

# School District Reorganization Process



**School district reorganization is one action the State Board of Education may direct to a school district that has failed to meet student-performance expectations for more than five years.**

School district reorganization does not mean schools will close. Rather, it is a process that may result in a change in boundaries, governance or management of a district.

Reorganization, as defined in state law, directs the local school board and community to have a role in the process. The commissioner of Education, with support from Colorado Department of Education staff, works with the district and neighboring districts to finalize and implement the reorganization plan.

The state board would determine what type of accreditation would be appropriate to assign the new or reorganized district under the Accountability Act.



## Why would the State Board of Education reorganize a school district?

In 2009, Colorado’s legislature passed the Education Accountability Act, which created a system to hold school districts and schools accountable for student academic performance on specific indicators and measures, including performance and growth on state tests and graduation rates. As part of this law, the state established an “Accountability Clock” that places schools and districts on [performance watch](#) when they receive low ratings over multiple years.

**After multiple years on the clock, the State Board of Education is required by law to decide a course of action to dramatically increase student achievement.** The state board may consider one or more of the following actions for school districts:

- Require a district to work with an external management partner to manage the district or turn over management of particular schools to an outside operator
- Convert at least one district-run school into a charter school
- Grant innovation status to at least one district-run school to provide flexibility from certain state and local rules
- Close one or more schools
- Initiate the district reorganization process
- Remove the district’s accreditation

## What information is available to the state board when deciding a course of action?

### State Review Panel

An independent group of Colorado-based education experts provides a recommendation to the commissioner and State Board of Education on the end-of-clock actions. The panel bases its recommendations on a site visit, document review, and stakeholder interviews.

### School District

A district can propose a course of action it believes would best improve student performance. The district may submit written materials and deliver a presentation.

### Education Commissioner

The education commissioner and Colorado Department of Education staff provide relevant data and background information (e.g., context, description of supports, summary of school improvement grants) to support the hearing.

### Community input

Comments, feedback and testimony submitted in advance of the hearing by parents, community members, local officials and others are an important part of the state board's review process.

The State Board of Education will conduct a public hearing when deciding a course of action for a school or district.

## How does the school district reorganization process occur?

The State Board of Education will conduct a public hearing when deciding a course of action for the school district. If the board directs district reorganization, the decision triggers the following steps as outlined in the School District Organization Act of 1992:

- The state board will indicate which school districts will be involved in the process.
- The commissioner will call for the appointment of a school organization planning committee by notifying the affected school districts.
- The membership of the committee is comprised of the following:
  - Two members appointed by each affected local board of education; and
  - One parent member appointed by each affected district advisory accountability committee.

- The committee will study the affected school systems and develop a plan of organization. The Department of Education will assist the committee in the development and submission of the plan.

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  - The committee’s plan of organization must address:
    - Student educational needs, including ensuring diverse and equal opportunities for all students;
    - Facility use;
    - New boundaries for affected districts;
    - A specific plan for representation by a local board of education of any proposed new district; and
    - How affected districts will share property and cash assets, among other topics.

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  - The committee files its proposed plan of organization with the commissioner and affected local school boards.

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  - The committee posts notice of and convenes public hearings on the proposed plan to collect public comments. The committee may make changes to its proposed plan after the hearings.

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  - The committee must formally approve the proposed plan within 60 days of the last public hearing.

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  - Within 10 days of the proposed plan’s formal approval, the committee sends the commissioner the plan of organization and a map of the proposed district configuration.

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  - The commissioner will either approve the plan or return it to the committee with suggestions for changes.

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  - The final plan of organization must be approved by the commissioner and the committee within 120 days of the last public hearing.

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  - After the final plan of organization has been approved, the committee will call for a special election on the plan.
    - In the election, voters in each affected district will vote to adopt or reject the final plan.
    - Prior to the election, the committee will meet with affected voters and explain the final approved plan.

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  - If the final plan is rejected by the majority of voters in any affected district, the committee and commissioner may reconvene to come up with a new plan. If the plan is approved by voters, it is considered adopted.
    - If the approved plan requires the formation of a new district, the committee chair will call for a special election for the selection of a local board of education for the new school district; and
    - The plan will become effective on the date specified in the plan.
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The School District Organization Act details how affected districts’ finances, like existing bonded indebtedness, will be addressed. Statute also provides an alternative, abbreviated process for school district reorganization should the State Board of Education wish to direct it.