

# Assessment Participation and Accountability



## Overview

This resource describes assessment participation requirements and the role of participation in both state and federal accountability. This resource assumes knowledge about the [required state assessments](#), [federal accountability](#), and [state accountability](#) processes. See the links for additional information. Use this resource to help build understanding of the terminology and policies around participation that impact performance framework ratings and federal identifications.

## What are the state and federal requirements for assessment participation?

### Federal Participation Requirements

Federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), like No Child Left Behind before it, requires a 95 percent participation rate. From SEC 1005 (c)(4)(E)(i,iii), States must:

- Annually measure the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students, and 95 percent of all students in each subgroup of students, who are enrolled in public schools on the assessment, and
- Provide a clear and understandable explanation of how the State will factor “the 95 percent participation requirement” into the statewide accountability system.

### Colorado Assessments & Participation Requirements

#### Colorado Annual Assessment Requirements

- State and federal law require assessments for evaluating students’ mastery of and growth in the Colorado Academic Standards and evaluating the performance of districts and schools. State law requires annual state assessments for third- through ninth- grade students in English language arts and math, as well as science and social studies assessments once in elementary, once in middle school, and once in high school. The social studies assessment may include a sampling method of every school at least once every three years (C.R.S. 22-7-1006.3(1)(a)).
- State law also requires assessments for evaluating students’ mastery of the Colorado Academic Standards and post- secondary readiness with a 9th grade assessment (C.R.S. 22-7-1006.3(2)(a)), a 10<sup>th</sup>-grade assessment (C.R.S. 22-7-1006.3(2)(a. 5)) and an 11th-grade assessment (22-7-1006.3(2)(b)).

#### State Law Regarding Parent Excusals from State Assessments

House Bill 15-1323 requires school districts to adopt a policy on how parents can excuse their students from a state assessment. Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-7-1013(8)(A-C) establishes how districts and schools shall implement this policy, summarized below:

- A. Districts and schools shall adopt and implement a written policy and procedure by which a student's parent may excuse the student from participating in one or more of the state assessments.
- B. If a parent excuses his or her student from participating in a state assessment, a district or school shall not impose negative consequences, including prohibiting school attendance, imposing an unexcused absence, or prohibiting participation in extracurricular activities, on the student or on the parent.

- C. A district or school shall not impose an unreasonable burden or requirement on a student that would discourage the student from taking a state assessment or encourage the student's parent to excuse the student from taking the state assessment.

For additional information on the use of assessment data for state accountability, see [State Policy Regarding Participation Requirements](#) starting on p. 3.

## How are assessment participation rates calculated for accountability purposes?

### Total Participation Rates

**Description of the Rate Calculation:** Total participation rates combine all the assessment records for each subject area (English, math and science) across all grade levels within a given school or district. For multi-level schools and districts that serve high school, the PSAT/SAT Evidence-based Reading and Writing results are combined with the English language arts results. Parent excusals are counted as non-participants (they are included in the denominator). Total participation rates best reflect the actual percentage of students enrolled that participated in testing.

**Use in Data Analysis and Improvement Planning:** This participation rate should be considered when-using assessment and growth data for improvement planning and/or other instructional purposes.

**Use in State Accountability:** Total participation is included on the performance frameworks to provide context for interpreting how representative the reported results are likely to be of the entire student population. Districts or schools with less than 95% total participation in two or more content areas receive a “Low Participation” descriptor next to their rating. Districts and schools with more than 95% total participation in two or more content areas receive a “Meets Participation” descriptor next to their rating. These descriptors do not impact the calculation of the frameworks. The rate can be viewed in Figure 1 as the “Participation Rate.” For 2022, districts and schools are required to have at least 90% total participation to be eligible to participate in request to reconsider, see [Participation Eligibility for a Request to Reconsider](#) starting on p. 6.

**Use in Federal Accountability:** Federal statute (ESSA) requires assessment of a minimum of 95% of students in the required content areas and grades indicated above. CDE uses a two-phase ESSA identification methodology. In the first phase, schools are identified for ESSA support and improvement based on the available assessment results. In the second phase, schools with less than 95% participation rates that are not already identified for support and improvement, will be included in a second round of identification analyses, wherein all non-participants in excess of 5 percent are counted as non-proficient records (assigned the lowest obtainable scale score available on each assessment) for the Academic Achievement indicator. Schools identified during the second phase have the phrase “Due to Participation Only” following their ESSA identification category.

### Accountability Participation Rates

**Description of the Rate Calculation:** The rules for accountability participation rates are the same as those for the total participation rate except that parent excusals are removed from the denominator, and English learners who have been in the U.S. for less than one year count as participants (in the numerator and denominator) for the ELA test regardless of whether they received a valid test score. As shown in Figure 1 below, valid scores represent the numerator. The numerator does not contain parent excusals because students with parent excusals would not have a valid score.

**Use in Data Analysis and Improvement Planning:** This metric is not recommended for use in analysis or improvement planning. Total participation is the preferred metric as it is a better indicator of how representative the tested student population was of the entire school or district population.

**Use in State Accountability:** Historically, if the district or school has accountability participation rates below 95% in two or more areas, the overall rating is reduced by one level. In 2022, this penalty will not be applied. For more information, see [State Policy Regarding Participation Requirements](#) in the next section.

**Use in Federal Accountability:** This rate is not used in any federal accountability calculations.

Figure 1. Performance Framework Participation Table

Test Participation Rates**						
Subject	Total Records	Valid Scores	Participation Rate	Parent Excuses	Accountability Participation ..	Rating
English Language Arts	11,423	10,760	94.2%	433	98.0%	Meets 95%
Math	11,423	10,761	94.2%	431	97.9%	Meets 95%
Science	3,747	3,180	84.9%	428	95.8%	Meets 95%

**Total participation**  
parent excusals are counted as non-participants
**Accountability participation**  
parent excusals are excluded from calculation
These ratings reflect whether accountability participation rates meet or exceed 95%.

For more detail on participation rate calculations by assessment and level, see the [Framework Participation Rate Calculations Fact Sheet](#). For an explanation of the 2022 growth participation calculation, see the section “[What are some unique considerations for the 2022-23 school year?](#)” starting on p. 6.

## What happens if my school or district does not meet the 95 percent participation rate requirement?

### Federal Policy Regarding Participation Requirements

As required by the U.S. Department of Education in its interpretation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Colorado must take into consideration and have a plan for addressing non-participants in the methodology used for identifying schools for support and improvement under ESSA (see above for calculations associated with participation). In Colorado’s two-phase identification methodology, after schools have been identified as Comprehensive (CS), Targeted (TS), or Additional Targeted (ATS) Support and Improvement based on available data, CDE re-runs the analyses to identify CS, TS, or ATS schools due to participation only.

ESSA identification, including identification due to participation, was paused during the pandemic and resumed in fall of 2022.

### State Policy Regarding Participation Requirements

#### School Performance Framework (SPF) / District Performance Framework (DPF) Policy Regarding Low Participation

Schools and districts are accountable for meeting minimum participation rates in the state assessments. If a school or district falls below the 95 percent accountability participation rate (i.e., for **reasons other than parent excusals**) in two or more content areas (English language arts/Evidence-based reading and writing, math, science), then the district’s accreditation rating or school’s plan type will be lowered by one level. In 2022, this penalty will not apply to any schools or districts. See [Accountability Participation Rate Penalty](#) for more information.

Schools and districts with low total participation rates **for any reason** will be noted in the school/district's rating to indicate that the results may not be representative of the entire student population. The plan type is not impacted by this participation descriptor. For example, a school that earns a Performance Plan, but has a total participation rate of 52 percent will be labeled as "Performance Plan: Low Participation." For all Performance Framework descriptors, see the box above.

CDE's policy for the impact of low participation is based on State Board of Education Rule and the February 2015 State Board of Education motion that districts will not be penalized by a lowering of their accreditation rating should their student participation rates fall below 95 percent on the state assessments due to parental excusals. The [State Board of Education rules](#) (1 CCR 301-1 5.02) state: "Information concerning the percentage of students enrolled in the District's or Institute's Public Schools who are not tested on the Statewide Assessments will not be factored into the analysis of the District's or Institute's attainment on the Performance Indicators, but will be factored into the Accreditation category assignment." Districts still must engage in good faith efforts to test all students in accordance with state and federal law and maintain documentation of parent excusals.

### Assigning an Insufficient State Data Rating

The criteria for assigning Insufficient State Data (ISD) has been adjusted under approved rule language and as recommended by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). An ISD plan type will be automatically assigned if the total participation rate is at or below 25% for both English language arts/Evidence-based reading and writing and math. An ISD plan type will also be applied if reportable data are not available for all applicable performance indicators (achievement, growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness). For multi-level schools (i.e., combined elementary, middle and/or high schools) and districts, ISD will be assigned if one or more EMH levels do not have reportable data for either achievement or growth.

## How do test administration codes impact participation calculations for the state performance frameworks?

### Impact of District Submitted Test Administration Codes on Participation Calculations

The inclusion/exclusion of a student score in both total and accountability participation calculations is dependent on the test administration codes submitted by the district. The table below shows all possible test administration codes and how the student would be included in both total and accountability participation calculations. Please note that records coded as "parent excuse" are included in total participation rates as non-participants, but are not included in the accountability participation rate (used when determining if a school's or district's rating would be lowered).

#### Performance Framework Participation Descriptors

*Meets Participation:* Above the 95% total participation rate in two or more content areas.

*Low Participation:* Below the 95% total participation rate in two or more content areas.

*Decreased due to Participation:* Below the 95% accountability participation rate in two or more content areas.

#### Helpful Terminology

*Participants:* Students who were eligible to test that were counted as participating in state assessments.

*Non-participants:* Students who were eligible to test that were not counted as participating in state assessments (e.g., student absence, parent excusal).



Test Administration Code (Did Not Test or Void Test Score Code)	Impact on Total and Accountability Participation Calculations	Included in Total Participation Rate:		Included in Accountability Participation Rate:	
		Numerator	Denominator	Numerator	Denominator
No Code: Student Received Valid Test Score and is included in School and District Aggregations	Counts as participant for both participation calculations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
First Year in US English Learner* without a valid score on CMAS English language arts or PSAT/SAT Evidence-based Reading and Writing assessment	Only for ELA accountability participation rate, if student is classified as Non-English Proficient (NEP) and enrolled in Colorado school for less than 12 months, count as participant	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes
Took Other Assessment or Duplicate Registration/Attempt	Excluded from both participation calculations	No	No	No	No
Withdrew from District During Assessment Window	Excluded from both participation calculations	No	No	No	No
Medical Exemption	Excluded from both participation calculations	No	No	No	No
Part-Time Public and Part-Time Homeschool Student	Excluded from both participation calculations	No	No	No	No
Absent	Counts as non-participant for both participation calculations	No	Yes	No	Yes
Test Interrupted and Not Completed	Counts as non-participant for both participation calculations	No	Yes	No	Yes
Student Test Refusal	Counts as non-participant for both participation calculations	No	Yes	No	Yes
Non-approved Accommodation	Counts as non-participant for both participation calculations	No	Yes	No	Yes
Misadministration	Counts as non-participant for both participation calculations	No	Yes	No	Yes
Parent Excuse	Counts as non-participant for Total Participation rate and excluded entirely from Accountability participation rate	No	Yes	No	No**

\*First Year in US English Learner: Starting in Spring 2018, students enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months and classified as Non-English Proficient (NEP), based on W-APT/WIDA Screener and a local body of evidence, may be exempt from the first year of the CMAS ELA or PSAT/SAT EBRW assessment. However, NEP students enrolled in grades 3 or 4 whose native language is Spanish and who have received instruction in Spanish in that school year are required to take CSLA. Non-English proficient students not testing

their first year in U.S. should have their English language arts records coded with Not Tested Reason = 02. Districts should also complete State Use Field 1 (Date most recently enrolled in U.S. coming from a non-U.S. school/country). Records coded in this way for eligible students will count as a participant for English language arts.

\*\* In the total participation rate calculations, records coded as “parent excuse” will be included in the base count and count as non-participants, but are not included in the accountability participation rate (used when determining if a school’s or district’s rating would be lowered).

## How do non-participants impact achievement and growth calculations on the state performance frameworks?

Per current state policy, when calculating achievement, students who did not test (for any reason, including parent excusals) will not be included in the denominator of the state achievement calculation (i.e., the student will not count as a “0” or receive the lowest score). Only students with two consecutive years of assessment scores can be included for student growth calculations, and non-participants are not factored in. For instance, if a student did not test in Spring 2021 but did test in Spring 2022, they would not have a reportable growth result for 2022 performance frameworks because they do not have two consecutive years of assessment scores.

## What are some unique considerations for the 2022-23 school year?

### Accountability Participation Rate Penalty

In 2022, school or district ratings will not be decreased due to participation. Historically, a school and district’s plan type is decreased when the accountability participation rate (parent excusals are excluded from the participation calculation) is below 95% in two or more content areas, see [State Policy Regarding Participation Requirements](#) for more detail. In 2022, the accountability participation decrease will not be applied across all schools and districts. This does not change the underlying participation rating, however. A “does not meet” rating on the framework cover page may indicate a need to review district/school participation coding processes. It should be noted that the issues tended to be related to participation codes. Therefore, the coding errors did not impact student scores and overall performance framework results. Note that the participation requirement will resume for the 2023 frameworks.

### CMAS Science

As Colorado fully implements the 2020 Colorado Academic Standards, CMAS science items will reflect those standards for the first time in Spring 2022. Therefore, scale scores and performance levels will not be available in 2022 and science achievement results will not be factored into 2022 transitional framework plan types. Total participation rates for science will be reported for informational purposes in 2022, but will not be included in the [accountability participation rate](#).

### Growth Participation Calculation

As required by [SB 22-137](#), the Department has added a growth participation rate onto the 2022 transitional framework reports. For this growth participation calculation, the numerator is defined as the total number of students with a valid growth percentile contributing to the median growth percentile (MGP) while the denominator is defined as students who could have tested in 2021 (i.e., all students in tested grades in 2021). Grades and content areas that were not part of the required state assessment administration in 2021 due to the alternating state assessment schedule are removed from the denominator. This calculation provides an accurate estimate of how representative the reported growth results are likely to be of the eligible student population. The department consulted with the TAP and Accountability Work Group (AWG) in creating this calculation. See [recorded May 19, 2022 meeting](#) for a more detailed explanation.

### Participation Eligibility for Request to Reconsider

Based on State Board accountability rules finalized in June 2022, schools and districts are required to have 90% [total participation](#) in both English language arts/Evidence-based reading and writing and math to access the 2022 request to reconsider process. A Priority Improvement or Turnaround district or school may use request to reconsider to move to "On Watch" or fully exit performance watch if they meet certain conditions (e.g., Improvement plan type or higher, meet 90% total participation on state assessments). Certain historical practices (e.g., ability to request Insufficient State Data with less than 85% participation rate if the district or school is able to demonstrate that data is not representative) are not available in 2022. Rule language is available on the [CDE website](#).

### Additional Resources and Assistance

For more detailed information about some of these processes and requirements, go to:

- General Information about performance frameworks, including links to resources: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks>
- General information about the request to reconsider process, including links to resources: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/requesttoreconsider>
- General information about the Unified Improvement Planning process, including information about planning requirements and links to resources: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip>
- General information about the accountability clock, including links to resources: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountability\\_clock](http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountability_clock)
- General information about ESSA identifications: [https://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa\\_csi\\_tsi](https://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essa_csi_tsi)

If you have questions about the contents of this fact sheet or need further assistance: Contact your assigned support coordinator. You may also contact

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