis related to school turnaround policies and practices, and is organized into five sections.

- 1. Doing Turnaround Right – Lessons from across the Country:** *review of the latest developments from turnaround efforts across the country to identify the most recent lessons learned from these efforts.*
- 2. Turnaround in Colorado – the Policy Context:** *reviewing Colorado’s policy framework for district and school accountability, discuss available options for turnaround under that framework, and explore ideas for policy changes that might be needed in order to be able to fully and flexibly use those options in appropriate situations.*
- 3. The Landscape of Low-Performing Schools and Districts in Colorado:** *examining current landscape of low-performing schools and districts in Colorado, identifying common trends and needs and pointing out areas that will require differentiated solutions.*
- 4. Decision Points for Colorado:** *evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of various options.*
- 5. Recommendations for Next Steps**

---

## DOING TURNAROUND RIGHT – LESSONS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

There are many excellent research and policy reports that provide a good overview of lessons learned from prior turnaround efforts. Many of these reports are listed in Appendix A, and their conclusions have been summarized in the Executive Summary. Rather than revisit those conclusions in this report, we will focus on updating what has been learned, using information from interviews with key players in major ongoing turnaround initiatives. In this section, we examine what is happening in other jurisdictions across the country that are currently engaged in turnaround work in order to better understand the range of options for intervention in failing schools and districts and some of the pros and cons of different approaches. As we survey other states, we also examine other states' legal frameworks and conditions needed to support a given intervention.

We also examine the direct and indirect costs associated with different approaches, with particular attention to how the new state functions are staffed. And, finally, we take a quick look at the results so far (which are mostly too early to say much, except for Louisiana), and identify any key lessons learned that might translate into Colorado's environment.

### ***Different State Approaches***

Most states have policies that permit the state to take some form of action to intervene in failing schools. According to the 2013 National Policy Report Card issued by Students First, just 13 states do not permit any form of state or mayoral takeover. These intervention policies differ from state to state. Some state options for dealing with individual failing schools include state seizures, state operation, or chartering out the schools. Other options include the appointment of a state coach or expert advisor for a school, or specific funding directed at special assistance to a school.

For approaches that deal with entire districts considered to be failing (in addition to, or instead of, individual schools only), the options are similar — state seizures, state direct operation of the district, appointment of a coach or expert advisor (special master), or other special assistance to the district.

### ***The Model of the State Recovery District***

The idea of a “recovery district” comes from Louisiana, when it was used, particularly after the unique circumstances of Hurricane Katrina, to turn around and re-create many schools. Under this model, the state creates a new entity that has the powers of a traditional school district and is typically given great authority and autonomy to operate and/or contract with other providers to run schools for the purpose of turning them around and preparing them to return to the home district. The idea of removing failing schools from their home district into a recovery district with more resources and focus has a clear appeal, but also raises some challenges. In this section, we examine some states that have taken this approach.

### **Louisiana Recovery School District**

The Louisiana Recovery School District (LA RSD), a special district overseen by the state Board of Education, was created in 2003 due to general school system failures. After Hurricane Katrina, the state legislature significantly expanded the role of the RSD. Schools rated as academically unacceptable under the state's accountability system for four consecutive years are eligible for transfer into the RSD. Districts that want to lead their own school turnaround efforts enter into an MOU with the state that establishes the conditions that must be met within one year to avoid transfer into the MOU.

The RSD has all of the authority of a traditional school district with respect to the schools and students under its jurisdiction. Currently, it operates 19 schools directly, using staff from Teach for America and The New Teacher Project. Another 58

---

RSD schools are operated by charter operators. Twenty schools are operated under MOUs between their districts and the state, and will be taken over by the RSD unless they improve. RSD schools are required to remain in the district for a minimum of five years to allow for sufficient time for turnaround.

The LA RSD has been the most active state-created district in the country. At its peak, when it operated all of its schools directly, it had a staff of 225 people and large-scale funding from FEMA, federal and private grants, plus a revenue stream from a 1.75 percent fee on student per pupil operating revenues. In its less bureaucratic phase, it works as an organization that mainly charters schools and partners with outside providers.

RSD schools are showing very positive academic outcomes, compared to the past and to non-RSD schools. Charter schools have the best performance, followed by MOU schools and then schools run by the RSD itself. As a result of this process, 80 percent of schools located in New Orleans are now charter schools. Compared to other states' turnaround approaches, Louisiana's RSD is relatively well-studied. Depending upon who was leading it, RSD took different approaches, with varying degrees of success. It seems to work less well when operating like a traditional district, and better when giving schools more autonomy. (See Smith 2012).

No other state has done as much with such a district. At the same time, the national money and talent that moved into Louisiana around school turnarounds was unprecedented and unlikely to be repeated elsewhere.

### **Tennessee Achievement School District**

Tennessee's First to the Top Act of 2010 provides that "priority schools," or those performing in the bottom five percent, are subject to mandatory turnaround interventions determined by the state's commissioner of education. There are three types of interventions:

- A turnaround led by the school's local education agency (LEA)
- A turnaround that takes place in an LEA innovation zone that provides "maximum autonomy" to schools in the zone
- Placement in the newly created Achievement School District

The Achievement School District is an arm of the state department of education that provides oversight for schools removed from the jurisdiction of their home LEA. ASD is now funded by Race to the Top money (Tennessee won \$500 million in the first round of Race to the Top) and federal I-3 grant funds.

The ASD has LEA-type authority to spend and receive federal and state funds for its schools, and also has the authority to use existing school facilities and assets to operate the schools. Under the statute, the ASD may operate schools directly, or may provide for the day-to-day operation of the schools by individuals, government entities, or nonprofit entities. The ASD also has authorizing authority for charter schools in the district. The state commissioner enters into contracts with third-party operators, and operators can request that the commissioner waive any state board rule (with some exceptions). The director of the ASD, Chris Barbic, reports to the state commissioner.

Achievement School District school operators decide whether to retain staff at the school. If a staff member is not hired by the operator, the staff member returns to the general employ of the LEA. Teachers who accept positions with ASD operators give up existing rights to salary and collective bargaining, but retain tenure, pension, and accumulated sick leave. If an operator dismisses a teacher, that teacher returns to the employ of the LEA.

---

Schools were first placed into the ASD at the beginning of the 2012 school year. There are currently six schools in the ASD, five located in Memphis and one in Nashville. Another six Memphis schools will be joining in the 2013-14 school year, and the ASD plans to expand each year. There are currently 83 schools in the state eligible to join the ASD.

Most of the current ASD schools are located in the high-poverty Frayser neighborhood of Memphis, in which 11 out of 15 schools are priority schools. Schools are operated either by the ASD directly or by charter operators. The state has a Charter Incubator (partially funded by Race to the Top), and ASD charter operators include Cornerstone Prep, Aspire Public Schools, Rocketship Education, Gestalt Community Schools, and KIPP Collegiate Memphis. Schools are matched with charter operators using a community process. ASD-run schools use staff from Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and other talent.

ASD schools remain with the district for five years, although the commissioner has the authority to remove schools from the district at any time. Transition planning begins during the third year.

### **Michigan's State School Reform District/Education Achievement Authority**

In 2009, Michigan passed Act 451, which authorized the establishment of a state school reform/design district to be overseen by the state board of education. This structure provides that the lowest five percent of schools across the state are under the supervision of a state school reform officer, who is superintendent of the district.

Local boards with failing schools must submit turnaround plans to the state school reform officer. If the turnaround plan submitted by the local school board is insufficient, the state school reform officer may place the school in the school reform district and may select an appropriate turnaround intervention listed in federal law. Schools that are restarted are to be operated by an educational management organization and may not have collective bargaining agreements. Schools implementing the turnaround option are subject to a turnaround collective bargaining agreement. If more than nine schools are in the district, no more than 50 percent may be implementing the transformation model. All per-pupil revenues go to the leader of the school, who has full authority over curriculum and discretionary spending. To date, the statewide school district has not yet been created, and no schools have been placed in a statewide district.

In 2011, Governor Rick Snyder arranged for the creation of the Education Achievement Authority through a memorandum of understanding between the Detroit Public Schools and Eastern Michigan University. This MOU was prompted by the appointment of a former GM executive as "emergency manager" for the Detroit Public Schools under a pre-existing statute that authorized the appointment of emergency managers for districts that had been financially mismanaged. The MOU provides for the EAA to be overseen by an eleven-member board primarily appointed by the governor. Eastern Michigan University is to serve as charter authorizer. The EAA would be responsible for operating certain Detroit schools, and could do so either directly or through charter or private operators, who would be able to staff their own schools and would receive 95 percent of per-pupil revenue for the schools.

In November 2012, voters repealed a 2011 amendment to the emergency manager law that had dramatically strengthened the powers of emergency managers. Detroit Public Schools consequently filed suit to regain control of the schools under the management of the EAA on the grounds that the emergency manager statute no longer applied. Governor Snyder asserts that Detroit cannot back out of the MOU without the approval of the EAA governing board, most of whom were appointed by him.

In the next legislative session, Republican bills are planned to reinstate the 2011 emergency manager law and to declare that the EAA has the authority of the state school reform district previously enacted in statute and can expand statewide.

---

Republicans also plan to introduce a number of bills that would greatly expand school choice and incentivize private operation of schools. Education reform is currently a matter of great political controversy in Michigan and the outcome is unclear.

### **Recovery District Lessons**

The Louisiana Recovery District is really the only recovery district that can be said to have credible results, as Tennessee's Achievement School District has just begun operations and Michigan's efforts are still mired in political controversy. As stated above, RSD schools are in fact showing improvements in achievement.

A recent analysis of the RSD by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (Hill and Murphy, 2011) reveals a few key points for other states. First, it is absolutely essential to have a reliable accountability system that appropriately identifies failing schools and districts, so there is no controversy about what constitutes failure. But this system should also allow some room for flexibility and for upward trends in schools. Since few states have an abundance of talent, the state must incentivize and support an inflow of talent from elsewhere. Whatever the state agency looks like, there should be a state agency that can control, transform and/or convert schools. Politically, the state must expect opposition and foot-dragging – some opponents will be implacable, but others may be persuadable. The organization needs credibility and “early wins,” with a critical mass in a metropolitan area – rural turnarounds are much more challenging. Finally, contracting out much of the work to third parties is essential.

The Fordham Foundation (Smith 2012) also examined the LA RSD and considered whether the model would transfer to Ohio. They suggested considering a nonprofit agency, rather than a state agency, for orchestrating the turnarounds, to achieve greater autonomy. They too worried that LA RSD could be a national “one-off” with so much national money and talent flowing there, post Katrina. They emphasize the value of moving fast, but that too many early school startup/turn-around failures are problematic. And, they note the importance of a charismatic, insurgent leader who is willing to bear the political heat, as Paul Pastorek did in Louisiana.

### ***Other Models of State Intervention***

The creation of a new school district to handle turnarounds is the most dramatic type of reform. In some cases, states do not create a new school district, but instead create another type of organization or structure that has the same purpose – overseeing the school while it is undergoing turnaround and creating an environment most likely to lead to turnaround success.

### **Indiana – Turnaround Academies and Lead Partners**

The Indiana legislature passed P.L. 221 in 2011 to update the state's 1999 accountability law and to add letter grades to school performance (A-F). The law also provides that schools in their sixth consecutive year of academic probation are subject to mandatory turnaround actions, determined by the state board of education. These actions may include closing the school, merging it with a nearby school, terminating the principal and staff, bringing in new management, and/or other actions recommended by the state department of education.

If the school is not closed and is taken over by the state, it is designated a Turnaround Academy and will be operated by a Turnaround School Operator (selected through a state RFP process). Turnaround School Operators have complete autonomy over the operations of the school, and are not bound by existing contracts. The TSO spends one year in observation and planning, and then takes over the school under a four-year contract. The state board of education determines the amount necessary to fund the school's operations, and withholds this amount from the per-pupil revenue that would otherwise go to the school's home district. Turnaround Academies are overseen by the state office

---

of school improvement and turnaround. Currently there are three authorized TSOs, all for-profit entities: Charter Schools USA, EdPower, and Edison Learning. They operate six schools in Indianapolis and one school in Gary.

If a school is not closed and is not taken over by the state, the district works with a Lead Partner to turn the school around. Lead Partners are also authorized by the state, and currently include Scholastic Achievement Partners, Wireless Generation, The New Teacher Project, and Voyager Learning.

In using this model, the state deliberately chose not to add an additional layer of state bureaucracy, as in Louisiana's RSD. Former state superintendent Tony Bennett was a powerful force for reform, but lost the election in November 2012. The new superintendent has expressed concerns about spending state funds to hire private companies as operators.

### **Connecticut – Commissioner's Turnaround Network**

In 2012, Connecticut established the Commissioner's Turnaround Network, operated out of the state's School Turnaround Office. This network will eventually manage a maximum of 25 schools, selected from schools performing in the bottom 40 percent, with preference given to volunteers and those whose collective bargaining agreements are expiring. The school turnaround office enters into contracts with nonprofit or higher education turnaround operators; the district can be a partner in the turnaround or the school turnaround office serves as a temporary trustee for the school. Teachers in Network schools reapply for their positions or return to the home district. While collective bargaining agreements remain in effect, they may be modified, and disputes are settled by an arbitrator. The Commissioner's Turnaround Network is funded with \$25 million in new funds.

The state turnaround office also has broad authority to implement turnaround options for schools in the bottom 20 percent who are not part of the Commissioner's Network. Options include reconstituting schools, imposing new curriculum, contracting with a third party to operate the school, or naming a new superintendent. Schools that reconstitute as COMMPact schools have autonomy over budget, curriculum, and governance; teachers in COMMPact schools may negotiate modifications to the district collective bargaining agreement.

Towns with the lowest-performing schools must direct their share of school funding to the state, which disburses the funds back to the town as long as it complies with state directives. In addition, the state has the authority to terminate local school boards and replace them with new members appointed by the commissioner. (In Connecticut, schools are operated by towns, and the school district is considered an arm of the state.)

### **Delaware – Partnership Zone**

Delaware's Partnership Zone, created as part of its winning Race to the Top proposal, is a network of 10 of the state's lowest-performing schools. Schools in the Partnership Zone stay with their districts, but are monitored and supported by the state department of education's School Turnaround Unit.

Districts with Partnership Zone schools are required to enter into an MOU with the department of education that provides for autonomy deemed necessary to implement the turnaround model. Partnership Zone schools that have collective bargaining agreements must "address" provisions in the agreement that could negatively affect turnaround implementation; if the parties are unable to agree, the state's secretary of education chooses between the sides. Districts are also required to create a governance structure for the turnaround work that involves either setting up a district turnaround office to lead turnaround or selecting an external lead partner to work with the turnaround school.

---

## **New Jersey**

New Jersey recently received funding from the Broad Center to enter into a contract with the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop seven Regional Achievement Centers, charged with working with 258 of the state's lowest-performing schools. The state's original proposal to Broad also requested funding to set up an Achievement School District for the state's lowest-performing schools. This part of the proposal would require new legislation, and has raised significant controversy in the state.

## **New York**

There is some evidence that state-sanctioned mayoral takeovers have had some positive results in some cities (Wong and Shen, 2003). Making a powerful political actor accountable for a city's schools appears to focus attention in a positive manner. New York City is an extreme example of this approach, where Mayor Bloomberg's office has taken over the city's schools with the blessing of state legislation.

### ***What We Know Doesn't Work – Lessons from Transformation and Other "Light Touch" Efforts***

The more incremental models of turnarounds also have limited data and none show dramatic successes. There are few positive results from models that implement coaching, increase training, or focus on new programs. While they might make initial sense, they are simply too minor to turn around a failing school or district. A failing school is simply not in a position to benefit from incremental efforts that yield results in more functional schools. If it was that easy, earlier interventions, including the transformation model that is part of the menu of federal turnaround options, might have worked.

Most [persistently low-performing] schools ... are like organisms that have built immunities, over years of attempted intervention, to the "medicine" of incremental reform. Low-expectation culture, reform-fatigued faculty, high-percentage staff turnover, inadequate leadership, and insufficient authority for fundamental change all contribute to a general lack of success, nationally, in turning failing schools around and the near-total lack of success in conducting successful turnaround at scale.

Mass Insight, The Turnaround Challenge (2007) ←

### ***Financial Considerations***

Not surprisingly, costs vary widely in state turnaround efforts. To some degree, turnaround tends to "cost" whatever resources the state actually have available to them for this purpose, as achieving major success with turnarounds is of course challenging.

One key cost issue is whether the state already has some related capacity. The state is ahead of the game if it has a statewide charter authorizer that could help play an important role in turnarounds. An excellent state data system that provides credible performance assessments is also critical. Having these pieces already in place can save some additional costs.

Another financial element is whether or not existing local spending can be captured in the turnaround process. An argument can be made that failing schools are by definition wasting money, and this money could be re-aligned to help with turnarounds.

Another issue is whether some of these costs can, in effect, be shifted to the federal government. Districts and schools that receive money from federal programs may be able to use this funding for turnaround. For example, Title I schools on turnaround may be able to tap into School Improvement Grant funds. Federal charter school start-up funding is available for charter conversions or restarts. Title II money might be used to train teacher leadership teams. As the Obama administration begins its second term, it has signaled a focus on teacher quality, and there may be financial support for teacher leaders in turnaround schools.

Within a particular state, another funding issue is whether or not the local and/or national foundations will support the turnaround activity. In particular, foundations can be exceptionally useful in jump-starting the turnaround process.

*Broad cost ranges for different state approaches*

Approach	Capacity Required	Costs	Issues
New recovery district	Strong leader, Infrastructure for new district, new school turnaround leadership	\$10 million plus for district, plus individual school costs	Issues will influence costs
Directly operating schools	New school turnaround leadership	Per school -- \$1 million at outset plus \$50,000 annually	Conditions for transferring operations back
Converting schools to charters or opening new charters	Authorizer, charter operators	Per school -- \$1 million at outset plus \$50,000 annually	Federal charter start-up dollars available
Coaching	Coaches with expertise	\$100,000 per school per year	Little leverage Few demonstrated turnaround results
SEA assistance to schools	SEA expertise and capacity	\$100,000 - \$500,000 per school per year	Little leverage Few demonstrated turnaround results
District seizure by state	Strong leader, SEA expertise and capacity	\$500,000-\$3 million per district	No state does more than three at a time
Assistance to districts	Strong leader, SEA expertise and capacity	\$100,000-\$1 million per district	Little leverage Few demonstrated turnaround results

---

### ***Political Considerations***

There is no doubt that dealing with turnaround schools and districts is a very political process, with parents, taxpayers, school boards, and other stakeholders heavily involved. There are many potential veto points, or places where political tensions can derail sound education decisions.

Evidence from other states points to a few key political lessons. First, where there are more dire education situations, there is also more political cover for stronger actions. For example, Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, the collapse of the economy and school district governance in Detroit, and the school bankruptcy in Oakland provided special situations that changed the political conditions. Each allowed a fairly strong form of intervention by the respective states.

Second, when there is special funding available, for whatever reasons (post-Katrina Louisiana recovery funds, Tennessee's victory in the first round of Race to the Top), this allows for more fundamental, extensive, and varied turnaround approaches.

Third, if they are savvy politically, states or cities don't attempt to take strong actions toward large numbers of districts (or schools) all at once. They use triage or other prioritization approaches that allow for some "early wins" and that demonstrate to low-performing districts a sense of seriousness and urgency, even while state resources and capacity are limited.

It is also true that the degree of any political backlash is related to the breadth and length of intervention. Generally, it seems that relatively strong actions in weak central city school districts are tolerated, given long periods of failures by the districts. Toothless assistance is of course okay in most places, as it disrupts almost nothing. But opposition appears to grow in proportion to number of localities affected – something to be aware of in a state-wide effort. When states have stepped in to repair a district's financial situation, as in California and Texas, there have been some improvements in student achievement. But premature abandonment of the district due to political pressure is a real concern, as appears to have happened in Oakland, California.

While most of these political concerns are about moving too fast or too forcefully, there may be circumstances when parents want to push for major school turnaround efforts. So-called "parent trigger" laws have been passed in California, Texas, Mississippi and Louisiana (and were recently considered in 18 other states). These laws typically provide that if a majority of parents in a poorly performing school sign a petition, the school will be closed, have its leadership changed, or will be converted to a charter (the laws vary on the consequences). This approach has been used most aggressively in California, with parent groups active in pushing petitions for change. Colorado has a relatively narrow version of a parent trigger law, allowing students, parents, and/or staff at a district-authorized charter school to move their school from district control to the state's Charter School Institute.

Finally, as with the RSD model, real success with other approaches also seems to require a charismatic insurgent leader willing and able to bear political heat. Steve Adamowski has fulfilled this role fairly well in Connecticut, and Chris Cerf might in New Jersey. Tony Bennett, of course, was voted out of this role in Indiana. For such a "czar" to be successful, they usually require unwavering support from a popular politician, typically the state's governor.

### ***State Legislation Needed***

Generally, state legislation for turnarounds tends to be relatively simple and direct. It typically builds upon the existing accountability and charter laws of the state. Some legislation simply reasserts the intrinsic power of the State Board to be responsible for K-12 education, even when that education is provided by districts. States are also recognizing the need to expressly provide autonomy for turnaround leaders so they can implement the dramatic changes needed.

---

Some legislation does create new powers and new institutions. This is true of the Recovery School District in Louisiana, the Achievement School District in Tennessee, and the school reform/redesign district in Michigan. Again, the dire nature of school failures in these areas, combined sometimes with opportunity (the Race to the Top competition), helped these legislative efforts move forward.

### ***The Unique Issues Presented by Rural Turnarounds***

The most publicized approach to turnarounds, one that involves bringing in outside groups and possibly charter school operators, is most likely to work in urban and suburban areas. This approach presents a much bigger challenge in rural areas, where it is quite difficult to attract charter providers and new teacher talent. Rural areas also face high transportation costs for coaching or other assistance. Despite the lower numbers of students involved, a district takeover and/or direct operation can cost almost as much in a smaller rural district as in a bigger district.

As a result, some states are considering rebuilding low-performing rural schools using technology-heavy models. There is no good evidence on this yet.

### ***Returning Schools to Their Districts***

If a state pulls a turnaround school out of its district, and beats the odds by successfully turning it around, there is an issue about what happens next. Returning it to the district might make sense, but not if problems remain in the districts that helped caused the school failure in the first place.

In Louisiana, after success in the RSD, there was considerable pressure to return the schools to local control. That pressure is now somewhat diminished, and there might be an option for schools to choose to stay in the RSD indefinitely. In Tennessee, it is expected that schools will return to local control, and there is not a clear option for schools to remain independent. In Michigan's volatile environment, the Detroit school board has sued to regain control of its schools. Return to district control should be handled cautiously. After state intervention in Oakland, California, for financial reasons, the return of the district to the local board wasted much of what had been accomplished.

### ***Lessons for Colorado***

Pulling all of these activities and ideas from other states together, there are some issues that Colorado policymakers must consider in moving forward with school and district turnarounds.

First, Colorado's constitution requires that the state's authority for overseeing the public schools be balanced with the power of the local school board to control instruction for schools in its district. Some of the sweeping exercises of state power seen in other states may not be possible in Colorado, or the state may need to proceed more carefully. With that said, local control should not be used to absolve the state of its obligation to ensure quality schools, nor should the state's oversight authority be used to trample local control where there is no reason to do so.

CDE and its partners in turnaround will need political support to push the school turnaround agenda hard. The state should consider whether the tools and powers that are already in place are sufficient, and whether any new legislation is needed to further strengthen or clarify the state's ability to intervene in turnaround situations. In particular, the state should consider the language of policies from other states that would be permissible in a local control state and would make sense for Colorado.

Colorado has an elected State Board of Education that appoints the Commissioner of Education. This is true in some of the other states, but not all. This may lead to political dynamics that are relatively unique. On the one hand, asking elected

---

policy makers to approve politically challenging decisions, such as closing schools or removing district accreditation, may not be very effective. On the other hand, it may be that placing elected officials from across the state in charge of these decisions, and setting up an infrastructure that ensures that they receive comprehensive and accurate information about failing schools and districts, may itself operate to provide essential political cover for turnarounds.

The availability of resources for districts and schools subject to takeover might reduce political pressure, creating something of a “grand bargain.” It is unlikely that a new Race to the Top competition will occur anytime soon. However, following Connecticut’s lead and creating a Commissioner’s Network in which schools apply for entrance and are provided with additional resources and support, might be a good approach. The resources required to convince schools and districts to aggressively pursue their own disruption are not trivial, however.

Colorado will need to consider its ability to attract enough good charter operators and other turnaround partners. Louisiana’s success is due in large part to the national talent pool that flocked there after Hurricane Katrina, excited by the ability to build an urban school district essentially from the group up.

Finally, successful state turnaround initiatives have benefited from charismatic leaders such as Chris Adamowski in Connecticut, Chris Cerf in New Jersey, Tony Bennett in Indiana, and Paul Pastorek in Louisiana. Who will be Colorado’s face for turnarounds? Or would Colorado be better served by pulling together a diverse coalition of supporters that is capable of moving the work forward even as leaders turn over?

---

## TURNAROUND IN COLORADO – THE POLICY CONTEXT

The previous section discussed the importance of a sound and flexible state policy framework, looking at those in other states. This section will review the current policy framework in Colorado for identifying and taking action with respect to low-performing schools and districts. It discusses the options that are currently available and makes suggestions for policy changes that could improve the feasibility and success of these options.

### **Balancing Local Control and State Oversight**

One important element of Colorado’s policy context is the constitutional balance between the right of local school boards to control instruction in their schools (Colo. Const. Art. IX, Sec. 15) and the responsibility of the State Board of Education for general supervision of the state’s schools (Colo. Const. Art. IX, Sec. 1). While other states often refer to a tradition of local control, Colorado has this tradition enshrined in the state constitution – one of only six states in the country to do so. This has implications for the respective roles of the state and its districts that are not present in other states.

For example, in Connecticut, the state has the ability to essentially fire the members of a school board and appoint their replacements. This would not be possible in Colorado. Another common policy in other states is a requirement that local districts transfer all funding for students in schools that are taken over to the state or recovery district. It is unlikely that a similar policy would be possible in Colorado, at least with respect to local funds, as the state supreme court has ruled that the state constitution requires that local districts have control over locally raised funds and those funds cannot be transferred to an entity over which the district has no control. See *Owens v. Colorado Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 92 P.3d 933 (Colo. 2004); *Lujan v. Colorado State Board of Education*, 649 P.2d 1005 (Colo. 1982).

However, there are limitations on local control that specifically relate to the state’s responsibility for general supervision of the schools. In *Board of Education v. Booth*, 984 P.2d 639 (Colo. 1999), a local school district challenged the provisions of the Charter School Act that allowed the State Board of Education to approve a charter school application that had been twice rejected by the local board. The state supreme court held that because the law still allowed for local negotiation of the actual terms of the charter, this represented an appropriate balancing of state and local authority. Similarly, in *Boulder Valley School District v. Colorado State Board of Education*, 217 P.3d 918 (Colo. App. 2009), an appellate court upheld the authority of the state Charter School Institute to authorize schools located in the boundary of a district that did not have exclusive chartering authority. Nothing in the state’s constitution, wrote the court, prohibited the creation of a system in which some schools were controlled by the state rather than by local districts.

Thus, in Colorado, the state’s turnaround initiative must represent an appropriate balance of local control and state oversight responsibility. A policy that does not strike this balance will not stand. As the *Owens* court said, the choice is between amending the constitution or creating a program that meets the mandates of the constitution.

### **Overview of S.B. 163 Accountability Framework**

Turnarounds in Colorado are part of the overall school and district accountability framework established by S.B. 163. A more detailed overview of the statutory accountability framework is contained in Appendix B. Generally speaking, S.B. 163 places schools and districts are placed in categories based on their performance with respect to student academic achievement, student academic growth, academic growth gaps among groups of students, and for schools and districts serving high school students, indicators related to post-secondary and workforce readiness. Placement in these categories is determined by the percentage of total possible points earned by the school or district. Schools and districts are then responsible for developing and implementing plans to guide their strategies for improvement over the next two years.

S.B. 163 sets up parallel but not identical accountability structures for schools and districts. This is not the case in most other states, where the accountability system leading to state takeover is primarily directed at schools. As a result, this report will separately discuss S.B. 163’s provisions relating to schools and districts where relevant. It should also be noted that a district’s overall performance can be high even if it has several poorly-performing schools; conversely, a district’s low rating does not mean that all schools in that district are poor performers.

School performance is measured by the state’s School Performance Framework. Based on its performance, each school is assigned a type of improvement plan.<sup>1</sup>

Percentage of total possible points received	Plan required
Elementary and middle schools – 59% or above High schools – 60% or above	Performance
Elementary and middle schools – between 46 and 58% High schools – between 47 and 59%	Improvement
Elementary and middle schools – between 37 and 46% High schools – between 33 and 46%	Priority Improvement
Elementary and middle schools – less than 37% High schools – less than 33%	Turnaround

For districts, accreditation status is determined by performance on the state’s District Performance Framework. There are five categories of accreditation:

Percentage of total possible points received	Accreditation status
80% or above	Accredited with Distinction
Between 64 and 80%	Accredited
Between 52 and 64%	Accredited with Improvement Plan
Between 42 and 52%	Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan
Below 42%	Accredited with Turnaround Plan

S.B. 163’s language provides that under most circumstances, schools and districts will analyze their own data and determine appropriate improvement strategies with minimal oversight or intervention from the state. However, schools and districts assigned Turnaround Plans must choose their strategies from a statutory list of prescribed interventions, and districts are responsible for ensuring that the plans are implemented. At the very lowest level of performance, and

<sup>1</sup> Districts may impose tougher standards on their schools.

after the school and/or the district has had the opportunity to improve but fails to do so, the state can mandate dramatic interventions. The State Board of Education can decide to remove a district's accreditation and require that the district undertake prescribed actions to be eligible for reaccreditation. For schools, the State Board of Education determines an appropriate restructuring option.<sup>2</sup>

Overall, this framework seems to represent an intentional legislative effort to balance state oversight authority and local control. The state's oversight authority is arguably meaningless if it has no ability to intervene in chronically-underperforming schools and districts after those schools and districts have had the opportunity to turn their performance around. Indeed, a system of state accreditation of districts is required by federal education law, and having such a system necessarily contemplates the potential removal of accreditation when performance does not meet standards.

### **Identifying Schools and Districts Eligible for State-Mandated Turnaround Interventions**

The process by which schools and districts are placed in different performance categories appears to have credibility across the state, a very important factor in effective state accountability systems. The School and District Frameworks used to measure performance are generally viewed as reasonable, and schools and districts are allowed to appeal any placement with which they disagree. As a result, this identification process is likely to be deemed an appropriate use of the state's supervisory power.

Those schools and districts that are subject to state-mandated interventions fall into two categories: those that have failed to make substantial progress under a Turnaround Plan, and those that have spent five consecutive years in Priority Improvement or Turnaround status. These categories are similar to those found in other states' turnaround policies, in which the state is given immediate authority to intervene in the very lowest-performing schools (such as in Louisiana and Tennessee) and/or in schools that have proven unable to lift themselves out of crisis after a prescribed number of years (such as in Indiana).

In Colorado, the State Board of Education has determined that schools and districts fail to make "substantial progress" on their Turnaround Plans when they fail to improve on performance indicators or fail to meet the implementation benchmarks and interim targets and measures in the Turnaround Plan. Because S.B. 163 requires Turnaround Plans to be designed so that successful implementation will lift the school or district out of the turnaround category into the next highest category, schools assigned Turnaround Plans for a second or third consecutive year are by definition eligible for immediate restructuring under S.B. 163. CDE is not currently interpreting its authority in this way.<sup>3</sup>

The second category of schools and districts eligible for state-mandated turnaround interventions are those schools and districts that have been placed in the lowest two performance categories for more than five consecutive years. According to S.B. 163, the State Board of Education must intervene after schools have implemented their fifth consecutive Priority

---

<sup>2</sup> S.B. 163 uses the term "restructuring," which also is used in federal turnaround law but in a slightly different way. This report uses that term as it is used in S.B. 163.

<sup>3</sup> The language of S.B. 163 with respect to schools states: "If a public school fails to make adequate progress under its turnaround plan or continues to operate under a priority improvement or turnaround plan for a combined total of five consecutive years, the commissioner shall assign the state review panel to critically evaluate the public school's performance and determine whether to recommend [one or more of the listed options]." C.R.S. sec. 22-11-210(5)(a). The State Board of Education then takes those recommendations into account and "shall determine which of the actions ... the local school board for a district public school or the institute for an institute charter school shall take and direct the local school board or institute accordingly." C.R.S. sec. 22-11-210(5)(b). Similarly, a district may lose accreditation if it has failed to make substantial progress under its turnaround plan, has been accredited with priority plan category of lower for five consecutive school years, or has substantially failed to comply with financial management and reporting requirements of Articles 44 and 45 of the School Code, and loss of accreditation is necessary to protect the interest of students and parents. See C.R.S. 22-11-209(1).

---

Improvement or Turnaround Plan, and after districts have been assigned the accreditation rating of Accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan for the fifth consecutive year.

More information about the schools and districts in these two categories can be found in the next section and in Appendices B and C.

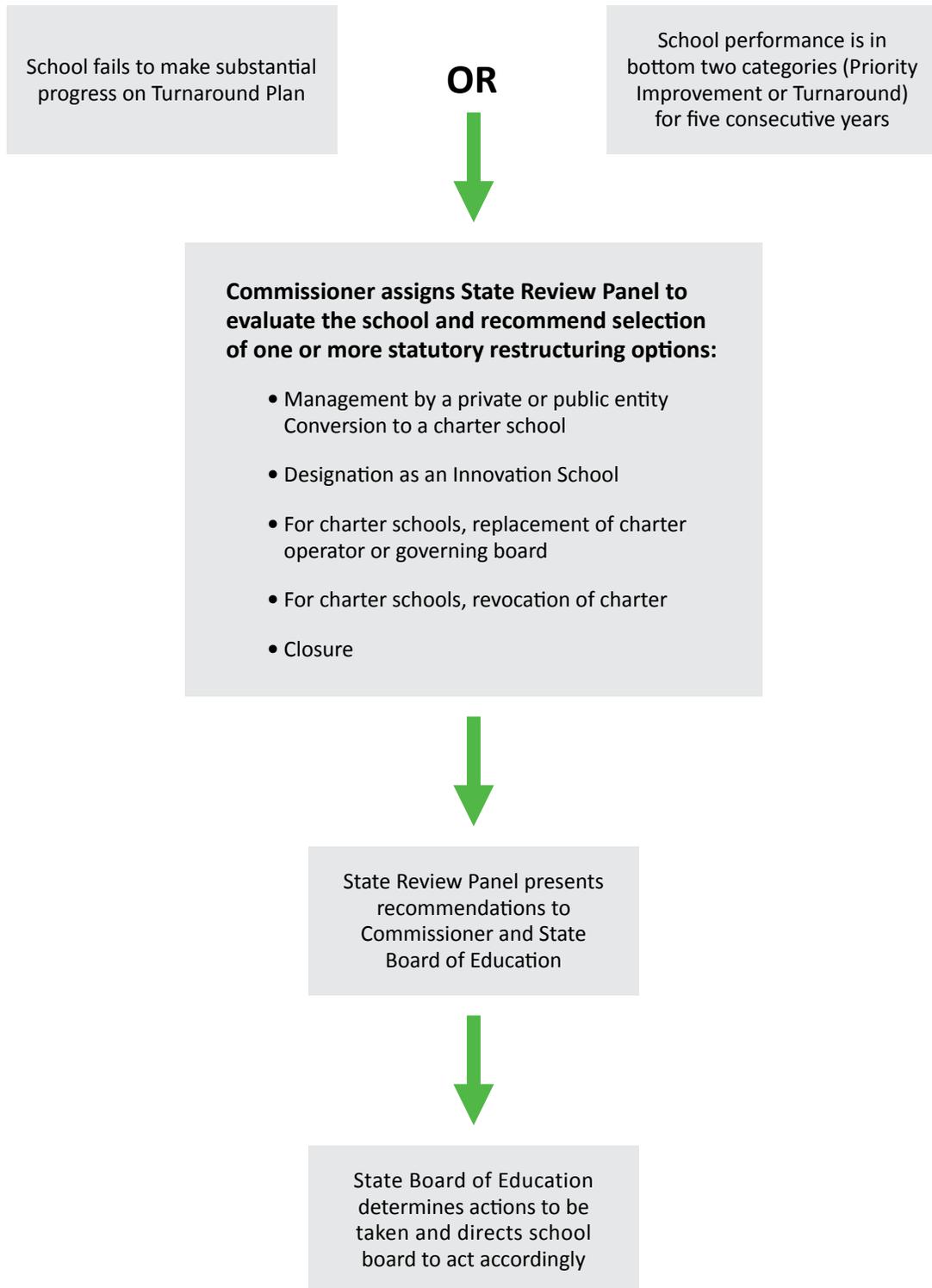
### **Failing Schools: State-Mandated Restructuring Options**

In Colorado, a school that meets the criteria for state-mandated turnaround interventions is subject to one or more of the following statutory interventions:

- Management by a private or public entity other than the district
- Conversion to a charter school
- Designation as an Innovation School
- For schools that are already charter schools, replacement of the charter operator or the governing board
- For charter schools, revocation of charter
- Closure

The State Board of Education decides which action/s are appropriate, taking into consideration the recommendations of the State Review Panel established by S.B. 163, and directs the local school board (or Charter School Institute, if applicable) accordingly.

***S.B. 163's process for state intervention in failing schools***



*Management by a private or public entity other than the district*

This is very broad language that permits the state to place the school under management of a third party. This third party could be a private or nonprofit organization, another higher-performing school district or BOCES, a new recovery district, a unit of the Colorado Department of Education, the Charter School Institute, or a different state or local government entity (such as a mayor’s office).<sup>4</sup> For those in Colorado advocating for a state recovery organization that takes control of failing schools, this is the language that could allow that to happen.

The statute does not specify any criteria for selecting the third-party management organization, or specify who selects or contracts with the organization. It states only that this is an option that the State Board can direct the local school board to take.

However, because the statute specifically states that management is to be taken away from the district, this is likely an option to be selected under circumstances in which the district is not interested in or particularly capable of directing turnaround reform itself. This conclusion is bolstered by reviewing the differences between the statutory language directing third party management of the district and/or its schools due to loss of district accreditation, in which the arrangement requires the agreement of the school district, and the language directing third party management of schools as a result of school restructuring, in which the language simply states that the third party must be an entity other than the district and has no language requiring district agreement. Compare C.R.S. sec. 22-11-209(2)(a)(I)(B) with sec. 22-11-210(5)(a)(i).

Thus, a better outcome seems more likely if the state directs an appropriate provider to play this role, taking into account the school and district circumstances. For example, the state could direct that the school be placed into a statewide recovery organization. Or the state could select from a go-to-list of third-party operators capable of providing effective turnaround options, having developed the list in advance to ensure that the list included a variety of providers to meet different types of school needs across the state.

**S.B. 163 Turnaround Intervention Option: Management by a Third Party**

“... With regard to a district public school that is not a charter school, that the district public school shall be managed by a private or public entity other than the school district ...”

• CRS 22-11-210(5)(a)(I) ←

One potential challenge for this option is that the statute does not necessarily provide for the autonomous conditions needed for the third-party manager to be able to implement dramatic reforms. Other options, such as conversion to charter school or Innovation School, automatically involve grants of at least some autonomy. It would make no sense for a third-party manager to take over control of the school but still be subject to existing collective bargaining agreement provisions, staffing choices, or district regulations.

<sup>4</sup> Although a recent Students First report characterizes Colorado policy as not permitting mayoral control, we read the broad language of S.B. 163 as permitting mayoral management of turnaround schools.

----->

This issue could be addressed by combining the third-party manager option with the charter conversion option – the third party manager selects a charter operator to manage the day-to-day operations of the school, and the charter operator would have the autonomy given to all charter operators. However, S.B. 163 directs the State Board to select “one” of the restructuring options, which means that combining options may not be permissible. S.B. 163 could be amended to clarify the conditions under which third-party managers will operate, which could include language modeled from other state statutes that provide that schools facing mandatory interventions are not subject to existing contracts or district rules, and that third-party operators have the ability to request waivers from the state as needed to implement their turnaround strategies.

The statute also does not specify how the turnaround management provider will be funded. As discussed previously, a few states direct per-pupil funding attributable to students at the school to be diverted to the recovery district or third-party provider. Other states have provided state turnaround funding, and/or specified that federal School Improvement Grants are to be used for this purpose. Colorado Supreme Court precedent would seem to prohibit a requirement that districts send locally-raised funds to another entity, even in circumstances where a school is failing. See *Owens v. Colorado Congress, supra*.

Finally, the statute also does not discuss how the school would, if ever, transition from the third-party manager back to district control. Other states typically set boundaries on this process. Given that the local district is losing control over the school (potentially an infringement on its right of local control), there should be a provision that lets both the state and the district know the process for returning the school to the district once performance has been improved.

Some examples of potential third-party management entities, and their potential applicability to different school situations, can be found in Appendix I.

#### *Conversion to a charter school*

The use of charter school operators to run turnaround schools has been particularly effective in Louisiana, and is an active option for most states with strong state turnaround policies. This option is particularly attractive in Colorado, which has a long history of strong charter school operators and an independent statewide authorizer in the Charter School Institute.

#### S.B. 163 Turnaround Intervention Option - Charter School Conversion

“...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 ...”

C.R.S. 22-11-210(5)

“Whenever the state board determines that it is necessary to recommend conversion of a public school to an independent public school pursuant to the provisions of section 22-210(5), the state board shall issue a request for proposals pursuant to subsection (2) of this section and supervise the appointment of a review committee pursuant to section 22-30.5-304.” <

S.B. 163 allows the State Board to direct the conversion of a turnaround school to a charter school. Colorado's Charter Schools Act provides for the authorization of three separate types of charter schools. The first is a district-authorized charter school, which operates under a charter with a school district. The second type of charter school is authorized by the state Charter School Institute (CSI). CSI may authorize charter schools located in districts that have not applied for and received exclusive chartering authority from the State Board of Education. Finally, independent charter schools may be created when a school has been persistently low-performing.<sup>5</sup> In the case of an independent charter school, the school's new operator is selected through an RFP process conducted by the State Board of Education, and may be any type of entity. The local school board then negotiates with the selected operator on the terms of the charter, so that the charter is ultimately between the operator and the district.<sup>6</sup>

The language of S.B. 163 appears to direct that conversion of a low-performing school to a charter school would occur through the independent charter school process. This may not be the most efficient procedure available, since it requires a rather cumbersome RFP process and places the State Board in the middle of the conversion. The one school converted to an independent charter school using this process, Cole Middle School in Denver, went through a long and painful process.<sup>7</sup> In addition, independent charter schools remain under the jurisdiction of their home districts, which may not always be desirable.

We suggest instead that charter school conversions occurring as part of turnaround result in schools that are chartered either by districts or by the Charter School Institute.<sup>8</sup> Higher-functioning districts might want to use a charter schools as part of a portfolio strategy to attract new providers to operate low-performing schools, as is the case in Denver. In cases where schools are located in districts that are not well-situated to be responsible authorizers, the Charter School Institute could be tapped to serve as the authorizer – essentially serving as a third-party recovery manager/district for low-performing charter schools across the state. This could be made automatic by an amendment removing exclusive chartering authority from districts that have been in turnaround or priority status for three or more consecutive years.

Other options available in the Act that could be more explicitly tied to turnaround include the ability of the Charter School Institute, as an organization representing charter schools, to request that the State Board of Education remove a district's exclusive chartering authority. C.R.S. 22-30.5-504(7.5). This would then permit CSI to authorize charter schools in the district.

In short, the Charter Schools Act contains a plethora of ways to use charter conversions as tools for turnaround, but they are confusing and not optimally aligned.

### *Designation as an Innovation School*

The Innovation Schools Act provides that schools may apply to their districts for Innovation School status, and that the application must show evidence of staff support for the application and, where the application seeks to waive collective bargaining agreement provisions, evidence of staff support through a secret vote. The Innovation Schools Act was originally intended as a way for schools that wished to engage in innovative practices to take the initiative to do so, provided the

---

<sup>5</sup> This provision, CRS 22-30.5-301 et seq., has been in effect since 2001.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that recent legislation (S.B. 12-067) prohibits school boards and the Charter School Institute from entering into charter contracts with for-profit operators. Instead, a for-profit organization can only enter into a contract for services with a school, and only if the charter school governing board is independent of the for-profit entity.

<sup>7</sup> See Anderson and DeCesare (2006) for lessons learned from this experience.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to remember that the school would be run on a day-to-day basis by a charter operator, not the district or the Charter School Institute.

district and school staff was supportive of the change. Although S.B. 163 relies heavily on Innovation Schools as a tool for turnaround, that act has not been amended to provide optimal flexibility for that purpose.

### S.B. 163 Turnaround Option – Innovation Schools

“...That the district public school be granted status as an Innovation School pursuant to section 22-32.5-105 ...”

C.R.S. 22-11-210(5)(a)(IV)

First, Innovation Schools are by definition tied to their districts. It is the district’s application to the State Board of Education that allows the district to seek waivers to allow the school to act autonomously. Without district support, the school cannot gain Innovation School status (which must be granted by the local school board) and has no avenue to get the necessary waivers from the State Board of Education. In other words, the Innovation School Act as it currently stands does not have the ability to convey autonomy on schools without the support of their districts, and so is not very useful in the case of schools located in districts that do not support the school’s efforts.

With that said, it can be anticipated that some districts in Colorado will want to actively engage in turnaround initiatives with their schools, and the Innovation Schools Act provides an excellent route to school autonomy in that situation. The most visible turnaround initiatives in Colorado today are those led by the Denver Public Schools, which has engaged nationally-recognized lead turnaround partners to work closely with failing schools located in two Innovation Zones in the district. DPS’ turnaround work is sophisticated and aggressive, and should be touted as a model for those districts with the inclination and capacity to direct their own turnaround initiatives. The ability to have districts use the Innovation Schools Act as a platform for turnarounds in their districts is a real strength of Colorado policy.

However, as discussed above, a turnaround leadership team must have the ability to remove staff who are not on board with the dramatic changes needed for turnaround. As such, requiring staff support for designation of an Innovation School will often not be appropriate in a turnaround situation. In addition, requiring staff support for a new school to open as an Innovation School would take away one of the avenues to providing autonomy for a new school start resulting from a closure. If staff votes are required for Innovation School designation in turnaround situations, that likely means that those schools would instead be converted into charter schools as the only reliable avenue to turnaround leadership autonomy.

The Denver Classroom Teachers Association has sued the Denver Public Schools over the designation of eight existing and two new schools as Innovation Schools without evidence of staff support. That case is currently pending in Denver district court.<sup>9</sup> Attorney General John Suthers has issued an advisory opinion stating that local school boards and the State Board of Education have authority to grant waivers for a school that has not yet opened, even though the staff votes otherwise would not occur. He reasoned that to require otherwise would be contrary to the innovation and flexibility promoted by the Act.<sup>10</sup> This conclusion would seem to be supported by C.R.S. sec. 22-32-109, which allows the local board of education to delegate employment decisions to a designated Innovation School. See also C.R.S. 22-32-110(1)(g) (allowing board to delegate authority to terminate employees to Innovation School).

<sup>9</sup> *Denver Classroom Teachers Association v. Denver Public Schools*, Case No. 11CV4215.

<sup>10</sup> Attorney General Opinion No. 12-01, issued January 23, 2012.

Another possibility to consider is the use of the Innovation Schools Act to grant autonomy to a school or group of schools that is placed under the management of a recovery district, should Colorado decide to create one.

We recommend that the language of the Innovation Schools Act be clarified to streamline the process for designation when that designation occurs as part of a turnaround plan. These clarifications should state explicitly that district rules and collective bargaining agreement provisions falling into categories affecting staffing, scheduling, curricular and instructional practices, and other key school operational decisions, are automatically waived when Innovation School designation occurs under a turnaround plan. In addition, the provision requiring local school board approval of an Innovation School application should be revised, so that districts cannot unilaterally block Innovation School designation. The Innovation School tool will work much better when districts are supportive of the changes, but districts should not be permitted to be an obstacle without cause.

These changes could occur by amendments that provide that a school on priority or turnaround status for three consecutive years, for example, is automatically accorded Innovation School status or membership in an Innovation Zone, notwithstanding other procedures set forth in the Act. In addition, new schools that are opened in connection with the closure of failing schools – as restarts, for example – should be permitted to open as Innovation Schools.

These amendments would provide unequivocal support for the use of the Innovation Schools status as a key way for turnaround school leaders to gain the autonomy they need to quickly put dramatic changes in place. If the Innovation Schools Act is not interpreted in this way, it becomes a much less useful tool for turnaround. While it is possible that this option may be subject to abuse by districts that are simply looking to free themselves from annoying collective bargaining agreement provisions, this possibility is outweighed by the need to accord turnaround school leaders the necessary autonomy so that failing schools have a chance of dramatically increasing performance.

#### *Restructuring Failing Charter Schools*

In the case of a failing school that is already a charter school, S.B. 163 provides that the State Board of Education can direct that the charter operator be replaced and/or that the governing board of the charter school be replaced.

#### *Closure/Revocation of Charter*

Finally, S.B. 163 permits the State Board of Education to direct that the failing school be closed, or, in the case of a failing charter school, that the school's charter be revoked (which results in closure). In turnarounds across the country, school closure is often paired with restarting with a new school operator. S.B. 163 is silent about whether the State Board of Education can direct restart as part of closure.<sup>11</sup>

Closing a school implies that students will attend and be better served by another school. This may not be an option for students attending schools in more isolated areas, and it is also difficult in districts where entire areas of the district are comprised mainly of failing schools. Recent research involving Chicago's turnaround efforts revealed that students whose schools were closed and attended new schools did not experience better academic outcomes, mainly because most of them moved on to similarly low-performing schools (de la Torre and Gwynne, 2009).

---

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, schools developing initial Turnaround Plans have the option to close and restart, because that provision of S.B. 163 allows the selection of options available in federal turnaround law, which includes restart.

## Failing Districts: Loss of Accreditation and Reinstatement Requirements

For districts, S.B. 163 operates as an accreditation framework. The Commissioner may recommend to the State Board of Education that a failing district's accreditation be removed, and assign the State Review Panel to recommend one or more of the following actions that must be met for accreditation to be reinstated:

- Reorganization of the district, which may include consolidation
- Takeover of district operations and/or school operations by a private or public entity
- Conversion of one or more of the district's schools to charter schools
- Designation of one or more of the district's schools as Innovation Schools
- Closure of one or more of the district's schools

If the district in question is the state's Charter School Institute, the State Board can direct appointment of a new Institute governing board, or third-party management of the Institute or one or more of its schools.

If the Department, the Commissioner, and the State Review Panel agree on the recommendation to remove accreditation, the recommendation is forwarded to the State Board of Education for action. The State Board may remove accreditation and set the conditions that must be met for reinstatement of accreditation. Currently, three districts and one BOCES have failed to improve on Turnaround Plans and thus are eligible for loss of accreditation. The State Board is required to remove accreditation for districts that are assigned an accreditation rating of Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan or Turnaround Plan for five consecutive years.

Most of the reaccreditation options involve the same options as in school restructuring, which makes sense because a district, after all, is a collection of schools. Two options, however, involve actions to be taken at the district level.

### *District Reorganization*

S.B. 163 provides that if the State Board removes a district's accreditation and recommends closure or reorganization, the existing process contained in the School District Organization Act (CRS 22-30-101) is triggered. This statute requires a planning process, including the formation of a planning committee representing affected school districts. The planning committee is charged with developing a reorganization plan, which is subject to public hearing and also requires a special school district election involving the eligible electors of each affected school district. If the voters reject the plan, it is not implemented. In effect, this gives the voters of a school district the right to veto the decision to close or consolidate a district.<sup>12</sup>

### SB 163 District Turnaround Option – Reorganization

“... That the school district be reorganized pursuant to article 30 of this title, which reorganization may include consolidation ...”

• CRS 22-11-209(2)(a)(1)(A) ←

<sup>12</sup> C.R.S. 22-30-117(1) states that once the commissioner and the planning committee have approved the final plan, “the committee shall call for and establish the date of a special school district election wherein the eligible electors in each school district affected by the final approved plan shall vote upon the adoption or rejection of the final approved plan of organization.”

----->

This is problematic because voters are highly unlikely to vote to close their own district. The school district and its history are often extremely important to the community identity, particularly in rural areas. In effect, the process currently contained in the School District Organization Act may act as a bar to ever using that act to reorganize a district. Ideally, the School District Organization Act would be amended to provide for community involvement in the development of a reorganization plan, but require that the final plan is subject to approval by the State Board of Education and must provide for closure or reorganization.

Closing a district is a very extreme measure that would certainly generate substantial political opposition, and it is likely that this would only be undertaken in very rare circumstances if at all. It is also obviously the ultimate infringement on local control of instruction. However, there is an argument to be made that this is an appropriate exercise of the state's oversight authority when a local community has proven unable to operate its schools according to minimum standards.

#### *Takeover of District Operations by a Private or Public Entity*

Again, S.B. 163 is silent as to the details of a district takeover, including questions about who selects and contracts with the third party operator, although the statute addresses local control by specifying that the agreement of the district to the arrangement is required. Colorado is not a state in which local school board members can be removed from power, so the local board would remain in place (provided voters did not remove them). However, it might be possible that this option calls for the board to remove the current superintendent and other administrators and replace them with a new management team from an outside entity specializing in turnaround.

In many other states, there are statutes providing for state takeover of districts that are academically or financially troubled. For example, Michigan's intervention in the Detroit Public Schools was originally part of a financial takeover, and California and Texas districts have been taken over by the state for financial mismanagement. S.B. 163 would permit the state to take over academically or financially troubled districts (as a public entity under the third-party management option), but only if the district agrees to it.

#### SB 163 District Turnaround Option – Third Party 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 ...”

• CRS 22-11-209(2)(a)(1)(A) <-----

#### ***Implications for Policy Changes***

In general, S.B. 163 sets up a solid framework that uses a continuous improvement planning process to identify categories of performance and strategies for improvement. For the lowest-performing schools and districts, there appears to be sufficient balance between identification for turnaround and time and opportunity to improve, and between local decision-making on strategies in the earlier stages and state mandated action in the later stages.

Available options for turnaround are broad and flexible, and if interpreted strategically have sufficient teeth to incentivize significant change. Schools can be closed, and districts can be consolidated with others or have schools closed without their consent. If, on the other hand, a district or school is directed to engage in active turnaround, the state framework

---

permits several available routes. Districts like Denver Public Schools, who want to actively participate in turnaround work as a district priority and have the capacity to do this work well, can work with external Lead Partners and use Innovation Schools and Zones as a primary strategy. On the other hand, schools located in districts that are not interested in or able to support turnaround might benefit most from conversion to a charter school, which is not operated by the district.

Other schools and districts could benefit from a range of third-party “private or public” entities serving as turnaround partners or school operators, ranging from divisions of CDE to quasi-state agencies such as Boards of Cooperative Educational Services or the state Charter School Institute, to nonprofit organizations such as charter management organizations and to private entities. S.B. 163 appears to place no restrictions on the identity of potential third-party turnaround partners and operators, other than that they use research-based strategies and have had success in similar organizations. This should allow Colorado to benefit from the wide range of turnaround providers described above in the section on national turnaround efforts, provided that these partners can be convinced to join Colorado’s initiative.

The primary challenge with the current language of S.B. 163 is that it does not provide automatic and consistent autonomy for new school operators. Innovation School leaders are dependent upon the local district for autonomy; new third party managers don’t have a statutory route to autonomy. Other issues include S.B. 163’s use of other statutory processes that are not necessarily optimal routes for turnaround.

The table in Appendix F summarizes the range of state-level policy changes that could strengthen turnaround options, depending on the strategies selected. The various options discussed are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Based on our review, we recommend that the state consider at least the following to ensure the goals of S.B. 163 are achieved:

- Provide that turnaround operators for schools and districts directed to implement mandatory turnaround interventions are given maximum autonomy in the areas of staffing, scheduling, curriculum, etc.
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround may be directed to implement one or more of the statutory options
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround interventions may be directed to close and restart
- Provide that districts accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans lose exclusive chartering authority
- Provide that schools converted into charter schools as a result of turnaround may be district-authorized charter schools, independent charter schools, or Charter School Institute-authorized charter schools, depending on the circumstances
- Clarify that the state may direct that schools may be placed into a network of similarly-situated turnaround schools, in addition to other actions
- Clarify how and under what circumstances schools may be returned to district management
- Provide that the School District Organization Act does not require a vote of electors to approve a reorganization or consolidation plan resulting from turnaround

All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

*Leo Tolstoy*

## THE LANDSCAPE OF LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS IN COLORADO

Low-performing schools and districts in Colorado are found across the state, in major cities, in small towns, and in isolated rural areas. This section of the report provides a picture of currently struggling schools and districts. To be successful, the state's turnaround initiative will need to recognize the great diversity of contexts and needs. However, it is also likely to be true that the state will not be able to engage in active individual turnaround efforts with all eligible schools and districts at once and will need to prioritize intervention.

### Low-Performing Schools

Of the nearly 1,800 schools in Colorado, 51 have been assigned Turnaround Plans in 2012.<sup>13</sup> For 10 of these schools, this represents their third consecutive year of turnaround, which means that they are eligible for immediate restructuring under S.B. 163. Another 14 have received their second Turnaround Plan assignment.

An additional 140 schools were assigned Priority Improvement Plans, placing them in the second-to-worst category of performance.<sup>14</sup> One hundred and one have been on Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans for more than one consecutive year. Forty-five are entering year four of the five-year clock. After the fifth year on Priority Improvement/Turnaround status, S.B. 163 directs that they be subject to mandatory closure or restructuring. A list of schools assigned Turnaround and Priority Improvement Plans in 2012 is in Appendix C. Collectively, these schools serve over 81,000 students, or just under ten percent of all students in the state.

There is wide geographic variety among low-performing schools. Low-performing schools are in the Denver metro area, the cities of Pueblo and Greeley, small towns across the state, and isolated areas in the Eastern Plains. Denver has the largest number of turnaround and priority improvement schools, followed by metro-area districts such as Adams 12, Adams 14, Aurora, and Westminster. Outside the metro area, Pueblo is notable for the number of low-performing schools, with four of its five middle schools on Turnaround Plans (and three of those for the third consecutive year).

Approximately half of low-performing schools reside in districts that are themselves accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans, but half reside in higher-performing districts. Jefferson County Public Schools, the largest school district in the state, has just three schools with Priority Improvement Plans and none with Turnaround Plans. Several other high-performing districts, including Douglas County, St. Vrain, and Thompson, have two to three low-performing schools apiece, typically online schools.

Several notable trends appear in looking at the data on low-performing schools. First, the vast majority of these schools serve high-poverty student populations. Statewide, 42 percent of Colorado's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch; in schools with Turnaround and Priority Improvement Plans, the average percentage of students eligible for free-and-reduced lunch is 71 percent. Of the 191 turnaround and priority improvement schools, 163 have a free-and

<sup>13</sup> This number includes 40 regular schools and 11 alternative education campuses.

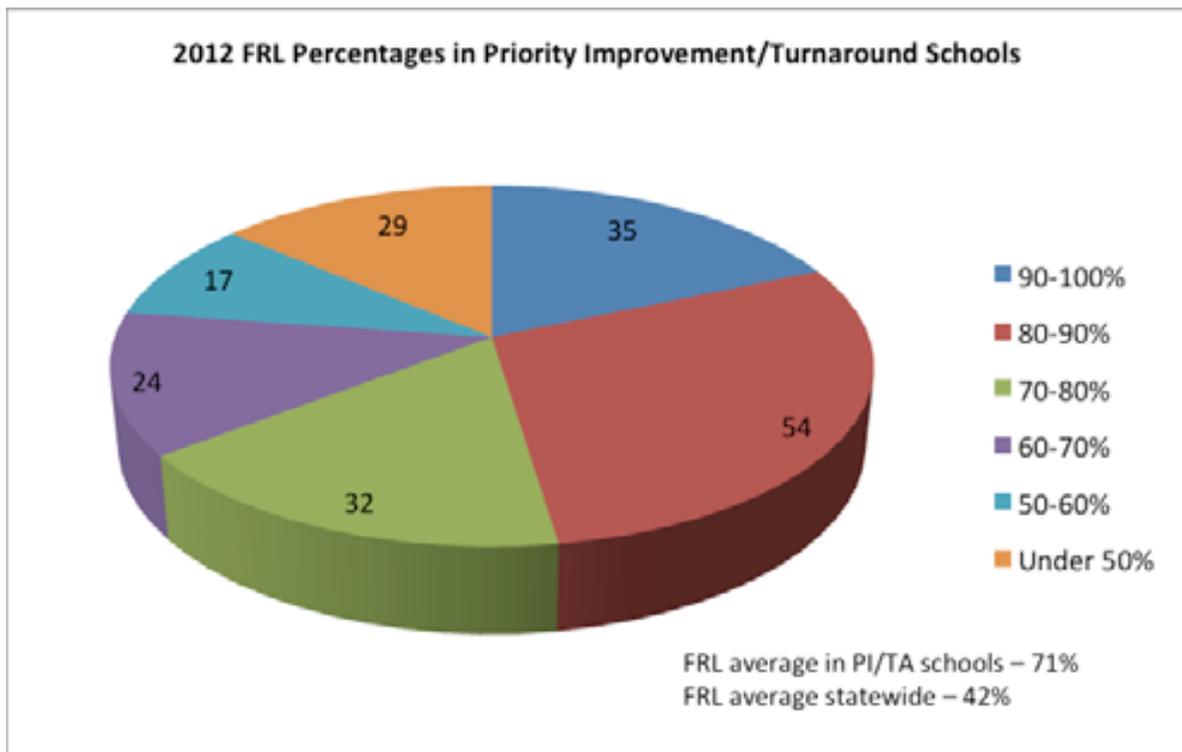
<sup>14</sup> This number includes 125 regular schools and 14 alternative education campuses.

reduced-lunch eligibility rate of 50 percent or over; 121 have free-and-reduced lunch eligibility rates of 70 percent or higher; and in 35 schools, 90 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The vast majority of Denver’s turnaround and priority improvement schools have free-and-reduced lunch eligibility rates of 90 percent or higher.

**Eligibility for free and reduced lunch, 2011-12 guidelines - USDA**

Free: 130 percent of poverty guidelines – \$29,055 for family of four

Reduced: 185 percent of poverty guidelines – \$41,348 for family of four



Colorado’s online schools are clearly struggling to meet the needs of students, even though they tend to serve wealthier families than other types of schools, and even though a recent study showed that online students and their families are quite satisfied with the education they receive (Buechner Institute for Governance, 2012). Douglas County’s three Priority Improvement/Turnaround schools are all online, including Hope Online, which serves nearly 3,000 students. Colorado’s largest online school, Colorado Virtual Academy in Adams 12, serves over 5,000 students and is on its third year with a Priority Improvement Plan. Three small rural districts, Karval, Vilas, and Julesburg, operate troubled online schools that collectively serve nearly 1,000 students.<sup>15</sup>

Elementary, middle, and high schools are represented fairly evenly, although middle schools appear to be a particular problem in Pueblo, Greeley and a number of rural areas.

<sup>15</sup> This represents a relatively recent dilemma for small cash-strapped rural districts – the online schools allow more dollars to flow into the district, but poor academic performance affects the district’s accreditation rating.

## Low-Performing Districts

Of Colorado’s 178 traditional school districts, 74 percent received accreditation ratings in the top two categories of Accredited or Accredited with Distinction in 2012. Twenty-four percent are accredited with Improvement Plans; nearly 11 percent have Priority Improvement Plans; and just two percent have Turnaround Plans. A list of all districts accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans in 2012 is contained in Appendix D.

Accreditation Rating Category	Number of Traditional Districts in Category, 2012	Number of BOCES in Category, 2012	Charter School Institute <sup>16</sup>
Accredited with Distinction	19		
Accredited	112	1	
Accredited with Improvement Plan	43		
Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan	19		1
Accredited with Turnaround Plan	4	1	
Not Accredited	0		

Of the 23 districts and one BOCES assigned to the lowest two accreditation ratings in 2012, 18 were assigned to Accredited with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan status for at least the second consecutive year, putting them “on the clock” towards S.B. 163’s five-year limit. In addition, two districts and one BOCES have received their third consecutive Turnaround Plan assignment. As discussed above, districts that fail to make progress under Turnaround Plans, and districts that are assigned Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans for more than five consecutive years, are subject to loss of accreditation. Rural districts Karval and Vilas are in year 4 of the clock, and also have failed to make progress under a turnaround plan. Adams 14 has had a Turnaround Plan for three years, which exemplifies failure to make progress under a Turnaround Plan.

The districts with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans in 2012 are a diverse group, from locations across the state and with student populations ranging from 66 to 76,000. Total 2012 student enrollment in Priority Improvement/Turnaround districts was 213,825, representing 24.8percent of the state’s total student population of 863,561.<sup>17</sup> Of students in Priority Improvement/Turnaround districts, 153,397, or 72percent, attend districts located in the metro Denver area.

As a group, the districts on Priority Improvement or Turnaround tend to serve a greater share of low-income children and a greater share of English language learners than state averages. For example, in seven of the 23 Priority Improvement/Turnaround districts, English language learners make up more than 30percent of the student population. The state average

<sup>16</sup> The Charter School Institute was assigned a Priority Improvement Plan based on prior financial problems.

<sup>17</sup> This number is larger than the total number of students in low-performing schools because not every school in a Priority Improvement or Turnaround district is low-performing.

for free or reduced lunch eligibility is 42 percent; for the Priority/Turnaround districts, the average is 60.1 percent. In 12 PI/TA districts, more than 70 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Just two districts had fewer than 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch.

It is extremely difficult for high-poverty districts to achieve high performance. Just two of Colorado’s districts with more than 70 percent low-income students were rated as Accredited, both rural with small numbers of students.<sup>18</sup> However, it should be noted that having relatively large percentages of low-income students and/or English language learners does not inexorably lead to Priority Improvement or Turnaround accreditation status. The following districts have similar demographics but are rated as Accredited.

District	Setting/ Region	# of K-12 Students 2012	2012 FRL %	2011 ELL %	2010 Rating	2011 Rating	2012 Rating
Eagle	Outlying Town - Northwest	6,408	43%	37%	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited
Sanford	Rural - Southwest	330	59%	1%	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited
Yuma	Outlying Town - Northeast	780	64%	34%	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited

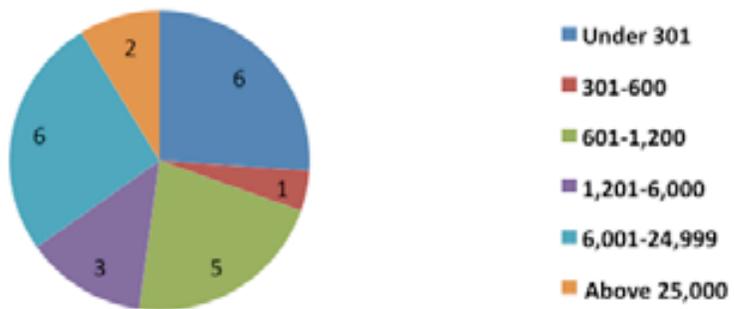
The diversity of the state’s districts with Turnaround and Priority Improvement Plans could lead to some productive groupings. For example, districts could be clustered by size, setting, and/or geographic location.

<sup>18</sup> These districts are Agate and Holly. In 2012, Holly served 292 K-12 students, and Agate served just 10.

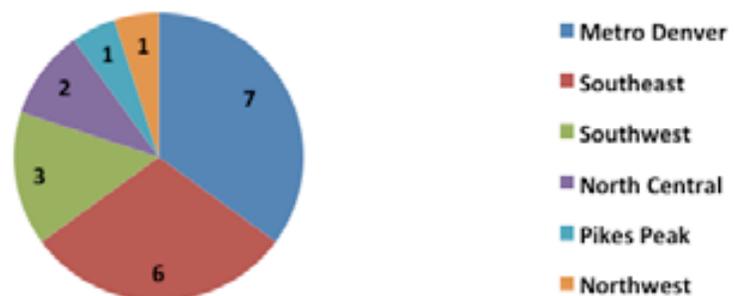
### Turnaround and Priority Improvement Districts by Setting



### Turnaround and Priority Improvement Districts, by Size



### Turnaround and Priority Improvement Districts by CDE Region



## District Root Cause Analysis

As part of this project, we were asked to identify key issues facing low-performing districts, we analyzed a sample of 30 district improvement plans to determine whether there were common themes among the root causes identified as contributing to low performance. The districts in the sample were selected because they either were accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans, or because they had one or more schools on their second year of a Turnaround Plan. For each of the four key performance indicators, district plans were reviewed and coded for frequency of reference to pre-identified root causes.<sup>19</sup>

Each year CDE provides Unified Improvement Plan Process Training sessions in partnership with the Center for Transforming Learning and Teaching (CTLT). These sessions address each step in the UIP process. As districts better utilize the UIP tool, the quality of information that districts and schools provide evolves and improves. Although districts clearly have room for improvement in analyzing their data and developing their plans, the root cause analysis did identify several themes that were consistently cited by districts as related to poor performance. For each of the key performance indicators, more than half of districts sampled identified misaligned and/or poorly implemented curricular, instructional, and data analysis materials and practices as root causes for low performance. In addition to these interrelated root causes, 48% of districts also identified failure to effectively implement interventions as a root cause of failure to close achievement gaps and meet post-secondary and workforce readiness measures.

Root Cause (Theme)	Academic Priority Challenge	Growth Priority Challenge	Gaps Priority Challenge	Post-Secondary Workforce
Curriculum	83%	83%	69%	41%
Instruction	79%	69%	72%	38%
Data Proficiency	55%	52%	41%	28%
Leadership	45%	41%	24%	21%
Student Expectations	34%	14%	24%	24%
Intervention	21%	17%	48%	48%
Parent Support	3%	3%	3%	0%
Turnover	7%	0%	0%	0%
ELL	7%	0%	17%	3%
FRL	3%	0%	14%	0%
IEP	3%	0%	10%	0%
Resource Constraints	0%	3%	10%	0%
Early Warning Signs	0%	0%	0%	28%
Transitions	0%	0%	0%	24%

<sup>19</sup> As described more fully in Appendix B, each district is required to submit an annual plan that analyzes trends and identifies root causes of any underperformance in the various areas of the School Performance Framework.

Some of our rural areas struggle with consistent and effective leadership ... they have problems with leadership and leadership burnout. There are so many levels of district politics and turnaround is politically sensitive.

*CDE Performance Manager* ←

In other words, many districts are struggling with some very basic alignment and instructional issues. One district summed it up in a way that seems to apply to just about every district in the study: “[The]...district lacks a standards-based curriculum, use of research-based instructional strategies, and appropriate materials that use student achievement data to guide and inform instruction...” Appendix E contains a more detailed description of the results of the root cause analysis.

As we talked to CDE staff about low-performing districts, it also became clear that leadership and politics were key issues in some of these districts. Several districts have challenges in attracting and retaining quality educational leaders; others have dysfunctional school boards and difficult community dynamics. These issues are typically not captured in the UIPs, but often contribute to the district’s inability to improve its educational performance.

“... [There are] many uncoordinated change initiatives going at one time and schools are struggling to focus their attention in ways that improve instruction...”

*From a district improvement plan* ←

---

## DECISION POINTS FOR COLORADO

At this point, certain decisions need to be made to allow Colorado to effectively move forward with its turnaround work. These will be discussed in turn.

### **Who will direct overall oversight and coordination of turnaround efforts in the state?**

As discussed previously, options for this role are many. However, lessons from the research show that there must be strong leadership and clear lines of responsibility in implementing accountability systems. Colorado must decide who is responsible for the oversight of turnaround schools and districts, and what that responsibility entails. It should be noted that S.B. 163 provides that the State Board of Education is ultimately responsible for selecting specific turnaround actions. Colorado's constitutional balancing of local control and state oversight responsibilities likely dictates that the state itself, whether through the State Board or CDE, make these ultimate decisions. However, the responsibility for shepherding the state's turnaround schools through their journeys could conceivably be handled by a different entity as a third-party manager or as a newly-created state recovery organization.

The role of coordination and oversight also should be understood to be potentially separate from the role of day-to-day school and district operations. The entity responsible for coordination and oversight could be set up to operate schools itself, or to contract out for the operations of schools, or some combination. This section will discuss the benefits and challenges associated with different entities that might play this role.

S.B. 163 implies that CDE will play a significant role in the coordination and oversight of school and district turnaround. In particular, CDE already has responsibility for overseeing the Unified Improvement Planning process established by S.B. 163, the placement of schools and districts in performance categories, and for making recommendations to the State Board of Education about appropriate state-mandated actions for the lowest-performing schools and districts.

Currently, CDE's Division of Accountability, Performance, and Support is acting in the turnaround oversight role. The Office of District and School Performance within that division employs four Performance Managers who are charged with overseeing and advising districts with Turnaround Plans and selected Priority Improvement districts that are on the five-year clock. DSP also houses three personnel charged with general field support services. Other units at CDE also provide input and support for low-performing schools, including units involved with federal programs, accountability and data analysis, and improvement planning.

Without additional funding, the Office of District and School Performance is not able to assign Performance Managers to all Priority Improvement districts, or to schools with Turnaround or Priority Improvement Plans located in higher-performing districts. In addition, the role of the field support services team in implementing S.B. 163 or any other recent education reforms is not clear, and three individuals certainly are not sufficient to fill support needs for this or any other major state initiative.

As discussed previously, in Indiana, the state office of turnaround serves as the oversight and coordinating body for turnarounds in the state. This office is responsible for identifying and vetting turnaround school operators, and for monitoring turnaround progress. It does not operate any schools itself. S.B. 163 provides the framework for Colorado to take the same path if it chooses to do so. Another option for the state is to create a new agency or unit that serves as a state recovery organization. For example, recovery school districts in Michigan and Tennessee are arms of the state department of education.

Some in Colorado are dubious about the ability of CDE to be tough, and/or its ability to be effective. Others have stated that the state should play solely an accountability role, and not be involved at all in improvement efforts, much like the role of a charter authorizer. CDE staff already play support roles in many activities that involve low-performing schools, including federal program implementation and support, and the improvement planning process. The department has also been criticized in the past for taking a single-minded compliance approach to schools and districts, which did not result in good relationships between the state and districts. The state is likely to need to balance its various roles in order to leverage scarce resources and to maintain trust with districts – critical in a local control state.

Some commentators suggest that state departments of education should not be charged with turning schools around, arguing that the culture of bureaucracy that characterizes most state agencies will ultimately be unable to support the quick and flexible decision-making needed for successful turnaround. At the very least, there appears to be agreement that the turnaround agency should be well-insulated from state bureaucracy. Based on research from other states, these options benefit from the simultaneous identification of a charismatic and influential “turnaround czar” to provide strong public leadership.

In Colorado, several options have been mentioned for a new state recovery organization. One of them is the state’s Charter School Institute, an organization that already exists and houses charter schools across the state that fit into its statutory jurisdiction. The state could, for example, pass legislation to direct that turnaround schools converted to charter schools automatically become Charter School Institute schools. This has benefits in that CSI already has the authority of a school district (including the ability to receive funds), and is a state agency.

However, there are also issues with this approach. First, in districts that are actively using charter schools as a strategy for a diversified portfolio of school choice, new charter schools might be better served by remaining in the district. It may be that those schools ideally placed in CSI are schools whose districts are not themselves interested in a charter portfolio strategy and/or do not have the capacity to implement this strategy well.

Another issue is that the Charter School Institute itself is accredited with a Priority Improvement Plan, with 2012 being the third year in which it has been assigned a Priority Improvement Plan. This designation stems from previous financial mismanagement rather than academic underperformance, and new leadership appears to be on track to put CSI’s fiscal house in order. However, at present, CSI is at risk of being reconstituted itself unless it is able to improve its accreditation status.

Finally, CSI in its current structure operates solely as a charter authorizer – CSI does not itself operate charter schools. CSI adheres to the quality authorizer standards promoted by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, which call for authorizers to close persistently low-performing schools rather than attempt to improve them. This is not necessarily a problem, in that schools placed in CSI because of turnaround can be operated by high-quality operators and improve through that avenue; however, it is important to understand CSI’s role in its current configuration. Of course, CSI’s role could be adapted if it was tasked with a different mission.

Another candidate for SRO is the Colorado Legacy Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education and other education stakeholders to help identify, incubate, and spread innovative practices in the state. Currently, the Legacy Foundation’s main areas of emphasis are educator evaluation, extended learning opportunities, healthy schools, and a high school initiative that emphasizes Advanced Placement course-taking and college

---

<sup>20</sup> New Schools for New Orleans is a nonprofit that makes strategic investments in New Orleans charter schools.

---

preparation. The Colorado Legacy Foundation is not an arm of the state education department, although its mission is tied to the state; it is a separate nonprofit organization governed by a board of trustees. If it played a role as an SRO, it would not function as a district without new legislation.

CLF has been very successful in attracting major funding to the state, and could leverage that history to serve as a conduit for national funds designed to build Colorado's turnaround capacity. Again, CLF in its current capacity would serve a coordinating and oversight role, rather than directly operating schools. CLF could also serve a more limited role as the oversight entity for schools whose needs are consistent with its current priorities, such as schools in which extended learning opportunities will be a key turnaround strategy, or high schools that need to refocus on college preparation.

Colorado could also develop a new nonprofit recovery organization along the lines of "New Schools for a New Colorado."<sup>20</sup> This organization would also not function as a school district per se, but could be an umbrella third-party manager. Adequate and sustainable funding would be very important in this case, and it is not clear that possibilities for funding such an organization have been fully explored.

At present, no "turnaround czar" has emerged at the level of a Paul Pastorek or Chris Adamowski for the state. This is not to say that one might not emerge, especially once the state has made a commitment to a specific course of action. Interestingly, several commentators have suggested that Governor John Hickenlooper could play this role.

**How should low-performing schools and districts be prioritized for state assistance and interventions?** Several schools and districts are eligible for mandated state interventions right now, and many more are in the five-year pipeline. How will the system manage its "caseload?" If fewer than all eligible schools and districts will be in the active turnaround system at any given time, what will the decision criteria be for identifying the more urgent cases? How will schools and districts not selected for immediate triage be assisted in improving their performance?

Currently, CDE does not have the bandwidth to oversee and coordinate assistance for all schools and districts that are low-performing. Instead, the state has chosen to focus its resources on a selected number of districts that have been labeled as Turnaround or that have been labeled as Turnaround or Priority Improvement for several consecutive years. A few districts in this category have chosen to actively engage in their own turnaround initiatives – Denver Public Schools is the best example of a district that has built substantial infrastructure and capacity to manage its own school turnarounds. It would not make sense for the state to try to replicate this work in districts such as DPS. Some districts could create internal capacity for turnarounds and are presumably willing to do so. Others may not be willing to divert resources and focus to turnaround, or simply may not have enough capacity or are too dysfunctional to even try.

If the state prioritizes based on numbers of students affected, investments would probably be focused on failing districts in large population centers such as the Denver metro area, Pueblo, and Greeley. Interventions here would give the state the biggest bang for the buck in terms of numbers of students affected. However, this may raise questions of equity, as the state is constitutionally required to ensure that students across the state have access to a thorough and uniform system of education. The state could strive for a more balanced geographic spread of schools and districts subject to turnaround. However, this could also increase the cost of turnaround and also brings in the challenging subject of how best to conduct turnarounds in rural areas that are not likely to attract an influx of experienced turnaround operators.

**What turnaround actions contained in S.B. 163 are appropriate for what circumstances? What diagnostic tools are available? How will these decisions be made, and by whom?** S.B. 163 currently provides that the State Board of Education makes the ultimate decisions about turnaround actions, once a school or district's performance has declined to a state where it is eligible for state-mandated interventions. Using Colorado's elected State Board of Education to make these determinations

---

has both benefits and challenges. First, it is the State Board of Education that has constitutional responsibility for overseeing the state’s schools, and the process in S.B. 163 represents the most direct and defensible way to exercise that authority.

However, the members of the State Board of Education may or may not have backgrounds in education or school reform, and as elected officials are constantly subject to political pressure. If the process in S.B. 163 is used, it is essential that they receive comprehensive information and decision-making criteria that will help them make the best possible decisions. Under the statute, the Commissioner plays a role in advising the State Board, as does the State Review Panel. S.B. 163 directs the State Review Panel to “critically evaluate” the situation, including existing leadership capacity at the district and school levels. The State Review Panel’s recommendations, along with those of the department, are presented to the State Board of Education.

As is true of any elected body, the State Board of Education can be unpredictable in terms of what its members will find relevant and not relevant in given situations. Another option is to amend S.B. 163 to provide that the Commissioner, rather than the State Board, is to select among the various turnaround options. Because the Commissioner is subject to State Board oversight, this would also represent a defensible exercise of state oversight authority, and perhaps may result in more predictable outcomes.

The sources of the data and the criteria for evaluating that data are not specified by statute. CDE is in the best position to initially capture relevant data, through its activities in improvement planning, federal program funding and implementation, and data analysis. CDE’s initial diagnostic process might include evaluation of school and district performance evidence, arranging for the equivalent of a School Support Team (SST) or Comprehensive Assessment for District Improvement (CADI) visit, interviews with key district and/or school stakeholders, and review of any other relevant evidence such as TELL survey results. CDE could create tools for assessing the capacity of the district or school leadership to engage in meaningful change, and to work productively with a third party, aligning those tools with the purposes of S.B. 163 and with diagnostic criteria used by CDE in other areas. Beyond CDE’s data and analysis, information could also be collected from the district and from third-party providers that have been involved in previous reform efforts. Appendix G contains ideas for procedures that might support data collection.

S.B. 163 provides a menu of options for turnaround situations. Each approach provides different strengths and challenges, and these should be matched to the situation. The table below provides a brief explanation of the pros and cons of S.B. 163’s turnaround options for schools.

Turnaround School Actions	Pro	Con
<b>Management by public or private third party</b>	Can provide new leadership, staff, and operations needed for dramatic change; allows for a wide variety of third party operators	Success depends on availability and quality of third party; autonomy currently not automatically granted to operators unless paired with another option
<b>Replacement of charter school's operator and/or governing board</b>	Can provide new leadership, staff, and operations needed for dramatic change	Success depends on availability and quality of new operator/ governing board
<b>Conversion to charter school</b>	Provides necessary autonomy, may be especially useful in district that is dysfunctional or unable to oversee turnaround	Success depends on availability and quality of new charter school operator/CMO
<b>Grant of status as Innovation School</b>	Provides necessary autonomy while keeping school within district control; can be used as part of a district-wide strategy; district can partner with external turnaround partner to implement	Does not itself guarantee that autonomy will be used well; some districts may not go far enough in using Innovation School status for dramatic change
<b>Closure</b>	Halts expensive investments when circumstances show that a school is not likely to improve even with dramatic restructuring	Disruptive to students and families; needs to be other educational options that are convenient and higher quality

Appendix H contains sample decision criteria that might be used to select an intervention for a school facing closure or restructuring.

Indiana provides its turnaround operators a full year of assessment and evaluation of a school's circumstances before the operator is expected to actually begin running the school, and Colorado might want to consider a similar arrangement. Third-party providers should also be able to work with districts and schools to adjust the plan as needed, as more information becomes available and more strategies are tried.

**What role should the State Review Panel play in assessing capacity and recommending interventions?**

S.B. 163 provides for the appointment of an independent State Review Panel to perform the following functions:

- Review all district and school Turnaround Plans and recommend modifications if needed
- At the Commissioner's request, review selected district and school Priority Improvement Plans

- 
- Review situations in which CDE is recommending that a district lose accreditation, and recommend that the State Board of Education require the district to take one or more actions specified in the statute
  - Review situations in which schools are eligible for restructuring, and make recommendations to the State Board of Education about statutory options

The members of the State Review Panel are appointed by the Commissioner, subject to State Board approval. The Commissioner may select an “appropriate” number of persons with demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- School district or school leadership or governance
- Standards-based elementary or secondary curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Instructional data management and analysis
- School district, school, or program evaluation
- Educational program management
- Teacher leadership
- Organizational management or school district and public school governance
- School district or school budgeting and finance
- Any other field deemed relevant to district and school improvement plan analysis

The State Review Panel has the potential to be a rigorous check on the quality of turnaround and priority improvement plans and on the appropriateness of selected interventions. Unfortunately, it also has the potential to be a group of people with too little information or direction to be anything other than a rubber stamp.

Currently, CDE is operating the State Review Panel without additional funding. SRP members are volunteers, who are not reimbursed for time or expenses. The state has provided training for panel members in reviewing internal improvement plan logic and in the state’s turnaround policy framework, but due to resource limitations has not been able to expand the SRP review to provide more comprehensive pictures of school and district performance and capacity.

**What third-party providers are available to play the role of day-to-day turnaround partner/operator/services provider, and under what circumstances? How can Colorado create a market for these entities to ensure that the best national talent in turnaround flows to the state?** Turnaround interventions that produce dramatic results require dramatic change. By definition, the vast majority of the turnaround schools and districts will not have sufficient capacity to be able to do this on their own – if they did, they would likely already have improved. Colorado will need to create a thriving market for third-party providers, both those already located in the state and those that can be recruited from a national market.

The state and its districts should be careful to distinguish between turnaround providers – those entities that will make the quick and dramatic organizational and instructional changes needed for successful turnaround of a dysfunctional school or district – and technical assistance providers, who promote sustainable professional learning in non-turnaround environments. Both types of providers are necessary in the big picture of school improvement in Colorado, but research has shown that the application of standard technical assistance to a turnaround situation does not work.

Some initial ideas about potential partners and providers are contained in Appendix I.

**How many turnaround leaders are needed? How will turnaround leadership be identified and developed? What incentives will be needed?** The literature is clear that turnaround school leadership requires a set of attitudes and skills not typically conveyed in traditional preparation programs or regularly needed in higher-functioning schools. Successful turnaround school leaders must be entrepreneurial, decisive, and focused on results. There is currently no leadership pipeline in Colorado for turnaround school leadership.

Preliminary results from a Donnell-Kay Foundation survey sent to superintendents and charter network leaders in November 2012 show that just five percent of respondents believe that principal preparation programs are doing a good job of preparing candidates to lead turnaround schools, and just seven percent believe that programs are preparing Innovation School leadership well. While some turnaround operators will bring their own turnaround school leaders with them, Colorado will need to consider specialized training for home-grown turnaround school leaders. These could range from immersion trainings for promising candidates identified by districts to the development of a Turnaround Leadership Corps that could be deployed throughout the state, focusing on areas unable to attract external turnaround operators. The state might also want to consider expanding the definition of turnaround leaders to include turnaround teacher leaders and create deliberate pathways for teachers.

**How can the number of schools and districts that are high-performing be increased through universal and targeted technical assistance? Who should provide this assistance?** There are 178 districts and nearly 1,800 schools in Colorado. Some of these schools and districts are high-performing and do not need assistance; a smaller number will need the intensive turnaround assistance that is the focus of this report. That leaves a large number of schools and districts that are neither high-performing nor in immediate danger of failure. It will be in Colorado's best interests to determine how to provide those schools and districts with appropriate technical assistance so that they are able to improve their performance, stay out of turnaround, and be positioned to implement the array of education reforms passed in recent years.

Currently CDE is developing a tiered system of supports for districts that is designed to be able to provide differentiated help to districts, much like a Response to Intervention framework provides differentiated assistance to students within a school. With limited funding, this will be challenging, and it becomes particularly critical for the state to align supports across programs and initiatives to leverage resources.

The district root cause analysis conducted for this report suggests that a large number of districts need some very basic help – aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments to Colorado's standards, analyzing data, and implementing effective interventions for students who are not learning. Several districts appear to be struggling with significant influxes of English language learners, and a coordinated effort to ensure that all districts have access to a high-quality English language development program may allow these struggling districts to stay off Priority Improvement and Turnaround status. While Colorado's districts generally do not appreciate mandates from above, they are very much in need of resources to turn to. This is particularly true for the majority of Colorado districts that are not large enough to have sophisticated central offices.

**Who will be the “face” of turnaround in Colorado? Where will political and strategic leadership come from?**

One of the lessons learned from national turnaround initiatives is the importance of a prominent leader who is willing to be the champion for turnaround in the state. No community wants its district or schools to be labeled as failures, and the dramatic changes needed for success in turnaround will inevitably be subject to backlash. Colorado needs to identify the person or persons best-positioned to play this role.

---

Obvious candidates for this role include those in charge of turnarounds at CDE, the Commissioner, and/or the politically popular Governor. In Colorado's decentralized system of education, it might be wise to pull together a coalition that presents a united front.

---

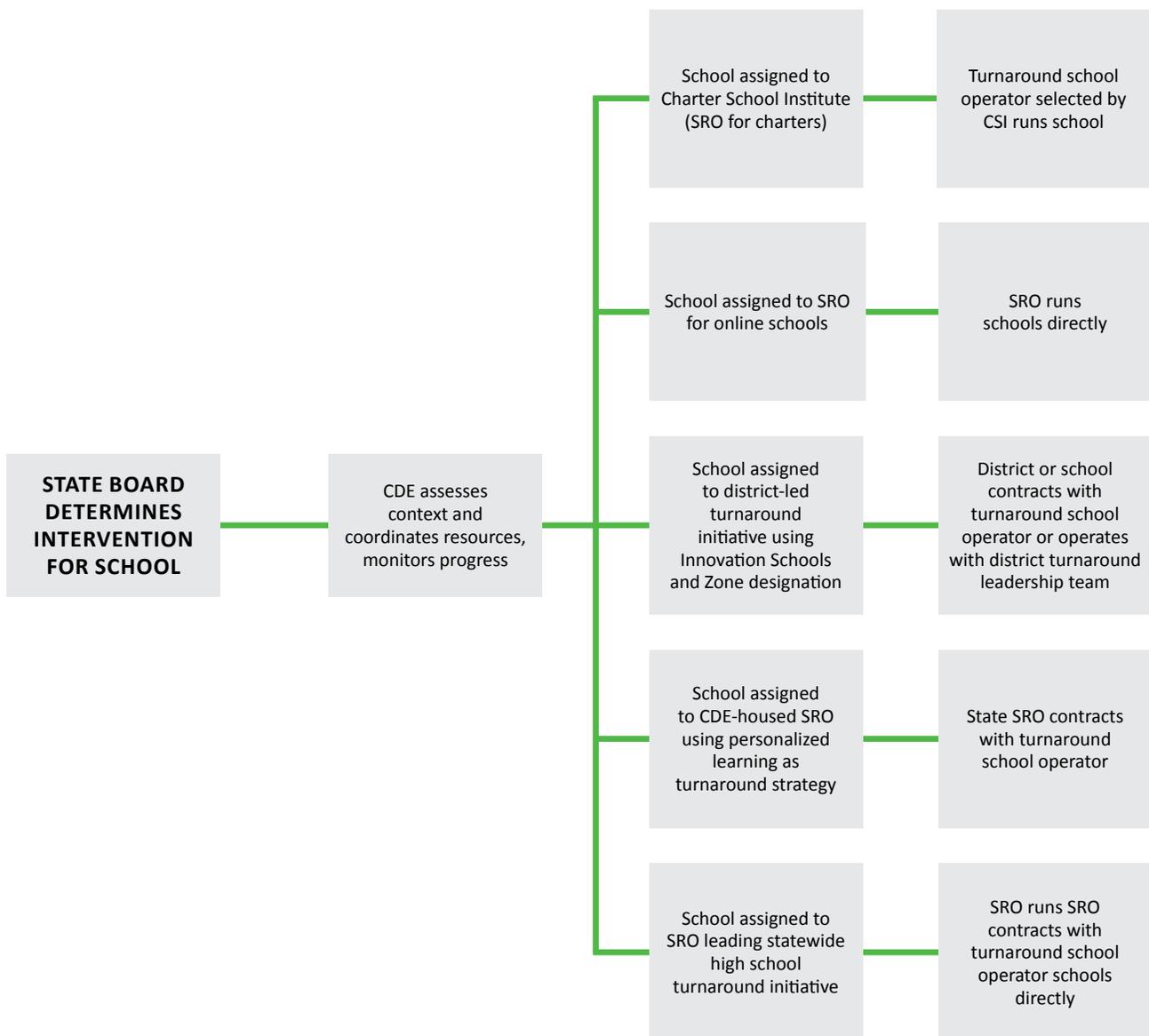
## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

We recognize that there are a variety of ways to move forward on the decision points discussed above. Based on our analysis, we recommend the following next steps for Colorado:

**1. Identify the key individuals and organizations who will lead the implementation of S.B. 09-163, including overseeing the implementation of turnaround strategies and the coordination of resources used in turnaround.** Although there are clearly many potential ways to resolve this issue, we recommend that the state's Division of Accountability, Performance and Support act as the coordinating and oversight body for turnarounds in the state. We make this recommendation for several reasons. First, in a local control state, the roles of the state and its districts should be clear so that all parties can understand how their respective obligations are balanced in a way that meets constitutional requirements. Second, this is consistent with how other states are approaching turnarounds, in that in all cases the state maintains a coordinating and oversight role. Third, this approach would still permit the use of third-party organizations as full partners in the state's turnaround strategy.

At this point, no one expects that CDE will be the only entity that provides turnaround services, and in fact S.B. 163 clearly anticipates that other organizations will be directly involved in turnaround. This allows the state to reap benefits from including high-profile charter networks and other turnaround school operators while still having the ability to direct other investments aligned with state priorities, such as the use of blended learning strategies in appropriate turnaround schools.

If this approach is used, we also recommend that the state designate certain partners as state recovery organizations that are involved in coordinating resources and operators for different categories of turnarounds. The structure and authority of the Charter School Institute make it a logical choice to house certain types of turnarounds; the Denver metro area is home to several talented charter networks; the Colorado Legacy Foundation may be interested in supervising turnarounds that fit within its priorities. This allows the state to tap into resources so it can expand the breadth of the turnaround initiative. A sample structure might look like this:



Mass Insight, one of the national thought leaders around turnaround, suggests that the state can play the following roles in turnaround initiatives:

- Buck-stopping role
- Table-setting role
- Incentivizing role
- Partner-building role
- Investing role
- Scaling up role

.....>

CDE could play all of these roles in an environment in which it serves as “air traffic” controller for turnaround.

**2. Develop procedures that ensure that the State Board of Education is provided with comprehensive information and analysis to assist it in making decisions on turnaround implementation.** As discussed above, the State Board of Education is the entity responsible for determining the appropriate intervention for the lowest-performing schools and districts. Assuming this remains the case, members of the State Board will need to rely on comprehensive information about each school and district context, including student data, prior reform efforts, district leadership capacity, available third-party providers, available funding sources, and the like. The turnaround oversight coordinator will need to develop systems to ensure that this information is reliably collected and analyzed. Currently S.B. 163 provides that a State Review Panel is to evaluate this information and make recommendations to the State Board of Education. If this route is used to provide analysis to the State Board of Education, the State Review Panel’s membership and procedures will need to be carefully planned and implemented to ensure credibility and comprehensiveness.

To ensure that the Panel is the rigorous tool that it is intended to be, we recommend the following:

- **Turnaround familiarity.** Members of the State Review Panel should not only have expertise in the areas selected, but this expertise should also extend to familiarity with the successful implementation of these areas in chronically and dysfunctional organizations. Ideally, panel members are familiar with turnaround initiatives and the research that has resulted from these initiatives; personal experience is preferred. Without this perspective, members are likely to default to recommending best practices more suitable for higher-performing organizations.
- **Diverse backgrounds.** To the extent possible, members of the State Review Panel should be intentionally drawn from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, including current and former educators, members of representative education associations, representatives of reform groups, business and higher education representatives with relevant expertise. This promotes cross-sector learning and will help protect against “groupthink.” Again, without resources to compensate panel members, this can be challenging.
- **Use of case reports and standardized criteria.** The information considered by the State Review Panel should include case reports completed by the CDE performance manager assigned to that district or school. These case reports should be standardized in form and aligned with criteria set forth in the Unified Improvement Planning process and with criteria used in the Comprehensive Analysis for District Improvement (CADI, for districts) or the School Support Team visits (SST, for schools). Panel members should be provided with standardized criteria for evaluation of the evidence and selection of options.
- **Appropriate panel assignments for decisions.** In fulfilling its statutory mission to review recommendations for district loss of accreditation, turnaround plans for districts and schools, and priority improvement plans upon request, the State Review Panel should be large enough so that each review situation is staffed by a sub-panel of persons with both appropriate subject matter expertise and contextual expertise/experience. Thus, for example, a turnaround plan in an urban context might benefit more from a panel member with urban expertise, while a rural turnaround plan might benefit more from one or more members with rural expertise. CDE is currently taking steps to ensure that this is done.

This level of rigorous review requires careful coordination and staffing. It also requires that the panel be large enough so that individual panel members, who are serving as volunteers, are not overwhelmed by the workload. A larger panel

can also serve the strategic political purpose of expanding the number of people in the state who are familiar with and committed to quality turnaround work. Membership should also have a stated duration, such as a three-year period.

Appendix G has additional ideas for steps CDE might take to develop and collect accurate and comprehensive information to support turnaround decision-making.

**3. Determine the initial capacity of the system to engage in active school turnarounds and estimate the landscape of turnaround operators and leaders needed to carry out the turnarounds.** The state (or other SRO) will need to estimate the optimal number of schools and districts engaged in active turnaround, review the likely demographic and geographic context for these schools and districts, and develop an understanding of the most effective turnaround partners for these schools. The state should also be prepared to consider the capacity of local districts to lead turnaround efforts and encourage those efforts when they are likely to be of high quality, both as a matter of efficiency and as an appropriate balance between state oversight and local control.

We recommend that the state consider the following factors in determining the capacity of the state's system:

- A projection of the number of schools and districts eligible for mandatory state intervention over a five-year period
- A projection of the number of districts with turnaround schools that are likely to be capable of leading their own turnaround initiatives, on their own or with a Lead Partner
- Categorization of turnaround situations into clusters that might be managed by external private or public entities or by a separate network established in the state, such as rural schools, online schools, high-poverty schools, etc.
- Projection of the number of third-party operators available and willing to work on turnaround in the state, including available funding sources

The state will then need to create a triage system to decide which districts and schools will be selected for active entrance into the system. Potential factors to be considered in triaging districts and schools could include:

- Turnaround status
- Number of students affected
- Duration of low performance
- Performance trending
- Prior reforms attempted
- Availability of third-party partners and providers
- Availability of resources for turnaround
- Cost-benefit analysis

In developing this triage system, the state should err on the side of starting slow. Turnarounds by nature are extremely disruptive, and the worst possible outcome in implementing S.B. 163 would be to create disarray in multiple failing schools and districts without an intensive and highly organized way to achieve real turnaround. In contrast, quick and decisive turnarounds in a handful of situations will help secure political support for the long term. The state should also be mindful

that its best and probably most cost-effective strategy for managing turnaround numbers will be preventing schools and districts from entering into priority improvement and turnaround in the first place, using a tiered system of supports for schools and districts.

Colorado should consider whether it can incentivize schools and districts to compete for entry into the state's turnaround system. Although this seems counterintuitive, it may be possible for the state to enter into a grand bargain with its failing schools and districts whereby substantial turnaround resources can be exchanged for active cooperation with turnaround strategies. This approach is being used in Connecticut with the Commissioner's Network, in which schools apply for entry.

**4. Develop a supply of high-quality third-party lead partners and turnaround operators for school and district turnaround efforts.** This should be a top priority for CDE. The Department realistically cannot play the role of turnaround provider, so it must find those organizations that are willing and able to do so. The state should plan to create a portfolio of different types of third-party providers, including charter school operators, district lead turnaround partners, Innovation School partners, etc.

To find the market, CDE should engage with education stakeholders in Colorado to determine which of them might be willing and able to play some of these roles. For example, we have a number of high-quality charter operators in the state that have proven their effectiveness with students. In addition, CDE should create an RFP process that will also attract national providers (using lessons learned from past RFP processes). These providers will need to be convinced that engaging in Colorado work will be worth their time and effort, both in terms of payment for work performed and also in terms of the likelihood of success. Colorado should use this process to aggressively market itself as an attractive place in terms of education reform – we have the policy framework needed, we have a long history of school autonomy, we have a committed group of districts and a supportive state department, and a thriving education reform community.

**5. Develop several diverse talent development pipelines for the identification, training, and recruitment of principals and teacher leaders** in the specialized area of school turnaround, and provide incentives for turnaround leadership teams to take temporary intensive assignments in turnaround schools. These turnaround pipelines should include:

- Routes that train current educators who demonstrate talents and interests in line with successful turnaround leaders
- Routes that train persons from other sectors to become school turnaround leaders
- Routes that train turnaround school leadership teams
- Routes that recruit proven turnaround school leaders on a national basis
- District-developed routes that train turnaround school leaders for district turnaround initiatives in larger districts with substantial numbers of failing schools

We recommend that Colorado take a multi-faceted approach to developing the pipeline of turnaround leaders. First, CDE needs to estimate the number of turnaround leaders that will be needed over time. Then it should enlist a variety of organizations that can help fill this role. Some suggestions include:

- Partnering with the University of Virginia and a local university to develop a turnaround specialist certificate program in Colorado
- Working with the Colorado Association of School Executives to develop a turnaround leadership strand in the new CASE Leadership Academy

- Coordinate new Innovation School and charter school leadership needs with cohorts trained through Get Smart Schools
- Work with the Colorado Education Association and Teach for America to identify and train teacher leaders who specialize in turnaround
- Identify a Turnaround Corps of well-trained turnaround leadership teams that are willing to take temporary assignments in turnaround schools, in exchange for extra pay

Larger districts with capacity should also be encouraged to develop their own turnaround specialist programs. Currently, Colorado's alternative licensure path for principals permits districts to design very flexible one-year programs for non-traditional career changers. CRS 22-60.5-305.5. While we believe that it is often best for principals to have instructional experience, we believe that the talent pool available to turn around schools should not be limited to those whose background is in education. In fact, it is entirely possible to imagine a successful turnaround led by a principal with experience in business turnaround, partnered with a teacher leadership team trained in turnaround.

Finally, the state should also consider incentives to attract persons with demonstrated success in leading turnarounds to Colorado, to supplement the number of home-grown turnaround leaders.

**6. Identify and implement policy changes** that allow the state, districts, and schools to more fully take advantage of the desired turnaround policy. For example, if the state wants to create a new district to act as the State Recovery District, legislation will likely be required. In addition, even if the current framework of S.B. 163 is retained, there are glitches that could interfere with some of the statutory turnaround options. We recommend at least the following legislative amendments to ensure the goals of S.B. 163 are achieved:

- Provide that turnaround operators for schools and districts directed to implement mandatory turnaround interventions are given maximum autonomy in the areas of staffing, scheduling, curriculum, etc.
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround may be directed to implement one or more of the statutory options
- Provide that schools subject to turnaround interventions may be directed to close and restart
- Provide that districts accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plans lose exclusive chartering authority
- Provide that schools converted into charter schools as a result of turnaround may be district-authorized charter schools, independent charter schools, or Charter School Institute-authorized charter schools, depending on the circumstances
- Clarify that the state may direct that schools may be placed into a network of similarly-situated turnaround schools, in addition to other actions
- Clarify how and under what circumstances schools may be returned to district management
- Provide that the School District Organization Act does not require a vote of electors to approve a reorganization or consolidation plan resulting from turnaround

**7. Develop a turnaround coalition** comprised of advocacy and practitioner groups to advise CDE on its turnaround work, to assist with turnaround work where appropriate, to engage in a coordinated communications strategy designed to raise public awareness around turnaround and school improvement, and to build public support both for the state's turnaround system generally and for local turnaround efforts.

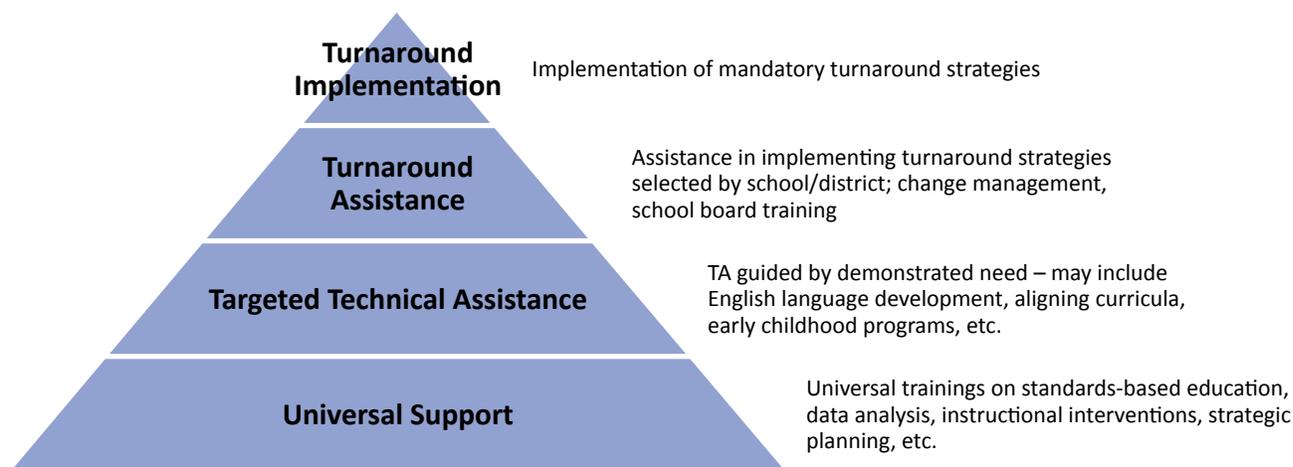
---

Other states have relied on charismatic individuals for leadership. Obvious candidates for this role in Colorado include those in charge of turnarounds at CDE, the Commissioner, and the politically popular Governor. Under Colorado's circumstances, however, the best person for the job might actually be a coalition. Ideally, those committed to Colorado's turnaround system will present a united front that consists of education reform groups, practitioners, membership organizations, legislators, parent and community groups, and business leaders. This group should deliberately undertake consistent messaging that reinforces both the urgency for turnaround and the need to do turnaround well. Separate communications strategies should be developed for each turnaround initiative for the purpose of educating the community and inviting their support – as one CDE Performance Manager stated, "It's important that there be community buy-in, from all levels."

**8. Build state and local capacity for both general and targeted technical assistance** to schools and districts not on Turnaround status for the purpose of decreasing the numbers of schools and districts that eventually need to be placed on Turnaround and increasing the numbers of schools and districts that effectively serve students. Focusing on a tiered system of supports that allows support to be differentiated based on need will ultimately be the most cost-effective way for the state to keep higher-functioning schools and districts out of turnaround. In implementing this recommendation, the state should expect that much of the technical assistance needed will be common across reform initiatives and should be coordinated.

We recommend that Colorado organize its support to districts and schools in a framework that looks much like the Response to Intervention framework being implemented in Colorado schools now. This Tiered Support Framework presumes that all districts and schools will benefit from a level of universal support in key areas such as standards and assessment, data analysis, and the like. The next level of support is geared at districts and schools that would appear to benefit from targeted technical assistance. S.B. 163 requires the state to provide this assistance to all schools and districts with Improvement, Priority Improvement, and Turnaround plans, subject to available resources. The next level involves more assistance for schools and districts that are implementing their own turnaround and priority improvement plans, and the final level involves the implementation of turnaround actions for schools and districts where such actions have been mandated by the State Board of Education.

Like the work of turnaround, CDE does not have the capacity to do this on its own. However, it should be strategic about the areas of technical assistance that are most needed in the field, and develop a plan for delivering some services itself and for arranging for outside consultants to be matched to the needs of schools and districts. We recommend that the state re-examine the use of field services offices and BOCES for this purpose. We also recommend that the state organize peer networks that can pair districts and schools with similar needs and match them with an improvement partner. Some ideas about the types of technical assistance needed are contained in Appendix J.



**9. To ensure quality implementation, cost out the components listed above, and solicit investments from the state, the U.S. Department of Education, national and local foundations, and other partners.** In doing this, the state should plan for both short-term priorities and long-term sustainability, and provide guidance to districts in using available funds to drive turnaround. A clear plan for implementation and a broad coalition of advocates makes our efforts more appealing to both local and national funders. The full commitment of the Governor and the state legislature will be critical to this effort.

This recommendation should not be read to mean that implementation must wait until full long-term funding is secured. The state and its partners can and should begin implementing many of these recommendations right now.

---

## CONCLUSION

As it begins this new era of turning around low-performing schools and districts, Colorado has many advantages. We have the benefit of a policy environment that promotes the essential conditions for turnaround – credible identification of low-performing schools and districts, broad authority for a variety of different approaches to turnaround, multiple options for external operators, including a state chartering authority, and clear consequences for failure to improve. We have a nationally-recognized data system that allows many factors to be taken into consideration when assessing school and district performance. We have a rich and varied landscape of education stakeholders who are, for the most part, aligned in seeking real improvements for children. We have a reputation for reform and quality of life that is attractive to talent across the country.

But we also have challenges. We are not a well-funded state, either in terms of state funding dollars or in terms of local foundation capacity, and we're not likely to have the equivalent of a Hurricane Katrina anytime soon to stimulate national investment. Our education governance is traditionally fragmented, and we are seeing the results of that in the slow and painful implementation of reforms as basic as standards and assessments. Our infrastructure for high-quality implementation of statewide policies is weak. Our reform policies have come fast and furious in recent years, a strength but also a challenge for districts and schools struggling to keep up.

We recommend that everyone involved in making decisions about turnaround schools and districts consider two key points. **First, in making any decision, the needs of children and youth should be considered first.** This requires adults to have the courage to actively make dramatic changes for the benefit of students when warranted, and to consider other approaches in circumstances where dramatic change is not feasible or beneficial for students. In other words, we should strive to “do no harm” to students in low-performing schools, whether that harm be through inaction or inappropriate action.

Second, the turnaround initiative in Colorado is one of many exciting and promising reforms. In the past few years, the state has passed legislation aligning its P-20 education system, updated its content standards, created a new way for schools to operate autonomously, passed a new educator evaluation system that calls for student growth as the primary indicator of performance, and developed a new education accountability system. It is in the process of developing new assessments and promoting more personalized learning in schools. **To the extent possible, decisions made about implementing S.B. 163 should align where possible with the state's important work on other initiatives.** This would allow us to better use our limited resources, and also reinforce the importance of all the reforms currently underway.

We are confident that Colorado will come together as an education community to build on our strengths and overcome our challenges in this new initiative to turn around the lowest-performing schools. There is room for leadership at all levels of this community, and all types of leaders are needed if we are to succeed. We hope that this report will help all education leaders see a role for their organizations and talent in helping to turn around our most troubled schools.

---

## Appendix A – References and Resources

### Turnaround References and Resources

American Institutes for Research (2011). “Reauthorizing ESEA – Making Research Relevant.” School Turnaround Pocket Guide. Washington, DC: Author.

American Institutes for Research (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2011). “School Restructuring: What Works When: A Guide for Education Leaders.” Washington, DC: Author.

American Institutes for Research (2010). “What Experience from the Field Tells Us about School Leadership and Turnaround.” Washington, DC: Author.

A+ Denver (2012). “Colorado Turnaround Schools – Rays of Hope.” Denver, CO: Author.

Christie, K. (2007). “The State Role in Accelerating Student Growth in Low-Performing High Schools.” ECS Policy Brief. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Colorado Department of Education (2012). “Priority Improvement and Turnaround Districts and Schools: A Supplement to the CDE District Accountability Handbook.” Denver, CO: Author.

Corbett, J. (2011). “Lead Turnaround Partners: How the Emerging Marketplace of Lead Turnaround Partners is Changing School Improvement.” Center on Innovation and Improvement. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

De la Torre, M, and Gwynne, J. (2009). “When Schools Close: Effects on Displaced Students in Chicago Public Schools.” Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., and Darwin, M. (2008). “Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools: A Practice Guide.” NCEE #2008-4020. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Hill, P. and Murphy, P. (2011). “On Recovery School Districts and Stronger State Education Agencies: Lessons from Louisiana.” Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

Huidekoper, P. (2011). “After a year, turnaround schools’ performance lackluster.” August 11, 2011, EdNewsColorado.org.

Kowal, J. and Ableidinger, J. (2012). “School Turnarounds In Colorado: Untangling a Web of Supports for Struggling Schools.” Public Impact.

Kowal, J. and Ableidinger, J. (2011). “Leading Indicators of School Turnarounds: How to Know When Dramatic Change is on Track.” Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact; Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

Kowal, J., and Hassel, E.A. (2011). “Importing Leaders for School Turnaround: Lessons and Opportunities.” Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact; Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., Tallant, K. (2010). “The School Turnaround Field Guide.” Boston: FSG Social Impact Advisors.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2012). “Being Bold: An Assessment of Turnaround Initiatives in Select School Districts and States.” Boston, MA: Author.

---

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2010). "The District Turnaround Office: A Comprehensive Support Structure for Struggling Schools." Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2010). "Enabling School Turnaround through State Policy." Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2010). "State Turnaround Office: The Foundation of a Statewide School Turnaround Strategy." Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2009). "Academy for Urban School Leadership, Harvard School of Excellence, Chicago, IL: Lead Partner Management for Turnaround of an Existing School." Meeting the Turnaround Challenge School Case Study. Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2009). "Partnership Zones: Using School Turnaround as the Entry Point for Real Reform – and Reinventing the District Model in the Process." Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2009). "School Turnaround Strategies That Have Failed: How to Avoid Past Mistakes in Addressing the Needs of Low-Performing Schools." Boston, MA: Author.

Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2007). "The Turnaround Challenge: Why America's Best Opportunity to Dramatically Improve Student Achievement Lies in Our Worst-Performing Schools." Boston, MA: Author.

McMurrer, J. (2012). "Changing the School Climate is the First Step to Reform in Many Schools with Federal Improvement Grants." Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.

McMurrer, J. (2012). "Schools with Federal Improvement Grants Face Challenges in Replacing Principals and Teachers." Washington, DC: Center on Education Policy, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University.

Murphy, P. and Hill, P. (2011). "The Changing Role of States in Education: The Move from Compliance to Performance Management." 2011 PIE Network Summit Policy Briefs. Minneapolis: Policy Innovators in Education Network.

Perlman, C. and Reddington, S. (eds.) (2011). "Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants." Center on Innovation and Improvement. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

Public Impact (2008). "School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success." Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact for the Chicago Public Education Fund.

Public Impact (2007). "School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement." Chapel Hill: Author; Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

Rhim, L. M. (2011). "Learning to Dance in the Queen City: Cincinnati Public Schools' Turnaround Initiative." Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

Smith, N. (2012). "The Louisiana Recovery District: Lessons for the Buckeye State." Columbus, OH: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Steiner, L. and Hassel, E.A. (2011). "Using Competencies to Improve School Turnaround Principal Success." Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact; Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education.

---

University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (2012). "Turning Around Low-Performing Schools in Chicago." Chicago, IL: Author.

Kenneth K. Wong and Francis X. Shen (2003). *Measuring the Effectiveness of City and State Takeover as a Reform Strategy*, 78 *Peabody J. of Educ.* 89.

**Other National References and Resources**

Students First (2013). "National Policy Report Card." Retrieved online at <http://reportcard.studentsfirst.org/>.

**Other Colorado References and Resources**

Anderson, A. and DeCesare, D. (2006). "Opening Closed Doors: Lessons from Colorado's First Independent Charter School." Denver, CO: Augenblick Palaich and Associates.

Buechner Institute for Governance (2012). "A Study of Online Learning: Perspectives of Online Learners and Educators." Report to the Colorado Department of Education, Unit of Online Learning.

Benson, D. (2008). "The Standards-Based Teaching/Learning Cycle: A Guide for Colorado Educators on How to Put Standards-Based Education into Practice at the District, School and Classroom Level." Denver, CO: Colorado Coalition for Standards-Based Education.



## **Appendix B – S.B. 163’s Accountability Framework**

### ***The Accountability Framework of S.B. 163***

S.B. 163, or the Educational Accountability Act, was passed with bipartisan support in 2009. In 2012, the state applied for and was granted waivers from the accountability provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind law that in essence allow the state to use S.B. 163 as its primary accountability system, although some federal requirements are still in effect.<sup>21</sup> As a result, we will focus on the provisions of S.B. 163 and not federal accountability requirements.

S.B. 163 establishes annual performance assessments and continuous improvement planning processes for schools and districts. It also provides for significant interventions in districts and schools that are persistently low-performing. At the end of this process, decision-making authority can be completely removed from failing districts and schools. This approach represents a balancing of a local school board’s constitutional right to control instruction in its schools (Colo. Constitution, Art. IX, sec. 15) with the State Board of Education’s constitutional responsibility for oversight of the state’s educational system (Colo. Constitution, Art. IX, sec. 1).<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Improvement Planning Process***

Under S.B. 163, all public schools and districts are assessed based on School and District Performance Frameworks, respectively, and are provided with the results of that assessment. The statutory improvement planning process then directs each organization to complete an in-depth data analysis that looks at performance targets and trends and identifies root causes of poor performance. The school or district then selects appropriate improvement strategies based on its analysis, and creates an implementation plan designed to improve performance. The type of plan required depends upon the level of prior performance, and is assigned by the State Board of Education upon the recommendation of the Colorado Department of Education. Districts are also accredited through this process. This cycle occurs on an annual basis.

### ***The District Performance Framework and Accreditation Ratings***

District Performance Frameworks measure district performance in four areas: academic achievement; academic growth; academic growth gaps; and post-secondary and workforce readiness. The District Performance Framework is also applied to assess the performance of the state Charter School Institute, which operates as a local education agency for the charter schools it authorizes, and any Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) that operate schools serving students.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Colorado’s approved waiver application is available on the Colorado Department of Education website at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability/NCLBWaiver.asp>.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g., *Hazlet v. Gaunt*, 126 Colo. 385, 250 P.2d 188 (1952); *Owens, Colorado Governor v. Colorado Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students*, 92 P.3d 933 (Colo. 2004)

<sup>23</sup> For purposes of this report, the term “district” will also include the Charter School Institute and any BOCES subject to the District Performance Framework, unless specifically stated otherwise.

DPF Component	DPF Component	How Measured
Student achievement		Percentage of students in the district scoring proficient or higher in statewide assessments in reading, writing, math, and science
Student academic growth		Median growth percentile for the district in math, reading, writing, and English proficiency
Post-secondary and workforce readiness		Average ACT composite scores; student dropout rates and overall and disaggregated graduation rates
Student academic growth gaps		Median growth percentile in the district in math, reading, and writing and for disaggregated subgroups

Because the District Performance Framework relies on longitudinal academic growth calculated by the sophisticated Colorado Growth Model as well as data about student point-in-time academic performance, it is generally considered credible by the education community in the state. Academic growth and performance data is currently limited to what can be shown by state assessments in reading, writing, math, science and English proficiency, and by dropout and graduation rates.

Scores obtained on the District Performance Frameworks are used to assign accreditation status to districts. There are six possible categories of accreditation:

- **Accredited with Distinction** – assigned to districts scoring 80 percent or above of points possible on the DPF
- **Accredited** – assigned to districts scoring between 64 and 80 percent
- **Accredited with Improvement Plan** – assigned to districts scoring between 52 and 64 percent
- **Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan** – assigned to districts scoring between 42 and 52 percent
- **Accredited with Turnaround Plan** – assigned to districts scoring less than 42 percent
- **Not Accredited** – may be recommended for districts that meet the statutory criteria for loss of accreditation due to chronic underperformance and/or financial problems

The plans that districts must submit to the state depend upon their levels of accreditation. Districts that are accredited or accredited with distinction must submit performance plans; districts in other levels must submit the types of plans indicated by their accreditation. Depending on their circumstances, districts may be required to submit additional addenda to meet other program requirements not addressed through the improvement plan, such as federal requirements.

### ***The School Performance Framework and Plan Assignments***

School Performance Frameworks use the same four components to evaluate individual school performance (except that the Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness component applies only to schools graduating students from high school). The state does not accredit schools, but uses the SPF to categorize schools by the type of plan they are required to submit in the state’s Unified Improvement Planning process. Districts accredit their own schools, and may be more demanding than the state’s requirements. Again, the focus on both growth and performance has led to acceptance of the SPF for school performance assessment.

SPF Component	How Measured
Student achievement	Percentage of students in the school scoring proficient or higher in statewide assessments in reading, writing, math, and science
Student academic growth	Median growth percentile for the school in math, reading, writing, and English proficiency
Post-secondary and workforce readiness	Average ACT composite scores; student dropout rates and overall and disaggregated graduation rates
Student academic growth gaps	Median growth percentile in the school in math, reading, and writing and for disaggregated subgroups

The state assigns four types of plans to schools as a result of the School Performance Framework:

- **Performance Plan** – assigned to elementary and middle schools receiving 59 percent or more of possible points, and to high schools receiving 60 percent or more of possible points
- **Improvement Plan** – assigned to elementary and middle schools receiving between 46 and 58 points, and to high schools receiving between 47 percent and 59 percent
- **Priority Improvement Plan** – assigned to elementary and middle schools receiving between 37 and 46 percent, and to high schools receiving between 33 percent and 46 percent
- **Turnaround Plan** – assigned to elementary and middle schools receiving less than 37 percent of total possible points, and to high schools receiving less than 33 percent of total possible points

Each district is required to review and approve the plans submitted by all schools in the district. For schools located in districts with 1,000 or fewer students, the district may submit a single plan for the district and its schools; for districts between 1,000 and 1,200 students, the district may request approval for submitting a single plan.

### ***Developing and Submitting Plans***

All plans required under S.B. 163 must include certain common components, such as identification of trends, root causes, targets, and research-based improvement strategies. S.B. 163 envisions that schools and districts with higher performance will be subject to less oversight and review in the planning process. Conversely, schools and districts with lower performance are subject to greater review. For example, schools with Performance Plans need only develop their plan with input from the superintendent and school accountability committee. For schools with Improvement Plans, the local school board must hold public hearings, and the local school board must formally adopt priority improvement and turnaround plans in addition to holding public hearings and soliciting input from school and district accountability committees. The State Review Panel established by S.B. 163 adds another layer of review, with a mandatory assessment by the Panel of all district and school Turnaround Plans and review upon request of the Commissioner of Priority Improvement plans. CDE staff also review all Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans and may recommend changes.

<sup>24</sup> The “clock” does not start until the academic year after the state or district receives its plan category. So, for example, a school assigned to a Priority Improvement Plan in December 2012 is “on the clock” with that plan as of July 1, 2013.

As schools and districts are identified as persistently low-performing, they have less and less discretion in the selection of plan strategies and are at risk of being subject to dramatic turnaround actions. Schools and districts with Turnaround Plan are required to select among turnaround interventions specified in S.B. 163. Districts and schools that are not making substantial improvement under a Turnaround Plan, and those who have been on priority improvement or turnaround status for more than five consecutive years, are subject to state-mandated turnaround interventions selected by the State Board of Education. This five-year time period is commonly referred to as “the clock” – so, for example, a school that has received a Priority Improvement Plan assignment for three consecutive years is referred to as on the clock in year 3.<sup>24</sup> If a school or district has been on the clock because it has been on priority improvement or turnaround status, an improvement in performance to an Improvement Plan or higher will take it off the clock. A subsequent Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan assignment will restart the clock over again at the beginning.

### ***Required Turnaround Plan Components***

S.B. 163 specifies the strategies that must be part of Turnaround Plans, for schools and districts that are not yet eligible for state-mandated interventions. **Schools** with Turnaround Plans must select one or more of the following strategies:

- Employing a lead turnaround partner to develop and execute the Turnaround Plan at the school
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure within the school
- Seeking recognition as an Innovation School
- Contracting with a third party (public or private) to manage the school
- Converting to a charter school
- For a charter school, significantly restructuring the charter
- “Other actions of comparable or greater significance,” including those identified under ESEA:
  - Closure
  - Restarting with a charter management organization or an educational management organization
  - Turnaround, defined as
    - ◆ Replacing principal and at least half of staff
    - ◆ Revising instructional program
    - ◆ Expanding learning time
    - ◆ Implementing operating flexibility
  - Transformation, defined as
    - ◆ Principal replaced
    - ◆ Changes in learning time, instruction, etc.

----->

**Districts** with Turnaround Plans must identify one or more of the following strategies:

- Employing a lead turnaround partner to develop and execute the Turnaround Plan at the district and its schools
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure in the district
- Recognizing one or more district schools as Innovation Schools
- Contracting with a third party to operate one or more district schools
- Converting one or more district schools to charter schools
- For the Charter School Institute, significantly restructuring the Institute’s charter contract
- Closing one or more district schools
- Other actions of comparable or greater significance (not specified)

The State Review Panel established by S.B. 163 is required to review all district and school turnaround plans and make recommendations to the Commissioner for modifications.

***Mandatory Closure or Restructuring***

If a school or district has been assigned a turnaround or priority improvement plan for more than five consecutive years (has spent five years “on the clock”), or has failed to make substantial progress under a turnaround plan, S.B. 163 mandates that the State Board of Education direct that specific action be taken, which may be up to and including closure of the district or school. Failure to make substantial progress under a turnaround plan means that the targets set in the plan have not been met, or progress has not been substantial enough to lift the school or district to the Priority Improvement level or higher.

For **schools** in this situation, S.B. 163 calls for restructuring. The Commissioner refers the school to the State Review Panel, which is charged with critically evaluating the school’s performance and recommending one or more of the following:

- That the school be closed or its charter revoked
- That the school be managed by a private or public entity other than the district
- That the school be converted to a charter school
- That the school, if already a charter, replace its current operator and governing board
- That the school be designated an Innovation School

The State Review Panel then presents its recommendations to the State Board of Education and the Commissioner, and the State Board determines which action/s are required and directs the school board to implement them. C.R.S. 22-210(5).

For **districts** in this situation, CDE may recommend that the district lose accreditation. C.R.S. sec. 22-11-209(1). This recommendation triggers review by the State Review Panel for the purpose of critically evaluating the situation and recommending one or more of the following actions:

- 
- That the district be reorganized or consolidated under the School District Reorganization Act
  - That management of the district and/or one or more of its schools be taken over by a different private or public entity (with the consent of the district)
  - That one or more of the district's schools be converted into charter schools
  - That one or more of the district's schools be designated Innovation Schools
  - That one or more of the district's schools be closed

If a district does not have any schools operating in its boundaries for at least three months, it loses its share of school funding for that year. Colo. Const. art. IX, sec. 2.

In making its recommendations, the State Review Panel is required to consider the leadership capacity in the district (including the capacity to plan for and implement change), the adequacy of the district's infrastructure to support school improvement, the readiness of the district to engage with an external partner, the likelihood that current management structure and staffing will allow for positive returns on state investments, and the necessity that the district remain in operation to service students. C.R.S. 22-11-209(2).

The matter then goes to the State Board of Education, which considers the recommendations of the State Review Panel, the department, and the Commissioner, and determines whether to remove accreditation. If the district is not closed or consolidated, the State Board specifies the actions that must be taken for accreditation to be reinstated and directs the district to take those actions. C.R.S. 22-11-209(3).

## Appendix C – Schools Assigned Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter # K-12 students	Charter #/online	EMH Levels Served	Final % Points Earned 2010	Final % Points Earned 2011	Final % Points Earned 2012	Final % Points Earned 2012	2010 Final Accreditation Category	2011 Final Accreditation Category	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	CORONADO HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	514	91.3	42.9	42.1	42.1	42.1	42.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	HILLCREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	496	78.4	52.2	44	44	44	44	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	COLORADO VIRTUAL ACADEMY (COVA)	EMH	4,620	27.4	41.6	40.9	40.9	40.9	40.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	THORNTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	430	85.4	37.5	37.1	37.1	37.1	37.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AT THORNTON MIDDLE	M	796	85.2	47.1	43	43	43	43	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	FEDERAL HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	575	93.7	43.8	44.9	44.9	44.9	44.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	LEROY DRIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	432	65.7	66.3	60.5	60.5	60.5	60.5	Performance Plan	Performance Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOLS	STURKEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	329	83.3	41.5	60.5	60.5	60.5	60.5	Performance Plan	Performance Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ADAMS COUNTY 14	LESTER R ARNOLD HIGH SCHOOL	H	256	51.6	34.2	33	33	33	33	Priority Improvement Plan	AEC: Turnaround Plan	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 3
ADAMS COUNTY 14	ADAMS CITY HIGH SCHOOL	H	1748	75.1	34.5	34.9	34.9	34.9	34.9	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ADAMS COUNTY 14	ROSE HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	479	88.9	34.4	38.6	38.6	38.6	38.6	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ADAMS COUNTY 14	CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	551	87.5	48.3	48.8	48.8	48.8	48.8	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ADAMS COUNTY 14	ADAMS CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL	M	762	88.3	51	45.7	45.7	45.7	45.7	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	NEW AMERICA SCHOOL	H	515	63.9	33.3	37.3	37.3	37.3	37.3	AEC: Default Improvement	AEC: Priority Improvement	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	APS ONLINE SCHOOL	H	121	33.9	25.1	25.1	25.1	25.1	25.1	Performance Plan	Turnaround Plan	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	ARKANSAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	474	66.7	34	39.1	39.1	39.1	39.1	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	JEWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	522	71.7	54.6	44.2	44.2	44.2	44.2	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	BOSTON K-8 SCHOOL	EM	489	86.1	53.1	46.7	46.7	46.7	46.7	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	AURORA CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	H	2270	72.4	37.5	45.4	45.4	45.4	45.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	CRAWFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	699	89.6	50	43.8	43.8	43.8	43.8	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	FLETCHER INTERMEDIATE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL	EM	290	96.2	47.2	43.1	43.1	43.1	43.1	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	KENTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	512	85.9	50	43.8	43.8	43.8	43.8	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	PARIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	439	93.2	44.2	48.4	48.4	48.4	48.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	MIRACHEK MIDDLE SCHOOL	M	930	70	47.3	36.9	36.9	36.9	36.9	Improvement Plan	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 28J	SIXTH AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	597	83.9	49.6	43.8	43.8	43.8	43.8	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
AGUILAR REORGANIZED 6	AGUILAR JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	MH	31	83.9	41.3	45.1	45.1	45.1	45.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ALAMOSA RE-11J	ALAMOSA OMBUDSMAN SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE	MH	61	67.2								Turnaround Plan	Year 1
ALAMOSA RE-11J	ALAMOSA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	1034	84.1								Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ARCHULETA COUNTY 50 JT	ARCHULETA COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	H	8	87.5	25	25.1	25.1	25.1	25.1	AEC: Default Improvement	AEC: Improvement Plan	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 1
ARRIBA-FLAGLER C-20	FLAGLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	87	49.4	35.4	31.3	31.3	31.3	31.3	Turnaround Plan	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
BETHUNE R-5	BETHUNE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	68	80.9	39.4	51.6	51.6	51.6	51.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
BOULDER VALLEY RE 2	JUSTICE HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL	MH	99	71.7	25.6	25.2	25.2	25.2	25.2	AEC: Default Improvement	AEC: Performance Plan	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 1
BRIGHTON 27J	BRIGHTON HERITAGE ACADEMY	MH	97	7.2	32.4	36.7	36.7	36.7	36.7	AEC: Default Improvement	AEC: Priority Improvement	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
BRIGHTON 27J	SECOND CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	625	31.2	59.2	53	53	53	53	Performance Plan	Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
BRIGHTON 27J	NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	315	80.3	67.2	43.4	43.4	43.4	43.4	Performance Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
BRIGHTON 27J	NORTHEAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	526	59.1	31.3	35.5	35.5	35.5	35.5	Turnaround Plan	Turnaround Plan	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter # e/online Served	K-12 student FRL 2012	K-12 % FRL 2012	Final % Points Earned 2010	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
BRIGHTON 271	OVERLAND TRAIL MIDDLE SCHOOL	M	666	51.2	53.3	50	Improvement Plan	50	Improvement Plan	45.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
BRUSH RE-20J	BEAVER VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	319	67.1	56	53.8	Improvement Plan	53.8	Improvement Plan	46.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
BURLINGTON RE-6J	BURLINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL	EM	222	62.2	47.3	42.7	Improvement Plan	42.7	Priority Improvement Plan	40.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
CANON CITY RE-1	MCKINLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	249	54.6	51	41.4	Improvement Plan	41.4	Priority Improvement Plan	36.7	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
CENTENNIAL R-1	CENTENNIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	98	88.8	88.8	43.8	Improvement Plan	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	37.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
CENTENNIAL R-1	CENTENNIAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	M	24	95.8	49.2	54.2	Improvement Plan	54.2	Priority Improvement Plan	44.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CENTER 26 JT	THE ACADEMIC RECOVERY CENTER OF SAN LUIS VALLEY	H	7	85.7	25	AEC: Default Improvement Plan		25.1	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	35.1	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
CENTER 26 JT	HASKIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	289	90.3	39.1	Turnaround Plan		44.8	Priority Improvement Plan	44.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	GOAL ACADEMY	MH	2590	71.7	28.7	AEC: Default Improvement Plan		26.2	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	31.8	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	YOUTH & FAMILY ACADEMY CHARTER	MH	160	79.4	45.7	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan		32	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	33.9	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	COLORADO PROVOST ACADEMY	H	309	40.5		Performance Plan		43.7	Priority Improvement Plan	38.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	MOUNTAIN MIDDLE SCHOOL	M	168	1.8				55.2	Improvement Plan	40.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	SCHOLARS TO LEADERS ACADEMY	EM	273	83.2	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan		40.1	Priority Improvement Plan	40.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	COLORADO CALVERT ACADEMY	EM	62	48.4	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan		42.4	Priority Improvement Plan	45.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	FRONTIER CHARTER ACADEMY	EM	226	25.7	76.5	Performance Plan		57.2	Improvement Plan	51.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	EARLY COLLEGE OF ARVADA	MH	238	10.5	77.1	Performance Plan		77.7	Performance Plan	76.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	STONE CREEK SCHOOL	EM	93	47.3	50.2	Improvement Plan		32.7	Turnaround Plan	42.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
CHERAW 31	CHERAW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	491	86.2	31.1	Turnaround Plan		32.2	Turnaround Plan	38.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	JACK SWIGERT AEROSPACE ACADEMY	M	196	29.6		Improvement Plan		42	Priority Improvement Plan	39.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	ACHIEVEK12	EMH	194	61.9	68.8	Performance Plan		60.5	Performance Plan	39.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	BATES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	356	69.7	51.7	Improvement Plan		41.7	Priority Improvement Plan	42.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	HENRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	154	85.1	25	AEC: Default Improvement Plan		25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	25.1	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	SPACE TECHNOLOGY AND ARTS ACADEMY (STAR ACADEMY)	H	177	60.5	25	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan		25.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	25.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 3
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL	H	449	70.8	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan		40.5	Priority Improvement Plan	42.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	PENROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E	382	55.2	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan		49.5	Improvement Plan	46.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
COLORADO SPRINGS 11	WASSON HIGH SCHOOL	H	977	65.7	53.7	Improvement Plan		56.1	Priority Improvement Plan	50.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	ACADEMY OF URBAN LEARNING	H	154	85.1	25	AEC: Default Improvement Plan		25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	25.1	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	COLORADO HIGH SCHOOL	H	177	60.5	25	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan		25.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	25.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	DENVER CENTER FOR 21ST LEARNING AT WYMAN	MH	215	70.2						25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	SUMMIT ACADEMY	H	224	70.1		Performance Plan		25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	CONTEMPORARY LEARNING ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL	H	221	72.4	37.5	AEC: Default Improvement Plan		36.8	AEC: Turnaround Plan	30.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	P.R.E.P.	MH	113	82.3	75	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan		25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	32.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	FLORENCE CRITTENTON HIGH SCHOOL	H	126	87.3	37.5	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan		34.1	AEC: Turnaround Plan	32.9	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 3

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter # e/online	# K-12 students 2012	K-12 % FRL 2012	Final % Points Earned 2010	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
DENVER COUNTY 1	ACE COMMUNITY CHALLENGE SCHOOL	MH	CH	217	86.6	38.1	AEC: Performance Plan	33.8	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	33.9	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	E		302	95.7		Performance Plan	25.2	Turnaround Plan	34.6	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	ESQUELA TLATELOLOCO SCHOOL	EMH		135	73.3	43.4	Priority Improvement Plan	40.7	Priority Improvement Plan	35.8	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	JUSTICE HIGH SCHOOL DENVER	H	CH	128	91.4	25	AEC: Performance Plan	41.7	AEC: Turnaround Plan	37.6	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	MUNROE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		588	98	37.1	Priority Improvement Plan	49.6	Improvement Plan	39.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	MONTBELLO HIGH SCHOOL	H		831	82.1	41.2	Turnaround Plan	44.2	Priority Improvement Plan	40.8	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	RACHEL B. NOEL MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		210	88.6	43.8	Turnaround Plan	38	Turnaround Plan	41.3	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	GILPIN MONTESSORI PUBLIC SCHOOL	E		205	81.5	47.8	Priority Improvement Plan	50.8	Improvement Plan	42	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	GENTENNIAL ECE-8 SCHOOL	EM		506	82.2	46.8	Priority Improvement Plan	52.6	Improvement Plan	42.1	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	JOHNSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		417	97.1	72.9	Performance Plan	49.3	Improvement Plan	43	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	WEST HIGH SCHOOL	H		526	84.4	44.1	Priority Improvement Plan	40	Turnaround Plan	43.1	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	ASHLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		315	96.8	51.6	Improvement Plan	43.4	Priority Improvement Plan	43.4	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	COLUMBINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		243	92.2	59.4	Performance Plan	43.8	Improvement Plan	43.8	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	SMITH RENAISSANCE SCHOOL	E		331	98.8	63	Priority Improvement Plan	27.1	Turnaround Plan	44.9	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	CASTRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		625	98.1	56.8	Improvement Plan	63.1	Performance Plan	45.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	COLLEGE VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		392	98	49.6	Improvement Plan	44.2	Priority Improvement Plan	45.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	DENVER ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL	H	OL	117	29.1	46.1	Turnaround Plan	52.5	Improvement Plan	46.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	GREENLEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		324	94.8		Performance Plan	30.8	Turnaround Plan	47.4	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	KEPNER MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		978	97.2	45	Priority Improvement Plan	50.1	Improvement Plan	47.4	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	WYATT-EDISON CHARTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	EM	CH	635	94.8	61.7	Performance Plan	61.1	Improvement Plan	47.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	SMILEY MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		206	81.1	58.1	Priority Improvement Plan	45.3	Priority Improvement Plan	48.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	SOUTHWEST EARLY COLLEGE	H	CH	324	76.5	60.6	Improvement Plan	49.5	Improvement Plan	50.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	NORTHEAST ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	EM	CH	239	92.1	51.3	Turnaround Plan	35.5	Turnaround Plan	52.8	Turnaround Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	TRIVISTA ECE-8 AT HORACE MANN	EM		521	96	41.9	Priority Improvement Plan	44.3	Turnaround Plan	52.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	MAXWELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		449	95.8	53.8	Improvement Plan	43.8	Turnaround Plan	52.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	BARRETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		165	94.6	57.6	Priority Improvement Plan	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	53.9	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DENVER COUNTY 1	GESAR CHAVEZ ACADEMY DENVER	EM	CH	441	88.9	53.4	Improvement Plan	45.5	Priority Improvement Plan	54.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DENVER COUNTY 1	BRUCE RANDOLPH SCHOOL	MH		911	96.2	54.3	Improvement Plan	55.4	Improvement Plan	57.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DENVER COUNTY 1	GOLDRICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		573	95.1	66.1	Performance Plan	51.9	Improvement Plan	59.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DOLORES COUNTY RE NO.2	SEVENTH STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		123	51.2	45.8	Priority Improvement Plan	50.6	Improvement Plan	40.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	HOPE ON-LINE	EMH	CH/OL	3079	56.4	29.1	Turnaround Plan	33.6	Priority Improvement Plan	38.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	EAGLE ACADEMY	H		103	8.7	50	Improvement Plan	41.7	Priority Improvement Plan	41.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
DOUGLAS COUNTY RE 1	EDGSD: COLORADO CYBER SCHOOL	EMH	OL	232	9.1	39.8	Turnaround Plan	44.6	Priority Improvement Plan	41.4	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
DURANGO 9R	FLORIDA MESA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		304	47.4	46.4	Priority Improvement Plan	53	Improvement Plan	42.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
EAGLE COUNTY RE 50	RED CANYON HIGH SCHOOL	H		130	43.1	33.6	Priority Improvement Plan	25.2	AEC: Improvement Plan	29.6	AEC: Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
EAGLE COUNTY RE 50	NEW AMERICA CHARTER SCHOOL	H	CH	34	44.1	25	AEC: Default Improvement	25.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	35.4	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 2
FALCON 49	FALCON VIRTUAL ACADEMY	EMH	OL	806	0		Performance Plan	40.8	Priority Improvement Plan	43.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
FREMONT RE-2	PENROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		247	53.9	51.6	Improvement Plan	52.7	Improvement Plan	41.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
FREMONT RE-2	FREMONT MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		360	52.5	44.3	Priority Improvement Plan	43.3	Priority Improvement Plan	42.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter e/online Served	# K-12 students	K-12 % FRL	Final % Points Earned 2010	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
GILPIN COUNTY RE-1	GILPIN COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		184	31.5	59	Performance Plan	54.9	Improvement Plan	42.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
GREELEY 6	JOHN EVANS MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		651	85.9	26.7	Turnaround Plan	31.3	Turnaround Plan	36.4	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
GREELEY 6	MARTINEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		579	94.8	51.9	Improvement Plan	46.1	Priority Improvement Plan	38.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
GREELEY 6	FRANKLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		768	83.3	46.5	Priority Improvement Plan	38.7	Priority Improvement Plan	40.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
GREELEY 6	BRENTWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		638	77.7	51.8	Improvement Plan	52.7	Improvement Plan	42.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
GREELEY 6	NORTHBRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL	H		969	67	49.9	Improvement Plan	42.7	Priority Improvement Plan	43.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
GREELEY 6	MADISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		528	94.9	50	Improvement Plan	50.6	Improvement Plan	44.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
GREELEY 6	MAPLEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		600	95.7	60	Performance Plan	37.6	Priority Improvement Plan	44.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
GREELEY 6	EAST MEMORIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		575	90.8	44.8	Priority Improvement Plan	48.5	Improvement Plan	45	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
HARRISON 2	BRICKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		369	83.7	75.5	Performance Plan	51.3	Improvement Plan	43	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
HUERFANO RE-1	PEAKVIEW SCHOOL	EM		287	81.9	43.3	Priority Improvement Plan	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan	42.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
IGNACIO 11 JT	IGNACIO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	M		129	63.6	47.7	Improvement Plan	35.2	Turnaround Plan	37	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
IGNACIO 11 JT	IGNACIO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL	E		170	64.1	34.3	Turnaround Plan	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan	41.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	BRADY EXPLORATION SCHOOL	H		288	62.5	32.9	AEC: Default Improvement	28.1	AEC: Priority Improvement	31.3	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	NEW AMERICA SCHOOL	H	CH	551	87.3	37.5	AEC: Default Improvement	38	AEC: Priority Improvement	36.7	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	STEVENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		321	86.3	83.3	AEC: Default Improvement	38	AEC: Default Improvement	36.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	WHEAT RIDGE 5-8	EM		470	85.5					38	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL	H		551	89.8	43.6	Priority Improvement Plan	47.1	Improvement Plan	45	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
JEFFERSON COUNTY R-1	MILLIKEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		553	54.1	59.7	Performance Plan	43	Priority Improvement Plan	40.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
JULESBURG RE-1	INSIGHT SCHOOL OF COLORADO AT JULESBURG	MH	OL	885	40.1	37.2	Turnaround Plan	34.3	Turnaround Plan	36.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
KARVAL RE-23	KARVAL ONLINE EDUCATION	EMH	OL	93	7.5	41.7	Priority Improvement Plan	33.8	Priority Improvement Plan	33.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
LAKE COUNTY R-1	WESTPARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		310	75.8	60	Performance Plan	42.2	Priority Improvement Plan	33.1	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
LAKE COUNTY R-1	LAKE COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL	EM		330	77.6	42.2	Priority Improvement Plan	40.7	Priority Improvement Plan	33.5	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
LAMAR RE-2	PARKVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		316	80.1	60.4	Performance Plan	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
LAS ANIMAS RE-1	LAS ANIMAS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	M		64	81.3	37	Priority Improvement Plan	37	Priority Improvement Plan	29.8	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
LIBERTY J-4	LIBERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		36	12.1	40.6	Priority Improvement Plan	32.8	Turnaround Plan	38.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
LONE STAR 101	LONE STAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		52	51.9	75	Performance Plan	38.9	Priority Improvement Plan	36.1	Turnaround Plan	Year 2
MAPLETON 1	THE NEW AMERICA SCHOOL	H	CH	402	80.9		Improvement Plan	29.3	AEC: Priority Improvement	29.6	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
MAPLETON 1	WELBY MONTESSORI SCHOOL	E		218	83	29.2	Turnaround Plan	28.2	Turnaround Plan	39	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
MAPLETON 1	CLAYTON PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL	EM		491	78.8	35.7	Turnaround Plan	40.2	Priority Improvement Plan	41.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
MAPLETON 1	GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY	EMH		530	91.5	44.7	Priority Improvement Plan	44.5	Priority Improvement Plan	44	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
MAPLETON 1	ACHIEVE ACADEMY	EM		458	84.8	51	Improvement Plan	45.6	Priority Improvement Plan	45.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
MAPLETON 1	MAPLETON EXPEDITIONARY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS	EMH		557	75.8	52.5	Improvement Plan	51.2	Improvement Plan	45.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
MAPLETON 1	NORTH VALLEY SCHOOL FOR YOUNG ADULTS	H		73	64.4		Improvement Plan	25.1	Turnaround Plan	37.2	AEC: Turnaround Plan	Year 1
MESA COUNTY VALLEY 51	GRANDE RIVER VIRTUAL ACADEMY	EMH	OL	245	9.4		Improvement Plan			37.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
MIAMI YODER 60 JT	MIAMI YODER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	M		81	71.6	74.4	Performance Plan	52.1	Improvement Plan	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
MOFFAT 2	MOFFAT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		39	82.1	58.3	Improvement Plan	41.7	Priority Improvement Plan	41.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
MOFFAT COUNTY RE: NO 1	MAYBELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		9	55.6		Performance Plan		Performance Plan	25.2	Turnaround Plan	Year 1

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter e/online	# K-12 students	K-12 FRL 2012	Final % Points Earned 2010	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
MOFFAT COUNTY RE-MO 1	SUNSET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		278	40.7	47.9	Improvement Plan	49.5	Improvement Plan	45.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
MONTE VISTA C-8	MONTE VISTA MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		231	78.4	55.7	Improvement Plan	50	Improvement Plan	42.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
MONTEZUMA-CORTEZ RE-1	SOUTHWEST OPEN CHARTER SCHOOL	H	CH	161	52.8	25.6	AEC: Default Improvement	25.8	AEC: Priority Improvement	25.2	AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
MONTEZUMA-CORTEZ RE-1	KEMPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		394	64	32.3	Turnaround Plan	36	Turnaround Plan	41.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
MONTEZUMA-CORTEZ RE-1	MANAUGH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		296	82.1	55.4	Improvement Plan	43.6	Priority Improvement Plan	42.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
NORTH CONEJOS RE-1J	CENTAURI MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		260	75	44.6	Priority Improvement Plan	53.8	Improvement Plan	44.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
NORWOOD R-2J	NORWOOD-ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		120	62.5	55.2	Improvement Plan	46.5	Priority Improvement Plan	45.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PRITCHETT RE-3	PRITCHETT MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		10	60	31.3	Turnaround Plan	47	Improvement Plan	38.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO CITY 60	FRED MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		291	76.3	30.2	Turnaround Plan	26.1	Turnaround Plan	25.5	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	LEMUEL PITTS MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		254	89.4	29.7	Turnaround Plan	26.6	Turnaround Plan	26.9	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	JAMES H RISLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		355	96.3		Turnaround Plan	25.1	Turnaround Plan	28.1	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	RONCALLI MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		559	76.4	45	Priority Improvement Plan	32.1	Turnaround Plan	30.6	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		269	91.8		Turnaround Plan	31.2	Turnaround Plan	32	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	BENAMIN FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		425	88.5	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	38.9	Priority Improvement Plan	40.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
PUERLO CITY 60	MINNEQUA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		360	88.1	57.3	Improvement Plan	52.7	Improvement Plan	41.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO CITY 60	BRADFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		338	94.1	40.4	Turnaround Plan	50.4	Improvement Plan	43.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO CITY 60	CARLIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		307	78.5	68.8	Performance Plan	65.8	Performance Plan	43.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO CITY 60	HAARF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		304	69.7	66	Performance Plan	42.3	Priority Improvement Plan	45.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
PUERLO COUNTY 70	BESSEMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	EM		437	91.5	34.2	Turnaround Plan	31.9	Turnaround Plan	46.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
PUERLO COUNTY 70	BEULAH MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		60	50	64.6	Performance Plan	55.8	Improvement Plan	42.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO COUNTY 70	LIBERTY POINT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL	M		521	54.1	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	51.1	Improvement Plan	44.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
PUERLO COUNTY 70	PLEASANT VIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		356	53.7	54	Improvement Plan	50.5	Improvement Plan	45	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ROCKY FORD R-2	JEFFERSON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL	E		279	85.7	31.9	Turnaround Plan	31.3	Turnaround Plan	31.3	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
SHERIDAN 2	SHERIDAN HIGH SCHOOL	H		370	77.3	55.3	Priority Improvement Plan	47.8	Improvement Plan	45.5	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
SIERRA GRANDE R-30	SIERRA GRANDE MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		65	89.2	42.2	Priority Improvement Plan	45.9	Priority Improvement Plan	36.6	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
SOUTH CONEJOS RE-10	ANTONITO MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		39	66.7	30.4	Turnaround Plan	36	Turnaround Plan	28.9	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
SOUTH CONEJOS RE-10	GUADALUPE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	EM		90	82.2	42.4	Priority Improvement Plan	57	Improvement Plan	45.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
SPRINGFIELD RE-4	SPRINGFIELD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	M		30	66.7	39.1	Priority Improvement Plan	57.4	Improvement Plan	43.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ST VRAIN VALLEY RE 1J	ST. VRAIN GLOBAL ONLINE ACADEMY	H	OL	81	28.4						Turnaround Plan	Year 1
ST VRAIN VALLEY RE 1J	SPANGLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		297	96.3	31.2	Turnaround Plan	61	Performance Plan	40.3	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
ST VRAIN VALLEY RE 1J	FREDERICK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		495	64.7	36.3	Turnaround Plan	36.3	AEC: Priority Improvement	44.8	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
ST VRAIN VALLEY RE 1J	ADULT EDUCATION/LINCOLN CENTER	MH		122	13.1	25	AEC: Default Improvement	25.1	AEC: Priority Improvement		AEC: Priority Improvement	Year 2
THOMPSON R-2J	MONROE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	EMH		333	65.5	50.5	Improvement Plan	47.2	Improvement Plan	43.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
THOMPSON R-2J	THOMPSON ONLINE	EMH	OL	48	27.1		Performance Plan	43	Performance Plan	50	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
TRINIDAD 1	FISHER'S PEAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		387	71.1	49	Improvement Plan	40.2	Priority Improvement Plan	40.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
VILAS RE-5	V.I.L.A.S. ONLINE SCHOOL	EMH	OL	165	51.5	29.1	Turnaround Plan	30.5	Turnaround Plan	28.3	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
WELD COUNTY RE-1	GIL CREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		174	71.8	36.5	Turnaround Plan	38.1	Priority Improvement Plan	33.3	Turnaround Plan	Year 3
WELD COUNTY S/D RE-8	TWOHIBLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		526	75.9	63.5	Improvement Plan	53.2	Improvement Plan	46.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
WESTMINSTER 50	RIVER C. RANUM MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		812	89		Priority Improvement Plan	26.3	Turnaround Plan	38.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
WESTMINSTER 50	M. SCOTT CARPENTER MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		566	90.1	36.7	Turnaround Plan	37.6	Priority Improvement Plan	38.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3

2012 CDE School Plan Type Recommendations (Final Recommendations 12/05/12) - with 2010 and 2011 SPF results

District Name	School Name	EMH Levels Served	Charter e/onlin e	# K-12 student s 2012	K-12 % FRL 2012	Final % Points Earned 2010	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Entering Year on P/TA
WESTMINSTER 50	CLARA E. METZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		381	86.4	50.5	Improvement Plan	51.1	Improvement Plan	39.7	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
WESTMINSTER 50	WESTMINSTER HIGH SCHOOL	H		2398	78.3	39.4	Priority Improvement Plan	36.1	Priority Improvement Plan	43.2	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
WESTMINSTER 50	SHAW HEIGHTS MIDDLE SCHOOL	M		648	78.4	45.9	Priority Improvement Plan	45.3	Priority Improvement Plan	43.6	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 3
WESTMINSTER 50	JOSEPHINE HODGKINS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		564	87.9	26.3	Turnaround Plan	50.1	Improvement Plan	44.4	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
WIDEFIELD 3	TALBOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		345	72.2		Performance Plan	47.5	Improvement Plan	45.1	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 1
WIDEFIELD 3	PINELLO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	E		329	66	55.7	Improvement Plan	44	Priority Improvement Plan	46.9	Priority Improvement Plan	Year 2
191 total				81012								
State total - 833,186												

## Appendix D – Districts Accredited with Priority Improvement and Turnaround Plans

2012 CDE District Accreditation Ratings														
District Name	2010 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2010	2011 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2011	2012 Final Accreditation Category	Final % Points Earned 2012	Consecutive TA or PI Status Yrs	K-12 Pupil Count 2012	Size	Setting	County	Region	2012 % K-12 FRL Min	% PK-12 ELL
ADAMS COUNTY 14	Accred. with Turnaround	37.8	Accred. with Turnaround	38.6	Accred. with Turnaround	39.5	Year 3	7,500	6,001-15,000	Den Met	Adams	Metro	83.2	43.7
AGUILAR REORGANIZED 6	Accred. with Priority Impr.	44.6	Accred. with Priority Impr.	49.2	Accred. with Turnaround	40.5	Year 3	97	Under 301	Rural	Las Animas	Southeast	72.9	3.1
KARVAL RE-23	Accred. with Priority Impr.	43.5	Accred. with Turnaround	38	Accred. with Turnaround	40.2	Year 4	122	Under 301	Rural	Lincoln	Northwest	13.5	0
MOUNTAIN BOCES	Accred. with Turnaround	32.8	Accred. with Turnaround	32.8	Accred. with Turnaround	37	Year 4	143	Under 301	BOCES		Northwest	0	5.6
VILAS RE-5	Accred. with Turnaround	30.3	Accred. with Turnaround	32.2	Accred. with Turnaround	28.6	Year 4		Under 301	Rural	Barca	Southeast	50.7	0
ADAMS-ARAPAHOE 281	Accred. with Improvement	45.8	Accred. with Priority Impr.	45.8	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	46.1	Year 2	39,835	Over 25,000	Den Met	Arapahoe	Metro	68.2	39
BRANSON REORGANIZED 82	Accred. with Priority Impr.	51.3	Accred. with Improvement	52.7	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	51.9	Year 1	452	301-600	Rural	Las Animas	Southeast	17.2	0
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE	Accred. with Priority Impr.	60.8	Accred. with Priority Impr.	57.2	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	53.5	Year 3	11,756	6,000-25,000	Urb Sub			50.2	19.8
DENVER COUNTY 1	Accred. with Priority Impr.	48.3	Accred. with Priority Impr.	50.2	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	51.7	Year 3	83,377	Over 25,000	Den Met	Denver	Metro	72.6	36.9
ENGLEWOOD 1	Accred. with Turnaround	42.9	Accred. with Priority Impr.	46.8	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	43.8	Year 3	2,981	1,201-6,000	Den Met	Arapahoe	Metro	56	41.2
GREELEY 6	Accred. with Improvement	54.8	Accred. with Improvement	52.5	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	48.7	Year 1	19,821	6,000-25,000	Urb Sub	Weld	North Central	61.5	25.6
IGNACIO 11 JT	Accred. with Priority Impr.	42.7	Accred. with Priority Impr.	42.7	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	43.3	Year 3	718	601-1,200	Rural	La Plata	Southwest	59.9	4.2
JULESBURG RE-1	Accred. with Priority Impr.	56	Accred. with Priority Impr.	58.3	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	52.5	Year 3	1,154	601-1,200	Out-Twn	Seogwick	Northwest	42.7	1.7
LAKE COUNTY R-1	Accred. with Priority Impr.	43.9	Accred. with Improvement	52.1	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	49.3	Year 1	1,167	601-1,200	Out-Twn	Lake	Northwest	73.4	35.1
MANZANOLA 31	Accred. with Improvement	34	Accred.	64.6	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	51.9	Year 1	131	Under 301	Rural	Otero	Southeast	76.3	23.7
MAPLETON 1	Accred. with Improvement	50.7	Accred. with Priority Impr.	47.7	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	47.4	Year 2	8,051	6,001-25,000	Den Met	Adams	Metro	72.5	33.9
MONTE VISTA C-8	Accred. with Improvement	54.5	Accred. with Priority Impr.	49.9	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	45.7	Year 2	1,139	601-1,200	Out-Twn	Rio Grande	Southwest	70.9	14.2
MONTEZUMA-CORTEZ RE-1	Accred. with Priority Impr.	49	Accred. with Priority Impr.	48.2	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	48.3	Year 3	2,753	1,201-6,000	Out-Cit	Montezuma	Southwest	58.1	7.2
PRITCHETT RE-3	Accred.	65.9	Accred. with Improvement	55.9	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	49.3	Year 1	47	Under 301	Rural	Baca	Southeast	53.7	0
PUEBLO CITY 60	Accred. with Priority Impr.	44.2	Accred. with Turnaround	40.4	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	46.2	Year 3	17,692	6,001-25,000	Urb Sub	Pueblo	Pikes Peak	70.4	6.5
ROCKY FORD R-2	Accred. with Priority Impr.	43.7	Accred. with Priority Impr.	43.5	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	44.1	Year 3	825	601-1,200	Out-Twn	Otero	Southeast	79.3	9.1
SHERIDAN 2	Accred. with Turnaround	44.8	Accred. with Priority Impr.	43.7	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	45.7	Year 3	1,584	1,201-6,000	Den Met	Arapahoe	Metro	84.4	38.4
WELD COUNTY S/D RE-8	Accred. with Improvement	52.9	Accred. with Priority Impr.	48.3	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	48.3	Year 2	2,411	1,201-6,000	Out-Twn	Weld	North Central	73.2	33.2
WESTMINSTER 50	Accred. with Turnaround	41.2	Accred. with Turnaround	40.2	Accred. w/Priority Impr.	46.4	Year 3	10,069	6,001-25,000	Den Met	Adams	Metro	82.4	42
								213,825					60.1333	

## Appendix E – Potential Policy Changes

Depending on the main strategies selected, there are many options for amending existing policies. This chart contains some ideas, not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Area	Policy Change	Options/Considerations
Designation of state recovery district to manage low-performing schools	Legislation to create state recovery district	Use language from similar policies in other states
Decisions about interventions	Provide that Commissioner, not State Board, will select interventions	State Board's role could be to ensure process was followed and to direct action
Designation of entity at CDE such as Commissioner's Network	Legislation may not be needed, but could include grant of autonomy is part of placement in network, conditions for return to district	Set up as competitive grant to solicit volunteers Use to serve isolated rural schools and/or to implement initiatives such as blended learning CDE could contract with third-party operators to implement
Create categories of schools eligible for restructuring depending on district involvement	Provide that schools may be part of district-led turnarounds or independent turnaround  This may not require legislation, but could include grant of autonomy for independent turnarounds	Indiana provides for schools to be in district-led turnarounds or as Turnaround Academies, which contract directly with operators
Designation of other organizations as SROs	Legislation may not be needed	Could designate third parties to oversee turnarounds that fall in a particular category
Selecting and contracting for management by a public or private entity	Clarify who selects and contracts with the third party	Home district or Colorado Department of Education Could clarify that local board may select if district itself is not eligible for loss of accreditation; otherwise CDE selects Could require that district selects from list pre-approved by state
Transition back from management by a public or private entity	Clarify circumstances under which management is returned to the district	May be for defined time period (for example, five years) or until performance improves to a specified level

Area	Policy Change	Options/Considerations
Range of interventions for schools	Provide that more than one intervention can be selected for a turnaround school	For example, a school could become an Innovation School managed by a third party
Conditions for management by a public or private entity	Clarify autonomy available for third party manager and process for receiving it	<p>Require school board to designate school as Innovation School and negotiate terms</p> <p>Provide that third party manager may decide whether to hire existing staff, who return to district if not hired</p> <p>Provide that third party managers are not bound by existing contracts or district rules</p>
Designation as an Innovation School	<p>Provide that new school starts as Innovation Schools do not require staff vote</p> <p>Provide that schools converted to Innovation Schools as part of turnaround do not require staff votes</p>	<p>Distinguish between regular Innovation Schools and turnaround Innovation Schools, as the Charter School Acts distinguishes among types of charters</p> <p>Include processes for retaining or not retaining current staff</p>
Conversion to charter school	<p>Provide that districts lose exclusive chartering authority under certain turnaround situations</p> <p>Clarify that new charter schools resulting from turnaround may be district-authorized, Charter School Institute authorized, or independent, depending on circumstances</p>	<p>Charter School Institute could house all turnaround charter schools, including schools converted to charters as part of restructuring</p> <p>Pre-identification of charter networks useful for schools in similar geographic areas</p> <p>Does charter transition back to district?</p>
Closure	Clarify that school closure can include directing the school to restart under a different operator	Some charter operators will not lead conversions, only restarts
Loss of district accreditation	Provide for consequences for districts that have lost accreditation	<p>Reduction in state share of school finance formula funding to cover costs of turnaround school operators</p> <p>Loss of district eligibility to apply for state grants</p> <p>Loss of district ability to issue diplomas</p>

---

## Appendix F – District Root Cause Analysis

### Summary of District Root Cause Findings.

- Overall districts’ most often identified an interrelated “lack” of curriculum, instruction, and data proficiency as a root cause for each of the four key performance indicators identified in SB 09-163 as the measures of educational success: academic achievement, academic longitudinal growth, academic gaps, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. This was also true for districts designated as a Graduation District and districts identified for improvement under Title III (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for English Language Learners)
- In addition, Graduation districts also identified a lack of or inconsistency in intervention strategies and credit recovery options
- AMAO districts also identified insufficient understanding and lack of instruction strategies by core subject teachers of how students’ progress through the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) and transition to English instruction before mastering their native language
- Districts are both encouraged and challenged by rebuilding and restructuring entire district
- When a district is identified as a Turnaround district, the entire community is impacted and goes through a period of acceptance and adjustment
- There are multiple stakeholders that need to be on-board with the turnaround strategy for success to occur
- Rural areas have greater leadership challenges than larger districts

## Description of Analyses

### Sample

Thirty district UIPs were selected for analysis. Selected districts met at least one of the following criteria: (1) Turnaround Accreditation; (2) Priority Improvement Accreditation; or (3) having one or more year-two turnaround schools within the district in 2010-2011. Criteria ensured that the lowest performing districts were included in the analysis as well as higher performing districts with one or more “orphan” schools or low-performing schools within an otherwise higher performance district.

**Table 1 Sample Districts by District Setting and Size (N=30)**

District	CDE Region	Setting (2010)	Size (2011 count)
Adams 14	6	Denver metro	6,001-24,999
Adams-Arapahoe (Aurora)	6	Denver metro	>25,000
Brighton 27J	6	Denver metro	6,001-24,999
Denver	6	Denver metro	>25,000
Englewood	6	Denver metro	1,201-6,000
Mapleton	6	Denver metro	1,201-6,000
Sheridan	6	Denver metro	1,201-6,000
St.Vrain	2	Denver metro	>25,000
Westminster	6	Denver metro	6,001-24,999
Charter School Institute	n/a	n/a	6,001-24,999
Mountain BOCES	n/a	n/a	
Canon City	11	Outlying city	1,201-6,000
Montezuma Cortez	9	Outlying city	1,201-6,000
Center	10	Outlying city	601-1,200
Huerfano	11	Outlying city	601-1,200
Julesburg	3	Outlying city	1,201-6,000
Liberty	8	Outlying city	<300
Monte Vista	10	Outlying city	601-1,200
Rocky Ford	12	Outlying city	601-1,200
Weld RE 1		Outlying city	1,201-6,000
Weld RE 8	2	Outlying city	1,201-6,000
Aguilar	11	Rural	<300
Arriba-Flagler	8	Rural	<300
Ignacio	9	Rural	601-1,200
Karval	8	Rural	<300
Park County		Rural	601-1,200
Vilas	12	Rural	301-600
CO Springs D-11	7	Urban suburban	>25,000
Greeley	2	Urban suburban	6,001-24,999
Pueblo 60	11	Urban suburban	6,001-24,999

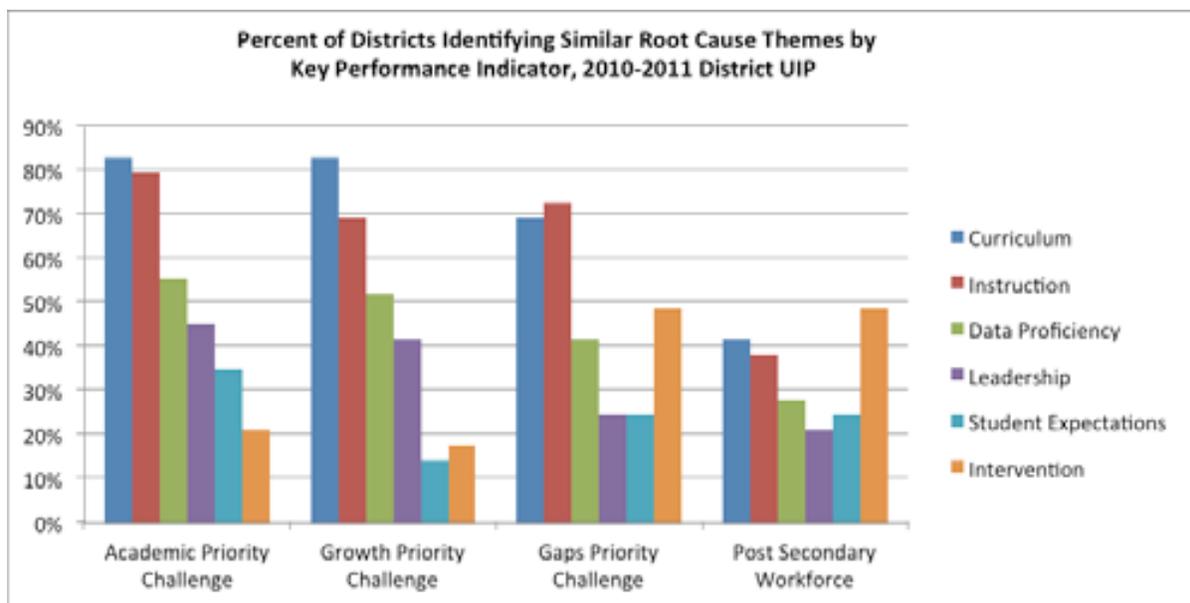
## Analytic Procedure and Findings

### Phase I – Identifying Root Cause Themes:

Using NVivo qualitative software, sample district UIP root cause narratives (Section III: Narrative on Data Analysis and Root Cause Identification) were reviewed and coded into categories or themes as specified in the August 16, 2012, *Summary of Questions from School Turnaround Study Group for UCD, Question II*.

Root cause theme categories were then narrowed by examining the number of references within each theme category. Districts tended to identify the same root cause for each of the four key performance indicators: 1) Academic Achievement; 2) Academic Growth; 3) Academic Growth Gaps; and 4) Post-secondary/Workforce Readiness. Figure 1 shows the percent of sample districts identifying similar root causes for low performance by key performance indicator.

**Figure 1**



### Summary of Results

- More than half of sample districts' identified an interrelated "lack" of curriculum, instruction, and data proficiency as a root cause for each of the four key performance indicators identified in SB 09-163
- More than half of districts designated as a *Graduation District* and/or identified for improvement under *Title III* (Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives AMAOs for English Language Learners) also identified lack of curriculum, instruction, and data proficiency as root causes for low performance
- Districts designated as a Graduation District also identified a lack of or inconsistency in intervention strategies and credit recovery options



Table 2 shows the top ten most frequent words used by district setting. Data are shown in descending order. For example, “lack” was the most frequently used word for districts set in the Denver-metro area, outlying town, and districts without a designated setting (Charter School Institute and Mountain BOCES). In contrast, the most frequently used word in urban-suburban district narratives was “instruction” and for outlying city districts, the most frequently used word was “systematic.”

**Table 2 Top 10 most frequent words used by district setting**

Denver Metro	Urban-Suburban	Outlying CITY	Outlying TOWN	Rural	No Setting
<b>Lack</b>	Instruction	Systemic	<b>Lack</b>	Curriculum	<b>Lack</b>
Instruction	Effective	Implementation	Curriculum	Absence	Required
Progress	Curriculum	<b>Lack</b>	Instruction	Development	Standards
Consistent	Quality	Learning	Standards	Instructional	Academic
Reading	Strategies	Academic	Instructional	Practices	Access
Expectations	Writing	Standards	Data	Professional	Curriculum
Assessments	Aligned	Congruent	Need	Online	Defined
Monitoring	Assessment	Curriculum	Progress	Systematic	Ensure
Aligned	Consistent	Cycle	Writing	Enrollment	Guaranteed
Implementation	<b>Lack</b>	Development	Aligned	<b>Lack</b>	Misalignment

The final stage of Phase II more closely examined the context, the paragraphs and/or sentences, in which the word “lack” was used in district root cause narrative descriptions. Again, districts were categorized by district setting. As Table 3 shows, the emphasis on what is lacking differs slightly by district setting. For example, Denver-metro districts most often identified a “lack of curricular framework,” “lack of systems for effective implementation of best instructional practices,” “lack of consistent interventions,” and lack of common understanding and guidelines.” Rural setting districts frequently mentioned a lack of curriculum but, unlike Denver-metro districts, rural districts also emphasized “a lack of research-based instruction,” and a “lack of consistent leadership and frequent staff turnover.”

**Table 3 Words used in association with the word “lack” by district setting.**

Denver Metro	Urban-Suburban	Outlying CITY	Outlying TOWN	Rural	No Setting
Curricular framework	Effective monitoring/ accountability system	Systemic implantation of curriculum	Continuity and alignment of Curriculum	Standards-based Curriculum	Guaranteed viable curriculum
Systems for effective implementation of best instructional Practices	Instructional strategies	Professional development for research-based teaching strategies	Research-based instruction	Research-based instruction	Real-time monitoring to identify need for additional attention or resource
Consistent interventions	Systematic approach to assessment	Direct instruction for ELLs	Systemic approaches to follow-up/ evaluations ect.	Consistent leadership/ turnover	
Common understanding and guidelines	Use of data to make informed decisions at classroom level			Shared vision by all stakeholders	

---

## *Summary of Results*

The most frequently used word in district root cause narratives was “lack.” Overall, the lack of curriculum, instruction, and data proficiency were the most often cited root causes for lack of progress regardless of district setting. Beyond these common themes, emphasis of root causes differed slightly by district setting with a lack of common understanding and guidelines for Denver-metro districts to a lack of leadership in rural districts.

### *Phase III – Verifying Root Causes*

This final phase of analysis intended to discover to what degree reported root causes were in fact, root causes of low performance. For purposes of this deeper analysis, six districts were selected for verification: Adams 14, Sheridan, Ignacio, Karval, Pueblo, and Aguilar. Due to time constraints, only Ignacio, Karval, Aguilar, and Pueblo were verified.

- All districts have had a Comprehensive Appraisal of District Improvement (CADI) and CADI results become part of the UIP

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that states allocate resources for intensive and sustained support to schools and districts designated as in need of improvement. Through improvement grants, eligible districts or schools receive funds to support a focused approach to improvement in the following areas: Facilitated Data Analysis and Action Planning, Best First Instruction; Leadership; and/or Positive Climate and Culture. Districts or schools identified for Title I Program Improvement or Corrective Action are eligible for the grant with priority given to districts and schools with the lowest performance and those that have had an SST or CADI review within the last four years. All districts in this sub-sample are identified for Title I Corrective Action and all had a CADI review (a comprehensive needs assessment) conducted by a third-party service provider, between 2006 and 2010

- Content analysis of local newspapers, district school newsletters, school board minutes, and other publicly available on-line resources were consistent with UIP narratives. These sources also provided information on community and leadership concerns not presented in the UIPs
- Interviews and feedback from CDE Performance Managers, UIP trainers, and UIP trainees confirmed that districts were struggling with curriculum, instruction, and data proficiency

---

## Appendix G – Developing Procedures for Turnarounds

We recommend that CDE consider developing operating procedures in the following areas:

- Outreach efforts to districts and schools as to priority improvement and turnaround status and initial connection to resources and partners
- Identification of those districts that are planning to implement their own turnaround initiatives for schools in the district
- Identification of criteria for district entry into state turnaround system
  - Mandatory turnaround implementation (district subject to closure or restructuring under S.B. 163): districts that have been on priority improvement or turnaround status for more than five years, and districts that have failed to make substantial progress on turnaround plans
  - Turnaround assistance (districts on turnaround plans, other districts designated as high-priority that do not fall into the first category)
- Identification of criteria for school entry into state turnaround system
  - Mandatory turnaround implementation (school subject to closure or restructuring under S.B. 163): schools that have been on priority improvement or turnaround status for more than five years; schools that have failed to make substantial progress on turnaround plans
  - Turnaround assistance (schools on turnaround plans that are in districts that are not leading their own turnaround initiatives)
- Development of standard operating procedures for diagnosing district context, root causes, and capacity, designed to answer the following questions in the following areas (a similar analysis would apply to schools):
- Urgency
  - Academic performance urgency
    - ◆ Is the district on a turnaround plan due to poor academic performance?
    - ◆ Is the district on Year 3, 4, or 5 of priority improvement or turnaround status due to poor academic performance?
    - ◆ Is the district's academic performance trending downward or staying in an unacceptable place?
    - ◆ How many students are affected by the district's poor performance?
  - Financial compliance urgency
    - ◆ Is the district on a turnaround plan due to compliance issues?
    - ◆ Is the district on Year 3, 4, or 5 of priority improvement or turnaround status due to compliance issues?
    - ◆ Is intervention necessary to protect the interests of students and parents?



- Root causes (if academic performance is unacceptable)

- Identification

- ◆ What does the available evidence point to in terms of the root causes of poor performance?

- ✦ District UIP documents

- ✦ Other information about district – district reviews by CDE (CADI, etc.), school visits by CDE, CDE data analysis, interviews with district and school personnel, teacher and principal surveys, school board minutes, etc.

- ✦ Prior CDE staff conclusions

- ✦ Prior State Review Panel conclusions

- District characteristics

- What is the size of the district?

- How many underperforming schools does the district have?

- Is the district geographically isolated?

- Is there a teachers' association or collective bargaining agreement in place?

- Does the district have significant numbers of students in poverty?

- Does the district have significant numbers of students learning English?

- District internal capacity for change

- Do current leaders demonstrate the ability to use data to accurately diagnose root causes and select and implement appropriate interventions?

- Is the district capable of providing turnaround leadership and necessary resources to schools on its own?

- ◆ Does the district have curricula and instructional materials aligned with state standards?

- ◆ Does the district have an internal structure and staff for turnaround?

- ◆ Can the district identify and provide qualified turnaround leaders?

- ◆ Can the district support schools in data analysis and action plans?

- ◆ Can the district provide needed training for principals and teachers?

- Do current leaders understand the need for substantial change? Are they willing to publicly support dramatic change?

- Are the school board, administration, and teachers' association (if applicable) capable of working cooperatively in the interests of students?

- 
- Is the district willing to work with a turnaround partner?
  - Is the district willing to grant innovation status to underperforming schools? Is the district willing to create an innovation zone for underperforming schools?
  - Development of a case report template that allows Performance Managers to summarize the evidence concerning a district or school, with a format that is concise and easily understood by others involved in the turnaround process
  - Development of DSP criteria to be considered in recommending a particular turnaround intervention
  - Development of similar procedures and criteria for turnaround schools
  - Assist higher-performing districts in developing capacity to address their own priority improvement and turnaround schools by providing trainings and toolkits designed to support districts that want to set up their own turnaround office or develop a district turnaround strategy

## Appendix H – Sample Decision Criteria for Selecting among School Turnaround Interventions

This appendix provides sample decision criteria that could be used in making recommendations to the State Board of Education about a school slated for closure or other mandatory interventions. No one indicator will be decisive in any given situation; rather, these indicators should be considered in their totality.

School Action	Indicators Supporting This Action	Indicators Against This Action
<b>Closing the school</b>	School performance is persistently poor or trending down despite multiple reform efforts	School performance is trending upward
	Relative few students are served by the school	A large number of students are served by the school
	Students have convenient options to attend other higher-performing schools	Students do not have convenient options to attend other schools
	No third party operators are available or willing to take over management	A third party operator is available and willing to take over management
	No leadership team with turnaround capacity is available	A leadership team with turnaround capacity is available
	Sufficient funds are not available to perform effective turnaround	Sufficient funds are available
	The community supports closure	The community does not support closure
<b>External management of school</b>	A third party operator is available and willing to take over management	No third party operators are available or willing to take over management
	The third party manager’s approach is likely to be beneficial to the school’s student population	The third party manager’s approach is not likely to be beneficial to the school’s student population
	The third party manager has demonstrated success with turnarounds/this student population	The third party manager does not have demonstrated success with turnarounds/this student population
	The district is willing to guarantee autonomy needed for turnaround success to the third party manager	The district is not willing to guarantee autonomy to the third party manager
	Sufficient funds are available to cover the costs of third party operation	Sufficient funds are not available
	There is a feasible way to successfully transition management of the school back to the district	Transfer back to the district will be problematic



School Action	Indicators Supporting This Action	Indicators Against This Action
<b>Conversion to charter school</b>	District is unwilling to guarantee autonomy needed for turnaround success	District is willing to guarantee autonomy needed for turnaround success
	The district or the Charter School Institute is willing to serve as authorizer	The district or the Charter School Institute is not willing to serve as authorizer
	A charter operator is available and willing to operate the school	There is no charter operator able or willing to operate the school
	The charter operator’s approach is likely to be beneficial to the school’s student population	The charter operator’s approach is not likely to be beneficial to the school’s student population
	The charter operator has demonstrated success with turnarounds/this student population	The charter operator does not have demonstrated success with turnarounds/this student population
	The district supports conversion to a charter school	The district does not support conversion to a charter school
	The community supports conversion to a charter school	The community does not support conversion to a charter school
	Sufficient funds are available for charter start-up costs	Sufficient charter start-up funds are not available
	Closing the school would be potentially harmful to students	Closing the school would not be harmful to students
	The charter operator can provide entry into a network of similarly situated and operated schools	
<b>Conversion to Innovation School</b>	The district is willing to guarantee autonomy needed for turnaround success to the school	The district is not willing to guarantee autonomy needed for turnaround success
	A new leadership team with turnaround capacity is available to lead the school	A new leadership team with turnaround capacity is not available to lead the school
	Innovation Schools and Innovation Zones are viewed as part of the district’s strategy for turnaround	The district does not want to or is not able to use Innovation Schools as a turnaround strategy



School Action	Indicators Supporting This Action	Indicators Against This Action
<b>Conversion to charter school</b>	The district and/or new leadership team has a plan to use Innovation School autonomy to achieve turnaround success	No one seems to know how Innovation School autonomy will be used to achieve turnaround success
	Sufficient funds are available to implement this strategy	Sufficient funds are not available
	Closing the school would be potentially harmful to students	Closing the school would not be harmful to students
	The community supports designation as an Innovation School	The community does not support designation as an Innovation School
	Designation as an Innovation School can provide entry into a network of similarly situated schools	
<b>Replacement of charter school board/new charter governance</b>	A new charter operator is available and willing to operate the school	There is no new charter operator able or willing to operate the school
	The new charter operator's approach is likely to be beneficial to the school's student population	The new charter operator's approach is not likely to be beneficial to the school's student population
	The new charter operator has demonstrated success with turnarounds/this student population	The new charter operator does not have demonstrated success with turnarounds/ this student population
	The district supports replacement of the charter school board/operator	The district does not support replacement of the charter school board/operator
	The community supports the new charter school operator	The community does not support the new charter school operator
	Sufficient funds are available to cover transition costs	Sufficient transition funds are not available
	Closing the school would be potentially harmful to students	Closing the school would not be harmful to students

## Appendix I – Potential Partners and Providers

None of the organizations listed in this appendix have agreed to participate in the capacities listed. This appendix is provided for illustrative purposes only.

Turnaround Intervention Need	Potential Providers
<p>Lead district/school turnaround partners (some of these partners operate charter schools only)</p>	<p>STRIVE Schools Network            DSST Schools Network            WestEd            Big Picture Learning            Blueprint            Explore Schools            Generations Schools Network            Talent Development            Diplomas Now            Institute for Student Achievement            Academy for Urban School Leadership            Green Dot            Mastery Schools            First Line Schools            Teach for America            The New Teacher Project            Harvard EdLabs</p>
<p>State Recovery Organizations</p>	<p>Charter School Institute            Colorado League of Charter Schools            Colorado Legacy Foundation            Commissioner’s Network (new)            Governor’s Network (new)</p>
<p>School turnaround leadership pipelines</p>	<p>Get Smart Schools            University of Virginia Turnaround Specialist Program            CASE Leadership Academy            CEA            Teach for America            The New Teacher Project            New Leaders for New Schools            District pipelines</p>

----->

## Appendix J – Types of Technical Assistance Needed by Schools and Districts

We believe that districts and schools would benefit from technical assistance in the following areas, both for purposes of understanding the turnaround process and in response to the district root cause analysis.

Change management facilitation
Targeted research and program evaluation
Facilitated data analysis
Improving instructional practices and strategies
Setting up Response to Intervention/extended learning structures in schools
Using blended or online learning strategies to personalize learning/gain access to subjects
Consulting on district/school governance structures and operations
Improving principal instructional leadership
Developing and using formative assessments
Implementing a high-performing culture
Implementing a high-quality preschool program
Setting up systems for English language learners
Conducting school board trainings for districts in turnaround or priority improvement



*Turnarounds in Colorado:*

*Partnering for Innovative Reform in a Local Control State* was produced and printed with the support of Get Smart Schools, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Legacy Foundation and the National Alliance of Charter School Authorizers.

The following organizations assisted with the development of this report.

A+ Denver  
Anschutz Foundation  
Charter School Institute  
Colorado Children's Campaign  
Colorado League of Charter Schools  
Colorado Succeeds  
Daniels Fund  
Democrats for Education Reform Colorado  
Donnell-Kay Foundation  
Stand for Children Colorado  
Teach for America Colorado

