

State Review Panel

Recommendation Process Protocol

Spring/Summer 2015



COLORADO
Department of Education

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Introduction

The State Review Panel (SRP) was created by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 to conduct a critical evaluation of the state’s lowest-performing schools and districts. The evaluation is focused on the areas outlined in the Accountability Act:

- Whether leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results;
- Whether the infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement;
- The readiness and capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student performance;
- The readiness and capacity of personnel to engage productively with an external partner;
- The likelihood of positive returns on state investments; and,
- The necessity to remain in operation to serve students.

The SRP school/district evaluation process includes a robust document review, as well as an on-site review for schools/districts approaching the end of the accountability clock. The purpose of the review process is to provide Panelists with evidence to recommend an action regarding each identified school and district to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education. The actions include: management by a private or public entity other than the district; converting to a charter school; converting to Innovation School status; closure; for charter schools, replacing the current operating entity or Governing Board with a different operating entity or Governing Board; or district reorganization.

Table 1:

Type of Required Action	Districts (C.R.S. 22-11-209)	Schools (C.R.S. 22-11-210)
District Reorganization	That the school district be reorganized pursuant to article 30 of this title, which reorganization may include consolidation	n/a
Change in Management	That a private or public entity, with the agreement of the school district, take over management of the school district or management of one or more of the district public schools	With regard to a district public school that is not a charter school, that the district public school should be managed by a private or public entity other than the school district
		With regard to a district or institute charter school, that the public or private entity operating the charter school or the governing board of the charter school should be replaced by a different public or private entity or governing board
Charter School Conversion	That one or more of the district public schools be converted to a charter school	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be converted to a charter school if it is not already authorized as a charter school

Innovation Status	That one or more of the district public schools be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to section 22-32.5-104 or that the local school board recognize a group of district public schools as an innovation school zone pursuant to section 22-32.5-104	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to section 22-32.5-104
School Closure	That one or more of the district public schools be closed	That the public school be closed or, with regard to a district charter school or an institute charter school, that the public school's charter be revoked

After the on-site review, the SRP will reconvene to review the body of evidence for each school and come to consensus on recommended action.

What is the purpose of the State Review Panel (the Panel) during the Recommendation Process?

The purpose of the SRP is to provide an opportunity for an objective third-party, comprised of representatives from the field, to provide recommendations on next steps for identified schools and districts to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The Panel’s recommendation complement and balance recommendations from CDE and the district¹. Two members of the SRP are responsible for objectively reviewing and evaluating documents and site visit evidence from a given school or district on the accountability clock, then making a recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education regarding one or more courses of action (see Table 1): 1) Innovation School Status; 2) Management by a private or public entity other than the district; 3) Conversion to a charter school; 4) School Closure; or 5) District Reorganization (districts only).

What are the general steps in the Recommendation Process?

The Recommendation Process is a multi-phase process that relies on available evidence from the first year of the district’s/school’s time on the accountability clock through the current year. During the review of evidence for the Recommendation Process, the SRP analyzes all evidence of school performance related to the six critical evaluation factors outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009. The SRP then documents its recommendation, which is shared with the Commissioner and State Board of Education.

Evidence Review

As part of being designated a State Review Panelist (Panelist), participants review schools’ or districts’ information using three methods: a review of documentation generated during their years as an identified school/district; a site visit conducted by the SRP; and a review of the Stakeholder Input Form submitted by district leadership that captures the district’s interest in potential recommended actions. The Panelists review documents against the six critical factors outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009 and submit a feedback form to SchoolWorks – an education consulting organization contracted to facilitate and support the SRP Recommendation Process; second, they participate in the site visit, during which they gather evidence through focus groups with key stakeholders, classroom observations (school reviews

¹ District leadership will have the opportunity to submit a Stakeholder Input Form in order to document the district’s interest in potential recommended actions. These will be shared with panelists prior to the on site visit.

only), and review of supplementary documents. As an outcome of the visit, a site visit feedback form is generated for use in the Recommendation Process.

Recommendation Process

Once the document review and site visit are concluded, each panelist prepares for the Recommendation meeting by considering all the evidence and completing a pre-recommendation form (see Appendix D). As part of this pre-work, Panelists study the collective evidence then note the school's/district's capacity levels as *Not Effective, Developing, Effective, or Highly Effective* (see Appendix B) in each of the six critical factors. Each Panelist submits his or her completed pre-recommendation form to the facilitator in the days prior to the Recommendation meeting via conference call. Prior to the meeting, the facilitator reviews the SRP's pre-recommendation forms and identifies areas of agreement and disagreement between panelists. Panelists and the facilitator meet as a group virtually for the Recommendation meeting to finalize their evaluation of the capacity levels of the school or district in relation to the six critical factors and to make a recommendation. Relying solely on evidence gathered and analyzed through the Recommendation Process, the facilitator supports Panelists to resolve differences in capacity levels and reach consensus. Once the SRP's consensus capacity levels are determined, the Panelists consider the five actions: Innovation school; Management by a private or public entity; Conversion to a charter school; Closure; or District reorganization; and recommend one or more of these actions for the school or district. As a final step of the meeting, Panelists attribute sufficient evidence to each capacity level; this serves as the basis for the writing of the Recommendation Form.

Development of SRP Recommendation Form

The recommendation of the SRP is captured in the Recommendation Form (see Appendix F). The Recommendation Form is prepared by the Panelist who serves as the team writer, based on the consensus discussions of the SRP. Once the recommendation is drafted, it is reviewed collectively by the Panelists to ensure that it captures the team's discussions and finalized. The Recommendation Form includes the Panelists' recommended course of action(s) for the district or school and attributes evaluative comments, evidence, and a rationale to justify the recommendation(s). The recommendation expressed in the Recommendation Form serves as the SRP's official Recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The Commissioner and State Board of Education receive one recommendation from the SRP, one from CDE; they rely on these sources of evidence to inform their final decision.

Presentation of Recommendation to Commissioner and State Board of Education

Once the State Review Panel determines a recommendation regarding the action for each school or district, the Panelist who served as the team writer will finalize the Recommendation Form and submit it to SchoolWorks for final review. Once the SchoolWorks project managers have reviewed the finalized Recommendation Form, they will electronically submit it to the Commissioner. Once the Recommendation Form has been submitted to the Commissioner, the district to which it pertains may request a copy from CDE. The Commissioner will be responsible for circulating the Recommendation Form to the State Board of Education. Once the Recommendation Form is sent to the State Board of Education, it will also become available to the public.

How was this Recommendation Process protocol developed?

The Recommendation Process protocol was developed by SchoolWorks in collaboration with CDE. It is based on requirements articulated in the Education Accountability Act of 2009 and SchoolWorks' accountability work with school districts and state departments of education across the country.

Roles and Responsibilities

Participants in the Recommendation Process serve in roles aimed to support the SRP's formulation of a recommendation. This section explains the roles and responsibilities of the SRP Panelists, Recommendation Process Facilitator, CDE, and SchoolWorks. Panelists should read this section carefully to learn how to prepare for the Recommendation process.

State Review Panelists

To ensure there is sufficient expertise on the SRP to effectively evaluate whether a school or district has met the requirements for the recommended action(s), Panelists are assigned to schools and/or districts based on the areas of expertise they possess in alignment with the district's/school's need. These include (among other areas) expertise in rural and/or urban settings, charter and/or district schools, school and/or district leadership.

Success of the Recommendation Process relies heavily on team members':

1. *Adherence to the Code of Conduct (see Appendix A)*
2. *Preparation for the Recommendation Process meetings*
 - Panelists review the Recommendation Process protocol in its entirety.
 - Panelists attend SRP trainings.
 - Panelists review all evidence in advance of the meetings.
3. *Collaboration with others under the Recommendation process facilitator's direction*
 - Panelists support and take direction from their Recommendation Process facilitator. They trust in his/her judgment.
 - Panelists actively participate in team meetings and support others' efforts to reach a unified recommendation based on evidence.
4. *Submission*
 - Panelists provide feedback on the draft of the Recommendation Form in accordance with pre-established timelines, ensuring that the form contains sufficient evidence and reflects the consensus of the team.

Recommendation Process Facilitator

Roles and responsibilities for the Recommendation Process facilitator include:

1. *Modeling and enforcing the Code of Conduct (see Appendix A)*
 - Team facilitators should exhibit the highest professional standards and are responsible for ensuring that their team does so as well.
2. *Coordination with CDE and the SRP*
 - Before engaging the SRP, the team facilitator contacts CDE to ensure that any additional documents (i.e., CDE feedback documents, past Document Review feedback forms, etc.) are made available in a timely manner.
 - Team members are likely to have questions about the process. The Recommendation Process facilitator should serve as the team's contact person to address these questions.
3. *Facilitation and management of logistics for the Recommendation Process meetings*
 - The Recommendation Process facilitator is comprehensively trained by experienced team facilitators and participates in all Recommendation Process trainings.
 - The Recommendation Process facilitator is responsible for facilitating the SRP Recommendation meeting.

4. *Submission*

- The Recommendation Process facilitator oversees the writing of the Recommendation Form, ensuring that the form contains sufficient evidence and reflects the consensus of the Panelists.

Colorado Department of Education

To be an effective partner in the process:

1. *Communicate the purpose and process of the State Review Panel clear to all prospective Panelists.*
2. *Recognizes the efforts of the SRP on behalf of the Commissioner and State Board of Education.*
3. *Provides SchoolWorks with all necessary documents.*
4. *Works with the Recommendation process facilitator to ensure that the team meetings run smoothly.*
5. *Schedules and manages recommendation process with the State Board of Education*

SchoolWorks

To be an effective partner in the process:

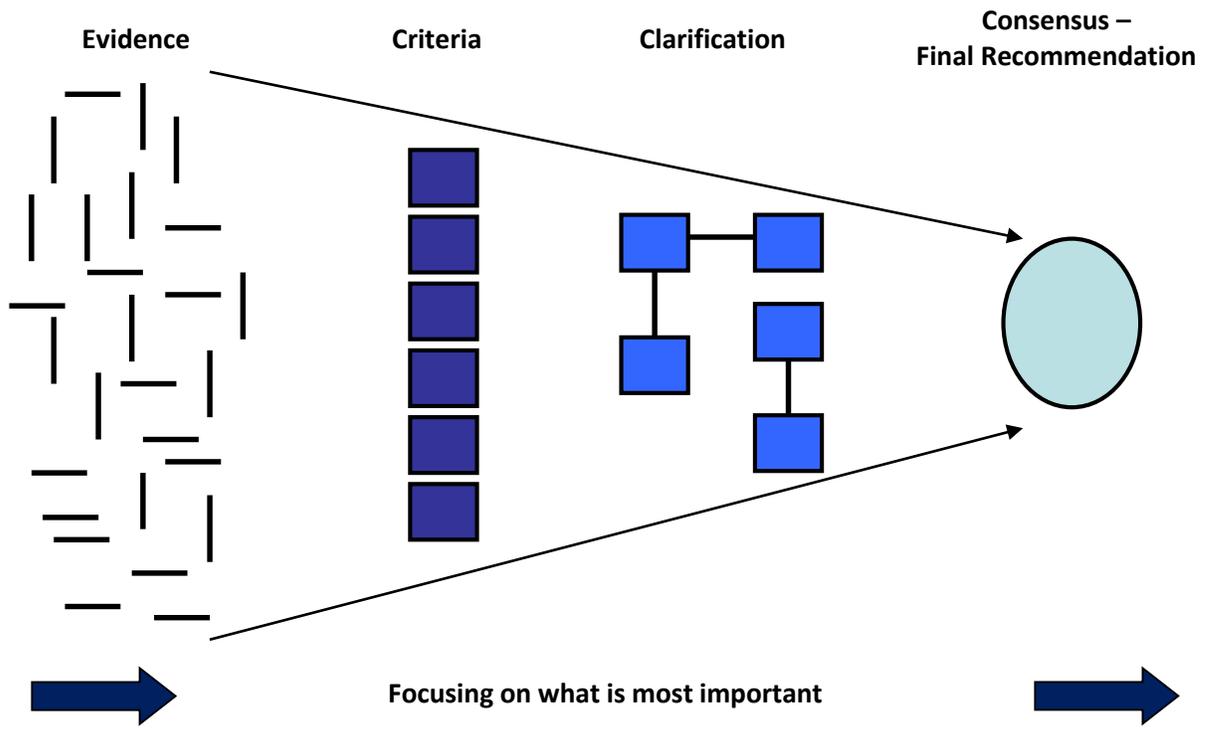
1. *Coordinates materials and assignment of team members*
 - Before the SRP meetings, team members are selected and provided with materials to review.
2. *Organizes team trainings*
3. *Communicates with the team*
 - SchoolWorks works collaboratively with the Recommendation process facilitator prior to the SRP meetings to ensure that documents are provided in a timely manner.
 - SchoolWorks works collaboratively with the facilitator during the Recommendation process to provide any additional documents requested.
 - SchoolWorks maintains good communication with the Recommendation process facilitator, SchoolWorks, and/or Panelists throughout the process, honestly expressing concerns and feedback.

A. Principles Guiding the Process

The Recommendation Process is built on four core expectations that drive the work of the team throughout the review to come to a consensus recommendation based on the school's or district's documentation.

- ***The process is criteria-driven.*** The SRP process is built on a set of criteria. Throughout the recommendation process, Panelists document whether the district/school has met the six critical factors outlined in the Accountability Act and refer to guiding considerations included in the process worksheets. Panelists use the Action Decision-making Chart (see Appendix C) during its team meetings to evaluate evidence of the school's performance and make a recommendation. A criteria-driven process ensures that Panelists are grounded in consistent expectations. The rubric's criteria also serve as a basis for professional dialogue.
- ***The process is an evidence-based system.*** The SRP's recommendation is based on evidence collected during the district/school's preceding years on the accountability clock, including both a robust document review and a site visit in the final year. The SRP builds a base of evidence for its recommendation that would lead any set of individuals to come to similar conclusions about the district/school's performance. Moving from evidence to recommendation is a cyclical process that depends on an open exchange of information among Panelists. While the SRP is required to address the rubric's criteria and base its recommendation on evidence, the process is not mechanical and requires some professional judgment by Panelists.
- ***The process is iterative, repeatedly checking on and testing the quality of the recommendation and the evidence that supports it.*** Panelists progress methodically from pieces of evidence to a recommendation. First, the SRP records *evidence* by reviewing former document review and site visit feedback forms. The team discusses evidence to identify initial *trends* within the evidence. The SRP discusses preliminary trends and findings so that all the appropriate evidence is considered by the SRP. This ensures that the appropriate evidence is considered before the recommendation is finalized.
- ***The SRP uses its professional judgment to come to consensus on the recommendation.*** To be useful, the SRP must produce a focused Recommendation. Focusing on key evidence requires discerning only what is important and merits comment. Within the protocol, the SRP uses professional judgment to distinguish the key factors that deserve comment from the wealth of evidence available to them. This use of professional judgment is represented below.

Moving from Evidence to Recommendation



B. Detailed Steps in the Process

SRP Training and Preparation

- SchoolWorks conducts an initial phone call with district and school representatives to review the Recommendation process.
- SchoolWorks conducts a training for all Panelists to review the Recommendation process and review this protocol.
- SchoolWorks with CDE and Panelists to establish a specific schedule for the Recommendation meetings.
- SchoolWorks and CDE work collaboratively to send a copy of the protocol, the schedule, and any other documents for pre-analysis to the SRP Panelists members.

The Panelists review the provided materials and document their analysis, evidence, and conclusions.

SRP Timeline

Date/s	SRP Event
January 2015	General SRP Training for Panelists; introduction to Recommendation Process
May 2015	Recommendation Process Training
June 2015	SRP Recommendation Meetings
June – July 2015	Submission of Recommendation Forms
June – July 2015	SchoolWorks reviews draft Recommendation Forms
July 2015	Recommendation Forms finalized
October 2015	SRP Recommendation Forms submitted

Written Recommendation Form

- The Panelist who serves as the team writer gathers all notes and other key evidence that have been collected by the team during its review to use in drafting the feedback form.
- The SRP develops a Recommendation that documents the evidence. This Recommendation Form provides a written record of the recommendation determined at the SRP's final meeting.
- Before it is submitted to SchoolWorks, all team members provide comments on the draft form according to pre-established timelines.
- SchoolWorks reviews the draft for sufficient evidence, factual accuracy, and consistency noted capacity levels.
- The Recommendation Form is finalized and sent from the SRP to the Commissioner and State Board of Education.

Appendix A: Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SRP MEMBERS

The SRP's work is guided by a code of conduct. Adherence to the Code of Conduct allows the SRP to make recommendations based on the decision-making framework by considering the full range of evidence presented to the team and in the absence of external influences. Adherence to the Code of Conduct also creates a frank, professional environment in which the Panelist may evaluate the extent to which the school has met performance expectations.

1. Demonstrate preparedness and professionalism.

- a. Attend and participate in SRP member trainings.
- b. Read all materials provided to you prior to the SRP meetings.
- c. Complete pre-meeting assignments.
- d. Arrive on time; stay until the end.
- e. Demonstrate high engagement and be "low tech." Use mobile phones, tablets, and other personal devices during designated breaks.

2. Carry out work with integrity.

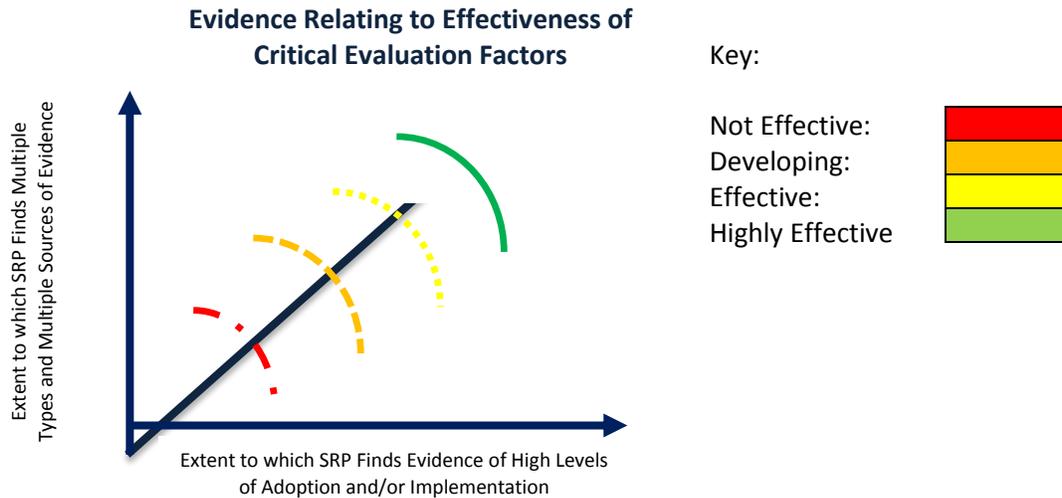
- a. Treat all those on the team with courtesy and sensitivity. Try to minimize stress.
- b. Demonstrate mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said.
- c. Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well the school has met expectations.
- d. Be firm and persistent, but be respectful.
- e. Share airtime. Provide opportunities for others to comment and question.
- f. Wherever possible, work to others' convenience.
- g. Maintain confidentiality. Do not disclose the substance of team discussions or recommendations with individuals beyond the SRP until such time as the State Board of Education takes action on the recommended action for the school.

3. Be objective; base recommendations on evidence, not opinion.

- a. Bring an open mind to SRP meetings to ensure a fair review.
- b. Do not criticize the work of an individual involved with the school or CDE. Base comments on school performance, not individual performance.
- c. Refrain from introducing "hearsay" as evidence.
- d. The recommendation must be robust, fully supported by evidence, and defensible.
- e. The recommendation must be reliable in that others would make the same recommendation from the same evidence.
- f. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on opinion or evidence.

Appendix B: Capacity Levels

The SRP will use the following guidance to select capacity levels. Note that the quality standard for each capacity level is based upon: the extent to which the SRP finds multiple types² and multiple sources³ of evidence related to the adoption and/or implementation of a practice or system AND the extent to which the SRP finds evidence of high levels of adoption and/or implementation of a practice or system.



Capacity Level	Quality Standard
Not effective	Evidence indicates that the key question is not a practice or system that has been adopted and/or implemented at the school, or that the level of adoption/implementation does not improve the school's effectiveness.
Developing	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that is developing at the school, but that it has not yet been implemented at a level that has begun to improve the school's effectiveness, OR that the impact of the key action on the effectiveness of the school cannot yet be determined.
Effective	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that has been adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that has begun to improve the school's effectiveness.
Highly Effective	Evidence indicates that the key question is a practice or system that has been fully adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that has had a demonstrably positive impact on the school effectiveness.

² "Multiple types of evidence" is defined as evidence collected from two or more of the following: document review, stakeholder focus groups and/or interviews; and classroom observations.

³ "Multiple sources of evidence" is defined as evidence collected from three or more stakeholder focus groups and/or interviews; two or more documents; and/or evidence that a descriptor was documented in 75% or more of lessons observed at the time of the visit.

Appendix C: Pre-Recommendation Form

Six critical evaluation factors	Document Review Capacity Level	Site Visit Capacity Level	Draft Capacity Level	Notes
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.				
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.				
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.				
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.				
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.				
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.				

Appendix D: SRP Facilitator Form

Six critical evaluation factors	Document Review Capacity Level	Site Visit Capacity Level	Draft Capacity Level	Notes
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	A -	A -		
	B -	B -		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	A -	A -		
	B -	B -		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	A -	A -		
	B -	B -		
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.	A -	A -		
	B -	B -		
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	A -	A -		
	B -	B -		
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	A -			
	B -			

Appendix E: Action Decision-making Chart

Innovation School Status - The Innovation Schools Act of 2008 (Article 32.5) establishes a process to waive certain local and state statutory and regulatory rules for public schools to gain autonomies that allow for more flexible and effective practices to meet the needs of students in a school. The Panel may recommend a school for Innovation Status if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is interested in the option and is demonstrably effective in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, particularly with regard to leadership and personnel capacity, and that there are positive early indicators of change, as described above.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE	
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.			X	X	
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.			X	X	
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.			X	X	X
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.			X	X	X
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.			X	X	X
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.			yes		

Management by a private or public entity other than the district – The Panel may recommend a school for management by a private or public entity other than the district if the document and on-site review indicate that the school may be effective in some of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, but is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity. In addition, there may be some evidence of positive early indicators of change. The district must be in agreement. For charter schools, this may mean replacing the current operating entity or Governing Board.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.		X	X	X
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.		X	X	X
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		X	X	X
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.		yes		

Conversion to a charter school - A district might convert a district school to a charter school to provide more autonomy and flexibility to a school from statutory and regulatory requirements that may have created obstacles in the past. The Panel may recommend a school for conversion to a charter school if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is not effective in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity, and shows limited evidence of positive early indicators of change. However, there is a compelling need for the school to remain open to serve students and a charter school may meet the needs of the community.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.				
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.				
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.				
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.				
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.				
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	yes			

Closure - The Panel may recommend one or more school closure (or multiple schools for closure if the district is on the accountability clock) if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is not effective in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity, and shows limited evidence of positive early indicators of change. Further, there is not a compelling need for the school to remain open to serve students.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X			
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.	X			
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	X			
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	no			

District reorganization (Districts only) - District reorganization might be pursued to intervene in a district where persistent low achievement may be caused by ineffective governance or leadership by a district Board of Directors or by district leadership. The Panel may recommend district reorganization, including consolidation with a neighboring district, if there is agreement by the parties involved (e.g., community support, neighboring district).

Protocol Criteria		I	D	E	HE	
1.	The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X			
2.	The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X			
3.	There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X				
4.	There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.	X				
5.	There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	X				
6.	There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	<i>no</i>				

Appendix F: SRP Recommendation Form _____

School & District:		
School/District Code:		
State Review Panelists:		
Recommendation Meeting Date:		
Critical evaluation factors		Capacity Levels:
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.		
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.		
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.		
Brief Description of Past School/District's Turnaround Efforts/Strategies:		
Panel's Recommendation:		
Evidence and Rationale:		