

Considerations for 2021-22

Unified Improvement Planning



COLORADO
Department of Education

Accountability Context

In response to disruptions created by COVID-19, Colorado has paused the accountability system for two school years (2020-21 and 2021-22). On March 16, 2021, the Governor signed HB 21-1161 into law, which paused state accountability for a second year. The CDE has also applied for and received waivers from the U.S. Department of Education to get additional flexibility on federal accountability requirements. This document provides considerations for improvement planning in light of the accountability pause and intermittent data availability.

For the 2021-22 planning cycle, it is worth acknowledging the range of experiences across school systems within the state of Colorado. Some systems have had minimal disruption to the school calendar and instruction. Other systems have significant disruption to instruction, assessment, and student enrollment.

The following guidance outlines considerations for approaching planning within this range of circumstances.

School Conditions

For schools and districts that have seen increased disruption in the past year, the following systems may be helpful to consider when assessing needs over the next year.

Climate and Culture: Given the disruptions of the past year, the routines, interactions and relationships that support positive school climate and culture may need bolstering in order to ensure students have effectively engaged/re-engaged with the school culture. This [resource](#) may provide a helpful framework for understanding the specific aspects of climate and culture.

Assessment and Data Infrastructure: Intentional data systems will support effective evaluation and understanding of student needs, including any emerging needs or gaps.

Proactive Engagement with Students with Evident Gaps: Determine whether systems are in place to identify and address student needs. Schools may leverage existing MTSS structures and/or identify additional opportunities to support student learning.

These conditions may inform multiple steps of the planning process including data analysis (current performance, trend analysis, priority performance challenges), root cause analysis and action planning.

Data Quality

A major consideration for the use of both state assessment data and local data is data quality. E.g., assessment participation rates can impact the quality of the resulting data. There are varied participation rates over the past year due to cohort and school-wide quarantines and parent opt out.

Ultimately, decisions based on data must take into account the quality of that data, including which student group(s) the results represent. The following questions can guide how data should be used to inform school improvement decisions:

- Are the results representative of the whole school? Of particular student populations?
- Are there major differences in results based on assessment administration (e.g. school based v. remote)?
- What is the scale of decision making? If the quality of the data is weak, high stakes decisions (significant resource investments, program elimination/ adoption) should not be made without additional context, such as triangulating findings with other available data sources.

2021 State and Local Data

Historically, state assessment results have played a prominent role in the analysis of performance data within the Unified Improvement Planning process. The new UIP Timeline (due October 15th) and the fall release of state data may require modification to the sequencing of analyses. The table below describes scenarios that may be helpful for schools and districts to consider in using their state assessment results.

	State Data are Representative of the Student Population			State Data are not Representative of the Student Population
If the Analysis Indicates...	Local assessment data aligns strongly with state assessment data.	Local assessment data is directionally consistent with state assessment data. Local data does not accurately reflect the performance of disaggregated groups, and/or grade-level proficiency.	Local assessment results are not aligned to state results.	Participation rate is low and/or state data are not representative of student population. Data should not be used for school improvement.
...Consider this Approach to Data Analysis...	Incorporate state assessment results in data narrative to confirm local data analysis.	Include state assessment analysis results in data narrative, clearly calling out discrepancies between state and local results.	Revise data analysis to describe results and differences between state and local assessment performance.	Include a statement describing state assessment participation and/or representativeness within the UIP.
...And this Approach to Action Planning.	Update target setting as appropriate.	Tweak improvement plan (e.g. strategies, target-setting) as warranted. Supplement improvement plan with analysis of local assessments; identify how local assessment can more closely align to state assessment results in the future.	Revise improvement plan to include a Major Improvement Strategy focused on understanding the quality of local assessments and their alignment to state academic standards (so that local assessment data can be used more effectively in the future). <i>Note: A Major Improvement Strategy guide on evaluation of assessment quality is forthcoming.</i>	Consider how existing data sets can be complemented with additional non-assessment data to inform school improvement efforts.

Considerations for Individual Sections of the UIP

The following provides specific recommendations for how the elements of the UIP may be adjusted for the 2021-22 school year. These recommendations are organized according to the elements of the online UIP. Before entering the content of the plan into the online UIP system, decide whether to **Copy from Last Year** or to start with a blank form. Consider the following questions in deciding whether to copy from the previous plan:

- To what degree does the previous plan represent the current school context?
- Given the degree of changes that may be needed, is it more efficient to start over?

Brief Description

Use this section to provide a summary of the context for the school. The school may want to reference their experience over the past year, including instructional model, quarantines/full school remote periods, etc. Identify the process for getting input from stakeholders on school needs and priorities that informed the improvement plan. Include information about current and prior data availability and provide rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of data points in subsequent sections.

EX. Prairie View school transitioned to a new interim assessment in the 2020-21 school year and, due to quarantines, has had less than 50% of students participate in both fall and spring assessments.

Prior Year Targets

Targets that were previously set may not be measurable. Use this section to describe progress or challenges in implementation that the targets were intended to measure. Leverage this information to inform action planning for the current year (captured in later sections of the UIP).

Current Performance

Due to the continued accountability pause, the school/district is still expected to plan based on the 2019 plan type and ESSA identifications. Take into consideration the requirements for the UIP based on the identification(s) the school may have (e.g., Turnaround Strategy for schools with a Turnaround plan type).

Provide any current data that would give an indication of how the school/district is doing relative to the 2019 rating. This may include available state data (e.g., graduation rates, ACCESS growth).

Trend Analysis

Given the disruptions in performance data, including state and local assessments, this year's Trend Analysis may include supplemental data that have informed the Priority Performance Challenges (the next section of the UIP). When possible, include data over time that indicates trend direction (e.g., increasing, decreasing) which may include fall-to-fall and/or spring-to-spring assessment cycles. Comparison points for data provide perspective about the scale of performance and can be used across a variety of data sets. Some examples of comparison points include state, district or national averages. See the section on 2021 State and Local Data, below, for specific guidance on integrating state assessment results.

It may be useful to include information about data that is a leading indicator about the performance data that follows. For example, attendance, behavior and course/credit completion are leading indicators for graduation rates. Ultimately, data quality considerations (see the sidebar on the first page) should inform how the school uses different sources of data to inform school improvement efforts.

Performance Indicators Although state assessment data may be limited, state/federal performance indicators may still inform the Current Performance, Trend Analysis, and Priority Performance Challenge sections of the UIP.



Academic Achievement:

How are students doing compared to a set expectation (e.g., a benchmark set by a local assessment)?



Academic Growth:

How are individual students progressing (e.g., local assessment growth data)?



Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness: How well are students prepared for the next step (e.g., Progression on ICAP, meeting graduation requirements)?

Priority Performance Challenges

The Priority Performance Challenge statement should be aligned to an aspect of student performance targeted for improvement and should indicate how the school understands the needs of students. Both state and local data can be used to define performance challenges, including non-assessment data (e.g., attendance).

Ex. Math decreased in percentage of "met/exceeded" in all 6 grade levels on 2019 CMAS as well as PSAT/ SAT. For multiple years, we have not met expectations on CMAS (in the middle school grades). Local data (i.e., interim assessments) have continued to show that the majority of students score at the Approaching level or below. A deeper analysis reveals that there are gaps amongst our student groups school-wide (FRL vs. non-FRL, SPED vs. non-SPED results, ELL vs. non-ELL, and amongst our Students of Color with a particular focus on African American/Black Students).

Root Causes

COVID-19 disrupted educational systems across the state in myriad ways. However, improvement planning is more effective when grounded in root causes that are within the control of the school, so that school-based solutions can be implemented. It is worth acknowledging that conditions that created challenges last year may not be in place this year (e.g. the need to quarantine cohorts of students); therefore, it may be more helpful to improvement planning pinpoint root causes that focus on re-establishing a more typical learning experience for students.

	Typical Root Cause Reflective of last year’s conditions	COVID- Recovery Root Cause Focused on upcoming conditions
Non-Example Not within the school’s control	<i>Student learning was disrupted by unanticipated transitions between in-person and online instruction.</i>	
Example Within the school’s control	<i>School systems were not in place that focused on smooth transitions between in-person and remote learning.</i>	<i>Students and staff need to re-establish consistent instructional routines.</i>

Major Improvement Strategies

Strategies should reflect the current context, align to research-based practices and respond to identified root causes. As appropriate, leverage the available [strategy guides](#) to inform the action plan, using the core components to identify measures to track implementation success within implementation benchmarks.

A series of [Major Improvement Strategy Guides](#) has been developed to support the effective selection and implementation of evidence-based Major Improvement Strategies. These guides include the following components:

- Introduction: Overview of the strategy
- Evidence Base: The basis in research or school improvement literature
- Considerations for Implementation: Guiding questions to determine contextual fit for schools/districts
- Implementation guide: Core components, based on evidence that will increase the likelihood of intended outcomes



The strategy guides can be used in the following ways to strengthen the plan:

- Use strategy guides to build out a new strategy for the school/district.
- Use the core components to evaluate previously adopted or planned strategies in order to support strong implementation plans and benchmarks.
- Review the strategy guide's structure and apply the components as a model for strengthening existing strategies – i.e., consider the evidence base, contextual fit, and essential core components to maximize the potential for an effective implementation.

Action Planning

The timeline for the action plan should cover the span of time the plan will be publicly posted. For example, if a school with a performance plan anticipates exercising biennial flexibility in the coming year, the action plan should cover two years. However, if a district expects annual planning cycles across all schools regardless of plan type, the action plan may reflect one year.

For schools/districts that use short cycle planning, the online system has a specific place to include short cycle planning documents in lieu of the detailed action plan. See [this guidance](#) for more details.

Target Setting

Identify measures that will help the school understand if improvement efforts are having the intended effect in terms of student outcomes. Target setting may include specific end-of-year metrics as measured by state and local assessments and should be set for the current and subsequent school year (i.e., the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years).

If the school has indications of declining performance, it may be helpful to set targets for state assessments at the level of pre-COVID performance, aiming for a return to a baseline before setting more ambitious targets.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE? www.cde.state.co.us/uip

[2021 Changes Document](#) Reflects the specific changes to accountability, planning expectations and the template for the 2021-22 school year

[2021-22 School Quality Criteria](#) Elements that lead to a well-developed improvement plan that blend best practice and accountability requirements. These are the criteria used by CDE in review of plans

[Accountability Committee Timelines for 2021-22 School Year](#) Provides recommendations for what time of year committees may engage in these activities