



Overview

During the 2017 state legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly expanded accountability requirements related to district and school improvement planning efforts to require some schools and districts to conduct needs assessments and identify improvement strategies related to early childhood learning. The act, *Concerning Implementing Research-Based Early Learning Strategies as Corrective Actions in the Public Elementary and Secondary Education Accountability System* (SB17-103) included the following provisions:

- Both *public schools* with priority improvement or turnaround plans that enroll students in kindergarten or grades 1-3 and their *school districts* (including the Charter School Institute) must include early childhood learning in assessing school improvement needs within in their Unified Improvement Plans.
- *CDE staff* must provide technical assistance regarding research based strategies that address the quality and availability of early childhood education opportunities within the district.

Early Childhood Needs Assessment Components

The following table outlines the needs assessment components and provides links to associated resources. If you have this resource in hard copy, you can click on the resource links below by going to the ECE Needs Assessment in the UIP guidance at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip_general_resources.

Needs Assessment Components	Resource Links
Identification of quality early childhood programs within the district boundaries or school neighborhood.	Colorado Shines: Find a Program Online
Child enrollment in district or private early learning and development programs that participate in the <i>School Readiness Quality Improvement Program</i> .	Contact your local early childhood council
District and school work with an early childhood council or community agencies within district boundaries or school neighborhood.	Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance:
District and school collaboration with ECE providers related to student transition from preschool to kindergarten.	Contact Your CPP coordinator
District or school teachers who are teaching in grades K-3 with early childhood teaching credentials.	Educator Credential Search
Professional development opportunities available within the district or school for early childhood providers, teachers and principals.	Colorado Shines: Early Childhood Professional Development Information System
District and school parent engagement plans and opportunities for family engagement in preschool through grade three.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Tiered Family, School, and Community Partnering • State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education • Build Initiative Family Engagement Toolkit • Contact your Colorado Preschool Program Coordinator for Preschool Parent Engagement Plan
Other early childhood resources (e.g., home visitation, early intervention services, library programs for young children, and family resource centers) available to families residing within the district boundaries or school neighborhood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention Colorado • Directory of Colorado Libraries • Family Resource Center Association • Where to find story time in Colorado



Districts and Schools Expected to Complete an Early Childhood Needs Assessment

CDE encourages all schools and districts serving K-3 students to assess their needs related to early childhood learning. SB 17-103 requires the following to conduct the early childhood needs assessment and document their efforts within their Unified Improvement Plan (UIPs): (1) schools that serve grades K-3 and have a priority improvement or turnaround plan, and (2) districts with schools that include grades K-3 and have a priority improvement or turnaround plan

Early Childhood Needs Assessment in Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs)

To document an early childhood needs assessment, there is some flexibility in how to approach integrating the results into the school or district level UIP. CDE recommends: (1) identifying priority performance challenges related to early childhood learning, (2) documenting results of the needs assessment as part of the analysis of the root causes, and (3) if appropriate, identifying a major improvement strategy or action steps within a major improvement strategy that address identified early childhood learning needs.

Identify relevant priority performance challenges related to early childhood learning. This includes school and district planning teams analyzing and interpreting the results of kindergarten readiness assessments, K-3 reading assessments, and other locally administered assessments. Planning teams may identify notable trends relative to these results and include them in the determination of priority performance challenges. This is not explicitly required within SB17-103, but will help the school and/or district build the case for any focus on K-3 activities.

Include early childhood learning needs assessment in root cause analysis narrative. Planning teams should discuss the results of the early childhood needs assessment in their determination of the root cause and must include a description of their analysis in their data narrative. Because the required elements of SB17-103 are focused on a systems level analysis, the root cause section of the UIP is the most appropriate section to house this information. Schools and districts may reference the results of the analysis, rather than provide the detailed analysis. In this case, the school or district may attach the detailed results to the UIP or link to an online report that provides the results of each of the required components.

Identify research-based improvement strategies and/or action steps related to early childhood learning needs. If the school/district planning team determines that one of the root causes is directly related to lack of school readiness and access to quality early learning opportunities, then research-based early learning and development strategies should be included in the UIP action plan. For schools operating under a turnaround plan, early learning and development strategies may be implemented in combination with another turnaround strategy as required by statute (e.g., turnaround partner, management restructure, innovation status, management partnership, charter conversion or restructure, other locally defined strategy).

CDE Support

Colorado Department of Education staff have made available a variety of resources to support school and district efforts to assess early childhood learning needs. At the request of the district and based upon available resources, CDE staff will provide technical assistance related to research-based strategies that address early childhood education. CDE staff will also review priority improvement and turnaround district and school UIPs for inclusion of information related to the early childhood needs assessment. As is typical practice, CDE will review UIPs for schools and districts that are on the accountability clock (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround) to ensure requirements are addressed. For additional supports, contact Anji Gallanos, P-3 Office Director (gallanos_a@cde.state.co.us; 720-527-0497) or Lisa Medler, Executive Director of Improvement Planning (medler_l@cde.state.co.us; 303-866-6993).