

Accountability Pathways and Hearings

Fact Sheet



Background

In 2009, Colorado’s legislature passed the Education Accountability Act that created a system to hold the state, school districts, and schools accountable for student academic performance on specific indicators and measures, including achievement and growth on state tests and graduation rates. Every year, schools and districts receive performance ratings. Those that do not meet expectations are assigned a rating of Priority Improvement or Turnaround. The state’s Accountability Clock requires the State Board of Education to direct a course of action to the local board of education if the school or district has received Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings for five consecutive years. These courses of action are called “Accountability Pathways”, and are directed by the state board during an Accountability Hearing.

Accountability Pathways

The State Board of Education can direct different pathways based on whether the chronically low-performing site is a district, a district-run public school, or charter school.

District Pathways

For districts that receive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings for five consecutive years as measured by the District Performance Frameworks, the state board can direct one of the following Accountability Pathways:

- **Management:** that a public or private entity serve as the lead partner in the management of the school district, or partially or fully manage one or more of the district public schools.
- **Charter Conversion:** that one or more of the district public schools be converted to a charter school.
- **Innovation:** that one or more of the district public schools be granted status as an innovation school, or that the local board recognize a group of district public schools as an innovation school zone.
- **Community School Conversion:** that one or more of the district public schools be converted to a community school.
- **Closure:** that one or more of the district public schools be closed.
- **District Proposed Pathway:** other actions that are comparable to or that have a more significant effect than the other pathways.
- **District Reorganization/Consolidation:** that a reorganization committee be formed to study reorganization pursuant to the School District Organization Act of 1992.
- **Removal of Accreditation:** that the district’s accreditation be removed.

District-Run Public School Pathways

For district-run public schools that receive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings for five consecutive years as measured by the District Performance Frameworks, the state board can direct one of the following Accountability Pathways:

- **Management:** that a public or private entity partially or fully manage the school.
- **Charter Conversion:** that the school be converted to a charter school.



- **Innovation:** that the school be granted status as an innovation school.
- **Community School Conversion:** that the school be converted to a community school.
- **Closure:** that the school be closed.
- **District Proposed Pathway:** other actions that are comparable to or that have a more significant effect than the other pathways.

Charter School Pathways

For charter schools that receive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings for five consecutive years as measured by the School Performance Frameworks, the state board can direct one of the following Accountability Pathways:

- **Operator Replacement:** that the public or private entity operating the charter school be replaced by a different public or private entity.
- **Governing Board Replacement:** that the governing board of the charter school be replaced by a different governing board.
- **Charter Revocation:** that the public school's charter be revoked.
- **Locally Proposed Pathway:** other actions that are comparable to or that have a more significant effect than the other pathways.

Accountability Hearing

When deciding a course of action for a school or district that has received five consecutive ratings of Priority Improvement or Turnaround, the state board holds an Accountability Hearing. Once a hearing has been scheduled, the state board acts in a quasi-judicial role, meaning the board cannot be lobbied or communicated with by the school, district, or other advocates. The state board must make their determination by considering only the following during an Accountability Hearing:

- **Commissioner and Department Report:** the Commissioner and CDE staff provide relevant academic data, prior improvement efforts, and other information as requested by the state board in the form of a submitted report.
- **State Review Panel Recommendation:** prior to the hearing, the State Review Panel (third-party education experts) will visit the school or district to review documents and interview school and/or district staff. The State Review Panel will issue a written recommendation regarding which Accountability Pathway can best improve student outcomes.
- **District Proposal:** CDE staff will work with the district to select a pathway that is best suited to create dramatic change at the school or district.
- **Public Comment:** the State Board Office collects comments, feedback, and testimony submitted in advance of the hearing by parents, community members, local officials, and others.

Early Action Accountability Hearing

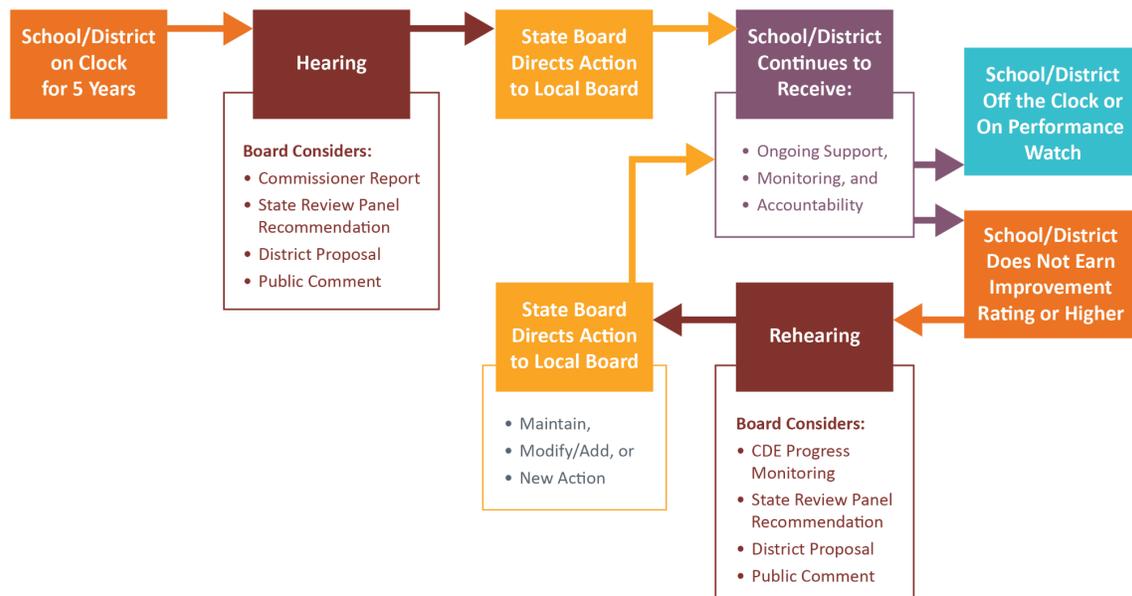
Early Action is a voluntary process through which schools and districts in Year 3 or Year 4 of Performance Watch can pursue an improvement pathway before the required state board-directed action in Year 5. An Early Action hearing replaces the Year 5 hearing. During this hearing, the state board has the opportunity to approve or deny the proposed

school or district pathway plan. The state board does not have the opportunity to direct a different pathway during an Early Action hearing. More information on the Early Action process can be found in the [Early Action Fact Sheet](#).

Post-Hearing Actions

If the school or district continues to receive Priority Improvement or Turnaround ratings after implementing their state board directed-pathway, the state board may in any year — and must every two years — hold an additional Accountability Hearing and direct the district to continue the previously directed action or undertake additional or different actions.

If the school or district receives two consecutive ratings of Improvement or Performance, then the school or district is no longer required to implement the state board directed-pathway and is considered off of the Accountability Clock. The Accountability Hearing process is outlined in the figure below.



A flow chart of the Accountability Hearing Process

Resources

CDE has developed guidance documents for each Accountability Pathway to support districts in selecting and planning for a pathway best suited to their needs.

Pathway Guidance Documents

Guidance documents overview important information about each pathway, including rationale for selecting that pathway, governance implications, and funding considerations.

- [Overview of Pathway Guidance Documents](#)
- [Charter Conversion Guidance](#)
- [Community Schools Conversion Guidance](#)
- [Innovation Plan Guidance](#)
- [Management Guidance](#)
- [Closure Plan Guidance](#)
- [District Proposed Pathway Guidance](#)
- [Manual of Procedures for District Reorganization](#)

For more information about the Accountability Pathways, visit the [Accountability Pathways webpage](#).