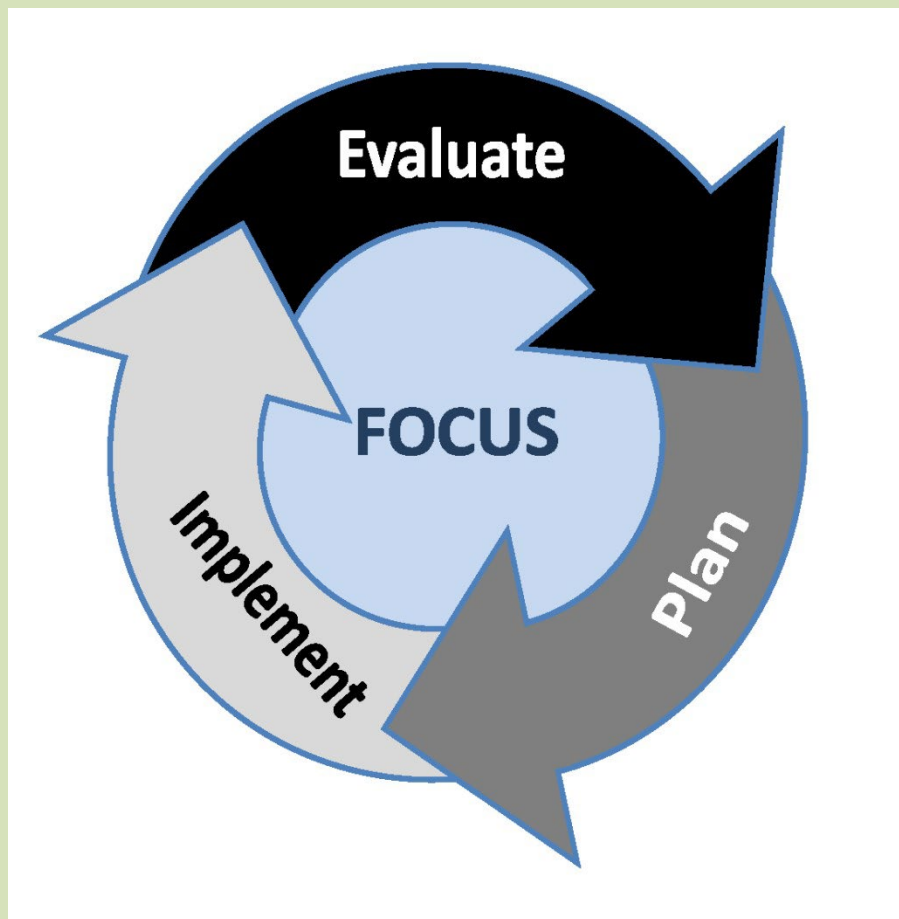


Unified Improvement Planning Handbook

Guidance for Schools and Districts for Completing a Unified Improvement Plan



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PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document was created to help school and district staff with the completion of their Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and supporting processes. The guide includes background information on key concepts, UIP requirements, samples from Colorado schools and districts, and recommendations for facilitating some of the planning processes.

Each section describing a part of the UIP includes one or more of the following elements:

- **Definitions/Requirements:** Describes the element of the UIP and discusses program and legislative requirements to be incorporated into the plan.
- **Examples:** Highlights examples that have been pulled from publicly posted UIPs or created by CDE from a compilation of school and district information and data.
- **Recommended Processes:** Provides suggested activities, guiding discussion questions, and other considerations or resources to use with staff to support completion of the UIP.

Notes included throughout the document provide additional information for schools or districts that have additional requirements, including schools and districts that are

- On the State Accountability Clock (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround),
- Identified for support and improvement through Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted, or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement),
- Serving grades K-3 and subject to READ Act requirements,
- Meeting program requirements in the UIP (Gifted Education, Title I School Wide), and/or
- A recipient of a grant (i.e., EASI, Early Literacy Grant).

QUICK LINKS

This handbook links to a variety of resources to assist in the improvement planning process. Additional resources are linked throughout the document and are summarized with their full URLs in appendix A.

	Description
UIP Online System	Link to online portal where all schools and districts work on their UIPs. Access must be granted by the district Local Access Manager (LAM) through CDE's Identity Management.
SchoolView	Link to location where all school and district UIPs are publicly posted.
Additional Assistance on UIPs	For additional assistance and resources, visit the UIP website or contact the UIP team at uiphelp@cde.state.co.us .
Additional Assistance on Performance Frameworks	For additional assistance and resources on state accountability, visit the Performance Frameworks website or contact the Accountability Team at accountability@cde.state.co.us .
Additional Assistance on ESSA Identification and ESSA Improvement Planning	For additional assistance and resources on ESSA identification and requirements, visit the ESSA (Federal Programs) website or contact the ESSA Team.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2009, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) introduced the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) to streamline school and district efforts to meet a variety of state and federal improvement planning requirements. The UIP reduces the total number of separate plans schools and districts are required to complete, with the intent of creating a single plan that has true meaning for local stakeholders. Adopting a common improvement planning approach has also enabled the state to shift from planning as an “event” to planning as a critical component of “continuous improvement,” as evidenced by the goals and purposes of the UIP in Table 1.

Table 1: Goals and Purposes of the UIP	
Alignment	Aligns improvement planning requirements for state and federal accountability into a single plan focused on improving results for students.
Best Practice	Promotes best practices in improvement planning, including using state and local data, engaging in a continuous improvement cycle, and prioritizing a limited number of strategies.
Documentation	Provides a common format for all schools and districts to document improvement efforts, and for those on the state accountability clock (i.e., Priority Improvement and Turnaround) to demonstrate a coherent plan for dramatic change over time that CDE and the State Review Panel can review.
Transparency	Offers multiple stakeholders (e.g., staff, families, community members) access to information about school/district improvement efforts through public posting of plans on SchoolView.
Supports	Triggers additional supports through CDE, especially for schools/districts on the accountability clock.

The *Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids* (S.B. 08-212) established the primary purpose of improvement planning as aligning efforts to *ensure all students exit the K-12 education system ready for postsecondary education, and/or to be successful in the workforce, earning a living wage immediately upon graduation*. Over time, several other state and federal programs and grants (e.g., EASI grants, Gifted Education, READ Act) have been woven into UIP processes, allowing schools and districts to simultaneously fulfill compliance requirements and align improvement efforts.

Theory of Action

The “Focus-Evaluate-Plan-Implement” diagram (Figure A) illustrates the theory of action behind Colorado’s approach to improvement planning – that by engaging in a *continuous improvement cycle* to manage

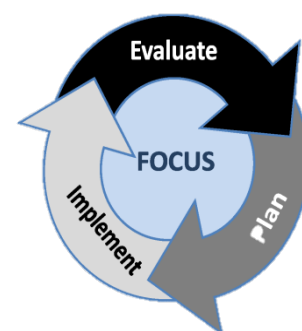


Figure A: Continuous Improvement Cycle

performance, districts and schools will become more effective and student outcomes will improve. This cycle describes four activities of continuous improvement:

- *Focus* attention on the right things (performance indicators),
- *Evaluate* performance by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data about performance,
- *Plan* improvement strategies based on performance data and Root Cause analysis, and
- *Implement* planned improvement strategies.

Then, repeat the cycle again throughout the school year to:

- *Evaluate* (or monitor) performance and implementation of Major Improvement Strategies at least quarterly,
- *Adjust* planned improvement strategies, and
- *Implement* revised strategies, as needed.

School and District Accountability System

Colorado's education accountability system is based on the belief that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed. Higher performing schools and districts have earned autonomy and can serve as models, while those that are lower performing are eligible for additional supports and have additional requirements. Figure B outlines the state's system for

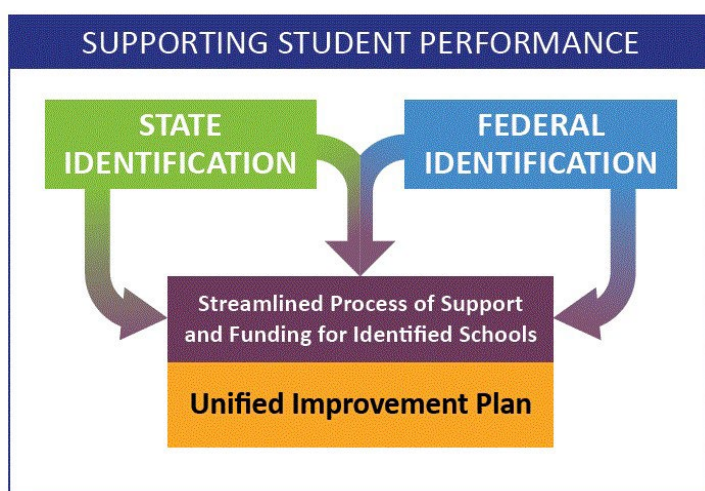


Figure B: Colorado Accountability System

accountability and supports for our lower performing systems. While the state and federal identification processes emphasize different aspects of student performance, they work in tandem. For the most part, the state identification process gives a broader sense of how the overall system is operating, whereas the federal identification process shines a light on historically underserved populations. Regardless of how a school or district is identified, the state has created a common improvement planning approach and streamlined the funding available to identified schools.

State Identification

Each year, the state evaluates the performance of all Colorado schools and districts through the School and District Performance Frameworks. This is intended to inform the overall state and individual communities about how well schools and districts are doing. The performance frameworks examine achievement and growth on state assessments, along with postsecondary measures such as graduation rates, drop-out rates, college entrance exams, and college matriculation rates. The District Performance Frameworks (DPF) guide the Commissioner in accrediting school districts and determine the type of improvement plan that the district should write. Districts Accredited with Distinction and Accredited need to write a Performance Plan. The remaining district accreditation ratings include the name of the plan the district should write. E.g., districts that are “Accredited with Improvement Plan” will write an Improvement Plan.

DISTRICT ACCREDITATION RATINGS	
ACCREDITED WITH DISTINCTION	
ACCREDITED	
ACCREDITED WITH IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
ACCREDITED WITH PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
ACCREDITED WITH TURNAROUND PLAN	
INSUFFICIENT STATE DATA: SMALL TESTED POPULATION*	
INSUFFICIENT STATE DATA: LOW PARTICIPATION**	
SCHOOL PLAN TYPES	
PERFORMANCE PLAN	
IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
TURNAROUND PLAN	
INSUFFICIENT STATE DATA: SMALL TESTED POPULATION*	
INSUFFICIENT STATE DATA: LOW PARTICIPATION**	

Figure C: State Accreditation and Plan Type Categories

Because local school boards accredit their schools, the department does not provide an accreditation rating for schools and instead only provides plan types based upon the School Performance Frameworks (SPF). Every school and district receives one of the ratings/plan types as outlined in Figure C. Schools or districts receiving the lowest numbers of points are assigned Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan types. Schools and districts with Priority Improvement and Turnaround plan types are considered to be on the Accountability Clock. Schools and districts that are on the Accountability Clock may receive directed action from the State Board of Education if they remain on the Accountability Clock for multiple years. Schools on the Accountability Clock that improve their performance and earn a rating of Improvement or Performance are considered “On Watch.” These schools will “exit” the state identification system (Performance Watch) the following year, as long as they are not reidentified as Priority Improvement or Turnaround. While all schools and districts are expected to complete an improvement plan, schools and districts on Performance Watch are eligible for additional supports and must complete additional planning requirements. For additional information regarding the relationships between

Terminology

Accountability Clock: Schools with Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan types are considered on the Accountability Clock.

“On Watch”: Schools formerly on the Accountability Clock (2+ years) that move to Improvement or Performance plan types are considered “On Watch” for the first year of their new identification. *If they remain at Improvement or Performance, they will formally exit their state identification.*

Performance Watch: Schools that are on the Accountability Clock OR “On Watch” are all considered to be on Performance Watch.

the Accountability Clock, “On Watch” status, and Performance Watch, and an overview of the requirements specific to school identification in these categories, see the [Performance Watch Summary](#). More details about the accountability clock are available in the [Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement](#).

Federal Identification

Through ESSA, schools may be federally identified in the following ways:

- **Comprehensive Support (CS) - Lowest 5%:** Title I schools performing in the lowest 5% of Colorado Title I schools are designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) based on the same performance indicators as those used to calculate state performance frameworks: achievement, growth, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and participation ([Appendix E](#) for an explanation of these terms).
- **Comprehensive Support (CS) - Low Graduation:** Graduation rates are embedded within the state’s postsecondary workforce and readiness measures in the DPF and SPF. ESSA, on the other hand, has a designation specific to high schools with low graduation rates. When four and seven-year graduation rates are below 67% for a three-year period, the school is identified as “Comprehensive Support and Improvement – Low Graduation rate.”
- **Comprehensive Support (CS) – Chronically Low Performing Student Group(s):** Title I schools formerly identified for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement that have continued to be low performing for the same disaggregated group(s) three consecutive years after identification will be moved to this category in their fourth year of identification.
- **Targeted Support (TS) / Additional Targeted Support (A-TS):** Under ESSA, CDE identifies schools in need of support based on the performance and participation of specific group(s) of students including English Learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students in individual race/ethnicity categories. These schools are identified as Targeted Support and Improvement (TS) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATS). More detail on how TS and ATS are calculated is available in the [ESSA methods for identification and exit criteria](#). Note that the state identification system also considers how disaggregated groups of students perform, but those calculations are rolled up within the overall district and school performance frameworks and there are not specific categories of identification based solely on these indicators.

More detail on how CS, TS and ATS identifications are calculated is available on the [ESSA methods and criteria for identification](#) webpage.

For more details on accountability requirements, go to the state [Accountability Handbook](#) or [ESSA in Colorado](#) webpage.

Completion and Review of Plans

Regardless of the plan type assignment, accreditation rating or ESSA identification, all schools and districts are required to complete a UIP. All UIPs are publicly posted and available to all stakeholders. In

addition to satisfying statutory requirements, this public posting of UIPs helps to establish transparency between schools and communities. The publicly posted UIP offers schools and districts an opportunity to share about the values, insights, and aims that drive their work with students, families, and communities. Currently posted UIPs are available at the [Performance Framework Reports and Improvement Plans](#) website.

Note for Schools and Districts with a Performance Plan Type: Schools and districts that maintain a rating of Performance or higher are eligible to submit plans on a biennial basis if approved by their district. For more information, see our [Fact Sheet on biennial flexibility](#).

All schools and districts must submit plans by October 15 (or the following Monday, if the fifteenth falls on a weekend). CDE will review plans for schools/districts with a plan type/rating of Priority Improvement or Turnaround, those that are On Watch, or those that have been identified for Comprehensive Support (CS) and Improvement under ESSA. Plans from CS-identified schools must be reviewed and approved by the school, district (i.e., local education agency or LEA), and CDE.

More information about the accountability process is available at the web pages listed below:

- [CDE accountability website](#): Overview information on the state accountability system and how ratings are identified
- [Federal identifications](#): Specific information about how federal identification under ESSA is determined

UIP FORMAT

The UIP is housed within the online UIP system and is organized into four sections or “tabs,” with the Data Narrative and Action Plan tabs containing the majority of the content about schools’ or districts’ improvement plans and efforts.

Table 2: Sections of the UIP

Main Tabs	My School/ My District	Data Narrative	Action Plans
Sub Tabs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summary of Plan ● Plan Progress ● School Contact Information ● Plan Details (Pre-populated report of requirements) ● School Context (<i>optional</i>) ● Assurances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current Performance ● Brief Description ● Notable Trends ● Priority Performance Challenges ● Root Causes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Major Improvement Strategies ● Action Steps ● Implementation Benchmarks ● Interim Measures ● Target Setting

The [CDE UIP webpage](#) includes instructions for accessing the online system and setting up access, as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

Expectations within the UIP

The structure and required components of the UIP are governed by statute and policy. These UIP expectations are laid out within the [Quality Criteria Rubric](#) and are organized by five guiding questions that outline the major concepts of the improvement planning process. The questions aim to create coherence and emphasize the importance of aligning all elements of the improvement plan.

Table 3: The “Big Five” Guiding Questions

Does the plan...
1) Investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent Performance Challenges?
2) Identify Root Causes that explain the magnitude of the performance challenges?
3) Identify evidence-based Major Improvement Strategies that have likelihood to eliminate the Root Causes?
4) Present a well-designed action plan for implementing the Major Improvement Strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?
5) Include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?

This UIP Handbook is a basic guide to support school and district stakeholders as they engage in an iterative, unified approach to improvement planning. The improvement planning process includes a deep analysis of different types of data and the prioritization of areas of focus (data narrative), key strategies and action steps (action planning), and benchmarks and targets (target setting and progress monitoring) to help the school or district monitor progress. Figure D provides an overview of the process, with each box representing a key step that will be described through this handbook. This handbook is intended to be used in conjunction with several other resources to strengthen school/district improvement planning processes, including: (1) the [School/District’s Performance Framework Report](#), (2) local sources of data, (3) the [UIP Online System](#), and (4) the [UIP Quality Criteria Rubric](#).

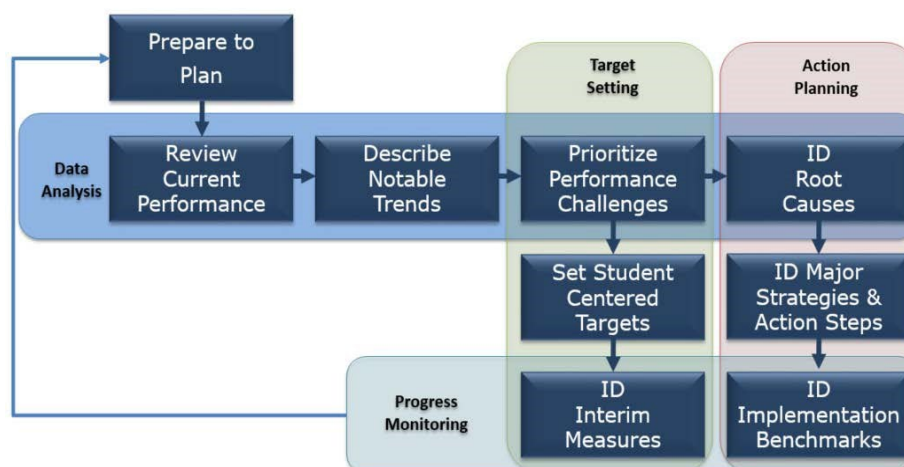


Figure D: Unified Improvement Planning Flow Map

PREPARE TO PLAN

Approach to Planning

The UIP was designed to enable schools and districts to streamline accountability planning requirements into one plan, while also providing enough flexibility that the process can be meaningful for that site. There are different types of planning that local sites may need to take into account when designing their planning system. Typically, districts will invest in a long-term strategic plan that articulates a vision of development over a five-to-ten-year period. The improvement plan should operate within that strategic vision and provide a one- to two-year operations plan that is nimbler and more responsive to performance data and emergent implementation issues. Short cycle planning is even more responsive, because it often looks about three months down the road and names very specific action steps to ensure there is urgency and high accountability in implementation activities.

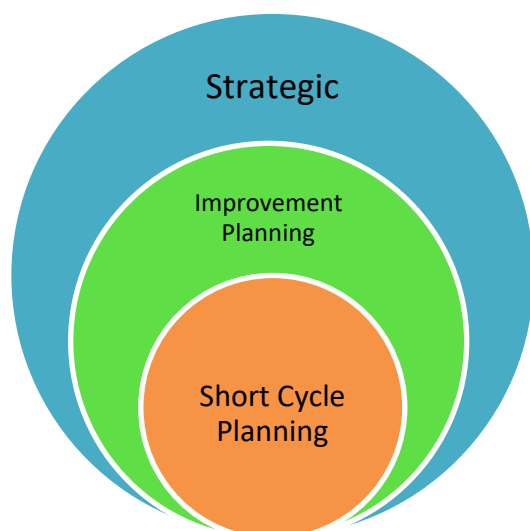


Figure E: Levels of Improvement Planning

For schools and districts identified through the state and federal accountability system, the UIP documents evidence of the school's or district's proposal for improvement and dramatic change. Therefore, the plan should convey the system's sense of urgency for improvement, communicate the progress on previous years' action plans, and detail a specific direction for the future. While CDE reviews these plans annually, the UIP acts as an archive of the school's or district's actions over time for the State Review Panel and the State Board of Education as they consider directed actions at the end of the Accountability Clock.

Districts are encouraged to think broadly about how to leverage the UIP process to build consistent practices for all schools. School UIPs may be reviewed by multiple individuals at the district level to ensure that key strategies are included. School UIPs may also be used as a data source to inform the district-level UIP.

Planning Timeline

Improvement planning is part of a cycle of continuous improvement. Refer to [Appendix D](#), below, for a suggested timeline for improvement planning.

Participants in the Planning Process

Planning at the school and district level should involve multiple groups of stakeholders. The makeup of these planning teams will look different based on the school's or district's unique needs and structures, and they should include representation from internal stakeholders (e.g., district and school staff, leadership, students) as well as external stakeholders (e.g., community members, families). Stakeholders may also be involved at different points during the process and in different ways (e.g., a small building team writes the full plan, department teams work on content specific trends, all staff participate in Root Cause analysis, and families participate in surveys or focus groups to gather support on main initiatives).

In general, teams should consist of building leaders and teachers, and they should include or seek input from parent, student, community, and district representatives. Involvement of some specific stakeholder groups is required by statute and state rule:

- [School and District Accountability Committees](#) (SACs/DACs) must play a role in the improvement planning process
- Local boards must adopt the UIP of the district and any schools on the Accountability Clock.

ESSA requires that plans are developed in partnership with stakeholders and that stakeholders play a meaningful role in the plan development process in an ongoing manner. For schools identified as CS, TS, and ATS under ESSA, plans are required to delineate the stakeholders involved, as well as how, when, in what way, and how often stakeholders partnered in plan development.

For more details on the role of Accountability Committees and local boards, refer to the [District Accountability Handbook](#). For specific requirements regarding the adoption of plans for schools and districts on the clock, refer to the [Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement](#).

The process used for engaging participants in the development of the UIP should be included in the *Brief Description* section of the UIP.

Deciding whether to Create, Rewrite, or Update the UIP

One of the first decisions a planning team must make is if they need to *create*, *rewrite*, or *update* their UIP.

Create a New Plan. If the school or district did not have a UIP in the prior year (e.g., new schools), the team will create a new plan. Given some of the unique circumstances of creating a UIP for a new school (e.g., absence of an SPF, limited or no trend data), there is additional [guidance for new schools](#).

Rewriting a Plan. Rewriting is similar to writing a new plan but applies to schools that have had a plan in previous years and have student performance data to draw on. This approach requires planning

teams to fully engage in every planning step as if they did not have a plan the prior year. Some conditions that could lead a planning team to rewrite their UIP include the following:

- New leadership at the school that is not invested in the prior plan,
- Limited or no staff involvement in development of the prior plan,
- Performance results that suggest insufficient improvement or a decline in performance,
- A plan that is out of step with current improvement strategies as enacted in the school or district,
- Significant changes in resources (positive or negative) available to implement improvement strategies,
- Re-configuration of the school (e.g., combining two schools or grade level re-configuration), or
- Feedback from the district, CDE, or community stakeholders suggesting that the plan needs substantial revisions.

Updating the Plan. Updating the UIP entails adjusting, fine-tuning, or building upon the plan from the prior year. Schools and districts who are updating will need to update, at a minimum, the Current Performance section, progress on Prior Year's Targets, Trend Analysis, Annual Targets, and Action Plans.

Online UIP Tip: Refer to the [UIP Online System User Guide](#) to learn how to copy the previous year's plan into the current year in the online system.

Gathering and Organizing Relevant Data

In preparation for improvement planning, planning teams should gather and organize relevant data from a variety of sources. Recommended data types are outlined in Table 4 and include:

- **Performance Data:** Performance data is focused on student outcomes and includes measures like student assessment achievement and growth results, in addition to educational outcome measures like dropout or graduation rates.
- **Demographic Data:** Demographic data describes characteristics about the school and could include student measures such as "the percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch" and staff measures such as "how many teachers are first- or second-year teachers."
- **Process Data:** Process data describes programs, strategies, and practices that may impact performance data as well as measures such as attendance and behavior that are predictive of other outcomes.
- **Perception Data:** Perception data reflects the opinions and views of stakeholders and may include climate surveys, implementation surveys, or information from focus groups.

While the School and District Performance Frameworks and ESSA profiles contain some of these information sources, the team should begin improvement planning based on local data. Data from

state sources, coming later in the improvement planning process, should be used to verify or refine the improvement plan.

Table 4: Potential Data Types for Improvement Planning, Organized by Types of Data
Includes recommendations for types of data to integrate into the different elements of the UIP.

Performance Data	Demographic Data	Process Data	Perception Data
Current Performance, Trends, PPC's, Targets/Interim Measures			
		Root Causes, Major Improvement Strategies/Action Steps, Implementation Benchmarks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Achievement and Growth from State and Local Measures Graduation, Completion Rate Matriculation to Higher Education Credential Attainment Rate Dropout, Reenrollment, Recidivism Rates Promotion, Credit Accrual Grades, Course Failure Rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age of Students Enrollment and Grades Served Gender Socio-economic status (e.g., Free and Reduced-Price Lunch) Race/Ethnicity Learning needs (e.g., English Learners, Students with Disabilities, More than 3 years behind in credit attainment) Length of time in school/program Mobility Rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Reviews (e.g., Diagnostic Review, Connect for Success, Turnaround Network) Structures/supports and External Partners (e.g., MTSS, PLCs, student support team, turnaround partner) Staffing Patterns (e.g., turnover rates, years of experience) Stakeholder Involvement (e.g., SAC) Course Offerings and Student Course Taking Patterns (e.g., AP enrollment) Budget (e.g., total grant/federal dollars received) Program Offerings and Enrollment (e.g., transition services, counseling, apprenticeships, credit recovery, intervention) Professional Development offerings Dropout prevention policy/practices review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student perception (e.g., safety, engagement) Community perception of school/students (e.g., parent surveys, focus groups) Staff perceptions of teaching and learning conditions (e.g., TLCC) Staff perception of student emotional and cognitive engagement Observations of instructional practices

PLANNING PROCESS WITHIN THE UIP

The sections described below align to main tabs and sub-tabs in the UIP Online System.

In these sections, “you” refers to the user of the UIP Online System. This may be a school/district leader or a designated UIP Writer. Keep in mind that Improvement Planning should be supported by a planning team, and that different team members may be responsible for different aspects of the improvement plan and process.

Main Tab: My School/My District

Description: This tab should be the first one that you see when logging into the UIP. There are a few main segments to this tab. The top of this tab includes the following key components:

- **UIP Tools:** At the top of the page, there are four tools that are available to support school and district improvement planning.
 - “Copy from Last Year” will populate the UIP with the contents of a previous UIP, except the reflection on previous targets. *When choosing this option, be sure to select the correct year for the UIP content you want to copy over.*
 - “Performance Snapshot” will open the CDE performance snapshot tool in a new tab. The performance snapshot provides easy access to key elements of the School or District Performance Framework, the publicly posted UIP, and current student demographics.
 - “Produce Draft UIP” will generate an electronic public-facing preview of the UIP. From this page, you can select “Download PDF” in the upper right corner to download a PDF of the current contents of the UIP. This can be helpful in sharing the plan with a wider audience that might not be able to log into the online system.
 - “Executive Summary” will produce a concise PDF that summarizes the Priority Performance Challenges, Root Causes, and Major Improvement Strategies of the UIP.
- **UIP Progress and Submission:** This status bar shows progress on completion for each component of the UIP. This is also where you will select “Submit for Public Posting” when the plan is ready to be submitted.
- **Relationship of UIP Elements:** This section shows the Priority Performance Challenges, Root Causes, and Major Improvement Strategies that have been entered into the UIP. *This section will auto-populate as information is entered into the other tabs in the UIP Online System.*
- **Attachments List:**
 - “Add Attachment” will show a pop-up window where you can add additional documents to their plan (e.g., a BOCES Gifted Attachment or additional action plan, as needed).

Below these introductory elements are several additional boxes that either provide information about the requirements for the current year or ask for user input.

“School Information” Box. This box includes general school information. Verify that the information listed here (e.g., principal name, phone number, grades served, and school website) are correct. If any of this information needs to be revised, follow the link in the system to update it.

“Plan Details” Box. The Plan Details box includes the school’s state and/or federal identifications, submission deadline and flexibilities available, and customized pre-populated requirements for the UIP. These prepopulated requirements may include accountability expectations (state and federal), statutory or program requirements (e.g., READ Act, Course Taking Analysis), and/or grants expectations (e.g., EASI) that are specific to the school or district.

Note: CDE prepopulates school/district requirements in this box. Schools and districts do not enter any information in this box.

Planning teams are advised to use this pre-populated report to understand their state and federal expectations and corresponding directions for completing the improvement plan. Consider reviewing this page with the appropriate team members to ensure that requirements are met within the UIP. Additional detail about meeting requirements is available in the [Quality Criteria and the Quality Criteria Rubric](#). For support with understanding requirements, email uiphelp@cde.state.co.us.

“Context” Box. The “Context” box provides a space where schools/districts can briefly describe the context that will be included in the executive summary report of the UIP. *This text box is optional and should be completed only if this information is desired in the executive summary.*

“Assurances” Box. Some state and federal requirements are satisfied by providing assurances about plan development, review, and implementation. In the Assurances box, you will check off each box to attest that the described element has been or will be incorporated in the improvement efforts in the current year. Please note, the school has responsibility for ensuring completion of activities associated with these expectations and may be asked to share artifacts as a part of a monitoring process.

Main Tab: Data Narrative

The Data Narrative section is sometimes referred to as the “data story.” This data story should explain how the team used their data analysis to select their Priority Performance Challenges, and how they then identified potential Root Causes for those selected challenges. The Data Narrative sets the foundation and provides rationale for Major Improvement Strategies and corresponding Action Steps in the subsequent part of the plan.

Description: This section provides schools and districts with an opportunity to articulate the insights from their data analysis and builds the case for the proposed strategies in the subsequent section (“Action Plan”). The data narrative section includes the following components, each of which has its own “sub-tab” in the online system:

- **Brief Description:** The Brief Description sub-tab is where users can provide background information about the school or district that helps the reader understand the system’s context, focus, and process used to involve stakeholders in the development of the UIP.
- **Prior Year Targets:** This section identifies Annual Targets from the previous year, describes performance relative to those targets, and gives reflections on what was successful and/or unsuccessful from the previous improvement efforts.
- **Current Performance:** Current Performance is where users capture a summary analysis of performance against local, state, and federal expectations.
- **Trend Analysis:** Trends statements show direction of student performance across three or more years (if enough data is available and student group sizes or n-counts are large enough) for the school or district. Where possible, trends should include a comparison point (e.g., local and/or state expectations, averages) to give context for that trend.
- **Priority Performance Challenges:** Priority Performance Challenges are selected based on the analysis of current performance and trends. These are summary statements of the student performance issues that the school or district has decided to focus on for the remainder of the plan.
- **Root Causes:** Root causes are the underlying causes within the school or district system that likely lead to each of the Priority Performance Challenges.

Sub-Tab: Brief Description

The Brief Description is an open narrative section that allows the school or district to provide relevant context that any reader should know. This section often includes the size and makeup of the staff and student body, particular improvement efforts or partnerships that the school has, and any substantial changes that have occurred at the school (e.g., a principal change).

This section should also contain details about how the school completed the development of their UIP, including how stakeholders (e.g., building leaders, classroom teachers, school staff, School Accountability Committee, families) were involved in decisions and/or how information was shared.

Table 5: Brief Description Examples

The table below gives two examples of how the UIP Development Process might be described in the UIP’s Brief Description section.

Example #1: UIP Development Process
<p><i>At the end of each school year our team reviews the goals of the UIP. Upon review, changes are implemented to refine the process and set new goals that are in-line with expected outcomes based upon the previous years’ data results. The major driver of our UIP development process was the School Performance Framework and our student achievement data. The school leadership team, including teacher leaders, analyzed the data and set strategic goals around MAPs, student and parent engagement, SAT and PSAT. We also worked to gain parent feedback through our Collaborative School Committee (CSC) meetings on our UIP goals and will continue to solicit feedback from parents</i></p>

throughout the year through these meetings. The UIP is an ongoing document that is visited each quarter to monitor the school's progress. Stakeholders are required to input data each month to update areas of growth and continued need. The district team will also monitor and give feedback on progress every 6 weeks.

Example #2: UIP Development Process

The UIP was written as a collaborative effort that started with our Leadership Team in September. This representative group completed data analyses on both local and state data. The information was shared with the staff and we had staff discussion to provide feedback. Our School Accountability Committee (SAC) was given a description of our proposed goals and we discussed the rationale for why the goals were chosen. SAC was given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback for our UIP. Our SAC is made up of 5 parents and 4 staff members. Parents of students on IEPs, 504s, Advanced Learning Plans, and those not in any program are represented. Staff represents teachers of primary, intermediate, specials, and classified/support staff.

Sub-Tab: Prior Year Targets

Description: The goal of this section is to help teams identify progress on previous Targets and identify any particular strategies that may have led to progress. The section involves two steps:

1. The first step is to detail each target from the previous year and the actual performance on the target. If using “copy” from last year, the targets will auto-populate.
2. The second step is to provide an overall reflection on the targets for each section. This should include analysis of what may have led to actual performance meeting or not meeting the targets and whether these results justify continuing with current Major Improvement Strategies and Action Steps.

If progress is evident over time, the positive results may provide a compelling case for continuing with the existing activities. If results are not as strong as intended, this may indicate a need to change course or adjust implementation. These decisions can be articulated in the text box “based on the reflection and evaluation, provide a summary of the adjustments that will be made for this year’s plan”.

Table 8: Prior Year Target Examples

Example #1: Targets and Reflection
<p>Prior Year Target: Students will attain the 55th percentile of growth in ELA</p> <p>Performance: Students achieved a 43rd percentile in ELA CMAS and 52nd percentile on PSAT.</p> <p>Prior Year Target: Students will attain the 55th percentile of growth in Algebra all areas tested.</p> <p>Performance: Students achieved a 32.5% growth percentile in Algebra.</p>

Reflection: Our students did not meet growth targets. Intervention groups were targeted for after school tutoring; however, additional measures can be implemented to progress monitor student performance and growth. Students practiced reading samples and writing responses, consistent with those on Common Core assessments; however, the samples of PSAT/SAT conceptualizing informational text was lacking. Teachers were given the task to use formative data to inform their instruction and students' assessment results were to be used to target areas of weakness. Additional formative checks within lessons need to be increased with fidelity and monitored by administration, including added PD in formative checks. Students at the lowest level of ELA ability were provided additional scheduling of an ELA literacy class to allow for double the instruction. The levels of intervention can be monitored more closely to determine effectiveness of the literacy programs. There was an increased use of Tier 1 best practices to raise the rigor through peer observation and collaboration; however an MTSS process needs to be formalized to structure Tier 1 interventions that work per common subjects and grade levels. Additionally, there was a focus on increased practice of solving real-world problems with embedded mathematical operations and practice describing the thought process used to solve problems in each math lesson; this needs to be implemented on a daily basis.

Example #2: Targets and Reflection

Prior Year Targets:

- 80% or more of Kindergarten students will Exceed or Meet grade-level expectations as measured by the Middle of Year writing performance tasks.
- The percent of 1st and 2nd grade students who are below grade level on text-dependent writing will decrease from 93% at the beginning of the year to 25% at the end of the year as measured by the BOY and EOY writing performance tasks.
- In grades 3rd-5th, 60% or more of students will Exceed or Meet grade-level expectations as measured by English Language Arts CMAS.

Performance:

- 85% of Kindergarten students met or exceeded expectations as measured by middle of the year performance tasks.
- By the end of the year, 44% were not proficient in 1st grade
- 75% in 2nd grade were not proficient on the middle of the year performance task.
- 63% of students in 3-5 were proficient or advanced on ELA CMAS.

Reflection: Last year, we had a school-wide focus on Literacy Design Collaborative work, where we increased our understanding of text dependent writing and intentionally planned using grade-level standards. In grades 3-5, we started to use claim, evidence, reasoning response format and in grades K-2, time was spent deconstructing tasks. On district performance tasks, the rubrics were not aligned K-5 and to standards, and as a result scores did not reflect student progress. We didn't spend time analyzing tasks as a school to ensure valid and reliable scores.

Recommended Process: This section provides an opportunity for planning teams to provide rationale for the decisions made in the rest of the plan and to describe what occurred during implementation. Planning teams should gather the data used for Current Performance to reflect on Prior Targets. In

addition, gather notes, documents, or feedback related to plan implementation to reflect on prior year targets and provide this rationale in the reflection section of the plan.

Sub-Tab: Current Performance

Description: The Current Performance section should be brief and should focus on an interpretation of data that describes the current state of student performance, as well as explicitly naming how the school or district is performing on accountability measures. For example, given the educational disruptions caused by COVID, consider carefully whether your pre-COVID data is still relevant to your school's current performance. This section does not need to include an analysis of trends (which will occur in the next section) but should instead focus on why the data that is included is relevant to the school's planning process. Ensure any data that is included in this section is clearly contextualized with the relevant data source, year, subject area, and grade level or student group that is referenced.

At a minimum, the current performance section should include:

- A summary analysis of indicators that are included on the **School/District Performance Framework** (e.g. achievement and growth on state assessments, along with postsecondary measures such as graduation rates, drop-out rates, college entrance exams, and college matriculation rates), as well as any measures where the school is not yet meeting federal accountability expectations for ESSA identified schools.
- A discussion of performance on local expectations or measures (this can include assessment measures, like interim assessments, or non-assessment measures like attendance, behavior, or student/community survey data). In some districts, local accountability measures are identified to supplement or even surpass state and federal expectations.
- *Note:* If a school or district submits a [request to reconsider](#) to the state, this may be a good place to leverage analyses conducted for the request to reconsider in order to provide deeper insights into current performance.

Recommended Processes: Prior to the release of school and district Performance Frameworks, planning teams should review student performance on local measures to determine whether expectations were met. Local measures can include both assessment and non-assessment data. Planning teams should rely on their local data to begin their planning process. See [Using Non-Assessment Data for School Improvement](#) for suggestions on how non-assessment data can be incorporated into school improvement processes.

Once school and district Performance Frameworks are released, planning teams should review the [school or district Performance Framework](#) and the [District and School Dashboard](#) (1) to verify the findings suggested by local data analysis, (2) to identify where state expectations were met, and (3) to reflect on areas where the school or district is not yet meeting state expectations. Additionally, School Profiles that include the data elements and results on ESSA indicators should be reviewed for any ESSA identified schools. Preliminary frameworks and ESSA identifications are available through

accountability contacts in August of each year, while the data that is included in these ratings, such as assessment scores and graduation rates, are updated in the [District and School Dashboard](#). Once ratings are finalized in December, the frameworks and ESSA ratings will be [posted publicly](#).

When building a plan based on local data, state assessment data plays a confirmatory role – that is, state assessment data will either serve to confirm the plan based on local data, or it will indicate that some adjustments are needed to that plan. Table 6 provides guidance about what revisions may be appropriate to make to the drafted improvement plan based on the degree to which local assessment data and state assessment data align. Note that the recommended or appropriate revisions will differ depending on the extent to which state data are representative of the student population (based on participation rates and demographics).

Table 6: Reconciling State and Local Data in Data Analysis and Action Planning

	Situation 1: State Data are Representative of the Student Population			Situation 2: State Data are not Representative of the Student Population
If the data indicate that...	Local assessment data aligns strongly with state assessment data.	Local assessment is directionally consistent with state assessment data, but it does not accurately reflect the performance of disaggregated groups, and/or grade-level proficiency.	Local assessment results are not aligned to state results.	Participation rates and/or state data are not representative of the student population. Data should not be used for school improvement.
...consider this approach to data analysis in the UIP...	Incorporate state assessment results in data narrative to confirm local data analysis	Include state assessment analysis results in UIP 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 indicating 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 the Colorado Academic Standards.	Revise improvement plan to include a Major Improvement Strategy focused on understanding the quality of local assessment and their alignment to Colorado Academic Standards (so that local assessment data can be used more effectively to understand student progress toward targets in the future).	Consider how existing data sets can be complemented with additional non-assessment data to inform school improvement efforts.

The initial identification of patterns in the Current Performance section may include the following categories:

- Overall performance rating and year on the accountability clock (if applicable)
- Indicator and sub-indicator areas, noting if the school/district met or exceeded local, state, and federal expectations
- Indicators and sub-indicators where the school/district fell short of local or state averages

Table 7: Current Performance Examples

This table gives examples of the kind of information that may be included in the Current Performance section.

Example #1: Current Performance <i>Overview of Engagement data from a Colorado Elementary School</i>				
<u>Engagement</u>				
<i>Attendance: Our overall attendance increased from 88.83% in 2018-19 to 92.98% in 2019-20 (pre-COVID). During the first year of COVID, in 2020-21, our attendance was 74.2%, but it rebounded to 86.9% in 2021-22, and increased to 92.5% attendance in 2022-23.</i>				
<i>Behavior: Our overall behavior incident counts for last year (2022-23) were 139 In-School Suspension, 45 Out of school Suspensions.</i>				
<i>Summary of Engagement: The school has prioritized supporting student attendance. We look at student attendance each week, and students who are chronically absent receive phone calls home, home visits, and multiple opportunities to re-engage. We have also prioritized restorative justice, and our behavior incidents have dramatically decreased, especially for Students of Color.</i>				
Example #2: Current Performance <i>Summary of Performance Framework from a larger district</i>				
<i>In 2018, the district was accredited by the Colorado State Board of Education with an Improvement Plan. The district accredited 16 schools at the Performance level, 11 at the Improvement level, two at the Priority Improvement level and no schools at Turnaround. The district provides additional oversight and support for schools on Priority Improvement or Turnaround or those designated as Comprehensive Support, Targeted Support, and Additional Targeted Support.</i>				
<i>Summary of District Performance Framework</i>				
<i>The District Performance Framework indicates that the district is "Approaching" in Academic Achievement, Academic Growth and Academic Growth Gaps, and state expectations in Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness.</i>				
	District	Elementary	Middle	High
Academic Achievement	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching	Does Not Meet
English Language Arts	N/A	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching

Math	N/A	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching
Science	N/A	Approaching	Approaching	Does Not Meet
Academic Growth	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching
English Language Arts	N/A	Approaching	Meets	Approaching
Math	N/A	Approaching	Approaching	Approaching
Participation Rate	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Graduation Rate	Meets	N/A	N/A	Meets
Disaggregated Graduation Rate	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
F/R Lunch	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Minority	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Students w/ Disabilities	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
English Learners	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Dropout Rate	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching
Colorado SAT	Approaching	N/A	N/A	Approaching

Overall Magnitude of the District's Performance Challenges

Even though the district moved out of Priority Improvement into Improvement in 2013 and stayed at Improvement since that time, our performance challenges persist. We continue to perform below state expectations both in achievement and growth, especially our subgroups, which comprise the majority of our student population.

Sub-Tab: Trend Analysis

Description: To identify notable performance trends, teams should compare data over time and against set comparison points (e.g., district or state averages, state thresholds for approaching, meeting, or exceeding requirements). Notable trends can include both positive and negative performance patterns and should describe the following elements:

- Measure and metric for the trend being described (see glossary for explanation of “measure” and “metric” if needed)
- Content area(s)
- Students included in the trend (e.g., grade levels, disaggregated groups)
- Direction of the trend
- Amount of change in the metric
- Time period over which trend was observed
- Description of what makes the trend notable

Table 9: Notable Trend Examples

Example #1: Notable Trends
<p><i>Trend Direction: Stable</i></p> <p><i>Performance Indicator Target: English Language Development and Attainment</i></p> <p><i>On WIDA ACCESS from 2019-20 to 2020-21, bilingual students' scores remained largely the same, with slightly fewer students reaching the highest level of proficiency. This is significant because it indicates that our students are not being prepared to express themselves verbally in ways that will help them reach proficiency in English.</i></p>
Example #2: Notable Trends
<p><i>Trend Direction: Increasing</i></p> <p><i>Performance Indicator Target: Academic Achievement (Status)</i></p> <p><i>Due to COVID-19, our students did not have an opportunity to demonstrate their growth in learning through CMAS in 2020. We use MAP as our proxy for benchmarking against progress on the standards that are tested on CMAS. In 2019-2020, the data suggests that our 3-5th graders showed slight improvement over our performance the previous year. In 2018-2019, at mid-year, 11% of 3-5th graders scored “at or above grade level” on MAP Math. In 2019-2020 at mid-year, we showed slight gains, with 13% of 3-5th graders scoring “at or above grade level” on MAP Math. This suggests that had our students been able to show what they knew in CMAS in Spring of 2020, we would have seen a continuation of the slight positive gains. In Spring 2020-21 (EOY), 15% of students met or exceeded expectations, showing continued growth and learning in Math.</i></p>

Recommended Process: Planning teams should indicate the basis for determining if a trend is “notable”. A notable trend should reflect a change in performance over time that is above or below expectations, or stable performance where a change in performance was expected instead. This should involve comparing the performance of the school or district to an external reference or comparison point. These comparisons can be criterion- or norm-referenced, insofar as they answer one of the following two questions:

- **Criterion-referenced:** *How did we compare to a specific expectation or standard?* The team should consider minimum state or federal expectations. The minimum state expectations (i.e., “meets expectations”) are listed on the [reference page](#) at the end of performance framework document. For higher performing schools and districts, it may be more appropriate to use the “exceeds” rating as a comparison point. The “approaching” rating may be a good marker to consider as a way to demonstrate progress, but note that “approaching” is not defined as meeting state expectations.
- **Norm-referenced:** *How did we compare to other schools, districts, or grades?* Planning teams can make a norm-referenced comparison to determine if a trend is notable by comparing the school performance trends to the district and/or state trends in the same content area over the same time period. In addition, if the trend is focused on a disaggregated group, the trend can be compared to the trend for the school overall for the same time period.

Table 10: Examples of Criterion- and Norm-Referenced Comparison Points

<i>Type of Comparison</i>	Criterion Referenced Comparisons	Norm Referenced Comparisons
<i>Guiding Question</i>	How did we compare to a specific expectation?	How did we compare to others?
<i>Examples of Comparison Points</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State expectations (e.g., “meets” on SPF) • Cut points for assessment performance levels (e.g., 750 on CMAS ELA/Math) • Graduation guidelines cut points (district-specific) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State average • District average • Out group v. in group (FRL to Non-FRL)

As suggested above, given the timing of the release of state frameworks, teams should begin their identification of trends using local data. This means they may need to begin by using norm-referenced comparisons within their school, or criterion-referenced comparisons if these are available for the assessments being used. Local data can be examined to begin identifying patterns in student performance, and when state-level data becomes available, this can be used to verify, refine, or supplement the patterns already identified.

How to identify notable trends. Identifying notable trends involves analyzing multiple points of data for each performance indicator, including grade level data and deeper disaggregation of student group data than what is included in the Frameworks. It may be easier to compile information into one table (see Table 11 for an example) to be able to look at changes over time. This table should be accompanied by a sentence or two to interpret the data and summarize these trends.

Table 11: Notable Trend Summary Table & Interpretation

Dropout Rates: Notable Trend Summary			
	2014	2015	2016
School	15%	14%	16%
State	2.4%	2.5%	2.3%

Interpretation: The dropout rate for the school has remained relatively stable (15%, 14%, and 16%) between 2014 and 2016. This is notable as it is much higher than the state average for the same time period and above state expectation.

In addition, planning teams should start with the trends from their prior UIP, if available, add the most recent performance data to their trend statements, and determine if the direction and magnitude of the trends remain the same. Teams can then decide which trends to note in the current UIP by determining which are informing the direction and priorities reflected in the current plans.

Resource - [District and School Dashboard](#): This tool has been created to pull information from multiple years of Frameworks and other sources into a format that is easier to analyze. It includes achievement, growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness data, as well as background information on student enrollment, attendance, and accountability sub-indicator detail over time.

Small Student Populations and Student Privacy. While CDE recommends that plans refer to numbers and percentages to strengthen the data story, protecting student identity must take priority. If the number of students is very small, then the public may be able to determine information about individual students, or Personally Identifiable Information (PII). For example, of the five students with an IEP, one of them is Native American. This scenario becomes a concern under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). CDE has determined that state produced data reports should only be reported publicly when the n-size is 16 students or more for achievement data and 20 students or more for growth data. Districts are responsible for setting and maintaining thresholds for reporting their own data.

Small schools and districts are still expected to engage in analysis of data for their students, even if the number of students in a particular disaggregated group is only one. This may mean that the reporting done in the UIP is modified to avoid sharing PII. For example, a description of the data analysis process and the high-level findings may be provided in the UIP, while the more detailed numbers and percentages related to performance trends are not shared in the public plan. Where numbers or percentages are not reported due to privacy concerns, there is a text box in the Trend Analysis section where you can provide context for what is and is not publicly reported. See [Data Analysis for Small Student Populations](#) for suggestions for how data analysis can be conducted and reported for smaller numbers of students

As an additional flexibility for small systems, there is a provision that allows small districts (under 1200 students) to request to submit a “Combined Plan,” or a single plan for all the schools and the district. If

a district elects to submit a Combined Plan, the accountability requirements for each of the schools as well as the district must be addressed in this plan. See [Guidance for Combined Plans](#) for additional detail about combined plans.

Sub-Tab: Priority Performance Challenges

Description: Prioritizing Performance Challenges may be the most critical step in the entire planning process, as it sets the tone for each of the subsequent steps. The planning team will need to identify which of their notable trends represent strengths to build upon and which represent challenges that need immediate attention for improvement. Priority Performance Challenges should be selected from trends that are a concern for the school or district and that describe the most appropriate areas and magnitude of focus that will lead to improvement. They should be specific statements about *student* performance that are linked to information shared in the Current Performance section. They are *not* Action Steps that need to be taken, or concerns about adult behaviors or systems like budget, staffing, curriculum, or instruction. (Where adult behaviors or systems are seen as driving or impacting these challenges, this information is more appropriately included in the “Root Cause” section below.)

Reminder:

Priority performance challenges focus on student-level data. At this stage in the planning process, resist the temptation to jump straight into identifying adult actions. Prioritizing clear performance challenges now will help the planning team select more effective improvement strategies later.

It is recommended that planning teams identify no more than three challenges in order to focus improvement efforts. Too many identified performance challenges will dilute the school’s or district’s efforts over the course of the year.

Magnitude

Priority Performance Challenges should correspond to areas of need identified by trend statements and address the magnitude of the identified need. It is important to note that a single Priority Performance Challenge may combine more than one trend statement. For instance, both the growth and achievement of 4th grade English language learners in math may be combined as a single Priority Performance Challenge. As indicated in the chart below, the identified challenges will vary depending on what the school or district finds in their data analysis of student needs.

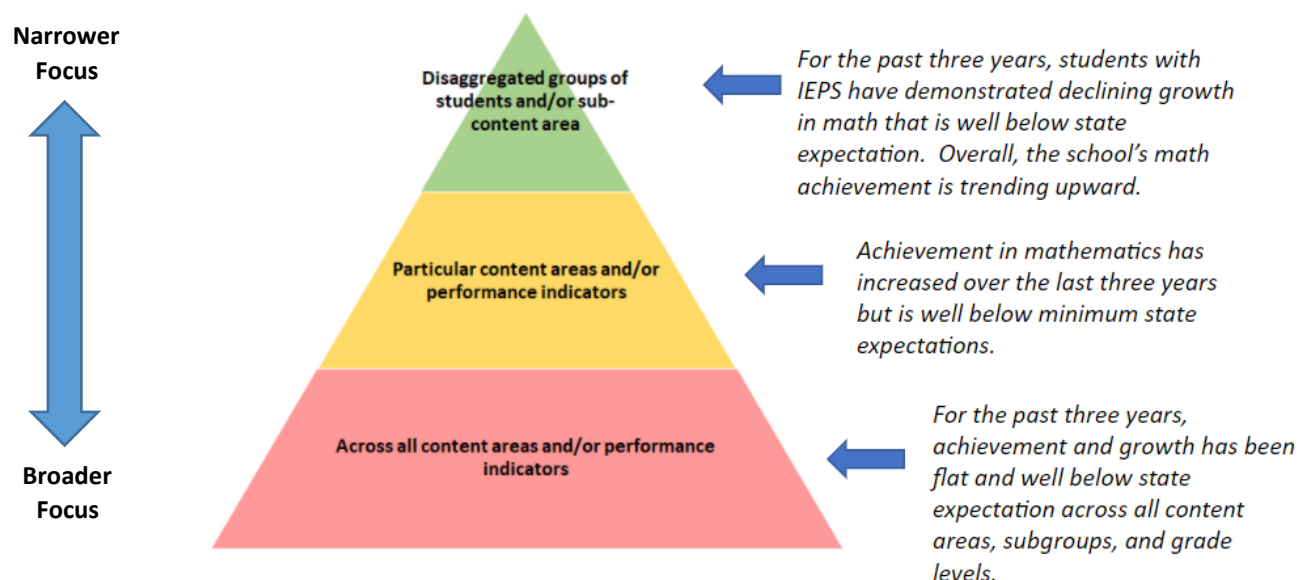


Figure F: Priority Performance Challenge levels of magnitude

Some schools may have challenges across all content areas and will have Priority Performance Challenges that match them, while others will focus on challenges within a specific content area or student group.

Planning teams should also consider the magnitude of the challenge. To gauge magnitude, the team may consider these guiding questions:

- Is the performance challenge contributing to state or federal identification?
- Is the performance challenge something that affects a significant proportion of the students in the school?
- Is the performance challenge evident across multiple content areas?
- Is the performance challenge evident across multiple disaggregated groups?

“Yes” answers to the questions above suggest that the performance challenge is of greater magnitude. Challenges that are not flagged by state or federal identification, that affect smaller proportions of students, or that are limited to single content areas or disaggregated groups are the kinds of focused challenges that schools and districts should turn their attention to once challenges of greater magnitude have been addressed.

In the Priority Performance section of the UIP, the team will need to articulate a rationale for the selection of the identified Priority Performance Challenges, including a description of how the team determined that these challenges were of the appropriate magnitude.

Table 12: Priority Performance Challenge Examples and Non-Examples

Non examples	Priority Performance Challenge Examples
<p>We need to focus on school climate and adopt attendance policies.</p> <p><i>Why this is a non-example:</i> Jumps to action planning and is not student focused.</p>	<p>Student engagement levels continue to be low as evidenced by low attendance, behavior challenges, and student survey feedback.</p>
<p>No differentiation in mathematics instruction when student learning needs are varied.</p> <p><i>Why this is a non-example:</i> Framed as a Root Cause.</p>	<p>Mathematics achievement (mean scale score ranging from 705-713) and growth (MGP ranges from 30th to 22nd percentile) in 5th grade have declined over the last three years and have been well below minimum state expectations.</p>
<p>Decline in writing achievement</p> <p><i>Why this is a non-example:</i> Too general</p>	<p>Writing performance, including growth (MGP 25) and achievement (mean scale score: 717-720), has been stable and below minimum state expectations for over five years across all grade levels (3-5).</p>
<p>The graduation rate is going down.</p> <p><i>Why this is a non-example:</i> Too general</p>	<p>The graduation rate of male students has declined over the last 3 years from 84% to 78% and is now below the overall state average.</p>

Recommended Process: How to Prioritize Performance Challenges

When updating a plan from a prior year, planning teams should first consider whether the most recent performance data suggests a need to revise Priority Performance Challenges. For example, did performance improve to the degree that a previously identified priority is no longer a challenge? Have other performance challenges become a higher priority?

If the planning team agrees that the UIP needs to be re-written or if the Priority Performance Challenges need to be updated, the team may consider the following approaches to selecting or revising the list of Priority Performance Challenges:

- Select challenges that did not meet local, state, or ESSA expectations.
- Focus the list: Determine which trends to combine because they are similar or reflect different ways to measure the same performance challenge. In some cases, trends may be combined across different performance indicator areas (growth and achievement) but within the same content area.
- Rank the challenges in order of urgency.
- Get input from the leadership team or the SAC/DAC.
- Remove Priority Performance Challenges that do not reflect the magnitude of the most urgent challenges the school or district is facing.
- Select challenges that may impact or increase performance in multiple areas if improved.

- Achieve consensus on the top three to five priorities and then engage in additional conversation as needed (e.g., through cycles of proposal(s) made by someone in the group, followed by discussion and modification of the proposal).

Sub-Tab: Root Causes

Description: This section of the UIP identifies the underlying causes behind the Priority Performance Challenges. Root Causes are statements that give a reasonable and coherent account of why the challenges exist and should represent the deepest underlying cause(s) of performance challenges. In other words, addressing the Root Cause(s) would result in the elimination, or substantial reduction, of the challenges identified as Priority Performance Challenges. Root Causes are not student attributes (such as poverty level or student motivation), but rather relate to systems design and practices that are under the control of the school or district, and thus provide a focus for improvement efforts. In the UIP, a cause is considered a “root” cause if:

- (1) The problem would not have occurred if the cause had not been present,
- (2) The problem would not reoccur if the cause were corrected or dissolved, and
- (3) Correction or dissolution of the cause would not lead to the same or similar problems.¹

Root Causes become the focus of Major Improvement Strategies. It is critical for Root Causes to reflect the magnitude of the selected Priority Performance Challenge and be within the control of the school or district to impact.

There is also a narrative section that should detail the rationale for how the Root Causes were selected and verified. Root Causes are often verified based on data that is not specific to student outcomes, such as surveys, focus groups, and observations of staff.

Table 13: Identifying Root Causes

<i>How to Identify Root Causes</i>	
Recommended Process	CDE Notes & Resources
<p>Select: Identify one to three closely related Priority Performance Challenges (e.g., math achievement and growth have both declined over the past three years).</p> <p>Context: Consider the school/district context, including process and perception data (e.g., equitable access to high quality teachers, school climate surveys, TLCC survey results, or Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports review).</p>	<p>In general, the process for examining Root Causes resembles a funnel, starting with the broadest thinking possible about causes related to each challenge and systematically narrowing and then deepening the collective understanding until the team arrives at a Root Cause.</p>

¹ Preuss, Paul. 2003. School Leader’s Guide to Root Cause Analysis. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

Brainstorm: Identify possible explanations (causes) for the Priority Performance Challenge(s). This is the time to encourage team members to think outside of the box and to get all their thoughts on the table about what may have caused the challenge.

Organize: Group like causes together (or categorize the explanations).

Narrow: Apply criteria to narrow the explanations to those that are actionable. This includes removing those explanations that are outside the control of the school or district.

Question: Deepen the thinking to ensure the identified causes are “root” causes. One tool to help planning teams deepen their thinking in the “Five Whys” process (linked in the CDE Notes & Resources column at right).

Finalize/validate: Once the team believes they have identified a Root Cause, they should validate their Root Cause with other data sources. This step is critical because some explanations that seem to reflect the best current thinking of the planning team may not hold up once they review additional data. Additional data sources typically include types of data other than student performance data.

While it is described as a series of steps, the process of identifying a Root Cause is iterative – planning teams may need to move back and forth among the steps in the process. For example, the team may be applying criteria to narrow their explanations when they realize that they had not identified a viable explanation in the earlier brainstorming step.

There are numerous [facilitation tools](#) on the CDE UIP website to help with different steps in the Root Cause analysis:

- **Brainstorming and Organizing:** [Circle Map](#) and [Tree Diagram](#)
- **Narrowing:** [Criteria](#) and [The Five Whys](#)

Table 14: Root Cause Description and Rationale Examples

Example #1: Root Cause(s) <i>From a Northeast Colorado elementary school</i>	Example #1: Rationale for Selection
<p><i>Lack of Best First Instruction and Pervasive Quality Drift</i></p> <p><i>There is a lack of consistent and deep implementation of common instructional practices. Weekly professional development is provided to teachers to support best first instruction, but teachers are not yet consistent with the implementation of these practices. As a result of quality drift, students are not exposed to grade level content. Throughout classrooms, students are not exposed to rigor.</i></p>	<p><i>Focused Leadership Solutions</i> was hired to do a Diagnostic Review in September to assess the current status of the school's professional practices while providing recommendations to the school to improve academic achievement and the current professional practices. The results of this Diagnostic Review were presented to staff on October 24th, identifying the school improvement priorities and bringing to light Root Causes for low academic achievement and growth.</p> <p>Administration and staff reviewed the findings and found that the school system lacks Best First Instruction (and there is a Pervasive Quality Drift), which includes subcategories of standards-based instruction, instructional context, instructional practices, meeting individual needs, and students as learners. Best First Instruction focuses on aligned, integrated, and research-based instruction that engages students in learning to proficiency. We also recognize that systematic Tiered Support is not yielding substantial results. Tiered support includes systems of tiered supports, multiple learning opportunities, and family/community partnerships. Tiered Supports focuses on a comprehensive system of tiered academic and</p>

	<i>behavioral support to enable students to master grade-level expectations.</i>
Example #2: Root Cause	Example #2: Rationale for Selection
<p><i>Lack of classroom-based engagement</i></p> <p><i>Staff lack the appropriate tools to engage and build relationships with students in our classrooms, particularly our male and African American students, in ways that support a positive classroom environment and culture where students are enthusiastic about learning.</i></p>	<p><i>One, the large number of referrals issued to the identified population of students. The majority of behavioral infractions are taking place in the classroom, a block of which lasts a duration of 100 minutes four days of the week and 77 minutes on Wednesday. Additionally, male students and African American students are highly overrepresented. Only 43% of staff agreed on the TLCC survey that school leadership communicates clear expectations to students. Only 44% of staff agreed on the TLCC survey that school leadership makes a sustained effort to address staff concerns</i></p>

Main Tab: Action Plans

The Action Plan section includes four sub-tabs and covers the remaining UIP elements.

Table 15: Sub-Tabs and UIP Elements in Action Plan Tab

Sub Tab	UIP Element	Description
Major Improvement Strategies	Major Improvement Strategies	This should include 1-3 Major Improvement Strategies, along with descriptions of those strategies and research that supports their effectiveness.
Planning Form	Implementation Benchmarks	Benchmarks describe what will be observed in adult actions or systems if the strategy is being effectively implemented. High quality benchmarks describe both completion (e.g., 100% of teachers received weekly lesson plan feedback) and quality (e.g., At least 75% of classrooms score Meets or Exceeds on the student engagement rubric during walkthroughs), as well as target dates by which these benchmarks should be met.
	Action Steps	Include action steps for each strategy that will support strong implementation (e.g., specifying key personnel, available resources, and timeline).
Full Plan	<i>Implementation Benchmarks, Action Steps (See note at right)</i>	Note: This sub-tab will automatically populate to reflect the benchmarks and action steps entered on the “Planning Form” sub-tab. You may also add, edit, or delete benchmarks and action steps from this tab, if desired.
Target Setting	Annual Targets	These are anticipated student performance targets for the school year. They should measure key areas of student performance prioritized for improvement (i.e., those identified as Priority Performance Challenges) in the current plan.

	Interim Measures	Interim measures describe the mid-year student performance targets that would indicate that intended progress is being made and suggest that the Major Improvement Strategies are effectively moving student performance toward end of year targets.
Report	<i>Implementation Benchmarks, Action Steps (See note at right)</i>	Note: This sub-tab compiles the Implementation Benchmarks and Action Steps into a Calendar format. From this page, you can use the “Download Calendar Info” button to download a CSV file that includes all Implementation Benchmarks and Action Steps, along with their Start and End dates.

These elements are detailed in individual sections below.

Sub-Tab: Major Improvement Strategies

Description: One to three Major Improvement Strategies should be identified in each plan. Attempting to implement more than three strategies at a time may stretch efforts too thinly and the school or district will risk ineffective or inconsistent implementation. The description of the strategy should identify what practices and systems will look like after successful implementation, the research supporting the effectiveness of the strategy, and how the strategy addresses the Priority Performance Challenges and Root Causes.

Magnitude

Overall, Major Improvement Strategies must be of the appropriate magnitude to respond effectively to the identified Priority Performance Challenges. For instance, a school or district that is not meeting state expectations for many or all of the performance indicators should consider strategies that drive broad, systemic reform of foundational practices and/or systems. On the other hand, where a school’s or district’s data indicates the need to focus on a small group of students or content areas, strategies may need to more closely target the needs of this group.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Major Improvement Strategies should be research- and evidence-based interventions. In other words, there should be evidence that using these strategies has previously led to improvements in student performance, and that this intervention will be effective in the context of the school where it is being implemented. The plan should describe the research or evidence that supports the strategy and why that strategy is being prioritized in the current plan.

The most recent federal legislation (ESSA) defines the following tiers of evidence-based interventions. The first three tiers or categories of research require findings of a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes:

- **Strong:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (e.g., a randomized approach)
- **Moderate:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (e.g., a matched approach)

- **Promising:** At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias
- **Evidence-Building:** Demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes. Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

Resource: Major Improvement Strategy Guides

CDE has created a number of Major Improvement Strategy Guides to help schools and districts better understand what research says about strategies that are commonly used in the UIP. These guides can be used for strategy selection or to determine areas of focus and action plans. To review these Strategy Guides, please visit CDE's [UIP Major Improvement Strategy Guides](#) page.

Table 16: Major Improvement Strategy Examples

The following examples come from a Front Range middle school that was ESSA identified as Comprehensive Support due to its being a Title I school performing in the lowest 5% of all Title I schools ("CS - lowest 5%"). Example #1 illustrates how that school satisfies the additional requirement of ensuring that the strategy is directly addressing the reason for ESSA identification.

Example #1: Major Improvement Strategies From a Front Range middle school	
Title	<i>Create and maintain a culture of using Data to Drive Instruction</i>
What success will look like	<i>Create data-driven culture in which assessments and instructional tasks are analyzed effectively as a source to inform current student understanding and generate targeted instructional plans.</i>
Research supporting this strategy	<p><i>This approach is informed by CDE's Strategy Guide on Data-Driven Instruction. This strategy is supported by an evidence base that meets ESSA level 3 or higher. The research cited in that strategy guide indicates that the following components are necessary for an effective data system and data culture:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Create and implement a standards-based assessment plan.</i> <i>2. Ensure educators have access to the data.</i> <i>3. Provide ongoing professional development on data use.</i> <i>4. Ensure educators collaborate regularly to learn about effective instruction and students' progress.</i> <i>5. Ensure collaborative meetings and expectations for data use are clearly communicated and implemented.</i> <i>6. Monitor teachers' use of data by conducting classroom observations.</i>
Example #2: Major Improvement Strategies	
Title	<i>Increase the positive climate and culture with consistent PBIS implementation.</i>

What success will look like	<i>Incorporate brain-based activities to support academic achievement and increase positive student participation and behavior through systematic school wide approaches. Staff and students will have 90% attendance rates. Family involvement will increase due to the many options for involvement. Families will continue to be an active part of the decision making process within our school. Total school enrollment will continue to increase.</i>
Research supporting this strategy	<i>There is gold standard evidence (“Strong” under ESSA) that suggests that when the key components of PBIS are implemented, it can lead to improved feelings of school safety, reduction in behavioral referrals and improved student academic performance in elementary schools. http://www.pbis.org/research This approach will be a good fit for our school given the alignment to our need and the desire by our staff to find solutions to behavior challenges.</i>

Sub-Tab: Planning Form

The Planning Form sub-tab provides space for you to input two elements of the UIP: Action Steps and Implementation Benchmarks. The sections below provide detail and guidance on these two elements.

Resource: Implementation Guide

To help schools and districts create strong action and progress monitoring plans to implement improvement strategies, CDE has created an [Implementation Guide](#). This guide incorporates insights and guidance from Implementation Science to provide research-based considerations for creating site-specific implementation plans. It is designed to be used in conjunction with other CDE-created resources, including the Strategy Guides, to help you design a site-specific school improvement action plan. This guidance (and the included [planning worksheets](#)) can be used to implement any well-defined educational strategy, as it presents the general practices that support strong strategy implementation in a variety of contexts. For additional information, visit the [UIP Major Improvement Strategy Guides](#) page.

Action Steps

Description: Each Major Improvement Strategy will include specific, sequential Action Steps that name an action needed, point person, date, and resources needed (as applicable). These Action Steps describe the incremental actions and tasks that are needed in order to bring a strategy to life. As with the Major Improvement Strategy itself, the Action Steps should aim at resolving the identified Root Causes for the plan’s Priority Performance Challenges.

The UIP is intended to be a one- to two-year document that provides information about a school’s improvement efforts and covers the duration of the posting period. For UIPs that are posted every two years (i.e., by schools or districts exercising biennial flexibility), these Action Plans must cover a two-year period. When UIPs are posted every year, the Action Plans may cover a one-year period. More information follows under “Implementation Benchmarks” and “Interim Measures.”

Within the action planning section of the UIP, there is additional flexibility available for schools using short-cycle plans (often called “90-day plans”). Short Cycle plans may replace Action Steps and Implementation Benchmarks in the online system; other elements included in the Short Cycle Plan (e.g., a strategy description) must still be entered into the UIP Online System. If a school is using short-cycle planning, the first set of plans must be included with the UIP submission in October; the UIP can be updated throughout the year as subsequent short-cycle plans are developed. However, all schools/districts are also encouraged to engage in long-term planning in order to phase in actions over time and avoid overwhelming staff. For additional guidance on using Short Cycle plans, view the [Guidance for Short Cycle Planning in the UIP](#).

Table 17: Action Step Examples

Note: The examples in the table below are provided for illustrative purposes only. Full plans should include more Action Steps than the number included in these examples.

Example #1: Action Steps			
Strategy: Clear Universal Instruction for All			
Action Step	Date	Owner/Actor(s)	Resources
Team leaders and facilitators will provide professional development focused on unpacking standards and establishing team norms.	August 8	Instructional Leaders, contracted facilitators	Contracted facilitation from external partner.
Before the beginning of Tri 1, teachers will identify grade level proficiency skills and align them to essential standards in both literacy and math.	August 20	Literacy and Math Teachers	Skills and standards template
Provide whole staff facilitation training intended to set teams/departments up for success throughout the school year	August 25	Instructional Leaders, contracted facilitators	Contracted facilitation from external partner.
Example #2: Action Steps			
Strategy: A focus on common behavioral expectations in all areas of the school			
Action Step	Date	Owner/Actor(s)	Resources
PBIS team will develop a set of common expectations	July 15 Year 1	PBIS team	None needed
Staff members will receive training on the expectations and develop plans for teaching students within their classrooms, in hallways, etc.	August 15 Year 1	PBIS team, whole staff	None needed
PBIS team will identify additional interventions that are needed	April 15 Year 1	PBIS team	None needed
PBIS team will research potential curricula/lesson plans around social emotional learning that can help meet the needs identified in year 1.	July 15 Year 2	PBIS team	Budget established for research and resource purchases.

Implementation Benchmarks

Description: Schools/Districts are required to identify Implementation Benchmarks spanning the full posting period of their plan. Monitoring these benchmarks throughout the year (e.g., at least quarterly by School/District Accountability Committees) will enable schools and districts to determine if improvement strategies are being implemented with fidelity.

Reminder:

The UIP is a planning document that should span at least a 1- to 2-year period (depending on frequency of posting). The plan should provide at least some Implementation Benchmarks to cover the full plan-posting period (1-2 years).

Implementation Benchmarks are tools for pacing and monitoring the roll-out of a strategy or initiative.

Implementation Benchmarks name specific, measurable adult actions or systems that are key to the implementation of a strategy or initiative, and they highlight major milestones for phases in a significant or system-wide change.

In order to provide strong and meaningful touchpoints that can be reliably used to gauge the quality of the roll-out of a strategy, Implementation Benchmarks must be carefully crafted. Strong Implementation Benchmarks identify a measure (e.g., observation form), an actor, a date, and a target metric), and they focus on outcome or quality of implementation (e.g., new instructional strategy implemented in 75% of classrooms after a training). Note that benchmarks focused solely on completion (e.g., “All teachers will receive professional development to support new school routines”) will allow the school to tell whether or not key actions are taking place, but they will likely not give nuanced information about how practices are shifting at the practitioner level. A combination of completion and quality or fidelity benchmarks will provide the foundation for a robust progress monitoring approach.

Table 18: Implementation Benchmark Examples

Examples: Implementation Benchmarks
<i>By September 15, an audit of daily lesson plans will show that 70% of teachers are incorporating language objectives into their daily lesson plans.</i>
<i>50% of teachers will have excellent or advanced implementation on the student engagement rubric by December.</i>
<i>100% of teachers will have excellent or advanced implementation on the student engagement rubric by March.</i>

For more guidance on Implementation Benchmarks, see the [Implementation Benchmark Guidance Document](#).

Sub-Tab: Full Plan

The Full Plan sub tab provides an alternative format for the Action Steps and Implementation Benchmarks entered on the Planning Form tab. You may add or edit Action Steps or Implementation Benchmarks on this tab, but you do not need to enter anything here. Use the “Download” button at the upper right corner of the sub-tab to download a spreadsheet file containing the Action Steps and Implementation Benchmarks you’ve entered into your plan.

Sub-Tab: Target Setting

The Target Setting sub-tab includes space to include Annual Performance Targets and Interim Measures. The sections below provide details and guidance about these two elements of your improvement plan.

Annual Performance Targets

Description: Based on the analysis and identification of Priority Performance Challenges, schools and districts should identify targets for two years and Interim Measures for multiple times within a year that will help measure the progress of student achievement throughout the year.

Each target and the associated Interim Measures should be aligned to the Priority Performance Challenges.

Comparison Points

Comparison points, as described in the [Notable Trend](#) section of this document, above, are a useful tool for establishing targets and associated Interim Measures. As with Notable Trends, targets and Interim Measures may be established with respect to criterion- or norm-referenced comparison points. Minimum state expectations, provided in the [Framework scoring guide](#), may serve as a criterion-referenced comparison point for target setting. In addition, target setting can use norm-referenced comparison points to measure progress against the performance of other populations or groups (e.g., district or state averages).

Example of an Aligned Performance Target

Priority performance challenge: Both achievement (mean scale score from 733 to 724) and growth (MGP from 30 to 22) in 5th grade CMAS mathematics have declined over the last three years and have been well below state expectations.

Performance targets for upcoming year: For 5th grade CMAS mathematics, increase the mean scale score to 735 and increase the median growth percentile to 50.

When setting targets, consider:

- Is the target “ambitious but attainable”?
 - “ambitious”: Does the target move the school or district aggressively towards meeting state and federal expectations?
 - “attainable”: Is the target realistic for the time period?
- Does the target align to the identified Priority Performance Challenge?

Note for all users: Missed performance targets may indicate that the selected Major Improvement Strategies are not being implemented as planned, or that the strategies themselves are not effectively addressing the Root Causes driving the school's performance challenges.

Interim Measures

Once annual performance targets are set for the upcoming two years, schools and districts must identify the Interim Measures they will use during the school year to determine if student outcomes are progressing adequately towards Annual Targets. Interim Measures should

- be based on local performance data that will be available at least twice during the school year,
- provide data about the same group of students as the performance target,
- use the same type of metric (e.g., growth, achievement) as the performance target, and
- focus on the same content area as the performance target.

Descriptions of Interim Measures should include the assessment or performance measure that is administered, the frequency of the administration or data availability, and the metrics being used (e.g., % scoring at a particular performance level).

Note: Recommended Process for Progress Monitoring (*Implementation Benchmarks and Interim Measures*)

CDE recommends that planning teams develop a cadence and protocol for regularly reviewing Interim Measures and Implementation Benchmarks and evaluating progress during the year. These checkpoints can be included in the Planning Tool as Action Steps. During these regular check-ins, reflect on the most recent performance and process data. Missed Implementation Benchmarks or Interim Measures may indicate that progress is not being made as expected. When this is the case, teams can evaluate whether planned strategies and Action Steps have been implemented fully, or whether they are simply not having the expected impact. If needed, planning teams should revise their plan during the school year to respond to actual performance with respect to Interim Measures and Implementation Benchmarks.

In addition, Implementation Benchmarks may be sequenced to describe expected increases in quality or levels of implementation over the course of the year. Crafting a set of carefully sequenced Implementation Benchmarks enables teams to monitor changes regularly (e.g., once per quarter) and review these Implementation Benchmarks alongside Interim Measures of student outcomes. The example below shows a set of Interim Measures and corresponding Implementation Benchmarks that will be assessed quarterly.

Table 19: Interim Measures and Implementation Benchmarks by Quarters – Examples

	Quarter 1 (By Sept 15)	Quarter 2 (By Dec 15)	Quarter 3 (By Feb 15)	End of Year (CMAS Window)
Interim Measures	MAP test #1 (Set baseline and growth goals)	MAP: At least 60% of students meeting growth goals	MAP: At least 60% of students meeting growth goals	CMAS: A mean scale score of at least 740 and MGP of 55.
Implementation Benchmarks	50% by Q1 classrooms will have excellent or advanced implementation on the student engagement rubric.	65% by Q2	85% by Q3	100% by mid-April

Table 20: Alignment of Action Plan Components (with CDE Annotations)

The UIP is designed to build on itself as a cohesive whole, with alignment across each of its components. The example below illustrates how alignment can be created in the action plan.

Example UIP Components	CDE Annotations
<p>Root Cause: <i>Insufficient Instructional Rigor and Formative Assessment</i></p> <p><i>While we have identified a curriculum and are seeing signs of movement, there is more work to do. Site visits to other similar schools demonstrated that the level of rigor in our instruction is not comparable. Furthermore, we don't have common formative assessments. Our TLCC data reveals that fewer than half of the staff (47%) are using formative assessments, and using assessment data was the #1 request for professional development.</i></p>	<p>The Root Cause identifies what might be preventing the school from moving forward and provides verification that this cause is apparent in multiple data points and needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>Major Improvement Strategy: <i>Strengthen the teaching and learning cycle</i></p> <p>Description: <i>Adopt a common formative assessment and invest in effective professional development that supports a common approach to the teaching and learning cycle.</i></p> <p>Describe what success will look like: <i>If implemented well, teachers will regularly collect formative assessment data and understand how to analyze specific student data for instructional gaps and adjust instruction accordingly.</i></p> <p>Describe the research supporting the strategy and why it is a good fit for your school: <i>Our strategy is based on descriptive research studies that identified the key pieces of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement. For professional development, the work will be ongoing and job embedded (e.g., aligned coaching, informal classroom observations and feedback).</i></p> <p>Note: To fully address the Root Cause, another Major Improvement Strategy may be necessary (i.e., to address the rigor of instruction).</p>	<p>The Major Improvement Strategy is aligned directly to addressing the Root Cause and describes what success will look like and the research that is guiding the strategy approach.</p> <p>Note: a full description of the research base has been omitted here for the sake of brevity. Strategy descriptions should name specific sources supporting the effectiveness of the selected strategy.</p>

Implementation Benchmarks	Action Plan*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Classroom observations in the fall will show that 90% of staff are implementing formative assessment at least once per week.</i> • <i>Classroom observations in the spring will show that 100% of staff are implementing formative assessment.</i> • <i>Regular coaching meetings in the spring will show that 70% of staff are analyzing formative assessment data and adjusting upcoming lesson plans accordingly.</i> • <i>The quarterly staff survey will show that staff feel supported in implementing this new practice.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide PD to teachers and building leaders</i> • <i>Create a coaching calendar to ensure follow-up from PD</i> • <i>Identify the processes and agenda items that PLCs will use to discuss results and adjust instruction</i> • <i>Set up a schedule for staff to visit each other's classrooms to observe new strategies</i> <p>*Note: These are abbreviated Action Steps that do not include all of the elements that should generally be included (i.e., point-person, date, resources needed).</p>	<p>The Implementation Benchmarks will help the team to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, and the Action Plan includes key steps that need to occur for the strategy to be effective.</p>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Hyperlinks Referenced in UIP Handbook

This list includes the full text of hyperlinks included throughout the UIP Handbook.

Hyperlink	URL
Accountability Handbook	https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountabilityhandbookpdf
Accountability webpage	http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/stateaccountability
Biennial Flexibility in UIP Submission	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip-submission-deadlines-and-biennial-flexibility https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip_biennial_flexibility_2021-22
Circle Map (Priority Performance challenge and Root Cause strategy)	http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/circlemap
District and School Dashboard	https://www.cde.state.co.us/district-school-dashboard
ESSA Improvement Planning	https://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essaplanningrequirements
ESSA methods and criteria for identification	http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi
Five Whys Protocol (Priority Performance challenge and Root Cause strategy)	http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/thefivewhys.pdf
Framework Reference/Scoring guide	https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/frameworkscoringguide2023
Graduation Guidelines “Menu of Options” Fact Sheet	https://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelinesmenuofoptions09-21-22pdf
Implementation Guide	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/implementation-guide
Implementation Guide Worksheets	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/implementation-guide-worksheets
Major Improvement Strategy Guides	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/strategyguides
Narrowing Criteria (Priority Performance challenge and Root Cause strategy)	http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/uiip/downloads/rootcauseanalysis_trainingmaterials/criteriafor narrowing explanations.pdf
New schools Guidance	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiip-guidance-for-new-schools

Hyperlink	URL
Performance Watch Summary	https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performancewatchlabelsandprogression
Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement	https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/priority_improvement_turnaround_supplement_2022
READ Act (Early Literacy Office)	https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy
School/District's Performance Framework Report	http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks
State Review Panel	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/statereviewpanel
Tree Diagram (Priority Performance challenge and Root Cause strategy)	http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/treedialogram
UIP root cause analysis facilitation tools	http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/rootcauseanalysis
UIP Guidance for Small Systems	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/combined_plan_guidance
UIP online system	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip-online-system
UIP Overview webpage	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip
UIP Quality Criteria Rubric	https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip_general_resources

Appendix B: UIP State Data Resources

CDE maintains a variety of data sources for state level data. These resources can be accessed through summary documents or through the links below:

- Helpful data sources for Improvement Planning: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/accessingdata>
- CDE Data Tools and Reports: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2019-5-15-data-tools-and-reports>

Common UIP State Data Resources

[Schoolview](#) This is a centralized hub with access to a wide variety of state level data and tools that schools and districts can use to analyze current performance and create improvement plans.

[School and District Performance Frameworks](#) The frameworks are official annual reports produced by CDE that are used for accountability and planning purposes. This is the same location where district and school UIPs are publicly posted.

[TLCC survey](#) The Teaching and Learning Conditions in Colorado survey is a statewide, anonymous survey intended to support school, district, and state improvement planning, as well as research and policy. Statewide results are posted, and school and district results are sent directly to districts.

[School and District Dashboard](#) The two dashboards provide multiple years of data including achievement and growth data, post-secondary readiness data, demographics, and enrollment/attendance data.

[PWR Data Sources \(PDF\)](#) This historical document contains a compiled list of data sources that are state collected and reported as well as local data that could be collected by the district that can be valuable in assessing high school students' progress and post-secondary workforce readiness.

Appendix C: Required School and District-Level Turnaround Options

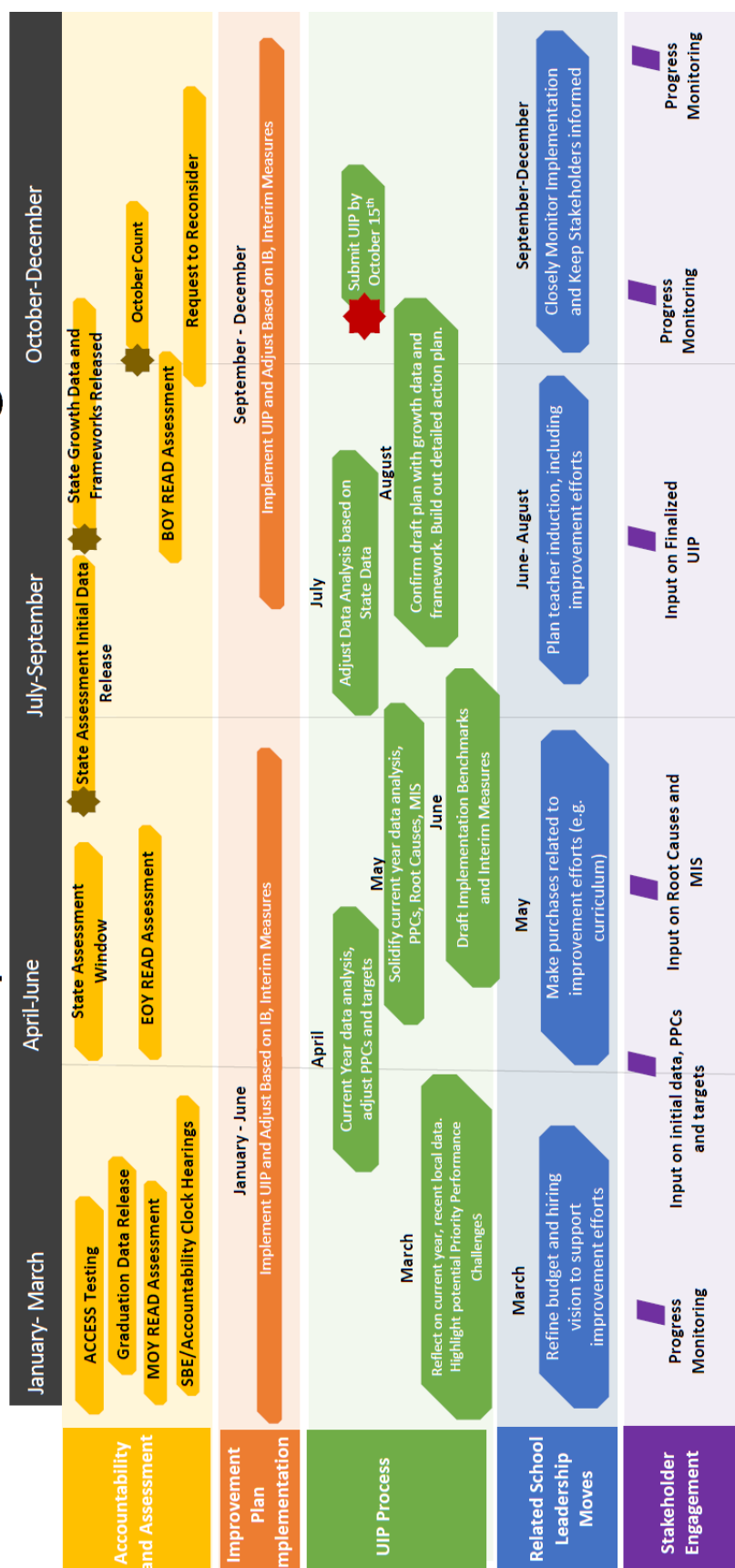
Improvement Strategies identified in school UIPs with a Turnaround plan type must, at a minimum, include one or more of the following as required by Colorado's Education Accountability Act of 2009. Schools/districts are also expected to include the selected strategy within the Major Improvement Strategy and/or Action Steps.

- Employing a lead turnaround partner that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances, which turnaround partner will be immersed in all aspects of developing and collaboratively executing the plan and will serve as a liaison to other school partners;
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure within the school to provide greater, more effective support;
- Seeking recognition as an innovation school or clustering with other schools that have similar governance management structures to form an innovation school zone pursuant to the Innovation Schools Act;
- Hiring a public or private entity that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances to manage the school pursuant to a contract with the local school board or the Charter School Institute;
- For a school that is not a charter school, converting to a charter school;
- For a charter school, renegotiating and significantly restructuring the charter school's charter contract; and/or
- Other actions of comparable or greater significance or effect, including those interventions required for low-performing schools receiving school improvement grants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, section 1003G (i.e., turnaround model, restart model, school closure, transformation model).

Appendix D: Suggested Improvement Planning Timeline

For an accessible version of the graphic, please email uiphelp@cde.state.co.us.

Unified Improvement Planning



Appendix E: Planning Terminology

Term	Definition
Academic Achievement Or Achievement	<p>A proficiency score on an assessment. Achievement for an individual is expressed as a test (scale) score or as an achievement level (see “Achievement Level,” below).</p> <p>Academic achievement is a performance indicator used to evaluate schools and districts in Colorado. Colorado uses the average score, or mean scale score, to measure achievement.</p>
Academic Growth	<p>For an individual student, academic growth is the progress shown by the student, in a given subject area, over a given span of time.</p> <p>Academic growth is a performance indicator used to evaluate schools and districts in Colorado.</p>
Academic Peers	<p>Students currently in the same grade, being tested in the same subject, with a similar achievement score history in that subject. For the Colorado Growth Model, these are a particular student’s comparison group when interpreting his/her student growth percentile.</p>
ACCESS for ELLs	<p>ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) is a secure large-scale English proficiency assessment for K-12th graders identified as English learners (ELs). The assessment measures student achievement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards in the English language.</p>
Achievement Level	<p>Descriptions of score levels on an assessment, using ranges of scores, separated by cut-points. On the CMAS assessments, for example, the five achievement levels are: 1-did not yet meet expectations, 2-partially met expectations, 3-approached expectations, 4-met expectations, and 5-exceeded expectations.</p>
Accountability Clock	<p>Refers to the number of consecutive years a school/district has remained in the two lowest accountability categories (Priority Improvement or Turnaround, or PI/T). After receiving two consecutive PI/T ratings, a school or district must receive an Improvement rating or higher for two consecutive years to exit the state identification system (Performance Watch). After five years of consecutive or nonconsecutive PI/T ratings while on Performance Watch, the state board must direct the school, district or Institute to take one of the actions, or pathways, outlined in statute.</p> <p>More details, including actions directed by the State Board of Education at the end of the Accountability Clock, are detailed in the Priority Improvement and Turnaround Supplement to the Accountability Handbook.</p> <p>See also: <i>On Watch, Performance Watch</i></p>
Action Step	<p>Something done to implement a strategy and/or make progress toward goals. Action steps are created for each strategy and identify resources (people, time, money) that will be brought to bear so that goals and targets can be reached. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>

Term	Definition
Additional Targeted Support (A-TS)	<p>Schools identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) based on having at least one student group performing in the lowest 5% for that student group are designated Additional Targeted Support (A-TS).</p> <p>If the school does not exit this category within 3 years of identification and is supported with Title IA funds, the school would be identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS) under ESSA.</p>
Average	<p>A summary of a collection of numbers, calculated by adding all of the numbers together and dividing by how many numbers were in the collection. Also known as the mean.</p> <p>See also: Mean</p>
Baseline	<p>The initial value of a metric against which future values are compared to determine if progress is being made toward goals.</p>
CoAlt: ELA and Math (DLM)	<p>Colorado Alternate Assessment: ELA and Math Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) is the standards-based assessment used to measure academic content knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics for students with significant cognitive disabilities.</p>
The Colorado Growth Model	<p>The Colorado Growth Model is a statistical model used to calculate each student's progress on state assessments. The Colorado Growth Model expresses annual growth, for an individual, with a student growth percentile in language arts, mathematics, and English language proficiency (for English Learners). For a school, district, or other relevant student grouping, student growth is summarized using the median of the student growth percentiles for that grouping.</p> <p>See also: Student Growth Percentile</p>
Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)	<p>Colorado's assessments that measure the Colorado Academic Standards. They include assessments in ELA, math, science, and social studies.</p>
Colorado SAT, PSAT10, PSAT09	<p>Colorado has given a college entrance exam each spring to all 11th graders enrolled in public schools since 2001. All Colorado 9th graders are administered the PSAT09; 10th graders are administered the PSAT10; and all 11th graders have the opportunity to take the SAT. These assessment results are used in the accountability system.</p>
<u>Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS)</u>	<p>Schools that are identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), based on one of the 3 following categories, are designated Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing in the lowest 5% of Title I schools (must be Title I school); • Having a graduation rate below 67% (based on 4- and 7-year graduation rates over a three-year period); or • Having at least one chronically underperforming student group (see also Additional Targeted Support)
Consolidated Application [ESEA]	<p>Colorado's grant application process for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to apply for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA) funds. This application is often called the "ConsApp."</p>

Term	Definition
Cut-Score Or Cut-Point	The number required for a school or district to attain a particular level of performance on the performance framework reports. The cut-point for each performance indicator level is defined on the performance framework scoring guide .
Disaggregated Group	A demographic group of students. Colorado reports student academic growth, on the performance framework reports, for four historically disadvantaged student groups: students eligible for free/reduced cost meals, students of color (e.g., “minority” students), students from major races/ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners/English learners. Additional disaggregation is reported by race, ethnicity, gender, and gifted identification.
Disaggregated Graduation Rate	Graduation rates are disaggregated by student groups. See also: <i>Disaggregated Group, Graduation Rate</i>
District Performance Framework (DPF)	The framework with which the state evaluates the level to which districts meet the state’s expectations for attainment on the performance indicators, and makes an accreditation level determination.
Drop-Out Rate	The Colorado dropout rate is an annual rate, reflecting the percentage of all students enrolled in grades 7-12 who leave school during a single year, without subsequently attending another school or educational program. It is calculated by dividing the number of students who dropped out by a membership base, which includes all students who were in membership at any time during the year. District Performance Frameworks use the grades 7-12 rate. School Performance Frameworks only include dropout rate at the high school level (grades 9-12).
ELs or ELLs or MLLs	English learners or Multilingual learners – includes Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and Fluent English Proficient (FEP) students. See also: <i>Fluent English Proficient, Limited English Proficient, and Non-English Proficient</i>
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act, the version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorized in 2015.
FELL (Former English Language Learner)	Students that have been formally exited from an English language development program for more than two years.
Fluent English Proficient (FEP)	This is the highest level of English proficiency designations for English learners, and it is split into four sub-designations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FEP, Monitor Year 1 ● FEP Monitor Year 2 ● FEP Exited Year 1 ● FEP, Exited Year 2. <p>Students at this level are able to understand and communicate effectively with various audiences, on a wide range of familiar and new topics, to meet social and academic demands in English. They are able to score comparably, in content areas, to native speakers, but may still need some linguistic support.</p> <p>Compare to: <i>Non-English Proficient (NEP), Limited English Proficient (LEP)</i></p>

Term	Definition
Framework Points	<p>The point values schools/districts can earn on each performance indicator included in the SPFs/DPFs. Framework points define the relative weighting of each performance indicator within the overall framework. They can be directly understood as percentage weights of the indicators when the school or district has data on all three indicators.</p> <p>For elementary and middle level schools only, framework points possible are: 40 for Academic Achievement and 60 for Academic Growth.</p> <p>For high schools and districts with high school levels, framework points possible are: 30 for Academic Achievement, 40 for Academic Growth, and 30 for Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness.</p> <p>When a school/district does not have sufficient data to calculate a score on a particular performance indicator, the remaining indicators are used, and their weighted contributions change.</p>
Framework Score	<p>This is the sum of the framework points a school or district earns on all performance indicators on the school/district performance framework. The framework score determines a school plan type or a district accreditation category.</p>
Graduation Rate	<p>Colorado calculates "on-time" graduation as the percentage of students who graduate from high school within 4 years of entering 9th grade. A student is assigned a graduating class when they enter 9th grade, and the graduating class is assigned by adding 4 years to the year the student enters 9th grade. The formula anticipates that a student entering 9th grade in fall 2022 will graduate with the Class of 2026.</p> <p>On the 1-year District/School Performance Framework reports, districts/schools earn points based on the highest value among the following graduation rates: 4-year, 5-year, 6-year, and 7-year. For District/School Performance Framework reports, the "best of" graduation rate is bolded and italicized on the Performance Indicators detail page.</p>
Growth Percentile	<p>See <i>Student Growth Percentile</i>.</p>
Improvement Plan	<p>The Educational Accountability Act of 2009 requires all schools and districts in Colorado to implement one of four plan types: Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, or Turnaround.</p> <p>Schools that earn 42% - 52.9% of their SPF points will be assigned to the "Improvement Plan" category.</p>
Implementation Benchmark	<p>A measure (with associated metric) used to assess the effectiveness with which a strategy is implemented. This is a component of the UIP process.</p> <p>See also: <i>Measure</i> and <i>Metric</i></p>
Interim Measure	<p>A measure (and associated metric) used to assess student performance at various times during a school year. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>
LEA	<p>Local Educational Agency; this can be a School District, BOCES or the lead school district in a multi-school district consortium.</p>

Term	Definition
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	<p>This is the middle English proficiency designation for English learners. LEP students are able to understand and be understood in many to most social communication situations, in English. They are gaining increasing competence in the more cognitively demanding requirements of content areas; however, they are not yet ready to fully participate in academic content areas without linguistic support.</p> <p>Compare to: Non-English Proficient, Fluent English Proficient</p>
Major Improvement Strategy	<p>An overall approach that describes a series of related maneuvers or actions intended to result in performance improvements. Strategies should be chosen based on considerations of coherence, affordability, practicality, and efficiency and should be research-based. This is a component of the UIP process.</p>
Matriculation Rate	<p>A measure of students that enroll in higher education opportunities following high school. The matriculation rate is a postsecondary workforce readiness sub-indicator in the District and School Performance Frameworks. It reflects all high school graduates that enroll in a career and technical education program, or 2- or 4-year higher education institution during the summer or fall term following high school graduation.</p>
Mean	<p>A summary measure of a collection of numbers, calculated by adding all of the numbers together and dividing by how many numbers were in the collection (commonly known as the average).</p> <p>See also: Average.</p>
Measure	<p>Instrument(s) to assess performance in an area identified by an indicator.</p>
Median	<p>A number that summarizes a set of numbers, similar to an average. When a collection of numbers is ordered from smallest to largest, the median is the middle score of the ordered list. The median is therefore the point below which 50 percent of the scores fall.</p> <p>Medians may be more appropriate than averages in particular situations, such as when percentiles are grouped.</p>
Median Student Growth Percentile Or Median Growth Percentile (MGP)	<p>Summarizes student growth by district, school, grade-level, or other group of interest. It is calculated by ordering the individual Student Growth Percentiles of the students in the group of interest and determining the middle score</p> <p>See also: Median</p>
Metric	<p>A numeric scale indicating the level of some variable of interest. For example, your credit score is a metric that companies use to decide whether to give you a loan.</p>
N-count	<p>Used primarily in the context of data-analysis or data reporting, “n-count” refers to the sample or group size, i.e., the n-count is the total number of members in a group.</p>
Non-English Proficient (NEP)	<p>The lowest English proficiency designation, for English learners. NEP students may be just beginning to understand and respond to simple routine communication in English, or they may be beginning to have the ability to respond, with more ease, to a variety of social communication tasks.</p> <p>Compare to: Limited English Proficient (LEP), Fluent English Proficient (FEP)</p>

Term	Definition
Normative Growth	<p>One student's growth understood in comparison to that of similar students. The Colorado Growth Model describes growth, normatively, as how each student's progress compares to other students with a similar achievement history—his/her academic peers.</p> <p>See also: <i>Academic Growth, Growth Percentile, Colorado Growth Model</i></p>
On Watch	<p>Schools on the Accountability Clock that improve their performance and earn a rating of Improvement or Performance are considered "On Watch." These schools will "exit" the state identification system (Performance Watch) the following year, as long as they are not re-identified as Priority Improvement or Turnaround.</p> <p>See also: <i>Accountability Clock, Performance Watch</i></p>
Participation Rate – State Accountability Determination	<p>Percentage of students, in a school/district, taking required state assessments; excluding Parent Excuses and counting NEP EL newcomers not testing in English Language Arts as participants. On the performance frameworks, schools/districts that do not meet the minimum 95% accountability participation rate in two or more subject areas are assigned a plan type one category lower than their framework points indicate.</p>
Participation Rate – Federal Accountability Determination	<p>ESSA requires a 95% participation rate on state assessments highlighted in the federal statute, namely English language arts, math, science, and English language proficiency. Schools are first identified for ESSA support and improvement based on actual performance. As a second phase, the identification methodology is repeated for schools that have a participation rate below 95% that are not already identified based on performance data. In the second phase scores for non-participants above 5% are adjusted to the lowest possible score for that assessment. Schools identified in the second phase will be labeled as identified due to participation only.</p>
Participation Rate – Population Representativeness	<p>Percentage of students, in a school/district, taking required state assessments; including English Language Arts, Math, Science, PSAT, and SAT.</p>
Percentage/Percent	<p>A way of expressing a fraction in a single number. For example, 1 out of 17 is 5.9%.</p>
Percentile	<p>A percentile is a way of showing how a particular score compares with all other scores in a dataset by ranking ranges of scores from 1 to 99. The higher the percentile, the higher ranking the score is among all the other values. Each range of scores represents 1% of the pool of scores.</p> <p>For example, if your vocabulary knowledge is at the 60th percentile for people your age, that means that you are higher in the distribution than 60% of people – in other words, you know more words than 60% of your peers. Conversely, 40% know more words than you do. The percentile is useful because you do not need to know anything about the scales used for particular metrics or tests – if you know that your percentile was the 50th, you know that your score is right in the middle of all the other scores, an average score.</p>
Performance	<p>General term used to encompass growth and achievement. Used to discuss both student and school level of attainment.</p>

Term	Definition
Performance Indicator	A specific component of school or district quality. Colorado has identified three performance indicators to evaluate all schools and districts in the state: student achievement, student academic growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness.
Performance Plan	The type of plan required for schools that already meet the state’s expectations for attainment on the performance indicators. Schools that earn at least 53% of their SPF points are assigned to the Performance plan category.
Performance Watch	Schools and districts that are on the Accountability Clock or “On Watch” are all considered to be on Performance Watch. See also: <i>Accountability Clock, On Watch</i>
PHLOTE	A data element used to represent students that have a primary or home language other than English.
Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)	The preparedness of students for college or a job after completing high school. This is one of the performance indicators used to evaluate the performance of schools and districts in Colorado. This indicator includes graduation, dropout, and matriculation rates, and Colorado SAT scores.
Priority Improvement Plan	One of the types of plans required for those schools that do not meet the state’s performance standards. Schools that earn 34% - 41.9%, of their SPF points are assigned to a Priority Improvement Plan category.
Priority Performance Challenges (PPC)	Specific statements about the school’s or district’s student performance challenges that are deemed to be priorities by the school or district. (Does not include statements about budgeting, staffing, curriculum, instruction, etc.). This is a component of the UIP process.
Rating	On the performance framework reports, CDE’s evaluation of the extent to which the school/district has met the state’s standards on the performance indicators and their component parts. The rating levels on the performance framework reports are: Does Not Meet, Approaching, Meets, and Exceeds.
Root Cause	The deepest underlying cause(s) of a problem or situation that, if resolved, would result in elimination or substantial reduction of the symptom. If action is required, the cause should be within one’s ability to control, and not a purely external factor such as poverty rate in the community. This is a component of the UIP process.
SASID	State Assigned Student Identifier Number – the number that Colorado uses to identify students in public schools.
Scale Score	Exact test score - this is considered a measure of student achievement. Such scores are calculated from participants' responses to test questions. On CMAS, students receive a scale score in English language arts, math, science and social studies. See also: <i>Achievement</i>
School Performance Framework (SPF)	The framework used by the state to provide information to stakeholders about each school’s performance based on the key performance indicators: student achievement, student academic growth, and postsecondary/workforce readiness. Schools are assigned to a type of improvement plan based on their performance across all indicators.

Term	Definition
School Plan Type	The type of plan to which a school is assigned by the state on the SPF report. The school plan types are Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, and Turnaround. This is also the type of plan that must be adopted and implemented, for the school, by either the local board (Priority Improvement or Turnaround) or the principal and superintendent (Performance or Improvement).
SEA	State Education Agency (Colorado Department of Education)
State Review Panel	A panel of education experts appointed by the commissioner to assist the Department and the state board in implementing the Education Accountability Act of 2009. The State Review Panel may review Priority Improvement Plans and Turnaround Plans for schools and districts, a process that includes site visits. The State Review Panel must review all schools and districts nearing the end of the Accountability Clock.
Strategy	See Major Improvement Strategy
Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	A way of understanding a student's current growth in achievement based on their prior scores and relative to other students with similar prior scores. A growth percentile of 60 in math means the student's growth exceeds that of 60% of their academic peers. See also: Median Student Growth Percentile
Target	A specific, quantifiable outcome that defines what would constitute success in a particular area of intended student improvement, within a designated period of time. This is a component of the UIP process.
Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI)	Schools identified for support and improvement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), based on having at least one student group that is consistently underperforming on at least 3 of the ESSA indicators.
Test Participation Test Participation Rate	See Participation Rate .
Turnaround Plan	One of the types of plans required for schools that do not meet state expectations for attainment on the performance indicators. Schools that earn 33.9% or less of their SPF points are assigned to a Turnaround plan category. For additional detail about Turnaround Plan requirements, refer to Appendix C