

1241 Executive Summary (moved into 1241 Final Report)

Statewide education accountability systems serve several important purposes. They provide reporting to help parents and families, education leaders, policymakers, and other community stakeholders understand student outcomes and identify and address disparities in educational opportunities among different student groups – thereby promoting equity in education. They offer transparency and comparability into how schools are performing against statewide standards. They recognize schools and districts performing well and help direct attention toward schools needing additional support.

Beginning in August 2023, stakeholders appointed by the Colorado General Assembly through H.B. 23-1241 formed the Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force “to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system.” Comprised of 26 members representing parents and students, educators, district and state leaders, and advocates from across Colorado’s many kinds of schools and districts, the Task Force engaged in over 150 hours of meetings, including 16 full Task Force meetings, 27 additional small group meetings between members studying elements of the accountability system, and additional stakeholder consultations (e.g., local interviews with parents, consultations with students, expert presentations). Members engaged in a rigorous and extensive study of the opportunities and challenges facing Colorado’s existing accountability system by drawing upon state data, task force member expertise, and stakeholder input.

The following findings and recommendations are a culmination of the Task Force’s commitment to making meaningful changes to a system impacting the educational opportunities and outcomes of Colorado’s 800,000+ K-12 students. And, they are being presented with full consensus by this diverse body of stakeholders. The 30 recommendations plus areas for further study are necessary to improve the state’s existing accountability system, which will help improve outcomes in schools and districts.

The recommendations address several accountability-related challenges and opportunities and solve a core set of issues specific to the state’s accountability frameworks, state assessments used for accountability, the accountability system’s public reporting and engagement capabilities, and how the accountability system supports continuous improvement.

Many of the 30 recommendations are interconnected. For example, if the accountability system adds a new indicator to support postsecondary and workforce readiness (through the frameworks), changes would also be needed to how those results are communicated to parents and stakeholders through public reporting. The Task Force thought through these dependencies and now encourages policymakers to consider the interconnectedness of the recommendations while also paying attention to each recommendation on its own.

In sum, the 1241 Task Force’s recommendations will:

- **Refine how the state accountability system rates schools and districts** (e.g., addressing some of the challenges that schools serving smaller student populations face, adjusting

performance frameworks to reflect diverse student populations better, paying greater attention to achievement gaps between student groups)

- **Enhance the accountability system's Growth, Achievement, and Postsecondary Readiness Metrics** (e.g., adding a new sub-indicator to help parents understand efforts their schools are taking to prepare students for postsecondary success)
- **Modernize state assessments used for accountability** (e.g., adjusting state assessments to be adaptive and accessible in multiple languages, encouraging assessment participation, and improving the timelines for sharing results)
- **Improve data reporting and sharing for parents and communities, educators, education leaders, and policymakers** (e.g., creating a statewide dashboard that is user-friendly for multiple audiences)
- **Strengthen school and district improvement processes** (e.g., implementing a comprehensive approach to improvement planning – including a system of early identification and intervention; expanding and targeting how schools are recognized for their successes)

The task force acknowledges that the accountability system alone cannot advance academic opportunities or prevent academic inequities. However, these recommendations can help schools and districts receive ratings through the accountability system that reflects the student outcomes they produce.

We encourage the Legislature, State Board of Education, Colorado Department of Education, and all stakeholders to continue the task force's work by implementing these recommendations and relying on the consensus reflected in this report. When implemented, these recommendations will make the accountability system a true roadmap for supporting improvement efforts and, ultimately, opportunities and outcomes for Colorado's diverse student body and school communities.

The recommendations and areas for further study this Task Force is presenting for consideration are as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS

District and School Performance Frameworks	
1	Lower student count thresholds for accountability calculations and reporting
2	Combine student groups for ratings while disaggregating student groups for state reporting
3	Expand the students with disability group for calculating results
4	Explore best practices and monitor the accountability system to identify and reduce issues of volatility that impact schools and districts with small student populations
5	Move SAT reading/writing and math out of PWR indicator to the Achievement indicator
6	Create "Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Before Graduation" sub-indicator to PWR

7	Rename the PWR matriculation rate indicator and thus expand it to be more inclusive of high-quality postsecondary options
8	Re-evaluate weighting of frameworks in light of changes the task force is recommending
Assessments for Accountability	
9	Develop content area assessments in languages other than English and Spanish
10	Improve the accommodations for students by dividing the CMAS into smaller sections
11	Clarify how schools can encourage or not discourage test participation
12	Make the CMAS assessment adaptive
13	Improve the timeliness of assessment results
Public Reporting and Engagement	
14	Create one, coherent statewide dashboard that includes local and statewide data aligned with statewide instructional and PWR priorities
15	Enhance the user experience with reporting functionality and support that offers all stakeholders a comprehensive, accessible, and user-friendly way to utilize data
16	Clarify which students count for participation so that there is more transparency in reporting
17	Revise summative rating labels to improve differentiation and understandability.
Continuous Improvement	
18	Provide guidance to local boards on monitoring the improvement planning process
19	Implement a system of early identification and intervention
20	Provide more support to schools starting in year 2
21	Support schools and districts pursuing bold solutions to turn around
22	Require schools and districts in year 4 and 5 to bring a CDE vetted plan that the state board approves and monitors the effectiveness of the plan
23	Require schools and districts with insufficient data: low participation, to create a corrective action plan
24	Provide more professional learning according to school and district plans
25	Conduct an evaluation of external managers and CDE's management of the external management process
26	Require schools and districts with State Board Action to convene and learn from their peers regularly
27	Provide additional benefits for those receiving awards
28	Focus awards on state priorities and values
29	Conduct and share research on best practices in CO schools
30	Change the rules on how districts can receive a Distinction designation

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

District and School Performance Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine the possibility of including in the graduation count as graduates, students with disabilities working toward extended evidence outcomes and who are currently receiving a certification of completion.
Assessments for Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to reflect on and adapt the state assessment to newer technology. Specifically, continue to consider how technology, such as artificial intelligence, may/should impact state assessments (including scoring constructed responses). ● Seek input on making modifications to the state's approach to non-federally required assessments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain the reading/writing, and math assessments in grades 9 and 10 (PSAT 8/9 and 10), as these provide high school students with early indicators about their level of readiness and allow student growth to be reported and included within the high school and district frameworks. ○ Consider alternate approaches to meeting the federal requirement to assess grade 11 science, including embedding this assessment into the grade 11 SAT assessments, thus eliminating the grade 11 CMAS science assessment.
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider expanding the purpose of the State Review Panel (SRP). These reviews should focus on being diagnostic in addition to evaluative. The SRP should include additional meaningful data in its report so that the SBE may best evaluate the Plan and/or identify the best directive action. Research whether SRP should evaluate holistic district systems, including budget, governance, operations, facilities, and enrollment patterns that go beyond academics. For schools and districts, at the end of the clock, the SRP should be assessing if the right district conditions are in place to foster success and, if not, diagnosing what the district can focus on to improve and take action, such as a change in leadership. This should all be reported to the State Board so that the SRP district system evaluation results can drive the support/interventions. ● Monitor the use of the new improvement planning template to ensure it meets the needs of the schools and districts, and continue to make improvements as needed.
Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Once all improvements to the rest of the accountability system are made, conduct a group study on aligning and improving the accreditation system.