Introduction

All Colorado schools, including new schools, are required to create a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) on an annual or biannual basis. The intent of this Guidance for New Schools is to help leaders, staff, and communities use their improvement plans to focus their strategies and implementation in order to have a successful founding year. This guidance document can be used in partnership with the Unified Improvement Plan Guidebook, which is available at http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip.

New schools are included in the UIP requirement in alignment with legislation and best practice.

- The state accountability law (SB 09-163) requires that *all* schools, regardless of circumstance, develop a UIP.
- New schools can launch with a strong start when leaders, staff, and the community are proactive and purposeful in their planning and implementation.

Note: For the purposes of this guidance, "new schools" refers to schools that are in their first year of operation; have combined with another school; and have little or no historical data. Normally, new schools are issued a new, unique school code from CDE.

How should new schools approach the UIP? Are there any special considerations?

In creating an improvement plan for a new school, planners should consult the overall guidelines found within the UIP Handbook. The handbook is available on the UIP website: http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip

Keep in mind that some of the guidelines in the handbook will not apply as well in a new school context. The following information provides specific adaptations to the UIP Handbook that school leaders may consider.

Gathering and Organizing Relevant Data

An existing school's UIP is grounded in an analysis of its student performance results. While new schools will not have school-wide historical data, new schools are able to gather local student achievement, language proficiency, and other performance data and background information to guide their planning and ensure they are meeting the needs of their students.

State Performance Data. In many cases, students in the school come from other Colorado public schools. As a result, CMAS, Colorado PSAT/SAT and ACCESS performance and growth data may be available for those students from their prior schools. For transfers within a district, check with your district as data may already be available. When analyzing prior years' data for students, the school needs to ensure that data are gathered for a large enough number of students to be representative of both the school as a whole and specific student populations, and to show a picture of overall needs.

Local Student Learning and Process Data. Local data can be collected early in the school year. This includes screening or pre-assessment data, as well as other student performance information. Refer to "Frequently Asked Questions," below, for additional information and specific examples of how new schools can collect and use local data (including student learning, demographic, process, and perception data) to inform a meaningful UIP.

Data Narrative

Brief Description
The new school should include pertinent information about its mission, student population, and founding, as well as any other context for the school (e.g., STEM focus, Montessori approach).

Reflection on Prior Year Targets
School leaders should indicate that this section of the UIP template is "Not Applicable" because the school is new and established no performance targets for the prior year.

Trend Analysis
Student learning trends will not be available for schools in their first year of operation, so the school should complete this section with any available state or local data. If no data is available, note that in the UIP.

Priority Performance Challenges
While existing schools use data produced in prior years to identify their priority performance challenges, new schools can use available data to identify these areas of focus. Beginning of the year assessment results, demographic data, or other student data may be used to identify areas of focus. For example, if the demographics show a high number of English Language Learners, the school may choose to focus on ensuring high quality language development in all courses. (Refer to "Frequently Asked Questions," below, for a table detailing examples of local student data.) Alternatively, schools may capture prioritized areas of focus of the founding year (e.g., establishing a strong student culture) as Priority Performance Challenges.

Root Causes
Root cause analysis is a process for identifying past practices that have contributed to a particular student performance result(s). For new schools, root cause analysis can look ahead to anticipated challenges rather than reflecting on past practices – i.e., it can be a process of identifying potential barriers to student learning. Consider questions such as: What challenges may prevent us from reaching our first year goals? Because root causes are most impactful when they identify practices or behaviors that are in the school's locus of control, think about how to focus these anticipatory root causes on the adult actions or school systems that will support student success in the coming year.

Action Plans

Major Improvement Strategies
Major improvement strategies are high level descriptions of the actions that the school leadership and staff will take to address the identified barriers or root cause(s). In some cases, the leadership and staff of a new school may have already identified strategies and actions that are designed to build the school culture and academic program. If so, these specific strategies and actions can be transferred into the UIP. If not, the school will need to articulate those strategies. Review CDE's Major Improvement Strategy Guides for evidence-based strategies that are widely used in school improvement efforts.

Planning Form
Once major improvement strategies are articulated, the next step is to ensure strong progress monitoring. Implementation Benchmarks describe adult actions that are needed to effectively roll out a new strategy, while Interim

Measures specify the growth in student outcomes throughout the year that will indicate they are on track to meet end of year targets. Progress monitoring is especially critical in the first year of a school to ensure that strategy implementation is rolling out as planned, that strong and stable foundational practices are put in place, and that these strategies and practices are positively impacting student outcomes.

School/District Target Setting

If the school has been successful in gathering state data associated with the priority performance challenge(s), the school can follow the guidance provided in the UIP Handbook for setting performance targets for the next two school years. If prior year state assessment data is not available (or if it is not representative of the student population, e.g., due to low participation rates), consider setting targets initially at the state averages (e.g., 50 MGP). These targets can then be revisited and revised during the year, as interim assessment data becomes available.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do new schools receive School Performance Frameworks (SPFs)? If not, how do they know where to focus their improvement plans?

Typically, a School Performance Framework (SPF) is generated for every public school by mid to late August, based on state data from prior years. The SPF is a school's rating, and the school's rating determines what type of plan the school will submit that year. Currently, Performance Frameworks are paused.

NOTE ON ACCREDITING SCHOOLS AND ASSIGNING SCHOOL PLAN TYPES FOR THE 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR
For all schools and districts
• *District and school plan types will continue to implement their 2019 ratings for the 2021-2022 school year.*
• *Districts and schools (including alternative education campuses) will not receive a 2021 performance framework, nor updated plan types. Preliminary and final reports will not be available.*

Because new schools have no state data from prior years, the state does not provide an SPF until the second year of operation. The "Data Narrative" section of this document, above, provides some guidance on how to approach data analysis for new school UIPs.

Do new schools receive a pre-populated report for the UIP?

New schools that have received a school code by July will receive information for improvement planning in the first tab of the UIP, just like other schools. However, little or no pre-populated data will be available on the reports in the first year. New schools should still use the online template in developing their UIP.

Can new schools exercise biennial flexibility in their first year as a school?

Schools that have been assigned a plan type of Performance are eligible to submit a plan every other school year, as the UIP is designed to be a two-year plan. In order to align with the spirit of biennial flexibility, new schools should submit a UIP in their first year; qualified schools may then exercise biennial flexibility in year two, as the school continues to implement the two-year plan.

How can new schools use local assessment data in their the UIP?

The following table lists data sources that may be collected at the school level for this purpose. Local student performance data (first column) should be used in data analysis (e.g., trend statements, priority performance challenges) and target-setting. Local demographic, school process and perception data (second through fourth columns) should be used during root cause analysis and as part of identifying implementation benchmarks.

Used for Data Analysis and Target Setting	Used for Root Cause Analysis and Implementation Benchmarks (Data Collected at Beginning of School Year)		
Student Learning	Demographic Data	Process Data	Perception Data
• Initial local benchmark or interim assessment results • Student work samples • Beginning of the year classroom assessment results • Language proficiency data	• School locale and size of student population • Student characteristics, including poverty, language proficiency, IEP, migrant, race/ethnicity • Staff characteristics (e.g., experience)	• Curriculum documents • Instructional materials • Observations of instructional practice • Academic interventions available to students • Student attendance • Discipline referrals and suspension rates • Schedules and class sizes • Family and community involvement policies or practices • Professional development • Services and/or programs (Title I, Special Education, ESL)	• Teaching and learning conditions surveys • Perception survey data (e.g., parents, students, teachers, community, school leaders) • Self-assessment results