Annual Report on Implementation of Local Accountability Systems:
Year Four (March 2025)

Submitted to:
Colorado State Board of Education
Colorado House Education Committee
Colorado Senate Education Committee

For additional information, go to the grant website at: Local Accountability System Grant | CDE (state.co.us)
Or contact:

Lisa Medler, Executive Director	**Lisa Steffen, Grant Manager**
medler_l@cde.state.co.us	steffen_l@cde.state.co.us

Accountability and Continuous Improvement Unit
Colorado Department of Education
201 E. Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203

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Executive Summary

S.B. 19-204 authorized the Local Accountability System Grant Program, which provides funds to local education agencies to pilot the adoption and enhancement of local accountability systems that supplement the state accountability system. This program is also intended to enable the state to learn from innovative practices in the field.

History Cohort 1 - Year 1 of the grant focused on the grant application process (November 2019-March 2020) and early implementation (March 2020-June 2020). In March 2020, the State Board of Education approved 11 unique grantee projects. Within these projects, 29 different districts/BOCES and 12 individual schools from across the state engaged in a wide range of initiatives. The Year 1 grantees began implementation just as the Governor issued an Executive Order calling for the suspension of in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year and districts shifted to a remote learning approach. With additional flexibility on the grant timeline and with a strong commitment from the grantees, the work continued despite the disruptions.

Local Accountability System Grant		
	Cohort 1	**Cohort 2**
Grantees	10	8
Total Number of BOCES, Districts and Schools	40	32
Total Award Amount Per Year	$450,000	$384,000

Funding for Cohort 1 - Year 2 of the grant was suspended due to state budget shortfalls related to the pandemic. Grantees committed to moving forward with some timeline adjustments. Flexibilities granted by the state controller (e.g., extended period for Year 1 grant fund expenditures, continuation of related activities into the next fiscal year) kept momentum of the grantees. Funding was re-established for the 2021-22 fiscal year, with the 2020-21 year serving as an extension year. Cohort 1 - Year 2 of the grant took place from July 2021 to June 2022, with 10 grantees participating. Cohort 1 - Year 3 of the grant took place from July 2022 to June 2023. A final wrap-up Cohort 1 - Year 4 extension was given for the 2023-24 school year to assist grantees in spending down final funds.

Cohort 2 - The department ran a grant competition in spring 2024 for a second cohort of grantees. In June the State Board of Education approved 8 unique grantee projects that include 2 consortia of districts or schools, 1 district and 5 schools. Four approved grantees are continuing project work from cohort 1 with a focus on new work, and 4 grantees are new applicants.

Grant Evaluation and Findings from Cohort 1

As outlined in statute (C.R.S.22-11-705 (5)(a)), a full external evaluation of the local accountability systems developed by grantees was completed. This evaluation was performed by an external contractor, Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA). In addition, CU-Denver's Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER), as well as CDE program administrators have consolidated the following findings:

- Grantees feel the grant has been successful, including increased enthusiasm and ownership of the continuous improvement process. While highlighting local accountability, grantees shared that they continue to value the current state and federal accountability systems.
- Quantitative analysis of grantee reported outcome data shows increased community engagement in shaping accountability systems and changes in measures that better reflect local values and goals.

- There are challenges related to implementing and maintaining data infrastructure and responding to changes due to leadership or staff turnover.
- While it is not clear that the measures themselves would be useful to other districts, there is value in the design work connecting local vision and mission and community and leadership priorities to the aligned measures. Local accountability systems allow for mechanisms by which leaders can utilize data and feedback that is actionable, timely, and relevant to their context.
- Several sites described their local systems as focusing on the "whole child" or telling a "fuller story" of their students' growth. Examples of additional student-level indicators or outcomes include: social emotional learning; student engagement; student dispositions towards learning; student well-being; and nonacademic outcomes related to being a prepared graduate (e.g., critical thinking, life skills, and accessing learning opportunities).
- CDE could support the field in determining/identifying, describing, and documenting measures (e.g., goals, outcomes, evidence of validity and reliability, supports to build the capacity to use the resources).
- Grantees value statewide public reporting of their local work, but it may be difficult to scale up alternative improvement plan and supplemental framework report flexibility statewide.
- Accountability partnerships add valuable technical assistance to schools and districts and are a valuable policy tool for expanding technical capacity, especially in analytical and evaluative support.

Introduction

The Colorado legislature authorized the Local Accountability Systems Grant Program through S.B. 19-204, to provide districts with added flexibility to design accountability systems that are a more comprehensive reflection of their local priorities and values. The grants are intended to support districts and schools in piloting the adoption and enhancement of local accountability systems to supplement the state accountability system. In determining student success, grantees have been given flexibility and support to supplement the statewide performance indicators by using additional measures of student success. Per statute, additional indicators may include academic and non-academic student outcomes, such as changes in student engagement, attitudes, and mindsets. A local accountability system is supplemental to the state accountability system and may be designed to:

> **Local Accountability System Grant Focus Areas**
>
> - Public Reporting Dashboards
> - Site Visit Protocols & Rubrics
> - Non-Academic Indicators
> - Stakeholder Values Collections
> - Alternative Approaches to Improvement Planning

a) *Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success, including additional performance indicators or measures, which may include non-academic student outcomes such as student engagement, attitudes, and dispositions toward learning;*

b) *Evaluate the capacity of the public-school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success; and*

c) *Use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a cycle of continuous improvement* (C.R.S. 22-11-703).

This program is also intended to enable the state to learn from innovative practices in the field. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is expected to evaluate the local accountability system's effectiveness and convene grantees to facilitate and support learning.

Description of the Grants Process

After the legislation was enacted, CDE developed a [competitive grant process](#) in Fall 2019. Applications were due in December 2019 and the review panel recommended 11 applicants for participation in the grant, awarding between $25,000 and $75,000 per grantee per year over a three-year period (dependent upon appropriations). The total award in Year 1 was $480,025. The State Board of Education approved all recommended proposals and grant amounts in March 2020.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Controller offered a no-cost extension of Year 1 funds into the 2021 fiscal year, giving grantees until June 30, 2021, to expend Year 1 funds. Further, the General Assembly suspended the program as part of its 2020 budget balancing package, resulting in cancellation of Year 2 (July 2020-June 2021) awards. This Year 2 funding included support for the local grants, as well as a 0.5 FTE for the Colorado Department of Education. At the end of the 2020-21 legislative session, the General Assembly reinstated the grant program and state FTE. Year 2 of the grant covered July 2021-June 2022. Year 3 of the grant covered July 2022-June 2023. At the request of grantees to ensure all funds were spent, a Year 4 cohort extension was allowed, where grantees could request additional funds or use the time to spend down remaining grant dollars. This covered July 2023-June 2024.

In spring 2024, applications were made available for Cohort 2 of the grant. Applications were due April 22nd in the GAINS grant management system. Eight applicants were reviewed by an internal CDE team, approved by the State Board of Education in June, and awards were made for amounts between $26,000 and $75,000 with a total of $390,000 requested for each year of the three-year grant period (future awards dependent on appropriations). The new grant cohort began July 2024.

Grant Membership

Cohort 1: The approved cohort 1 grantees include five consortia of districts or schools collaborating to develop their local accountability system and six districts or schools working independently. Seven grantees are working with an accountability system partner, including Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), University of Colorado (CU) Boulder, CU Denver, Breezy Strategies, Marzano Academies, Momentum Strategy and Research, Generation Schools, WestEd and Cognia. The grantees represent a wide variety of district and school sizes across the state, and the projects are quite varied in scope. In June 2021, Garfield 16 declined continuation in the grant due to conflicting priorities because of the pandemic. A more detailed list of the grantees and partners can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Local Accountability Systems Grantees

PROJECT FOCUS	LEAD APPLICANT	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS	REGION	ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PARTNER
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MEASURES AND METRICS	Boulder Valley School District RE-2	Cañon City School District Greeley-Evans School District 6 Gunnison Watershed School District	Metro Pikes Peak North Central West Central	CU Boulder -- CADRE
COMPETENCY BASED LEARNING	Delta County 50J - Vision Charter Academy	--	Southwest	Momentum Strategy and Research
STUDENT CENTERED ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM (S-CAP)	Buena Vista School District	Akron School District Buffalo School District East Otero School District Frenchman School District (Fleming) Hanover School District Haxtun School District Holyoke School District Kit Carson School District La Veta School District Las Animas School District Monte Vista School District West Grand School District Wiggins School District	Pikes Peak North Central Northwest Southwest Southeast Northeast	CU Denver -- The Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER) and Breezy Strategies
SUPPLEMENTAL DASHBOARD	Denver Public Schools	--	Metro	--
SUPPLEMENTAL DASHBOARD	District 49 (Falcon)	--	Pikes Peak	--
SUPPLEMENTAL DASHBOARD AND RUBRIC	Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8	--	Pikes Peak	WestEd
MEASURING OPPORTUNITY PILOT PROJECT (MOPP) WITH ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES	Jefferson County - New America School Lakewood	Brady Exploration School (Jefferson Co) Denver Justice High School (Denver) Durango Big Picture School (Durango) HOPE Online High School (Douglas Co) Jefferson High School (Greeley) New America School - Aurora (CSI) New America Schools - Thornton (Adams 12) Southwest Open School (Cortez) Rise Up Community School (Denver) Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs)	Metro North Central West Central Southwest	Momentum Strategy and Research
SUPPLEMENTAL DASHBOARD	Jefferson County Public School District	--	Metro	--

SUPPLEMENTAL DASHBOARD	Northeast Colorado BOCES	Plateau School District RE-5 Revere School District Yuma School District 1	Northeast	NWEA, Generation Schools
COMPETENCY BASED LEARNING	Westminster Public Schools	Brush School District RE-2J	Metro Northeast	Cognia, Marzano Academies, and CU Denver -- C-PEER

*Garfield 16 is no longer participating in the grant, due to constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remaining funds were shared between current grantees, as eligible.

Cohort 2: In June 2024, the State Board of Education approved a second cohort of the Local Accountability System Grant, including four continuing grantees: S-CAP, the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP) renamed as Balanced Accountability & School Improvement Cycle (BASIC), District 49 and Vision Charter Academy in Delta County 50. Four new school level grantees were also awarded: Southwest Open Charter School, Rise Up Community School, AXIS International Academy, and High Point Academy. This cohort includes two consortia, one district, and five single schools including one Alternative Education Campus (AEC), three charters and one dual AEC/charter. Four grantees are working with an accountability system partner, who include CU Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER), Breezy Strategies, and Momentum Strategy and Research.

PROJECT FOCUS	LEAD APPLICANT	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS	REGION	ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM PARTNER
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTING AND ALTERNATIVE PLANNING	Delta County 50J - Vision Charter Academy	--	Southwest	Momentum Strategy and Research
STUDENT CENTERED ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM (S-CAP)	Kit Carson School District	Akron School District Buena Vista School District Burlington School District Dolores School District East Otero School District Ellicott School District Hanover School District Haxtun School District Holyoke School District Ignacio School District Karval School District La Veta School District Las Animas School District Monte Vista School District Sargent School District Sierra Grande School District West Grand School District Wiggins School District	Pikes Peak North Central Northwest Southwest Southeast Northeast	CU Denver -- The Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER) and Breezy Strategies
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTING	District 49 (Falcon)	--	Pikes Peak	--
BALANCED ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CYCLE (BASIC) WITH ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES	Jefferson County - New America School Lakewood	AUL Denver (Denver) HOPE Online High School (Douglas Co) Southwest Open School (Cortez) Rise Up Community School (Denver) GOAL Academy High School (District 49)	Metro North Central West Central Southwest	Momentum Strategy and Research

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING	Southwest Open Charter School	--		Southwest	Momentum Strategy and Research
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTING	Rise Up Community School	--		Metro	
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING	High Point Academy	--		Metro	
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTING	AXIS International Academy	--		North Central	

CDE Activities to Support Grantees

During the 2020-21 Year 1 extension, CDE and the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) facilitated a series of grantee convenings in June 2020, October 2020, March 2021, and a culminating May 2021 session to record the Local Accountability System presentations. Each session included presentations from grantees on their work to date and networking opportunities to discuss successes and challenges. CEI and CDE also provided technical assistance to grantees upon request. Available topics included measurement development, reporting and visualization, and stakeholder engagement. Surveys of grantees demonstrated that they found the technical assistance opportunities valuable, and greatly appreciated the opportunity to network, troubleshoot, and share learnings across grantees.

During 2021-22 (Year 2), CDE facilitated grantee convenings in October 2021, March 2022, and May 2022. These convenings included networking, planning, a learning session on local measures presented by the Center for Assessment (NCIEA), and discussions on evaluation planning and grantee mapping. Additionally, CDE and grantees collaboratively presented at the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) conferences in February 2022 and July 2022.

During 2022-23 (Year 3), CDE facilitated grantee convenings in March 2023 and May 2023. This included a session on developing and determining reliability of social-emotional learning measures, and a session on engaging stakeholders and local boards in local accountability systems. CDE again presented at the CASE conference in July 2023 with grantees.

During 2023-24 (Year 4), CDE facilitated two grantee convenings in January 2023 and April 2024. The first session included evaluation planning, coordination for presentation to the 1241: Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force. The second convening was held publicly in coordination with a 1241 Task Force meeting. This full day convening included presentations and collaborative work time with 1241 committee members, as well as grantee wrap-up and report out activities.

For the 2024-25 period, cohort 2 began with an initial kickoff meeting between CDE and each cohort 2 grantee lead. Grantees are in the planning stages for grant activities and have filled out a baseline implementation evaluation rubric to set the stage for CDE's internal evaluation efforts. Convenings are scheduled for January and April.
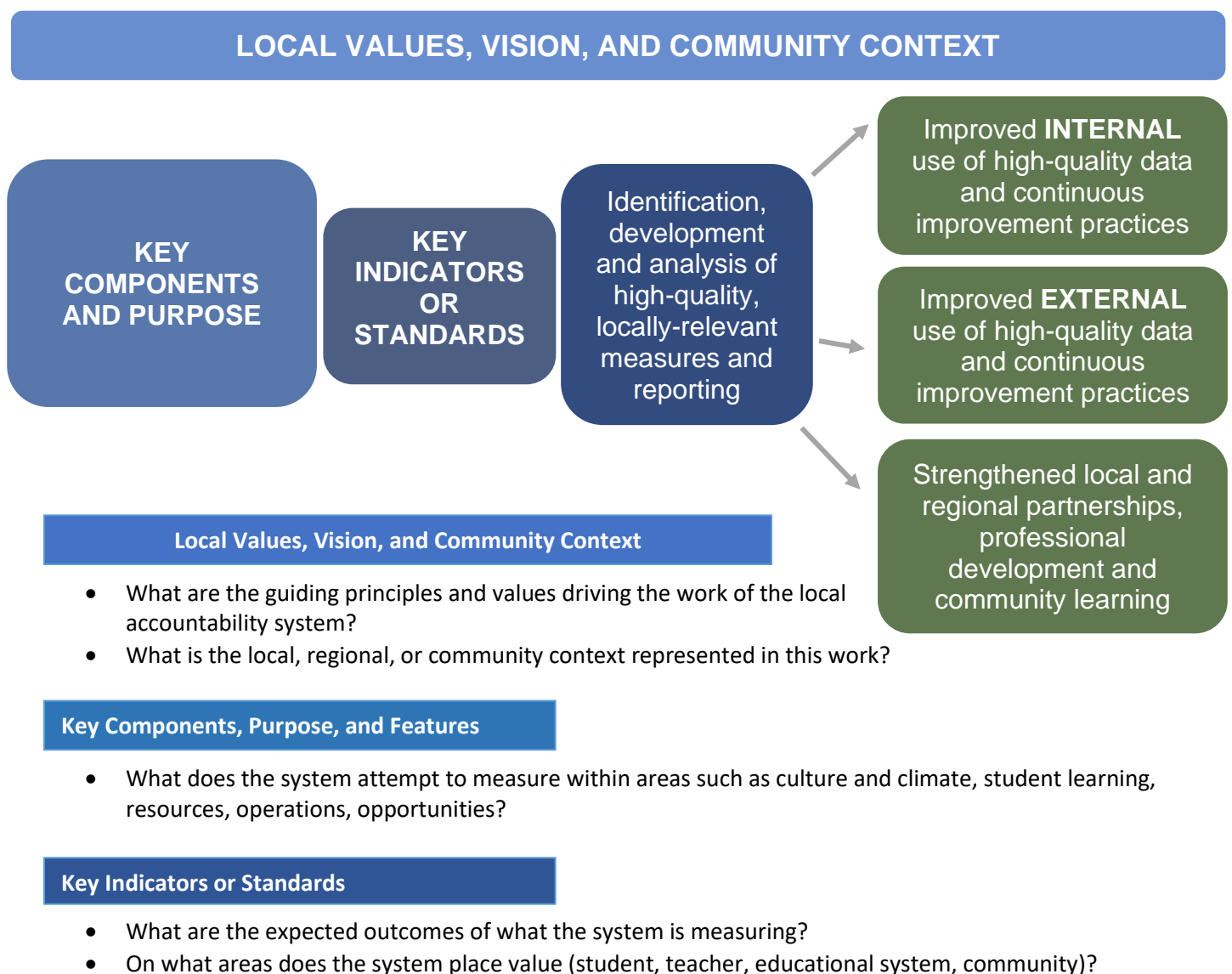
Grant Progress

In Year 4 of cohort 1, members worked to spend down final funds, engaged in evaluation activities, and have been revisiting their work to determine ways to make the systems sustainable after grant funds have been expended. More information on grant activities in year four is available in Appendix A.

Theory of Action

To support grantees in articulating why there is a need for locally developed measures, CDE asked grantees to articulate a logic model to describe how the grantee's values and vision drive what is prioritized in the district, what is collected, analyzed, and reported, and how those results are used. Usage is split into three categories: internal process improvement; external community engagement; and general system improvement through shared learning.

Illustration 1. Flow Map of the Local Accountability System Theory of Action

LOCAL VALUES, VISION, AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

KEY COMPONENTS AND PURPOSE → **KEY INDICATORS OR STANDARDS** → Identification, development and analysis of high-quality, locally-relevant measures and reporting

- Improved **INTERNAL** use of high-quality data and continuous improvement practices
- Improved **EXTERNAL** use of high-quality data and continuous improvement practices
- Strengthened local and regional partnerships, professional development and community learning

Local Values, Vision, and Community Context

- What are the guiding principles and values driving the work of the local accountability system?
- What is the local, regional, or community context represented in this work?

Key Components, Purpose, and Features

- What does the system attempt to measure within areas such as culture and climate, student learning, resources, operations, opportunities?

Key Indicators or Standards

- What are the expected outcomes of what the system is measuring?
- On what areas does the system place value (student, teacher, educational system, community)?

Measures and Reporting

- What data sources and measures are incorporated into the model? How are measures shared and summarized?
- How are results ranked, rated, or weighed?

Utilizing Results and Shared Learning

- How are the data and reports utilized by consortium, districts, and schools for continuous improvement within the system?
- How are data and reports utilized by families, stakeholders, peer districts or schools, or the broader community?
- How has the system led to strengthened local or regional partnerships, professional development, or community learning?

Presentations on Theory of Action

In Spring 2021, CDE, in partnership with CEI, recorded presentations of grantee progress in their system development. Presentations included an overview of the system's component parts, as well as lessons learned and recommendations for the state. These recordings are available on the Local Accountability System Website.

Local Accountability System Grantee Website Video 1
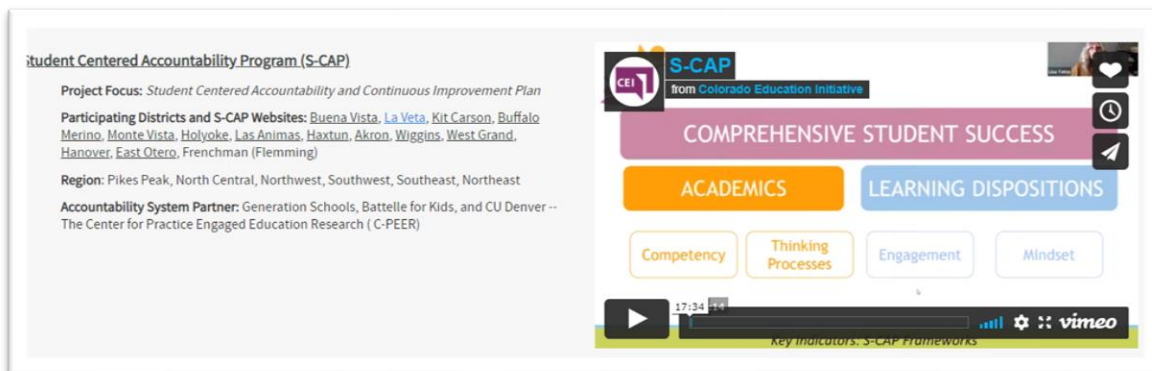
System Development

Each grantee has had a unique path in developing or improving their local accountability systems. Some grantees joined with fully formed infrastructure, while others, like Boulder Valley School District, worked with their accountability partner and stakeholders to consolidate their local values and mission into key components, develop standards, indicators and metrics, develop reports on those indicators, and develop a system of data usage for continuous improvement.

Boulder Valley School District Graphic 1 – Overview of stakeholder engagement process, including District Accountability Committee, CU Boulder research, Stakeholder Committees, and Board of Education feedback.

Example Theory of Action: Cañon City

Below is an example of a grantee's local accountability system logic model and a description of each component.

"The Cañon City School District believes that by taking an in-depth look at each of its schools on an annual basis, through the lens of what it collectively strives to achieve as an educational system, it will identify opportunities for improvement and growth to assist schools in more effectively reaching their goals."

Cañon City's Mission and Vision

The work Cañon City is doing stems from their commitment to innovative opportunities and the focus on specific trait and skill development.

Cañon City Graphic 1 District Vision, Mission and Core Beliefs that drive the Local Accountability System

Key Components, Purpose, and Features

The SELF framework focuses on specific traits (e.g., Civility, Agency, Innovation, Knowledge) and skills (e.g., Collaboration, Leadership, Contribution, Reflection). This becomes the basis for measurement.

Cañon City Graphic 2 – Student Empowered Learning Framework Traits and Skills

Indicators, Measures and Reporting

Cañon City then uses a district created rubric aligned to the indicators and standards to observe instruction, survey families, students, and staff, and evaluate building activities. They then complement the observational and perception data with academic, social-emotional, and behavioral data. All inputs are deliberated and calibrated at the district level, and a web-based report is shared with staff and each school community.

Cañon City Graphic 3 – Rating system for evaluation rubric

Cañon City Graphic 4 – Public reporting components, including Instructional Review rubric results, survey results, and School Performance Framework data
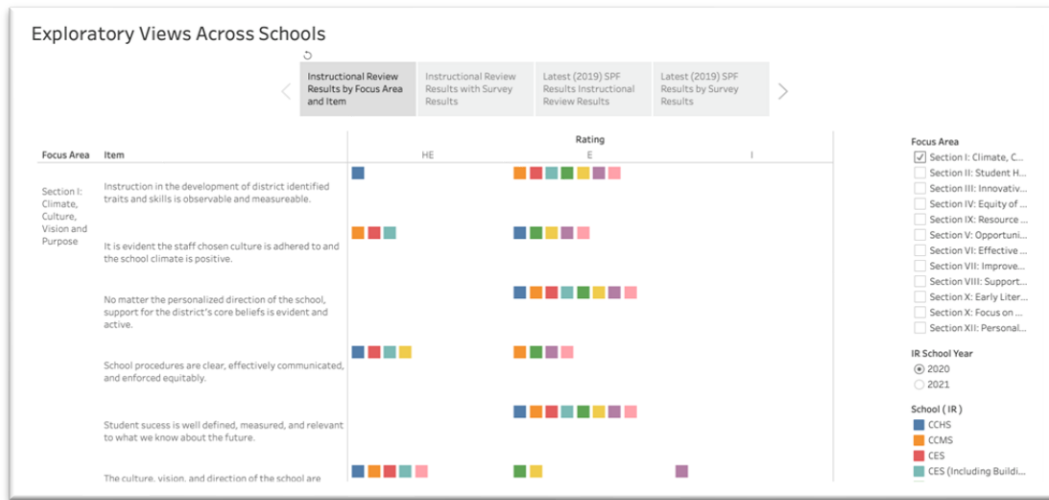
Utilizing Results and Shared Learning

Internal Usage for Continuous Improvement:

A web based report is available for administrators to see comparisons across schools within the district.

Cañon City Graphic 5 – Visualization of rubric and survey results across the district's schools

External Usage for Public Engagement:

A website for each school (e.g., Cañon City Middle School) is available to communicate finalized results to the community.

Cañon City Graphic 6 – Website of Cañon City Middle School that includes rubric and data results and reflection.

Strengthened Regional Partnerships, Community Learning and Professional Development:

Cañon City worked with community leaders, including the mayor, business council, community college dean, and community health administrators to develop the rubric, surveys and site visits. This was done to ensure the community was supportive of the process and outcomes. The system works to create internal and external understanding of the vision, mission, core beliefs, and profile of a graduate. Work with the accountability partner, CU Boulder's CADRE, and the consortium of Boulder Valley School District, Greeley School District and

Gunnison-Watershed School District allows for shared learning and system improvements (e.g., rubric review, development of exemplars).

Example Theory of Action: Student Centered Accountability Program

The Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP) was established in 2015 when five rural districts (S-CAP Core Districts) came together to establish a collaborative approach to accountability that would drive system improvement in rural settings where state accountability reporting was often limited. This aim was initially and continues to be driven by peer site visit/feedback S-CAP calls *System Support Reviews (SSRs)*. S-CAP includes 17 rural Colorado school districts and two external partners, Breezy Strategies and the University of Colorado, Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER).

### Key Components, Purpose, and Features

S-CAP was established to develop and maintain a cross-district collaborative approach to accountability and improvement that is timely, meaningful, considers the whole child, and engages community stakeholders in a continuous cycle of improvement and innovation supported by a network of peers.

S-CAP Core Values
1. *Emphasize every student and the whole student.* S-CAP uses measures beyond state test scores including local academic and learning dispositions measures.
2. *Accountability means continuous improvement.* Integrate the evaluation of the systems intended to support meaningful learning for every student in order to uncover weaknesses and highlight strengths to build strategic plans of continuous improvement.
3. *What gets measured and reported gets done.* Expand and enrich what gets measured so the results for students are also expanded and enriched.
4. *Accountability impact increases with local stakeholder investment*. Local boards review multiple student data and results from system support reviews directly connected to district priority needs.

Indicators and Outcomes

S-CAP 1 – Comprehensive Student Success Graphic
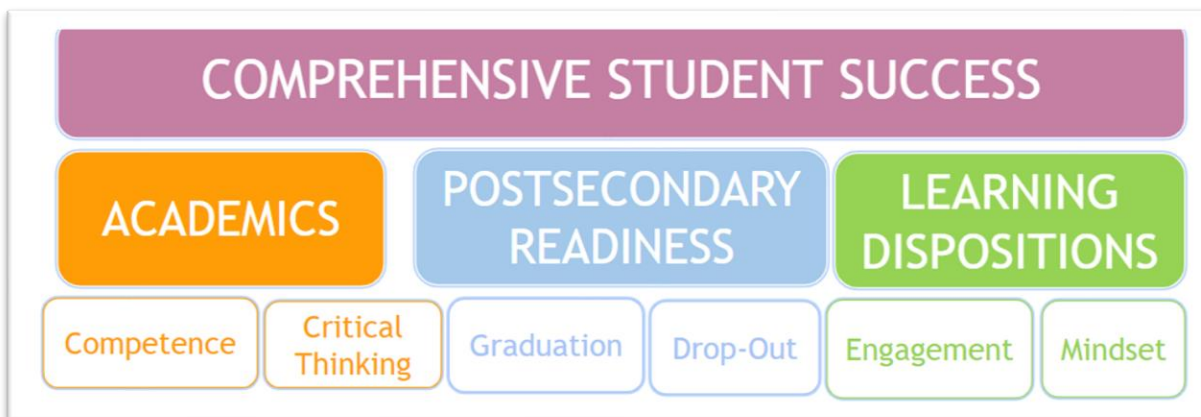
S-CAP focuses on outcomes at the ***student*** and ***system*** (district, school, and classroom) levels with detailed indicators described in frameworks for each.
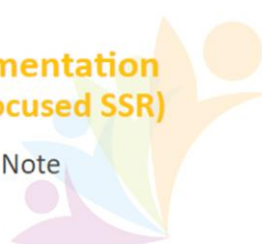- At the ***student level***, indicators focus on *academics, learning dispositions, and post-secondary readiness*. Academic competency is directly aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards. Learning dispositions extend student outcomes to encompass the whole child.

- S-CAP indicators of *system support for student success* (at classroom and school/district system levels) include: Curriculum and Instruction, Leadership and Vision, Learning Climate, Professional Learning, and Resource Allocation.
    - This includes a review of district implementation of strategic priorities such as implementation success, stakeholder communication and resource allocation.

Measures and Reporting

Annually S-CAP districts participate in one of three different types of System Support Reviews through which peer reviewers (educators from other districts) review, analyze, and interpret a variety of evidence sources and provide feedback to the district receiving the review. The S-CAP websites serve as the district's alternative format unified improvement plans and include key state accountability and assessment dashboards. More detailed reporting is also made available for internal teams.

Comprehensive Student Success

Academics

- School/District Performance Frameworks
- State Assessment Results
- Local Standardized Assessment Results
- Locally Developed Performance Tasks
- Student Thinking Processes (teacher observations)

Learning Dispositions

- S-CAP Student, Family and Teacher Survey Results
- Classroom Observation
- Student Focus Groups

System Support

- Background Information and Key Documents
- Annual Student, Family and Teacher Survey Results
- Focus Groups/ Interviews
- Classroom and Schoolwide Observations

Strategic Priority Implementation (additional evidence for Focused SSR)

- Audit of Strategic Priorities Note Catcher

S-CAP 2 – Measures Graphic

Utilizing Results and Shared Learning
Internal Usage for Continuous Improvement:
The evidence and results of the S-CAP district System Support Reviews (SSRs) are used by district leaders to develop and adjust their strategic priorities and allocate resources. Generally, districts identify four priorities, emerging from the SSRs findings.

External Usage for Public Engagement:
Each S-CAP district has an S-CAP website that provides public reporting on SSR evidence, results, and ensuing strategic priorities and planning.

Strengthened Regional Partnerships, Community Learning and Professional Development:
S-CAP has become a networked improvement community (NIC) for professional learning among and across district and school leaders and teachers. Thus, district staff learn with and from one another about various aspects of their strategic priorities. The peer review and dialogue about evidence, including observation of classroom practices expands educator experiences with effective practice and models evidence-based reflection on practice.

S-CAP Annual System Evaluation and Improvement
CU Denver's C-PEER annually evaluates the quality and use of S-CAP data collection tools – survey instruments, focus group questions, interview questions, classroom observation protocols, document review and background information template. During the annual S-CAP Summer Summit, district staff use analyses of SSRs conducted during the prior school year (provided by C-PEER) to reflect on the process and evidence gathered during the SSRs, and the feedback provided to districts receiving SSRs to make recommendations on SSR improvement for the next school year.

Grantee Flexibility: Alternative Improvement Plans

Three grantees, Fountain-Fort Carson, S-CAP member districts and a subset of NE BOCES districts took advantage of the alternative improvement planning format flexibility provided by the grant. CDE reviewed the district templates to ensure that the alternative format met state and federal requirements and State Board of Education rules. District and school plans were submitted and posted on the CDE website under the link "Alternative Improvement Plan."

Performance Frameworks - Official Performance Ratings

Monte Vista C-8 (2740)

59 NORTH BROADWAY
MONTE VISTA, CO 81144
County: RIO GRANDE

Number of Schools: 6
View School List

Framework Report PDFs 🔍
Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)
Alternative Improvement Plan
Accreditation Contract PDF
Accreditation Contract Plain Text

Performance Framework Graphic 1 – CDE Website that includes Frameworks, Improvement Plan or Alternative Improvement Plan

Grantee Flexibility: Supplemental Performance Reports

Grantees are eligible to provide supplemental performance reports to the Department that are accessible on the CDE SchoolView website. Some grantee supplemental reporting is presented in various formats based on district size, system components, and reporting infrastructure.

Reports may be:
- Combined, single access point data dashboards, such as:
  - Jefferson County's School Insights
  - Boulder Valley's strategic planning metrics;
- Individualized school reports such as:
  - The Measuring Opportunites Pilot Program (MOPP) Supplemental Performance Reports; or
- Comprehensive websites that include both alternative improvement planning and data reporting dashboards such as:
  - S-CAP's System Support Review (SSR) rubric based dashboards, strategic priorities, academic dashboards and Learning Disposition dashboards.
  - Fountain-Fort Carson's academic performance page displays district assessments (e.g., DIBELS, Illuminate) while the culture and community page includes attendance, behavior, student and family perception, and faculty and staff feedback data.
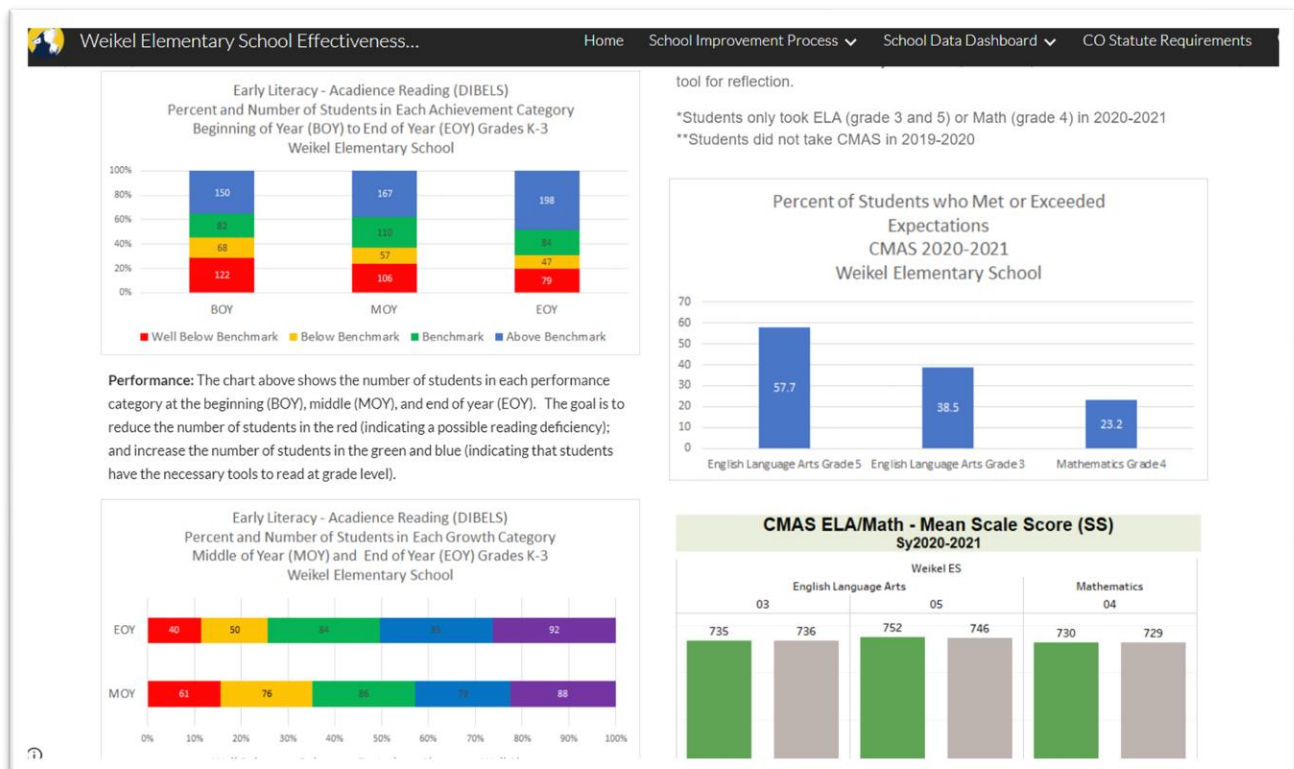
Fountain-Fort Carson Website 1 – Each school has a website that includes the improvement planning process, a school data dashboard, and a review of site visit rubric results.

- NE BOCES' websites including strategic priorities, district performance, and additional accountability requirements.
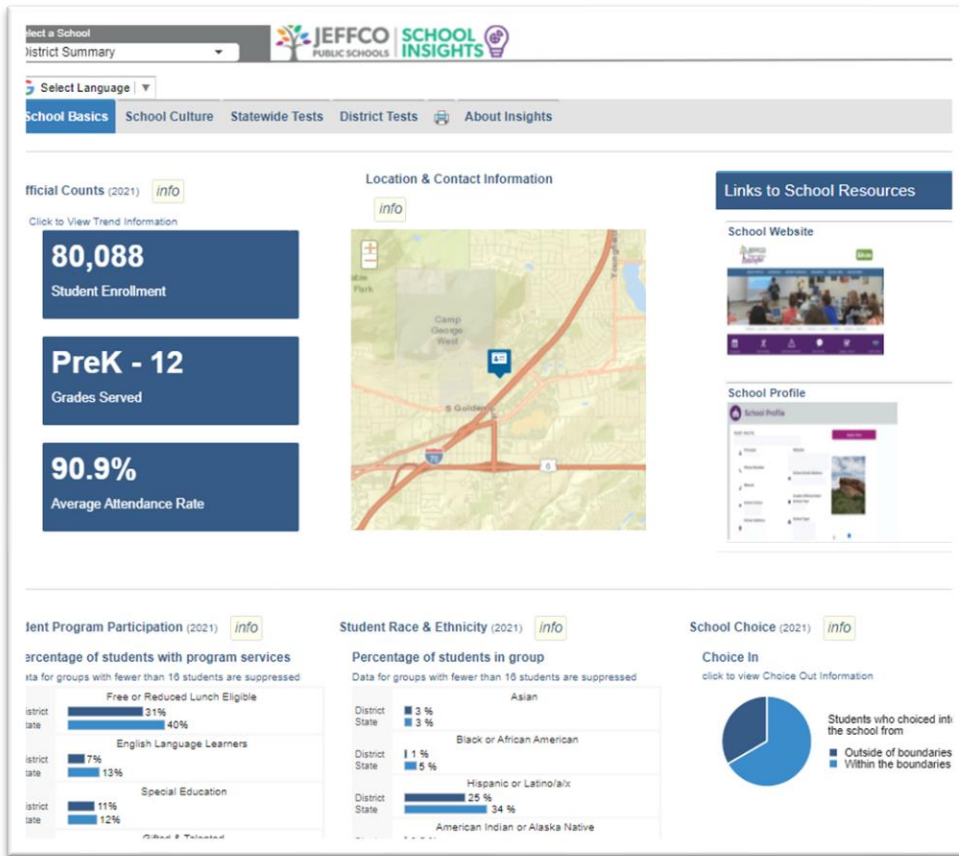
Jefferson County Website 1 – School Insights includes data on school culture, statewide
data, district tests, and school basics.

- The MOPP Supplemental Performance Reports are currently the only reports individualized to the school and not connected directly to alternative improvement planning. These reports include measures such as Alternative Education Campus Socio-Emotional Learning (AEC SEL) survey, Student Centered Growth System results, Qualitative Review Cycle and Unique Measures. These reports have been posted on the SchoolView website.

Performance Framework Graphic 2 – CDE Website that includes Supplemental Performance Report

MOPP - Southwest Open School Supplemental Report 1

MOPP - Southwest Open School Supplemental Report 2

Measures and Indicators

Measures and Performance Indicators Included in Each Local System

Grantees are required to report the measures and indicators utilized to evaluate progress toward implementation of local priorities. These can include summative and formative assessments of student achievement and growth, process, progress, opportunity, participation or perception data, rubric based evaluations, and trend or change information.

Table 3. Measures and Performance Indicators by Project
Details collected from grantees by CDE and CU Denver C-PEER grant mappings

Project	Description of Project Measures and Performance Indicators
Boulder Valley School District, Cañon City School District, Greeley, Gunnison Watershed	• Attendance, Discipline Incidents, school climate survey (Boulder Valley) • Homework completion, enrichment programs/activities offered, participation in enrichment programs/activities, enrichment quality (Boulder Valley) • Local 10-indicator school performance rubric: School Climate & Culture, Student Health and Social-Emotional Wellness, Innovative Instruction (Cañon City) • Equity of Opportunity, Opportunities for Learning Experiences, Effective Assessment Practices, Improvement of Instruction and Learning, Support for Positive Student Behavior, Resource Acquisition and Maintenance of a Safe Learning Environment, Parent and Student Perception of School (Cañon City) • Physical space evaluation, counseling offerings, restorative practice offerings, enrichment offerings (Gunnison Watershed) • Attendance, discipline, perception surveys (Gunnison Watershed) • Blended learning offerings, personalized learning goals set (Greeley) • School climate survey, graduation competencies, graduation rate, post secondary opportunities (Greeley) Boulder Valley School District supplemental metric reports https://www.bvsd.org/about/strategic-plan/metrics Cañon City School District Example supplemental reports and alternative planning https://echoesfromcanon.weebly.com/cchs-2021-instructional-program-review.html https://shorturl.at/lDHUW
Delta - Vision Charter Academy	• Family involvement • Community opportunities • Individualized education • Individual design skill development • Search Institute's Developmental Assets Profile

Student Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP)	Student Academic Competency • School and District Performance framework Reports • State administered assessment results reports (CMAS, SAT/PSAT, and optionally WIDA Access) • State required locally administered assessment results reports-- K-3 reading assessment kindergarten readiness assessment (optional). • Locally administered standardized assessment results reports (e.g., NWEA, Galileo) • Other local assessments Student Thinking Processes Evidence • Locally Developed teacher ratings Learning Dispositions Evidence • S-CAP Classroom/School observation on-line data collection tool • S-CAP Student Survey • S-CAP Teacher Survey (Teaching and Learning Conditions Colorado Survey + S-CAP items) • Attendance Dashboard • Disciplinary Actions Reports (optional) • Post-Secondary/ Workforce Readiness Evidence • Graduation/Dropout/ Matriculation Dashboard • Alumni surveys (optional) System Support Evidence • S-CAP Student, Family and Teacher Surveys. • Document Review and Background Information Template • Overview of District Template (including brief description of academic performance. • Focus group questions (students, teachers, family) and leadership interview questions and note catchers. • S-CAP Classroom /School observation on-line data collection tool Implementation of strategic priorities Evidence: • Audit of Strategic Priorities Note Catcher • Focused SSR Focus Group Questions (customized) Example supplemental reports and alternative planning https://scapaguilarschools.com https://akronscap.org https://arriba-flaglerscap.com/ https://scapbvschools.com/ https://merinoscap.org/ https://scap.burlingtonk12.org https://eosdscap.com https://scap.hanoverhornets.org/ https://hcosdscap.org https://ignacioscap.org https://karvalschoolscap.com http://kcscap.com/ https://lavetaschoolsscap.org https://lascap81054.wordpress.com https://scapmvschools.org/ https://westgrandscap.org https://wigginsscap.com/

Denver Public Schools	• Whole child, school culture, and additional academic measures
District 49	• Student learning, school culture, safety and security, and leadership and operations. https://www.d49.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=9928

Fountain Fort Carson School District 8	• School Effectiveness Matrix – Evaluation Rubric
	▪ Academic Performance:
	   – Standard 1: Standards–Based Instruction (6 indicators)
	   – Standard 2: Assessment for, as, and of Learning (6 indicators)
	   – Standard 3: Teaching and Learning (6 indicators)
	▪ Learning Environment:
	   – Standard 4: School Culture and Environment (6 indicators)
	   – Standard 5: Student Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Health (4 indicators)
	▪ Organizational Effectiveness:
	   – Standard 6: Home, School, and Community Partnerships (5 indicators)
	   – Standard 7: School and Classroom Leadership (5 indicators)
	   - Standard 8: Comprehensive and Effective Planning (5 indicators)
	
	Example supplemental reports and alternative planning
	https://sites.google.com/ffc8.org/fountainmiddleschooleffectiven/home?authuser=0

Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)	• MOPP School Accountability Roadmaps included measures for the following:
	   • Academic Standing: NWEA MAP data, credit accrual
	   • Student Engagement: Student return rate, discipline rate, Panorama SEL Survey results, student re-engagement rate
	   • Postsecondary Workforce Readiness: Course completion rate, Work Keys Certificate Rate
	   • Social Emotional Well Being: CASEL SEL Framework
	
	Example supplemental metric reports
	https://cedar2.cde.state.co.us/documents/SPF2022/AlternativeFrameworks/2035-8133.pdf

Jefferson County School Insights	• School Basics-- Enrollment (over time, choice in/out, demographics, federal program participation) • School Culture (student engagement, family engagement, and teaching and learning conditions) • Academic Performance (Statewide and District administered assessment results, Graduation and Dropout) Example supplemental metric reports https://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/schools/school_insights
NE BOCES	• NWEA MAP achievement and growth targets • College Board, ASVAB, CogAT, STAR • Postsecondary success data: postsecondary enrollment, awards, and outcomes • Student Well Being and Learning Conditions Diagnostic Survey Example supplemental metric reports https://www.studentcenteredreporting.org/academic-assessments https://www.studentcenteredreporting.org/climate-dispositions lonestar-district.weebly.com yuma-district.weebly.com revere-district.weebly.com haxtun-district.weebly.com plateau-district.weebly.com
Westminster and Brush	• High Reliability Schools Measures

- Level 1: Safe, Supportive and Collaborative Culture
- Level 2: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom
- Level 3: Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum
- Level 4: Standards-Referenced Reporting
- Level 5: Competency Based Education

External Evaluation: Evidence Provided by the Grantees of Effectiveness in Measuring Quality

As required by statute (C.R.S. 22-11-705(5)(a)), a full external evaluation of the local accountability systems has been completed. This evaluation is facilitated by an external contractor and managed by CDE. CDE selected Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates (APA) to conduct the external evaluation. Part one and two of the evaluation is included in Appendix B. Part one is a qualitative analysis which includes generalized quality criteria for local accountability systems, an overview of grantee challenges and opportunities, grantee reasoning for engaging with local accountability infrastructure, and an assessment of grantee and accountability partner success in driving continuous improvement efforts. Part two is a quantitative evaluation using state and local grantee data that analyzes student and system outcomes using local and state measures. The evaluation also summarizes the learning generated through the duration of the cohort, focused specifically on potential implications for the Colorado state accountability system.

Additionally, some project participants are further providing local program evaluation by engaging with internal and external audiences to gather feedback. For example, the S-CAP System Support Review (SSR) and Fountain Fort Carson's Student Effectiveness Matrix have received positive anecdotal feedback from participating school and district leaders regarding the value of formal reviews, including leadership development, improvement targets and evaluation. Accountability System Partners such as CU Boulder and CU Denver have also been engaging in research and evaluation of system components and processes.

Preliminary Analysis: CU Denver's Center for Practice Engaged Education Research

To prepare for the project evaluation outlined in the legislation, the Department contracted with C-PEER to conduct grantee interviews, develop descriptive site mappings, and lift out high level overarching observations.

This is a summary of the overarching themes for the projects:

- All grantees used and supplemented the CDE School and/or District Performance Frameworks (SPF/DPF), a core component of the Colorado state accountability system. The standard SPF and DPF performance indicators (and associated measures) focus exclusively on the *academic outcomes of students.*
- With their local accountability systems, school and district leaders aim to provide a more comprehensive and, in most cases, a more nuanced story of the performance of their schools to supplement the SPF reports.
- The systems provide feedback to local stakeholders about their schools which includes an expanded set of performance indicators related to the success of their students. Grantees explained that these additional performance indicators respond to their local context -- reflecting values identified by their communities, the characteristics of the students they serve,

or the model/design of their schools. Several described their local systems as focusing on the "whole child" or telling a "fuller story" of their students' growth.

- Examples of additional student-level indicators or outcomes include: social emotional learning, student engagement, student dispositions towards learning, student well-being, and nonacademic outcomes related to being a prepared graduate (e.g., critical thinking, life skills, and accessing learning opportunities).

- The local accountability and improvement systems also include school or district performance indicators that *expand beyond the academic outcomes* of their students.
  - Examples include the following: School Climate/Culture; Curriculum, Instruction, Leadership and Vision, Professional Learning Business/Community School Partnerships, and the Alignment of Learning Offerings to Student Needs.
  - These systems used a variety of types of evidence to measure these indicators, including student, family, and educator surveys (including expanding the use of Teaching and Learning Conditions Colorado survey); student, family, and educator focus groups; teacher observations of students; site visitor observations of classrooms; student learning presentations/products; and student participation in advanced courses.

- All the systems established mechanisms by which school leaders and staff received feedback that was actionable, timely and relevant for their context.

- Grantees use a variety of types of evidence, including local leaders reflecting upon and presenting their understanding of their school or district performance as part of their systems and placed significant emphasis on expanded involvement of internal and external (community, parent) involvement in their accountability and improvement processes.

- Several established time and processes for educators and leaders to learn with and from one another (across schools or districts). For example, both MOPP and S-CAP describe the schools and districts in their partnership as a networked learning community with built-in time and structures to learn together.

- Many of these local accountability systems incorporate site visits that engaged different school/district stakeholders and colleagues from other schools or districts in providing feedback to leaders about their schools' performance.

- Other projects primarily emphasized enhanced visualization of and support for analyzing and interpreting evidence related to school performance (Jefferson County and NE BOCES).

Key Summary from APA's Part 1 Evaluation:

The goal of this evaluation is to support learning about innovative practices by LASG grantees and explore their generalizability to the rest of the state.

The evaluation was designed to address the following questions:

1. How do successful grantees design and implement effective continuous improvement systems as part of their accountability systems?
2. What are the successes, challenges, and lessons learned, and what are the contextual factors at each site that may have contributed to those successes and challenges?
3. What measures do these accountability systems use and how?
   a. Are there leading indicators of success that grantees have observed or identified when implementing their local accountability measures?
   b. What is the perceived reliability and validity of these measures?

Initial Findings:

- Grantees felt the grant has been successful while also continuing to value the current state and federal accountability systems.
  - This evaluation found the LASG program to be a success in that it has helped schools and districts develop local accountability and improvement systems. Through this work, new valid and reliable measures of local goals and processes have been developed or identified for use in local accountability systems.
  - While grantees work to address perceived shortfalls of the current state and federal accountability systems with their locally developed system, this does not mean that they do not see value in the state system. For example, the LASG has built capacity to better implement the state's current accountability system for AECs, by building capacity within AECs to better identify accountability measures aligned with the individual school goals.
- The LASG participant survey respondents agreed that they have either met or are making progress to grant goals.
  - Eight of nine grant activities were rated as a success, with the only activity not rated as a success being "capacity to engage the public." Respondents also identified challenges related to implementing and maintaining data infrastructure and responding to changes due to leadership turnover.
  - Challenges were most often associated with data, including capacity to make data informed decisions and data infrastructure (e.g., data dashboards, data storage and data cleaning).
  - The largest sustainability challenge identified by grantees is on-going leadership buy-in. Particularly challenging is turnover of local school boards and district superintendents, which can lead to changes in priorities and goals. Often the work associated with the LASG involves district leadership. This work was described as valuable but time-consuming. New leadership priorities can lead to different leadership focus and use of leadership time.
  - Support from CDE was described as helpful. For example, program participants said the posting of their alternative reports and plans on the CDE website helped increase the credibility of their work on alternative accountability systems.
- Grantees shared the importance of district alignment efforts.
  - While it is not clear that the measures themselves would be useful to other districts, what is valuable is the design work connecting local vision and mission, community priorities, and leadership priorities to the aligned measures. CDE could support the field in discriminating measures (e.g., goals, outcomes, evidence of validity and reliability, supports to build the capacity to use the resources).
  - A key question is what lessons or measures or tools developed through the LASG can be disseminated or used by other districts. CDE staff and current grantees have used sessions at the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) conference to increase district leaders' knowledge of LASG activities.
  - The measures developed by LASG grantees, including peer review processes, could be valuable to other districts. However, the value comes from the measures and processes supporting locally developed goals. Without the connection between measures, processes, and local goals, as well as leadership buy-in and community engagement, the measures and processes developed by LASG grantees are less valuable to other districts. Moreover, it is important to note that many of the locally developed measures are regularly updated and changed as challenges with the measure are identified and as goals and needs of LASG grantees evolve.

- To support the dissemination and use of goals, the state could further engage in supporting discrimination, description, and interpretation of the measures for other sites. This could include the development of materials that clearly describe the goals and outcomes that are measured, the evidence of validity and reliability, and the resources needed to build the capacity to use the new measures.
- Grantees value statewide public reporting of their local work.
  - The LASG grantees value the ability to link their accountability plans within the state's website. Having the local system recognized by the state provides value and credibility to local efforts. This capacity to link the local and state accountability and improvement efforts should be expanded to make it easier for local accountability reports to be shared along with state SPF and DPF reports.
- Privacy concerns remain an issue with the state accountability and data reporting.
  - A challenge identified with the current state system by local grantees is that privacy concerns override district staff's ability to access all state accountability data for smaller districts and schools. Current public SPF and DPF reports do not report personally identifiable information (PII) such as achievement and growth scores. Private reports are available to district staff, but knowledge of the availably of and how to access these newer private reports is a challenge. Making it easier for small districts to access and use complete (N of 1) state accountability measures about the students within the districts will address this challenge identified by interviewees.
- Accountability Partnerships provide valuable additional capacity. External partnerships build capacity in schools and are a valuable policy tool.
  - The Accountability Partners have provided valuable capacity to local districts as they do this work. Partners serve as technical experts supporting many grant activities including development of theories of action, development and validation of measures and serving as thought partners to grantees. The use of external partnerships to help build capacity in schools and districts is a powerful policy tool and appears to be one way the state can help local districts build capacity.

Key Summary from APA's Part 2 Evaluation

The evaluation design was created to meet the legislative requirement for a quantitative evaluation as well. This evaluation addresses the following question:

1. Is participation in the LASG associated with improvements in the four main components of accountability systems: community engagement, goals, measures, and change?

This question was addressed through case studies of five LASG participants who volunteered to provide data showing changes in their accountability systems: Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), Fountain Fort Carson School District (FFC8), Jefferson County School District (Jeffco), MOPP and S-CAP. Each of these LASG participants provided quantitative data that illustrates changes in their local accountability system supported by the LASG grant. Three LASG participants provided data showing changes in community engagement.

1. FFC8 provided data showing their efforts resulted in increased parent engagement in community forums.
2. Jeffco provided data showing how their *School Insights* accountability framework developed as part of their LASG activities.

3. S-CAP provided evidence of increased engagement of the education community in the LASG activities through the continued growth in district participation in S-CAP during LASG implementation.

Two districts provided data showing changes in accountability measures that reflected local goals.
1. BVSD had a local goal of reducing and eliminating student discipline disparities between different racial and ethnic groups. They provided data on student suspensions that showed both a decrease in suspensions and a reduction (but not elimination) in disparities in discipline.
2. MOPP data shows use of student achievement measures that are better aligned with alternative education campus (AEC) goals is associated with increases in accountability outcomes as measured in the state's AEC school accountability frameworks.

This report is also intended to provide quantitative information on the impact of participation in the LASG on student academic outcomes. The analysis of state level accountability data does not show different changes in student growth or achievement for districts participating in LASG and districts not participating in LASG. The lack of impact associated with the LASG is not surprising given the short timeframe and the focus on changing accountability systems as a first step in the broader effort to improve student outcomes. Furthermore, LASG implementation occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic environments.

Taken together, these results show that the localities implementing the LASG can provide evidence of changes associated with local accountability systems. The evidence provided shows reported increases in community engagement in shaping accountability systems and changes in measures that better reflect local values and goals. Grantees and CDE have shared lessons learned from this process with other districts. Future evaluations have the opportunity to learn about how districts sustain these efforts as well as if and how these efforts can lead to changes in student outcomes.

Observations from CDE

The department's experience resonates with the observations made by CU-Denver C-PEER and APA. In addition, in administering the grant, CDE has also observed the following:
*   Grantees demonstrate enthusiasm and a sense of ownership of local accountability related improvement efforts as demonstrated by continued engagement with peer grantees, a focus on system evaluation, and willingness to share learnings with the public.
*   This work has required a tremendous amount of dedicated time on the part of the participating grantees. At times, the work has been deprioritized due to other competing demands.
*   Grantees benefit from ongoing convenings and technical assistance to strengthen their theory of action as they complete the complex work of their projects.
*   Site staff need assistance understanding related state and federal requirements and how to best integrate those requirements within their local innovations. State and federal requirements provide a minimum bar for identification and improvement supports.
*   Staff turnover (especially grant leadership) impacts the continuation of local accountability system activities. Some sites have been able to re-commit to the work in new ways, but others have struggled to inherit another leader's vision. In the same way, when a district shifts its mission and vision due to a new superintendent or at a local board's direction, the corresponding adjustments in assessments, technology policy, or improvement strategies may have a major impact on the local accountability system infrastructure, and redesign may be required.
*   Community/stakeholder engagement has helped grantees make new local systems responsive and meaningful throughout the identification and continuous improvement cycle.

- Grantees have focused extensively on internal and external continuous improvement efforts. Publicly articulated details on the associated district driven interventions and tiered supports once improvement plans have been developed has not been a target area.
- Annual maintenance of alternative improvement plans has taken a significant level of effort, including CDE's supervision of plans meeting state and federal requirements, collection, publishing, and review.
- CDE observed and schools and districts reported challenges with developing and maintaining data systems and web tools, including how data is collected and analyzed. External partnerships were often required but changes in cost, technology, policy, report functionality, data collection models, or data governance could lead to large scale disruptions or dissolution.
- CDE has observed that leveraging data reporting and planning documents as both a tool for district administration to supervise and coach school leaders and as community report outs can be a challenge, as the level of detail, complexity and data usage purposes are different between these groups. There is a need to investigate multi-format reporting for district, school, and community users. Grantees reported a continued need for quality stakeholder engagement.
- While CDE has been able to post grantees' reports on the state website, further investigation into processes, systems, and capacity (e.g., technology platform) would be needed before considering implementation at a broader scale.

Final Takeaways, Recommendations and Thoughts from Cohort 1 Grantees

At the final convening of grantees from cohort 1, the CDE team took notes on some high-level recommendations and best practices for districts and schools engaging in local accountability system work.

Community Integration
- The greater school community (families, students, local public) need different data reporting than school leaders, and appreciate organization by topics relevant to them.
- It is important to ensure that teachers, the community, and especially the students know how the system is supposed to be working (e.g., for districts that have developed a Portrait of a Graduate to articulate the standards students are working toward) and to ensure mutual ownership. The system should be transparent.
- Once the end user is defined, time should be spent to ensure their voice is influencing the outputs. Develop feedback loops to get a pulse on the climate continuously.
- The local accountability systems democratize data access.

Leadership – Development, System Coherence and Continuity
- Local accountability systems work in alignment with leadership development and leadership pipelines, since the systems are components of vision setting, as well as monitoring implementation of that vision. This is the work of leaders, so it is important to track, monitor and coordinate local accountability system work with efforts to support the leader talent pipeline.
  - Strong systems can support internal leadership development pipelines, including opportunities for district and school leaders to work together and do value alignment work.
- There is strength in making the local accountability systems generic. Then they are less likely to be influenced by transition, and advertised as complementary to a strategic plan, not reliant upon or in response to the strategic plan.

- The local accountability system should demonstrate its purpose and efficacy so there is a reason to keep it in times of transition.
- Districts can set expectations to maintain systems in times of transition, including training the local boards.

Ensuring System Quality and Success
- Documentation (playbooks, guidance, rubrics, conversation guides, scripts) are hugely important to sustainability, proper system usage, and system success.
    - It is important to track the current state of multiple data collections, their purpose, and how they interact and then to set expectations from the top. Without top-down management, data collections proliferate and become difficult to synthesize, coordinate, interpret and support.
    - Having high quality definitions of data is important to ensure data is used meaningfully.
    - Data should be relevant to the user (e.g., current, informative, trustworthy), and connected to an anchor (standard, reference norm, progress indicator) to ensure proper usage/interpretation. Continue to support decision science (data-based decision making, appropriate analytics for decision-making) and staff professional development around quantitative and qualitative data interpretation and usage.
- There is a lot of value in ensuring common data across schools/districts/school types, with agreed upon standards.
- Districts benefit greatly from the opportunity to network, learn from each other, learn from experts, and have external, non-biased evaluators.
- It is easy to get complex with these systems, but for sustainability, comprehension by users, and maintainability, it is important to prioritize simplicity.
- School leaders need districts to synthetize and clarify expectations for leaders. Districts set the vison, schools implement and provide evidence of implementation.

Conclusion

Despite the impacts of COVID-19 disruptions, grantees made a commitment to moving forward with the work with some alterations to the timeline. The LASG has focused on designing strong, evidence-based, scalable, maintainable, and replicable systems. Grantee engagement continues to be high throughout the school year, and grantees reported that grant supports, work with accountability partners, networking, technical assistance and presentation opportunities have led to local system reflections and improvements. With the resumption of the state and federal accountability system in 2022, grantees have been able to pair their supplemental performance reports and alternative improvement planning formats with CDE published reports. CDE will continue to update the legislature and other stakeholders on the progress of grantees through the annual grant program report and through the grant website, as the grant continues into Cohort 2, including evaluation activities performed internally by the department.

Appendix A – External Evaluations

Local Accountability System Grant Year 1 Evaluation

By Robert Reichardt, Jennifer Kramer-Wine, Charles Menke

APA Consulting

June 30, 2023

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Executive Summary

This evaluation by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) is the first outside evaluation of the Colorado Local Accountability System Grant (LASG) program. This evaluation of the LASG is required by the authorizing legislation (SB-19-204[1]). *It is important to note that this is not an evaluation of any individual grantee or Accountability Partner*, rather this is the first of two evaluations and mainly uses qualitative information to support the evaluation. The second evaluation will use more quantitative data.

LASG provides grant funds to enhance local accountability and continuous improvement systems[2]. Schools and districts participating in the LASG are also part of the statewide accountability system. LASG local accountability system is supplemental to the state accountability system and may be designed to:

   a) Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success, including additional performance indicators or measures, which may include non-academic student outcomes such as student engagement, attitudes, and dispositions toward learning;
   b) Evaluate the capacity of the public school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success; and
   c) Use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a cycle of continuous improvement (22-11-703)[3].

Grants were awarded in March 2020 by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) through a competitive process to 11 of the 14 applicants. Grant amounts range from $25,000 to $75,000 per year for a statewide grant total of $450,000 per year. The grants are intended to last for three years; however, grants were suspended soon after they were awarded for a year due to pandemic-caused disruptions. Currently 10 grantees participate in the LASG.

Grantees are engaging in a wide variety of initiatives, including public reporting dashboards, site visit protocols and rubrics, development of nonacademic indicators, stakeholder engagement processes and alternative approaches to improvement planning. All grantees have worked on defining their values, articulating their underlying structure, and defining a theory of action.

Grantees come from a wide range of contexts including small rural districts, large urban districts, as well as a consortia of alternative education campuses (AECs) as part of the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)[4]. While much of resources and attention from the state accountability system focus on

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[1] The bill text can be found here: https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb19-204
[2] Information about the grant can be found here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant
[3] This language was taken from a CDE LASG fact sheet, located at:
https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier
[4] More information about AEC accountability in Colorado can be found here: Alternative Education Campus Accountability | CDE (state.co.us)

lower rated schools and districts, i.e. schools and districts identified Priority Improvement or Turnaround, LASG grantees generally higher rated on the state accountability system.

An important feature of the LASG grant is the option to work with Accountability System Partners that provide expertise in developing measures, helping to design infrastructure, and to support data interpretation. CDE's role in the grant included helping to administer the grant, supporting on-going improvement planning that complies with federal, state, and grant requirements, facilitating convenings of grantees to support networking, planning and capacity building. CDE staff has also provided technical assistance to grantees upon request.

The goal of this evaluation is to support learning about innovative practices by LASG grantees and exploring their generalizability to the rest of the state. The evaluation uses multiple sources of data including a literature summary, review of existing documentation about the grants and grantees, a survey of grantees and their Accountability Partners, and interviews with five selected sites and their Accountability Partners. The interview sites were selected by APA in consultation with CDE to represent the wide variety of successful grant activities in varying contexts.

A brief summary of literature related to this evaluation is provided to identify the key components of accountability and continuous improvement systems. The critical elements in accountability and continuous improvement systems and their relationships are summarized Figure 1 below.

Figure ES1: Critical Elements in Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems

This representation of accountability and continuous improvement systems has several important elements. First, these elements are shown within a **cycle of improvement**, that is these systems operate in cycles of improvement, not as one-time events. Second, **information within the cycle flows bi-**

directionally. For example, efforts to identify measures can influence goals as can efforts at change. Finally, this system operates in a **context of community engagement** that can occur throughout the entire cycle. Community engagement does not occur at any one time within accountability and continuous improvement systems, but throughout the system.

The LASG participant survey respondents agreed that they have either met or are making progress to grant goals. Eight of nine grant activities were rated as a success, with the only activity not being a success was "Capacity to engage the public." Challenges were most often associated with data: capacity to make data informed decisions and data infrastructure e.g., data dashboards, data storage and data cleaning. Finally, supports from CDE were described as helpful. For example, program participants said the posting of their alternative reports and plans on the CDE website helped increase the credibility of their work on alternative accountability systems.

The largest challenge the LASG sustainability identified by grantees is on-going leadership buy-in. Particularly challenging is turnover of local school boards and district superintendents which can lead to changes in priorities and goals. Often the work associated with the LASG involve district leadership. This work was described as valuable but time consuming. New leadership priorities can lead to different leadership focus and use of leadership time.

This evaluation has found the LASG program to be a success. It has helped schools and districts develop local accountability and improvement systems. Through this work, new valid and reliable measures of local goals and processes have been developed or identified for use in local accountability systems. While grantees work to address perceived shortfalls of the current system with their locally developed system, this does not mean that they do not see value in the state system. The LASG has built capacity to better implement the state's current accountability system for AECs, by building capacity within AECs to better identify accountability measures aligned with the individual school goals.

A key question is what lessons or measures or tools developed through the LASG can be disseminated or used by other districts. CDE staff have already used sessions at the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) conference to increase district leader knowledge of LASG activities. The measures developed by LASG grantees, including peer review processes, could be valuable to other districts. However, the value comes from the measures and processes supporting locally developed goals. Without the connection between measures, processes and local goals, as well as leadership buy-in and community engagement, the measures and processes developed by LASG grantees are not valuable to other districts. And it is important to note that many of the locally developed measures are regularly updated and changed as challenges with the measure are identified and as goals and needs of LASG grantees evolve. To support the dissemination and use of goals, the state could further engage in discrimination of the measures. This could include the development of materials that clearly describe the goals and outcomes that are measured, the evidence of validity and reliability, and the resources needed to build the capacity to use the new measures.

The LASG grantees **value the ability to link their accountability plans within the state's website**. Having the local system recognized by the state provides value and credibility to local efforts. This capacity to link the local and state accountability and improvement efforts should be expanded to make it easier for local accountability reports to be shared along with state SPF and DPF reports.

A challenge identified with the current state system by local grantees is that **privacy concerns** override district staff's ability to access all state accountability data for smaller districts and schools. Current public SPF and DPF reports do not report personally identifiable information (PII) such as achievement and growth scores. Private reports are available to district staff, but knowledge of the availably of and how to access these newer private reports is a challenge. Making it easier for small districts to access and use complete state accountability measures about the students within the districts will address this challenge identified by interviewees.

The **Accountability Partners have provided valuable capacity to local districts** as they do this work. Partners serve as technical experts supporting many grant activities including development of theories of action, development and validation of measures and serving as thought partners to grantees. The use of external partnerships to help build capacity in schools in districts is a powerful policy tool and appears to be one way the state can help local districts build capacity.

Introduction

This evaluation by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) is the first outside evaluation of the Colorado Local Accountability System Grant (LASG) program. Authorized by the Colorado State Legislature in Senate Bill (SB) 19-204[5], the LASG provides grant funds to enhance local accountability and continuous improvement systems[6]. This section begins with a description of the LASG followed by a short description of the evaluation. The following sections provide the results of the evaluation, including a brief literature summary on accountability and continuous improvement, results of a short survey of grant participants, and findings from in-depth studies of five selected grant participants.

LASG Overview

As described in Colorado Department of Education (CDE) publications, the LASG local accountability system is supplemental to the state accountability system and may be designed to:

d) Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success, including additional performance indicators or measures, which may include non-academic student outcomes such as student engagement, attitudes, and dispositions toward learning;
e) Evaluate the capacity of the public school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success; and
f) Use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a cycle of continuous improvement (22-11-703)[7].

Grants were awarded in March 2020 by CDE through a competitive process to 11 of the 14 applicants. Grant amounts range from $25,000 to $75,000 per year for a statewide grant total of $450,000 per year. The grants are intended to last for three years; however, grants were suspended soon after they were awarded for a year due to pandemic-caused disruptions. Currently 10 grantees participate in the LASG.

As described by CDE, grantees are engaging in a wide variety of initiatives, including public reporting dashboards, site visit protocols and rubrics, development of nonacademic indicators, stakeholder engagement processes and alternative approaches to improvement planning. All grantees have worked on defining their values, articulating their underlying structure, and defining a theory of action. Grant awardees include individual districts as well as consortia of participating districts:

• Boulder Valley School District, RE-2, Canon City School District, Greeley-Evans School District 6 and Gunnison Watershed School District
• Delta County 50J – Vision Charter Academy
• Student-Centered Accountability Project (S-CAP), including Buena Vista R-31, Akron R-1, Buffalo RE-4J, East Otero R-1, Frenchman RE-3, Hanover 28, Haxtun RE2-J, Holyoke Re-1J, Kit Carson R-1, La Veta Re-2, Las Animas RE-1, Monte Vista C-8, West Grand 1-JT, and Wiggins RE-50(J)

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[5] The bill text can be found here: https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb19-204
[6] Information about the grant can be found here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant
[7] This language was taken from a CDE LASG fact sheet, located at:
https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier

- Denver Public Schools
- District 49 (Falcon)
- Fountain-Fort Caron School District 8
- Garfield County School District 16 (withdrew due to constraints created by the pandemic)
- Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP), including New America School – Lakewood (Jefferson County), Brady Exploration School (Jefferson County), Denver Justice High School (Denver), Durango Big Picture School (Durango), HOPE Online High School (Douglas County), Jefferson High School (Greeley), New America School – Aurora (Charter School Institute), New America School – Thornton (Adams 12), Southwest Open School (Cortez), Rise Up Community School (Denver) and Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs)
- Jefferson County Public School District
- Northeast Colorado BOCES, including Plateau School District RE-5, Revere School District, Yuma School District 1, Lone Star 101, and Haxtun Re-2J
- Westminster Public Schools and Brush School District RE-2J[8]

While much of resources and attention from the state accountability system focus on lower rated schools and districts, i.e., schools and districts identified Priority Improvement or Turnaround, LASG grantees generally higher rated on the state accountability system. Grantees provided videos describing their work, which are available at this link: http://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant.

Grantees come from a wide range of contexts including small rural districts, large urban districts, as well as a consortia of alternative education campuses (AECs) as part of the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)[9]. AECs have specialized missions and serve high-risk student populations including students experiencing homelessness, addiction, are in foster care, and/or are pregnant or parenting. Since 2002, the state has been working to support high quality settings for these vulnerable and challenging populations. AECs are able to select optional measures for their accountability and improvement planning in addition to state measures.

An important feature of the LASG grant is the option to work with Accountability System Partners that provide expertise in developing measures, helping to design infrastructure, and to support data interpretation. These partners include Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), University of Colorado (CU) Boulder, CU Denver, Marzano Academies, Momentum Strategy and Research, Generation Schools, Battelle for Kids, WestEd, and Cognia[10].

CDE's role in the grant included helping to administer the grant, supporting on-going improvement planning that complies with federal, state and grant requirements, facilitating convenings of grantees to support networking, planning and capacity building. CDE staff has also provided technical assistance to

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[8] The language describing grantee activities as well as list of grantees was taken from:
https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier
[9] More information about AEC accountability in Colorado can be found here: Alternative Education Campus Accountability | CDE (state.co.us)
[10] From the Year 2 Legislative Report at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant

grantees upon request. Technical assistance topics have included measurement development, reporting and visualization, and stakeholder engagement.

Colorado's Current Accountability System

Schools and districts participating in the LASG are also part of the statewide accountability system. It is important to understand at a high level components of Colorado's current school and district accountability system to understand the work of LASG grantees[11]. The Colorado accountability has four important components: goals for student outcomes, measures of student outcomes with cut-points that indicate whether students have met the goals, and processes for identifying challenges and making plans to respond to those identified challenges, and public engagement processes.

Many people engage with the Colorado school and district accountability system through the school and district performance reports (SPF and DPF respectively). They report on student outcomes and use that information to rate schools and districts. The accountability system rates districts and school based on three different key performance measures: **student achievement** on statewide assessments, **student growth** on statewide assessments, and for secondary students, **post-secondary and workforce readiness** based on statewide assessments and other measures. The state develops cut-points that award a different number of points for the ratings based on average or in some cases median performance of students on these different measures. These cut-points apply to all schools serving the same grade levels. However, alternative education campuses may use different measures and cut-points than traditional schools. In recent years, parents have been able to opt their students out of participating in statewide assessments, which has reduced the amount of assessment data available.

Within each measure points are awarded for the performance of all students and for the performance of multiple sub-groups of students including English Learners, free and reduced lunch price eligible students (a measure of poverty), minority students, and students with disabilities. The law that establishes federal expectations for state accountability systems requires the use sub-group performance as part of the accountability system in order to reveal and focus attention on underperformance of disadvantaged groups that could otherwise be hidden in aggregate measures. However, this also means that students can be counted in multiple measures. For example, the test scores and growth of a low income, Latino student who is an English learner would be reported in four measures: all students, students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, English learner students, and minority students.

It is important to note that the Colorado school and district accountability system is a form of extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to the phenomenon when an action is performed in accordance with outside rewards or to avoid punishment. Intrinsic motivation refers to the phenomenon when s an action is performed for its own sake as well as for personal rewards. In educational settings, these two

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[11] This is a high level description of Colorado's district and school accountability system. Additional details are available at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/Accountability

phenomena are very useful thinking about incentives for school administrators, teachers, and communities when instituting incentives (Alamri, et al., 2021; Jang, 2019; Trinidad, 2023).

In order to protect the privacy of students, the state does not report on groups of students smaller than 20 or 16 students, depending on the measure. However, this privacy rule means the DPF and SPF for many smaller districts and schools have a significant number of measures that have missing data. As an effort to report more information, CDE uses three-year averages to increase the number of students associated with a measured which increases the number of measures that are reported.

The state has developed a unified improvement planning (UIP) process for using the data contained in the SPF and DPF to identify areas where student performance is below expectations and to identify changes to systems and process to address the identified student performance challenges. The UIP combines multiple state, federal, and grant required planning processes into one planning process. The state has also developed a set of sanctions and supports to help the lowest rated schools and districts to improve student outcomes.

The state's accountability system includes a requirement for community engagement through school and district accountability committees (SAC and DAC respectively) and the local school board. Through each group, staff and community members are required to review the data contained in the SPF or DPF and discuss strategies identified in the UIP to address student performance challenges. The data from the DPF and district UIP is often also presented to local school boards as part of the community engagement process as well.

Taken together the state's accountability system has several important components. It has statewide expectations for student achievement, growth, and post-secondary and career readiness. These expectations are operationalized through measures of student performance and cut-points that are applied to this performance data. This data is provided to schools and districts using SPF and DPF reports. The accountability system has mechanisms to provide sanctions and supports to low performing schools and districts, and it has a system for planning and responding to student performance challenges for all schools and districts through the UIP process. Finally, it has s a community engagement process through the work of DACs, SACs, and local school boards.

Outside Evaluation of the LASG

This evaluation of the LASG is required by the authorizing legislation (SB-19-204). *It is important to note that this is not an evaluation of any individual grantee or Accountability Partner*, rather this is the first of two evaluations and mainly uses qualitative information to support the evaluation. The second evaluation will use more quantitative data.

The goal of this evaluation is to support learning about innovative practices by LASG grantees and exploring their generalizability to the rest of the state. The evaluation was designed to address the following questions:

1. How do successful grantees design and implement effective continuous improvement systems as part of their accountability systems?
2. What are the successes, challenges, and lessons learned, and what are the contextual factors at each site that may have contributed to those successes and challenges?
3. What measures do these accountability systems use and how?
    a. Are there leading indicators of success that grantees have observed or identified when implementing their local accountability measures?
    b. What is the perceived reliability and validity of these measures?

The evaluation uses multiple sources of data to address these questions. This includes a literature summary, review of existing documentation about the grants and grantees, a survey of grantees and their Accountability Partners, and interviews with five selected sites and their Accountability Partners. The interview sites were selected by APA in consultation with CDE to represent the wide variety of successful grant activities in varying contexts.

This evaluation is part of multiple efforts to learn from the LASG grant activities. CDE has produced two legislative reports that both describe the grant program as well as observations by CDE staff[12]. CDE and grantees have also collaboratively presented at Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE). In addition, the CU Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER) has also engaged in study of the grantees including mapping of each of the grantee's theories of action.

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[12] Information is available here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant

Literature Summary

A brief summary of literature related to this evaluation is provided here. The complete summary is in Appendix A. This summary is intended to identify the key components of accountability and continuous improvement systems.

Accountability has deep roots in American public education history (Loeb & Byun, 2019; Spring, 2016). Since the common school movement in the late 1800's school leaders gathered information to help the public and policymakers make decisions about how well schools are educating students.

Since 2000, and especially with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, most school and district accountability systems follow the administrative model within which districts and schools are rated based on student outcomes, and these ratings are used help to target resources (Loeb & Byun, 2019). In a framework described by O'Day (2002), the theory of action for an accountability system rests on the perspective that the most effective system improvements that lead to increased student achievement happen in the classroom. The framework has four components:

1. Generate and focus **attention** on information relevant to teaching and learning.
2. **Motivate** educators (and others) to attend to relevant information and expend effort to augment or change strategies in response to this information.
3. Develop the **knowledge** and skills to promote a valid interpretation of the information (at both the individual and system levels).
4. Allocate **resources** where they are most needed (O'Day, 2002).

As accountability systems began to work on a faster cycle than the yearly cycle of original accountability systems, the language to describe them changed from accountability to continuous improvement systems. The shift reflects more accurately how states and districts focused their attention and resources, similar to how O'Day discussed (2002). Grunow et al. (2018) created a general definition of continuous improvement "as the ongoing disciplined efforts of everyone in the system to make evidence-based changes that will lead to better outcomes, system performance, and organizational learning" (p. 3). The researchers further explain:

> Continuous improvement approaches engage the workforce to identify and improve the critical causes of problematic outcomes, which necessarily lie upstream from the end-of-the-line outcomes of accountability systems. (p. 10)

A guiding principle for a continuous improvement system is improvement science. Improvement science is rooted in the scientific method in that small experiments are created to gather information about a problem of practice[13] (Fixsen et al., 2015; Hannan et al., 2015).

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[13]Industries beyond public education use improvement science. See, for example, manufacturing's Six Sigma methods (https://asq.org/quality-resources/six-sigma) and healthcare's movement toward more equitable care

In sum, in a continuous improvement setting, small groups work with data consistently to understand the changes that need to happen to reach the desired outcomes within the system. In addition, the literature summary revealed key differences between accountability and continuous improvement systems, including:

1. Continuous improvement is a system created within an organization, while accountability can be imposed from outside,
2. A locally generated continuous improvement system can be more flexible in the measures used, change those measures, make them match local goals, use more leading indicators, and measures that are maybe not as reliable since the stakes are not as high.
3. The cycle for continuous improvement is often more rapid than yearly accountability.

Critical Elements of Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems

Within accountability and continuous improvement systems, several critical elements are evident, including stakeholder engagement, clear goals or desired outcomes, measures progress towards those outcomes, and changes within the system or processes to move towards meeting those goals. In either an accountability system or a continuous improvement system, these critical elements combine to form a theory of action: if stakeholders identify a set of desired outcomes, measure them, and use that data to change systems or processes, then student outcomes will improve.

Community Engagement

Community engagement gathers information about what is needed in classrooms and schools to help students reach the community's expectations. The community encompasses people invested in the school system, from parents choosing schools for their students to elected officials who set standards and decide school funding levels. A few questions that the community considers as accountability systems are developed include:

- What improvements need to be made within the system?
- What data are collected by the system?
- Are the data collected aligned with the improvements?
- To what extent are the data collected available to those who need it? (Gill et al., 2014; Grunow et al., 2018; O'Keefe et al., 2019)

At the classroom level, community engagement with teachers honors one element of continuous improvement, which is to understand what is needed where students are learning: within classrooms. To develop systems, the community identifies a set of desired outcomes discussed in the next section.

(Kenney, C. (2008). *The best practice: How the new quality movement is transforming medicine*. New York, NY: Public Affairs).

Goals

As community members consider what improvements need to be made within the system, they identify goals for the students served by the system. Goals for students are generally long-term and reflect if students are ready for postsecondary success (aka, readiness[14]). Also, many outcomes are in the state standards, developed within education departments, and sometimes informed by statute. Often national experts develop these standards, such as the work to develop the Common Core State Standards from 2008-2012.

Measures and Assessments

Once desired goals are identified, when appropriate, measures are used to track progress toward reaching the outcomes. Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, states and districts have used assessments to measure the extent to which students are proficient in core subjects. At first, proficiency was simply used as a measure. Then more sophisticated analyses were conducted to measure growth. As the use of assessments became normalized across the country, assessment data became more and more high stakes.

A way to think about the objective of the use of assessments within an accountability system is to consider an analogy offered by a former Long Beach Public Schools Superintendent Carl Cohn, "we should think about refining the design and uses of assessment to be more like the medical field: looking for the right dose, the right time, for the right patient[15]". Therefore, when identifying measures, several questions should be asked about the characteristics of measurement systems, such as whether or not the assessment is:

- reliable (does it provide consistent information?),
- valid (does it measure what it was designed to measure?), or
- comprehensive (does it cover all standards?) (Gill et al., 2014; Loeb & Byun, 2019; Moon et al., 2020; Murphy, 2017; Polikoff et al., 2020; Ravitch et al., 2022).

Ultimately, "the test of whether the usefulness of the measures outweighs their imperfections is whether they appear to improve educational opportunities for students and lead to better decisions" (Loeb & Byun, 2019, p. 101). Questions about assessments branch into types needed to measure a system and how to assess standards. As states and districts grappled with these assessment questions, some moved to measuring student growth on the assessments.

Changes in Systems and Processes to Meet Goals

Changes to systems and processes within the public education system as part of accountability and continuous improvement are multi-layered. They can range from focusing on classroom interactions to how state leaders interact district leaders. As highlighted in the O'Day framework, these changes often

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[14] Readiness can be defined as prepared for college, a career, or the military. Some systems define readiness in terms of being prepared for civic engagement. Goals such as increased graduation rates, improved performance on nationally normed standardized assessments, or other meaningful goals are set.

[15] "Forum: Do Policymakers Use Educational Assessment?," 2019

include resource reallocation. Nevertheless, all discussions about system and process change center on the essential question: how do we achieve desired outcomes?

One way to think about system and process changes in relation to accountability or continuous improvement system is to identify the implementation drivers. Implementation drivers were identified by researchers at the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) as common practices among successfully implemented practices and programs, as illustrated in Figure 1. The three drivers are Competency, Organization, and Leadership supports.

Figure 1: Implementation Drivers
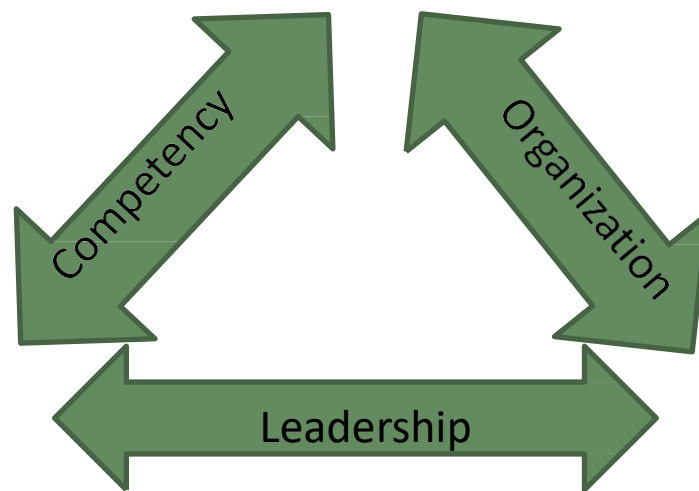
Source: Adapted from Fixsen et al. (2005)

Improved outcomes for students often require a change in practice, and **competency drivers** are how new practices, skills, and knowledge are taught to selected staff through training and coaching. **Organizational supports** create a hospitable environment of innovation and change. This includes information systems for monitoring progress, processes, and resources or materials necessary to carry out new programs. **Leadership** helps surface and resolve problems, sets priorities, and manages the change processes. The Implementation Drivers tool can provide a framework for assessing the availability of the critical elements of effective accountability and continuous improvement systems (Fixsen et al., 2015).

System Model

The critical elements in accountability and continuous improvement systems and their relationships are summarized Figure 1 below.

Figure 2: Critical Elements in Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems

This representation of accountability and continuous improvement systems has several important elements. First, these elements are shown within a **cycle of improvement**, that is these systems operate in cycles of improvement, not as one-time events. Second, **information within the cycle flows bi-directionally**. For example, efforts to identify measures can influence goals as can efforts at change. Finally, this system operates in a **context of community engagement** that can occur throughout the entire cycle. Community engagement does not occur at any one time within accountability and continuous improvement systems, but throughout the system.

A key to the success of accountability or continuous improvement systems is that *leaders need to focus on the human interactions throughout the system*, but especially in the classroom, to ensure that teachers know what the accountability systems are measuring, what the continuous improvement systems are working to improve – and why (Gill et al., 2014; Lewis, 2015).

Participant Survey

As part of the LASG evaluation, program participants were surveyed to help the evaluation team describe the overall successes and challenges within the LASG. The survey was developed by APA in consultation with CDE. A link to the on-line survey was sent to 28 representatives of participating districts and Accountability Partners in May of 2023. Participants were sent a reminder email and had two weeks to respond to the survey. Eleven respondents participated in the survey for an overall response rate of 39%. Respondents represented both grant recipients (districts or schools) and Accountability Partners. A copy of the survey instrument is contained in Appendix B.

Perspectives on progress made on the grant were positive. The majority of respondents (six out of 11) said they had met their project goals. The remaining respondents said they were making progress toward their goals for the grant.

Respondents were asked to rate the success of nine different grant activities. Respondents were able to rate success using a five-level Likert scale ranging from Not a Success (1) to Extreme Success (5) and all the rating scale questions included a "Don't know/Not Applicable" option. The higher the average response, the more an activity is seen as a success. Figure 3 below shows the results from that question. For all of measures, at least 50% of respondents identified that activity as a success with the lowest success rating for the "Capacity to engage the public" activity. All the remaining activities had an average rating of 3.0 or higher, which corresponds to a rating of "A success" or better, with the highest rated activity being "Access to expertise."

Figure 3: Grant Activities Levels of Success

In a parallel fashion, respondents were also asked to rate the level of challenge of nine grant activities. The rating scale for the level of change ranged from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). Results from this question are shown in Figure 4. The highest level of challenge is associated with "Data-informed decision-making capacity," which is the only activity with an average scale of 3 and corresponds to the "A challenge" rating. All the other activities were "Slightly challenging" or "Not a challenge." Mirroring the success question, the least challenging activity was "Access to expertise."

Figure 4: Grant Activities Levels of Challenge
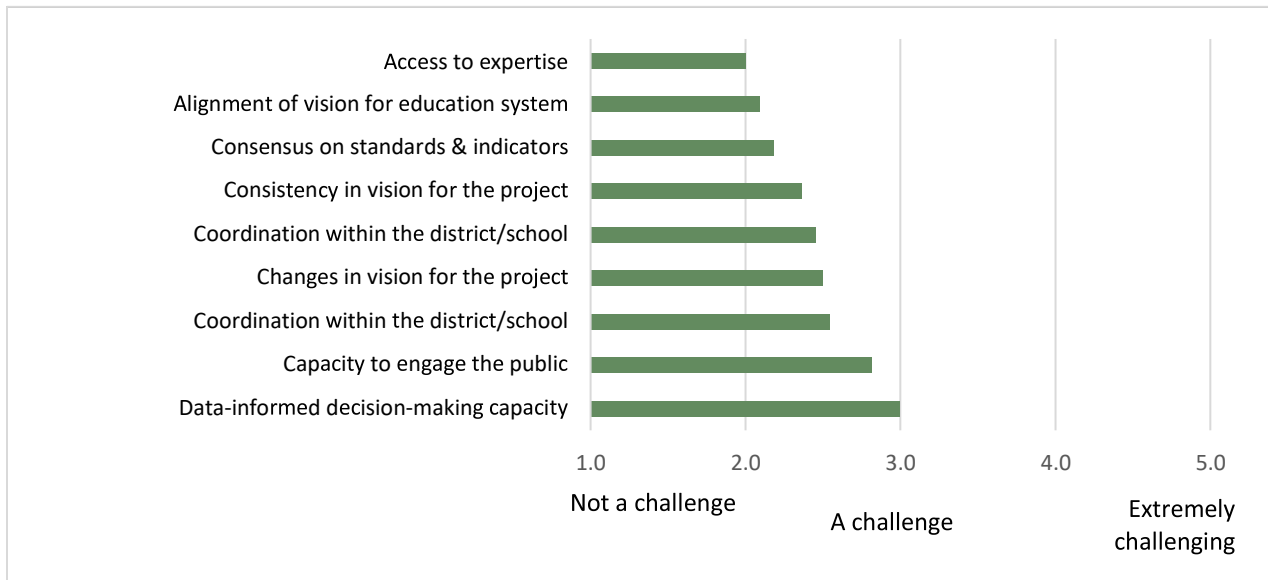
In an effort to understand factors that supported or were challenging to LASG success, program participants were asked about contextual factors supported success or are a challenge to the LASG. Results from the question rating nine different sources of challenge are shown in Figure 5 below. Respondents rated the level of challenge on a five-level Likert scale from "Not a challenge" (1) to "Extremely challenging" (5). Two contextual factors stand out as challenges: "Existing data infrastructure" and "The pandemic." Data and use of data is emerging as a barrier to the project: issues around data and capacity were identified in several questions as a challenge.

Figure 5: Grant Activities Levels of Challenge
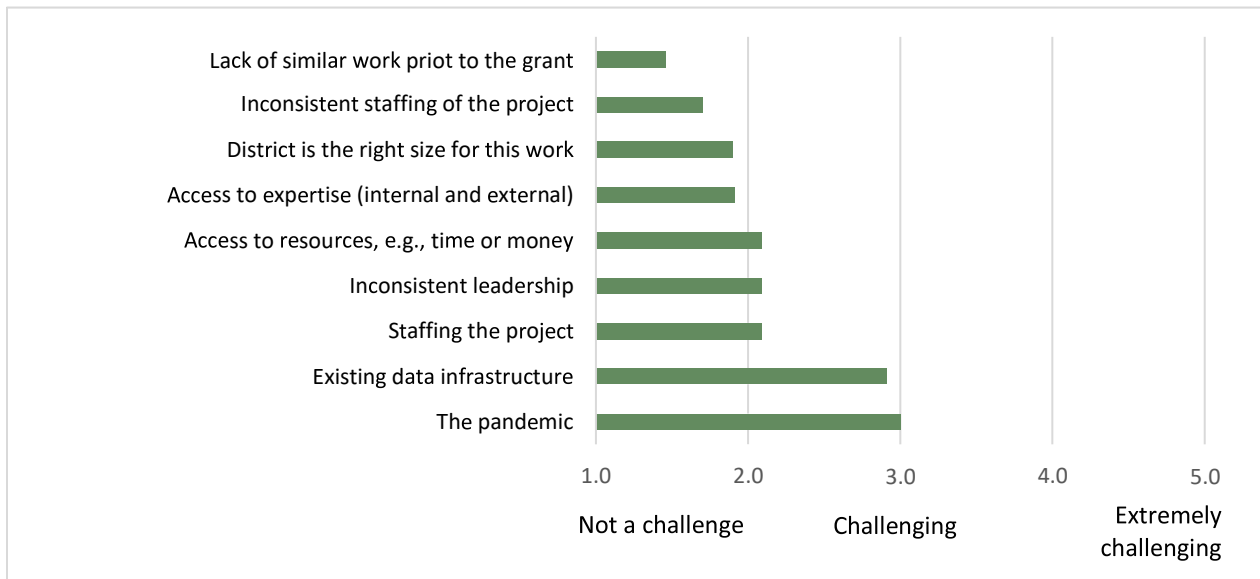
The survey had several questions on the support provided by CDE. A question about valuable supports rated four supports listed as important to the success of the grant. These valuable CDE supports included assistance administering the grant, networking convenings, reviewing accountability system plans, and technical assistance.

LASG participants were also asked what additional support would be helpful to implementing the LASG. Six additional supports were rated on a five-level Likert scale ranging from "Not helpful" (1) to "Extremely helpful" (5). Results are shown in Figure 6 below. The support rated most helpful was "Posting supplemental reports and alternative improvement plans." The process of providing this support involves posting local accountability reports and improvement plans on the CDE website.

Figure 6: Additional supports
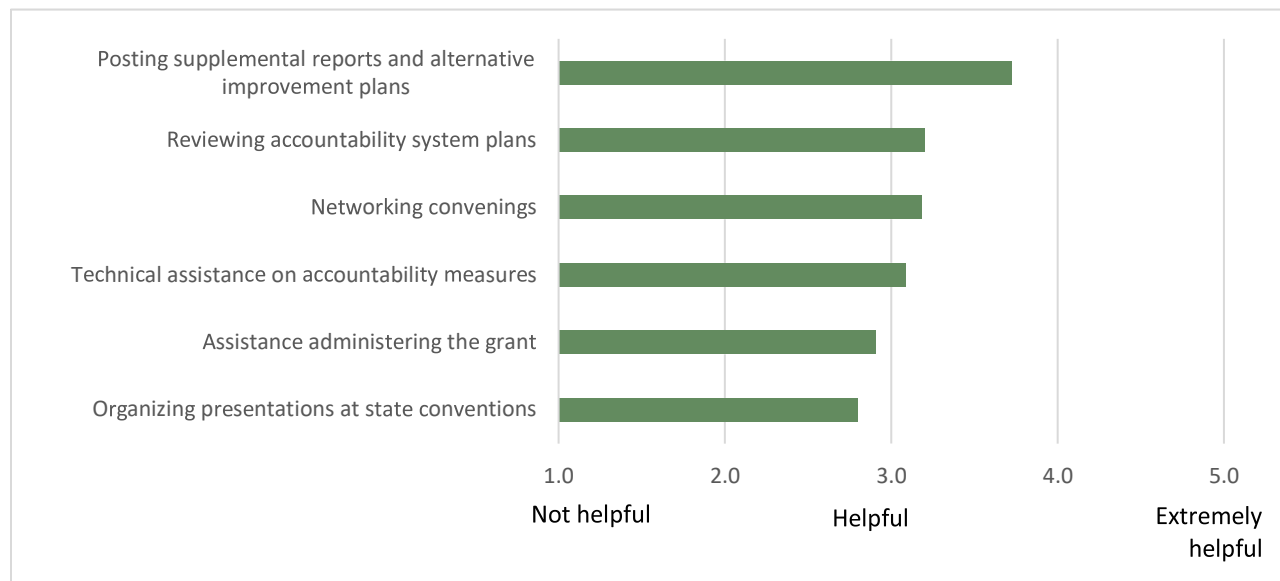
Finally, respondents were asked using an open ended question about what the LASG was helping them accomplish. Multiple respondents wrote about **the value of developing accountability measures that are aligned with their local values** as well as the goals and mission of the school or district. Several respondents wrote about how this work helped **increase transparency and sharing of data with** stakeholders. Respondents described the **value of measuring student outcomes with measures beyond the statewide test**, and that this project has allowed them to connect district activities and processes (e.g., curriculum and professional development) with those outcomes.

Summary of Survey Results

The LASG participant survey provided valuable insight on the grant's progress. Respondents agreed that they have either met or are making progress to grant goals. Eight of nine grant activities were rated as a success, with the only activity not being a success was "Capacity to engage the public." Challenges were most often associated with data: capacity to make data informed decisions and data infrastructure e.g., data dashboards, data storage and data cleaning. Finally, supports from CDE were described as helpful with additional work around posting alternative accountability reports and improvement plans. Program participants said the posting of their alternative reports and plans on the CDE website helped increase the credibility of their work on alternative accountability systems. This will be discussed again in next section of the report.

Participant interview data

In addition to surveying LASG grantees, the APA team conducted document reviews and interviews with participating districts, Accountability Partners and CDE staff. This section provides the results of those efforts. The APA team collected data through semi-structured interviews on LASG progress, challenges, successes, how measures are being developed and used, and advice for other districts, CDE and the legislature. The interviewees were from five grantees selected because of their success with the grant in a diversity of contexts by CDE in consultation with APA. Documents reviewed for this section include the two legislative reports that were prepared by CDE, other documentation on the CDE website, as well detailed descriptions of each district's theory of action that were prepared by the Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-Peer) at the University of Colorado Denver and shared with the evaluation team. This chapter summarizes the results of those interviews in combination with document review.

Value of the LASG

Consistent with the survey responses, grant participants described the LASG as a success through the interview process. Interviewees were asked what components of the grant were valuable to this success, e.g., what problem did the grant help districts and schools address.

How does LASG Add to the Current System

The literature summary established that there are four main components of accountability and continuous improvement systems:

- establishment of goals,
- development of measures that can describe progress towards those goals,
- processes to use that data to inform changes in processes, systems and resource allocation, and
- on-going engagement of the public and staff.

As previously noted, the existing state system has all of those components. If the current state accountability system has all the components of accountability and continuous improvement systems, a key evaluation question is what does the LASG add? The following section describes different reasons districts and schools found the LASG valuable. First, many respondents were clear that the LASG allowed them to **develop local goals and measures that reflected their community values**. These values were reflected in the educational focus of districts and schools (particularly AEC schools) but may not be measured in the state accountability system. The state accountability system uses state level goals that are imposed on districts. The state system is an extrinsic form of motivation and the LASG allowed districts to develop local goals and measures that LASG participants found intrinsically motivating. By using local goals and measures, many schools and districts found it easier to engage the community in accountability and improvement processes. These local goals provided new avenues for engagement with their communities, including staff, because they felt more ownership. Interviewees believe this

improved engagement resulted in more support for the school system by the public and for increased improvement efforts by staff.

Second, the state accountability system measures focus exclusively on educational outcomes and does not include a **theory of action that connects district and school activities with the outcomes measured in the accountability system**. The UIP process provides a process to develop a theory of action but does not prescribe what measures districts should use. In other words, the state accountability system does not provide any information on whether the processes and systems such as instruction, curriculum, and school culture, provided by districts and schools are effective and which should be addressed to support improving student outcomes. Equally important, the data provided in the state accountability system is not seen as timely for the improvement process. Finally, the UIP process was viewed by some interviewees through the lens of compliance instead of an opportunity to develop a theory of action and measures. The LASG helped some districts and schools develop these theories of action and measures of processes that provided LASG participants with data and tools to improve student outcomes that is not available in the current system.

Another related concern of some participants was **the focus of the state's accountability system**. The state has equal requirements for schools and districts in terms of the UIP planning. However, much of the state's support and sanctions to schools and districts are focused on those that are in the bottom 15% of the state's ratings. Some LASG participants felt their local accountability systems allowed the focus to be on schools at all performance levels.

LASG interviewees had multiple **concerns with the measures in the state accountability system and how the measures are developed**. Not all concerns were shared equally by every LASG participant. Many LASG participants are from smaller districts, which represents the majority of Colorado districts, and they discussed how privacy rules prevent them from getting the data in the SPF and DPF needed to identify and respond to student challenges. Further, the use of three year averages to allow for public reporting was not seen by some LASG participants as a good source of actionable information given the age of some of the information. A second challenge with state accountability data was the high number of assessment opt outs, that is **non-participation in assessments**, which some district leaders believe has impacted the validity and actionability of the state data.

Another challenge identified by some LASG participants is that **state goals for student achievement do not seem realistic for all student populations and all districts**. In other words because student characteristics such as poverty level are highly correlated with student achievement some interviewees question whether state goals are appropriate for all schools and districts. This challenge is illustrated in Figure 7 which was taken from CDEs SchoolView website[16]. It shows the average mathematics achievement for all students by district in 2022. The horizontal axis shows achievement measured with a scale sore, higher on the horizontal axis means higher achievement. The vertical axis shows poverty as measured by free and reduced lunch (FRL) eligibility. Districts farther to the right serve higher

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[16] https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/accountability-dataexplorertool

proportions low-income students. Each blue circle represents a district. The blue line is the average achievement level as poverty increases. It shows that low poverty districts, on average, have higher achievement levels than higher poverty districts.

The orange line is the achievement level of the median district, in this case Hi-Plains R 23 in Seibert, Colorado. The orange line represents the middle performance level of districts in Colorado. The figure shows that all districts with 10% or fewer students that qualify for FRL perform better than the median district. Further, all districts above 80% FRL eligibility perform below the median district. Given this high level of correlation between student demographics and student achievement, some participants in the LASG did not believe the same achievement goals are appropriate for school districts that serve different populations.

Figure 7. 2022 Math Achievement Mean Scores and FRL Eligibility
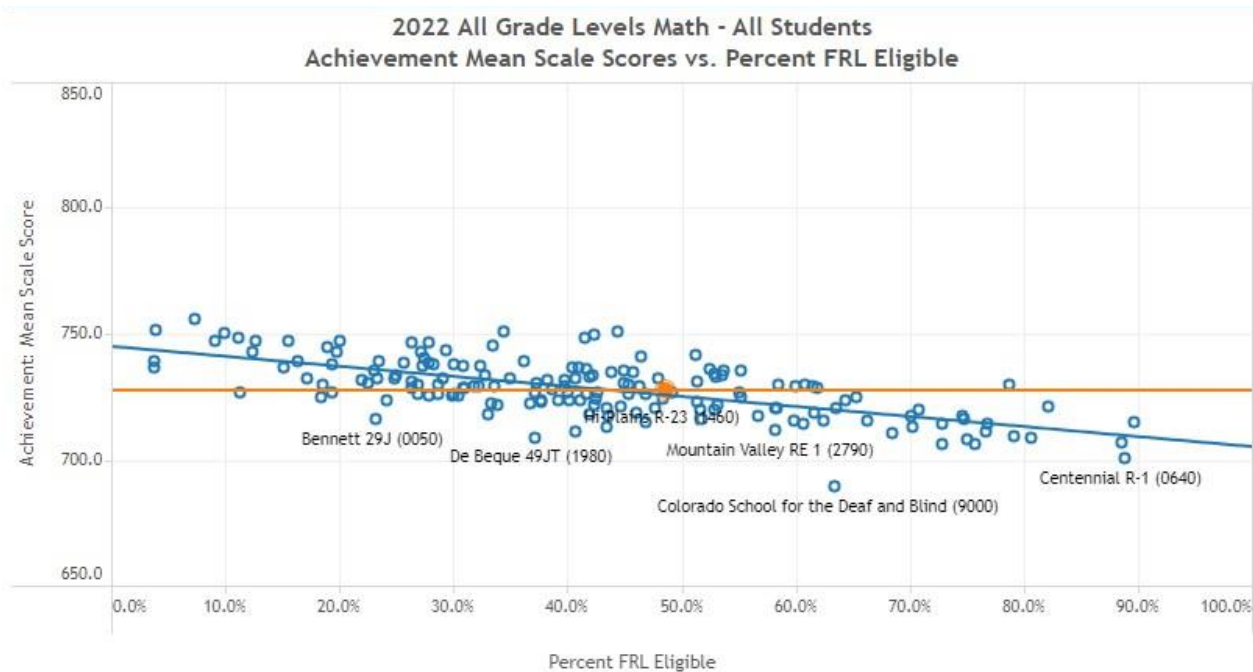
The local accountability systems allowed school and districts to develop their own goals they felt are more appropriate for their populations.

Another concern about the state goals and measures identified by interviewed grantees is how **students may be counted multiple times in the SPF**. As discussed earlier, the SPF reports data for all students and for students in sub-groups (e.g., minority, English learner, low-income students, etc.). This sub-group reporting reflects state and national goals around equity and improving outcomes for all students. However, this results in students who are in subgroups being reported more in the school and district rankings than students who are not in subgroups. Some LASG participants believe this counting of some students more than others led to inaccurate representations of district and school performance. The

LASG provided an opportunity for districts to develop measures that some felt more accurately described district performance.

Through the LASG many participants felt the grant helped them develop goals, measures, improvement processes and public engagement processes that complemented the state system and were more actionable*. It is important to note that LASG participants do feel the state accountability system is valuable.* However, they felt additional local goals, measures, and processes are needed to support public engagement and ultimately improve outcomes for students.

Additional Accountability Measures

Many of the LASG participants developed or used measures as part of their local accountability systems that are not part of the state's accountability system. A key consideration for grantees is that these measures provide valid and reliable information on the processes or outcomes they are intended to measure. The LASG Accountability Partners play an important role in supporting grantee's work to identify additional measures that are aligned with local goals. They also provide valuable support in developing and validating these new measures. Four types of additional measures used LASG participants:

- Student achievement assessments, i.e., tests,
- Administrative data such attendance, discipline, student activity participation,
- Student, staff, and community surveys, often of subjects such as climate or community, and
- Locally developed qualitative data collection tools including interviews, focus groups and observation rubrics for observation of classroom and school-wide processes inside schools such as instruction.

These additional measures generally came from three sources:

- Off-the-shelf measures that have been validated by their publisher,
- Existing extant data that the school or district has been collecting for some time, and
- Measures developed by the LASG grantees, often involving a collaboration between school or district staff and the Accountability Partner.

These additional measures have different sources of information on their validity and reliability. **Validity** refers to how accurately the method measures something. **Reliability** refers to whether a measure can be relied upon to measure something consistently. The publishers of off-the-shelf measures provide information on the validity and reliability of their measures. Accountability Partners can play a very important role in helping LASG grantees evaluate the information accountability and reliability information provided by vendors.

Existing data often measures things that schools and districts have experience measuring such as attendance or graduation rates. Implementing those measures in a reliable fashion does take a common

understanding of business rules for those collecting the data. For example, attendance clerks need a common understanding of how much of a school day a student must miss to be counted as absent.

Finally, for measures developed by grantees, particularly grantees for smaller districts or individual schools, the **Accountability Partners can play an important role in the development of measures**, providing technical evaluation of measure validity and reliable as well as supporting the best use of those measures. For example, they can review inter-rater reliability of observational rubrics, review how evidence was identified and used in observations, and can facilitate review of data collection tools by grant participants. While Accountability Partners provided this technical support to smaller districts and schools, grantees from larger districts often have their own internal research capacity to validate measures.

It is important to note that a very important source of information on the validity and reliability comes through repeated engagement, review, and use of measures by the community. And, in the case of locally developed measures, these measures can and are continuously being revised to better meet the needs of grantees. For measures that are existing administrative data, questions about reliability and validity can lead to reviews of existing process to collect information and refinement of those processes.

Taken together, LASG grantees have many different tools to judge the reliability and validity of the measures they use. Other districts may be able to use similar measures in their own internal accountability systems. The most important consideration is **how these measures fit with district goals and theories of action for improving district performance**. Off the shelf measures are available for other districts to adopt (possibly with vendor support) and extant measures are already available for use in district accountability systems. The measures developed by grantees may require additional technical support for smaller districts to use while larger districts may have to devote some of their own technical resources towards supporting their use.

Accountability Partners

The LASG provides an opportunity to work with Accountability Partners. These partners provided expertise around development of theories of action, identifying appropriate measures, data visualization and public engagement. Interviewed grantees saw their expertise as extremely valuable in building the capacity of LASG participants from smaller districts and schools in developing local accountability systems and using those systems as part of their continuous improvement process.

Accountability Partners have helped districts and schools develop unique approaches to address their goals for accountability and improvement. For example, the MOPP consortia has provided support to AECs in identifying their goals and available measures to support accountability and improvement. AECs have specialized missions and are often small institutions with limited resources to use toward accountability and improvement. The LASG's Accountability Partners has helped address the need for additional resources to support AECs.

Peer Review

Another unique approach developed and implemented by some LASG participants is the use of **peer review to support accountability and improvement**. These reviews use rubrics developed by LASG grantees as they observe instruction and other processes in schools. Reviewers can be peers from other districts or peers from within a district. Reviewers provide feedback to schools and districts on what they observed. These reviews help build capacity in several ways. First, through the development of the rubrics school and district leaders develop and identify ways to measure practices they think are important to student outcomes. Second, through the observation process, participants learn how to identify and quantify practices that are important to student outcomes. And finally, through providing feedback all the participants reported growth in their understanding of these practices.

APA is currently serving as part of the evaluation team for the Colorado READ Act. The READ Act, through the Early Literacy Grant, provides a similar mechanism to Accountability Partners for schools and districts to bring in external expertise. In both the READ Act and LASG, APA finds that grants from the state that support bringing external expertise to districts and schools is a powerful tool for improvement. However, the READ Act evaluation has also shown that districts and schools must be purposeful in supporting the capacity developed by these external partners after grants have concluded. As LASG implementation continues, CDE may consider ways these practices can be sustained beyond the grant period.

Public Engagement

Public engagement is a key ongoing component of accountability and continuous improvement systems. It includes stakeholders within the community and staff within districts and schools. The LASG has supported **improved public engagement** and interviewees believe it has **improved public support for education** within communities. The LASG processes identified goals and developed measures that reflect local values. The improvement processes developed through this helps support the attainment of the local goals. Several interviewees said that public buy-in also requires public vulnerability. For the public to engage in the project, leaders had to be willing to discuss real problems and challenges facing the district. Through this **transparency**, which can open leaders for criticism, work on accountability and improvement systems can actually improve public engagement over time.

Several interviewees discussed how they were able to use LASG supported processes to **engage students in improvement processes** and how their perspectives provided insights into school challenges and success. In addition, interviewees stressed that while deeper engagement flowed from the processes being developed with LASG support, engaging non-traditional or disenfranchised populations requires additional focus and work.

Challenges to On-going LASG Success

Interviewees were very clear that **leader buy-in, particularly superintendent and local school board, is central to the success of LASG efforts**. This is a strength of the project: when leaders buy in, change can be impactful. It takes time to effort to build confidence in new systems and measures. In particular, the

community wants to see that new measures used in the local accountability and improvement systems are valid and reliable. Grantees said LASG participation can be time consuming for leaders. Leader buy-in can also be a challenge for LASG efforts: when leaders change, bringing new vision and priorities to the district can then result in de-prioritization of this work.

Another challenge that was described by most interviewees was **data management and visual representation**. Data is central to accountability and improvement systems. Data is generated as part of the measure process and then through the change process data must be analyzed, contextualized, and used to identify successes, challenges, improvement strategies, and goals for future outcomes. This process of using data to inform change requires that **data be consolidated and contextualized**. This requires both data management expertise to access consolidate and represent data and measurement expertise to validly represent data.

Next steps and recommendations

This year's evaluation has found the LASG program to be a success. It has helped schools and districts develop local accountability and improvement systems. Through this work, new valid and reliable measures of local goals and processes have been developed or identified for use in local accountability systems. However, it does not replace the current state accountability system. While grantees work to address perceived shortfalls of the current system with their locally developed system, this does not mean that they do not see value in the state system. The LASG has built capacity to better implement the state's current accountability system for AECs, by building capacity within AECs to better identify accountability measures aligned with the individual school goals.

The state system imposes values, goals, measures, and improvement processes on school districts and is an extrinsic accountability system. The local accountability and improvement systems have provided intrinsic value and motivation. The locally developed systems are valuable because they are locally developed and reflect locally identified goals.

A key question is what lessons or measures or tools developed through the LASG can be disseminated or used by other districts. CDE staff have already used sessions at the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) conference to increase district leader knowledge of LASG activities. The measures and processes developed by LASG grantees could be valuable to other districts. However, the value comes from the measures and processes supporting locally developed goals. Without the connection between measures, processes, and local goals, as well as leadership buy-in and community engagement, the measures and processes developed by LASG grantees are not valuable to other districts. And it is important to note that many of the locally developed measures are regularly updated and changed as challenges with the measure are identified and as goals and needs of LASG grantees evolve. To support the dissemination and use of goals, the state could further engage in discrimination of the measures. This could include the development of materials that clearly describe the goals and outcomes that are measured, the evidence of validity and reliability, and the resources needed to build the capacity to use the new measures.

The LASG grantees **value the ability to link their accountability plans within the state's website**. Having the local system recognized by the state provides value and credibility to local efforts. This capacity to link the local and state accountability and improvement efforts should be expanded to make it easier for local accountability reports to be shared along with state SPF and DPF reports.

A challenge identified with the current state system by local grantees is that **privacy concerns** override district staff's ability to access all state accountability data for smaller districts and schools. Current public SPF and DPF reports do not report personally identifiable information (PII) such as achievement and growth scores. Given that district and schools staff have access and use to other PII about students, it is not clear why the state's accountability related PII would not also be available to district staff through some sort of private on-line access. Private reports are available to district staff, knowledge of the availably of and how to access these newer private reports remains a challenge. Making it easier for small districts to access and use complete state accountability measures about the students within the districts will address this challenge identified by interviewees.

The **Accountability Partners have provided valuable capacity to local districts** as they do this work. The use of external partnerships to help build capacity in schools in districts is a powerful policy tool and appears to be one way the state can help local districts build capacity in this area.

The second year of the LASG evaluation will focus on quantitative measures using both statewide accountability measures and locally developed measures to identify and describe LASG successes and challenges.

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Appendix A – Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems Literature Summary

Context

The following short literature summary provides context to the upcoming evaluation of the grants program authorized by SB19-204 Public School Local Accountability Systems and operated by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The goals of the evaluation are to learn about new systems of continuous improvement developed by the grantees through these grants and learn about the measures and related data systems developed by grantees to support accountability and continuous improvement. To reach these goals, the following evaluation questions will be explored:

1. How do successful grantees design and implement effective continuous improvement systems as part of their accountability systems?
2. What are the successes, challenges, and lessons learned, and what are the contextual factors at each site that may have contributed to those successes and challenges?
3. What measures do these accountability systems use, and how?
4. Are there leading indicators of success that grantees have observed or identified when implementing their local accountability measures?
5. What is the perceived reliability and validity of these measures?

To provide the context for the evaluation, the common structures for effective accountability and continuous improvement systems are described with critical elements identified, which will highlight the key characteristics of implementation drivers.

Introduction

Accountability has deep roots in American public education history (Loeb & Byun, 2019; Spring, 2016). Since the common school movement in the late 1800's school leaders gathered information to help the public and policymakers make decisions about how well schools are educating students. The evolution of accountability systems reflects different audiences, such as parents, school leaders, district leaders, elected officials, and state and federal education departments.

While accountability has evolved, continuous improvement is a relatively new concept honed in the manufacturing and medical fields, which education leaders recently adopted. Continuous improvement differs from accountability because its primary assumption is the system needs to be changed to reach desired outcomes. The system assumption pushes people in the system to focus on system design and operations (Bryk et al., 2015; Grunow et al., 2018).

The following summary incorporates research on accountability systems and continuous improvement systems. First, descriptions of the common accountability structures and continuous improvement systems are provided. The second part describes critical elements in current accountability and continuous improvement systems.

Accountability Systems

Since 2000, and especially with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, most school and district accountability systems follow the administrative model within which districts measure schools based on student outcomes, which then help to target resources (Loeb & Byun, 2019). In a framework described by O'Day (2002), the theory of action for an accountability system rests on the perspective that the most effective system improvements that lead to increased student achievement happen in the classroom. The framework has four components:

5. Generate and focus **attention** on information relevant to teaching and learning.
6. **Motivate** educators (and others) to attend to relevant information and expend effort to augment or change strategies in response to this information.
7. Develop the **knowledge** and skills to promote a valid interpretation of the information (at both the individual and system levels).
8. Allocate **resources** where they are most needed (O'Day, 2002).

Researchers used O'Day's framework as a foundation for which to analyze accountability systems. For example, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) used O'Day's (2002) framework of attention, motivation, knowledge development, and resource allocation as the framework for the team to analyze an early adopter of a comprehensive accountability system, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in 2003-04. CPS' efforts to establish an accountability system resulted in further questions about the limitations of complex and bureaucratic systems.

The CPRE research team found wide variability in the responsiveness of schools to CPS' new accountability system. Indeed, one suggestion was that schools with inadequate resources fell further behind. While CPRE's final analysis highlights the complicated nature of understanding the effectiveness of large urban schools, the critical indicator of effectiveness used was the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, which is a lagging indicator, meaning that the data inform interested parties after changes can be initiated (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). Because teachers and administrators receive the data from the tests after the school year, several education researchers raise questions about the extent to which the information is helpful for teachers to improve their instruction (Hess & Martin, 2022; Hutt & Polikoff, 2020; Loeb & Byun, 2019; Ravitch, 2010; Ravitch et al., 2022).

As accountability systems evolved over the past twenty years, interested parties work to identify leading indicators of success that can be gathered in real-time, such as attendance data. For example, a school performance framework (SPF) is a component of an accountability system that is usually developed by school districts to understand how individual schools are performing. In some cases, the measures are tabulated and consolidated into a single score that provides both feedback for educators through the tabulation and to the public through the single score.

Bellwether, a consulting firm that works with states and districts to engage with reform efforts, summarized the approaches used by five districts when aggregating and using data:

1. System Management and Accountability;
2. School Continuous Improvement; and
3. Family and Community Information.

When a district aggregates data for system management and accountability, these data are used for decisions such as school expansion, sanctions, charter renewals, or closures. With a continuous improvement framework, the intended audience is school leaders who access data to make day-to-day strategic decisions such as interventions. Finally, with data aggregated for external audiences, families can navigate choice options, and advocates can identify improvement areas.

Post-ESSA Accountability Systems

Federal legislation reflects the evolution of accountability systems. Policymakers learned from the rigid requirements within NCLB and adjusted during the reauthorization process, which resulted in the 2018 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Changes within ESSA mainly focused on the indicators and interventions using O'Day's model (2002). Fryer (2022), who served as part of the team who drafted ESSA in her role as a senior policy advisor to Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), explains there are four main opportunities for state accountability systems within the law:

1. New accountability indicators, including new assessments that allow for student personalization;
2. Flexibility on indicator weighting;
3. New Identification systems for low-performing schools; and
4. State and local control for interventions.

Within these parameters, states are exploring new accountability options. For example, five states are piloting personalized assessments: Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and North Carolina (Fryer, 2022). Using Louisiana as a case-in-point, its statewide accountability system allows for a new English and Social Studies assessment to assess student comprehension of district-selected passages several times per year, thus, illustrating the shift to include different assessments teachers can use during the same school year and assessments that focus beyond reading and math.[17]

Continuous Improvement Systems

The language changed to continuous improvement systems as accountability systems began to work on a faster cycle than the yearly cycle of original accountability systems. The shift reflects more accurately how states and districts focused their attention and resources, similar to how O'Day discussed (2002). Grunow et al. (2018) created a general definition of continuous improvement "as the ongoing

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[17] For more information about Louisiana's state report card, see "Louisiana's Key Initiatives." https://louisianabelieves.com/resources/about-us/louisiana's-key-initiatives.

disciplined efforts of everyone in the system to make evidence-based changes that will lead to better outcomes, system performance, and organizational learning" (p. 3). The researchers further explain:

> Continuous improvement approaches engage the workforce to identify and improve the critical causes of problematic outcomes, which necessarily lie upstream from the end-of-the-line outcomes of accountability systems. (p. 10)

Indeed, the definition reflects the use of leading (what do we know today) versus lagging (what will we know in the future) indicators. Furthermore, Grunow (2018) delineates three different elements of continuous improvement informed by leading and lagging indicators: (1) cycles; (2) methodologies; and (3) culture (Grunow et al., 2018). Cycles are clear steps educators take to act and reflect on their work and can be as short as analyzing a daily lesson or as long as a year. Methodologies are more formal structures developed by outside organizations. For example, in 2008, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching introduced Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) that provided experts to advise schools as they worked through continuous improvement cycles. Finally, culture focuses on enabling collaboration and continuous learning within the workplace. A few distinguishing characteristics of a culture of continuous improvement include an appreciation of differences and an openness to new ideas.

A guiding principle for a continuous improvement system is improvement science. Improvement science is rooted in the scientific method in that small experiments are created to gather information about a problem of practice.[18] (Fixsen et al., 2015; Hannan et al., 2015). Hannan et al. (2015) explain one way to approach continuous improvement by using a methodology with four phases – plan, do, study, act (PDSA) – in detail:

> Planning a small experiment—or small test of change—to learn, making predictions about the experiment's outcome; doing or executing it in practice; studying what happened; then reflecting and acting upon the first three phases. An essential part of the reflection is comparing what happened with what was predicted. New insights come to light from the gap between expected and actual results. (p. 496)

Louisiana is again an instructive case-in-point in that researchers highlight how the state report card informs the state's continuous improvement methods used with districts because Louisiana added measures to its accountability system to inform how the state department can enable teachers to support students to reach higher academic goals. For example, its statewide accountability system allows for a new English and Social Studies assessment to assess student comprehension of district-

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[18]Industries beyond public education use improvement science. See, for example, manufacturing's Six Sigma methods (https://asq.org/quality-resources/six-sigma) and healthcare's movement toward more equitable care (Kenney, C. (2008). *The best practice: How the new quality movement is transforming medicine*. New York, NY: Public Affairs).

selected passages several times per year. Data are gathered, analyzed, and teachers can adjust instruction as needed (Hutt & Polikoff, 2020; Kaufman et al., 2016).

In sum, in a continuous improvement setting, small groups work with data consistently to understand the changes that need to happen to reach the desired outcomes within the system. In addition, the literature summary revealed key differences between accountability and continuous improvement systems, including:

4. Continuous improvement is a system created within an organization, while accountability can be imposed from outside
5. A locally generated continuous improvement system can be more flexible in the measures used, change those measures, make them match local goals, use more leading indicators, and measures that are maybe not as reliable since the stakes are not as high.
6. The cycle for continuous improvement is more rapid than yearly accountability.

The following section discusses critical elements needed within accountability and continuous improvement systems.

Critical Elements

Within accountability and continuous improvement systems, several critical elements are evident, including stakeholder engagement, clear goals or desired outcomes, measures progress towards those outcomes, and changes within the system or processes to move towards meeting those goals. In either an accountability system or a continuous improvement system, these critical elements combine to form a theory of action: if stakeholders identify a set of desired outcomes, measure them and use that data to change systems or processes, then student outcomes will improve.

The theory of change is rooted in O'Day's (2002) framework discussed throughout the literature review. The original framework intended to serve as a way for states, districts, or schools to improve. With the addition of stakeholder engagement, it also addressed O'Day's underlying problems with accountability systems:

1. Accountability is generally at the school, while the changes need to occur within classrooms
2. There are internal and external audiences and, therefore, goals
3. The measures need to be valid and accurate in order to reflect the goals of teaching and learning

In addition, contemporary accountability and continuous improvement systems inform the theory of action, which reflects a growing acknowledgment that all parts of a school system (families, students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders, and elected officials) engage with a growth mindset.

Community Engagement

Community engagement gathers information about what is needed in classrooms and schools to help students reach the community's expectations. The community encompasses people invested in the school system, from parents choosing schools for their kids to elected officials who set standards and decide school funding levels. A few questions that the community considers as accountability systems are developed include:

- What improvements need to be made within the system?
- What data are collected by the system?
- Are the data collected aligned with the improvements?
- To what extent are the data collected available to those who need it? (Gill et al., 2014; Grunow et al., 2018; O'Keefe et al., 2019)

Additionally, community engagement with teachers at the classroom level honors one element of continuous improvement, which is to understand what is needed where students are learning: within classrooms. To develop systems, the community identifies a set of desired outcomes discussed in the next section.

Goals

As community members consider what improvements need to be made within the system, they identify goals for the students served by the system. The goals for students are generally long-term and reflect if students are ready for postsecondary success (aka, readiness[19]). Also, many outcomes are in the state standards, developed within education departments, and sometimes informed by statute. Often national experts develop these standards, such as the work to develop the Common Core from 2008-2012.

Measures and Assessments

Once desired goals are identified by interested parties, when appropriate, measures are used to track progress toward reaching the outcomes. In general, outcome measures include data such as:

- Graduation rates
- College enrollment
- College persistence
- Career or military readiness

The long-term outcomes are broken into components that are understood to be leading indicators or milestones that lead to desired outcomes, such as:

- Freshman on track to graduation

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[19] Readiness can be defined as prepared for college, a career, or the military. Some systems define readiness in terms of being prepared for civic engagement. Goals such as increased graduation rates, improved performance on nationally normed standardized assessments, or other meaningful goals are set.

- Attainment on the ACT or SAT
- Student Attendance

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, states and districts have used assessments to measure the extent to which students are proficient in core subjects. At first, proficiency was simply used as a measure. Then more sophisticated analyses were conducted to measure growth. As the use of assessments became normalized across the country and assessment data became more and more high-stakes, prompting much debate. The debate about assessments used in accountability systems has centered around the challenge of using lagging indicators (data that are made public the next school year) because teachers could not take immediate action within their classrooms, such as the challenge the CPRE team found in Chicago (O'Day, 2002). Indeed, some district leaders cheated within the assessment systems (Blinder, 2015).

Ravitch et al. reflect on the high-stakes notion of statewide assessments, and, in general, pointed questions remain about the lagging nature of statewide assessments to ascertain the effectiveness of public education (Hutt & Polikoff, 2020). However, the constant throughout the 20-year journey of statewide annual assessment implementation is that the systems in American education collect large amounts of data to understand how students are performing – and those data are disaggregated, so federal and state, and local policymakers can see who needs more support (Fuller, 2022; O'Keefe et al., 2019; Olson, 2020; Ravitch et al., 2022; Schueler & West, 2022).

Nevertheless, another way to think about the objective of the use of assessments within an accountability system is to consider an analogy offered by a former Long Beach Public Schools Superintendent, Carl Cohn: "we should think about refining the design and uses of assessment to be more like the medical field: looking for the right dose, the right time, for the right patient" ("Forum: Do Policymakers Use Educational Assessment?," 2019). Therefore, when identifying measures, several questions should be asked about the characteristics of assessments, such as whether or not the assessment is:

- reliable (does it provide consistent information?),
- valid (does it measure what it was designed to measure?), or
- comprehensive (does it cover all standards?) (Gill et al., 2014; Loeb & Byun, 2019; Moon et al., 2020; Murphy, 2017; Polikoff et al., 2020; Ravitch et al., 2022).

Ultimately, "the test of whether the usefulness of the measures outweighs their imperfections is whether they appear to improve educational opportunities for students and lead to better decisions" (Loeb & Byun, 2019, p. 101). Questions about assessments branch into types needed to measure a system, how to assess standards, and why. As states and districts grappled with these assessment questions, some moved to measure student growth on the assessments.

The current state of assessments reflects the flexibilities within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed in 2015 (Hess & Martin, 2022; Olson, 2020; Ravitch et al., 2022). In addition, ESSA, combined with the education challenges during the pandemic, created an environment where advocates from across the political spectrum ask questions about the future of assessments and accountability.

The opportunity results in many interested parties weighing in on what assessments are needed (Hess & Martin, 2022; Kaufman et al., 2016; Ohlson et al., 2016; O'Keefe et al., 2019; Ravitch et al., 2022; Vaandering & Moss, 2022). For instance, the nation's largest teachers union, National Education Association (NEA), identified its members' hopes in a recent publication entitled "Principles for the Future of Assessment," which include:

1. Create community-based and student-centered processes for assessing student growth, learning, and development.
2. Design assessment that inspires learning. Assess what is meaningful to student well-being, learning, and individuality. (Vaandering & Moss, 2022).

Given the range of perspectives, one conclusion is that assessment data are essential, yet, being intentional about what assessment data are used and when is an essential component of any data system. As one example, to help with thinking about what assessments are needed for decision-making, Mathematica created a chart to illustrate the levels within the system and how they could use data (Gill et al., 2014).

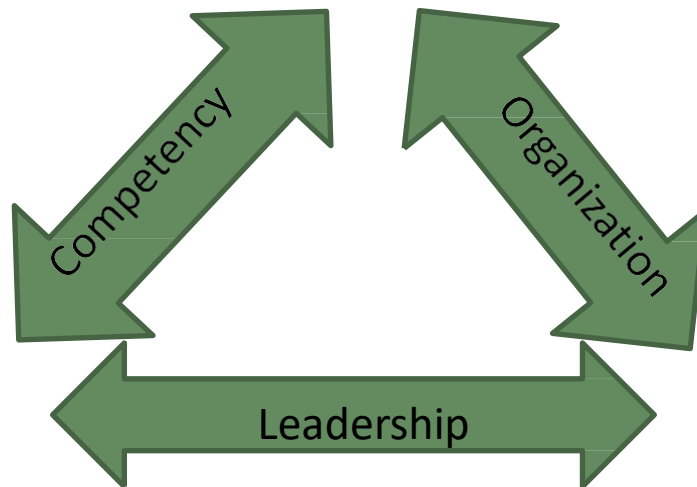| Educational Decision Maker	Data Uses
Classroom teachers	• Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of students • Developing and revising classroom instruction • Understanding professional strengths and weaknesses
School administrators	• Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of staff and students • Developing and revising school plans, targets, and goals • Monitoring the implementation of school practices, programs, and policies
Superintendents, school boards, district staff, charter management organization leaders, charter authorizers	• Assessing the needs, strengths, progress, and performance of schools, staff, and students • Developing and revising district curricula, standards, plans, targets, and goals • Monitoring the implementation and impact of district practices, programs, and policies
State education agency officials	• Monitoring statewide achievement and attainment levels, overall and for subgroups, statewide and by school/district • Monitoring and reporting measures of school performance (that is, value-added) • Measuring teacher value-added • Monitoring human capital pipeline • Evaluating program implementation and impacts • Developing and revising state standards, curricula, and goals

The chart needs to include data for external consumption, such as data for families and wrap-around service providers who complement the public education system. Nonetheless, the critical element of assessment data helps to identify the different types of support that educators need to support students throughout their PreK-12 experience, which are discussed in the next section.

Changes in Systems and Processes to Meet Goals

Changes to systems and processes within the public education system as part of accountability and continuous improvement are multi-layered. They can range from focusing on classroom interactions to how state leaders interact district leaders. As highlighted in the O'Day framework, these changes often include resource reallocation. Nevertheless, all discussions about system and process change center on the essential question: how do we achieve desired outcomes?

One way to think about system and process changes in relation to accountability or continuous improvement system is to identify the implementation drivers. Implementation drivers were identified by researchers at the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) as common practices among successfully implemented practices and programs, as illustrated in Figure 1. The three drivers are Competency, Organization, and Leadership supports.

Figure 1: Implementation Drivers

Source: Adapted from Fixsen et al. (2005)

Improved outcomes for students require a change in practice, and competency drivers are how new practices, skills, and knowledge are taught to selected staff through training and coaching. The organizational supports create a hospitable environment of innovation and change. This includes information systems for monitoring progress, processes, and resources or materials necessary to carry out new programs. Leadership helps surface and resolve problems, sets priorities, and manages the change processes. The Implementation Drivers tool can provide a framework for assessing the availability of the critical elements of effective accountability and continuous improvement systems (Fixsen et al., 2015).

The literature revealed state-level support structures in Louisiana and California to understand where teachers, school leaders, and district leaders need support. Louisiana emerged due to RAND's American Teacher Panel survey analysis, in which researchers found that teachers in the state accessed the Louisiana Department of Education's resources more than teachers in other states (Kaufman et al., 2016). In addition, Louisiana students increased in their college and career readiness; 11th-grade students gained more points on the ACT composite scores; the number of Advanced Placement courses doubled; fourth-grade NAEP reading scores showed the highest growth in the country. So, RAND asked: why? The highlights of the research results describe three critical support elements from the state department of education:

1. A coherent academic strategy focused on integration, alignment, and quality among systems supporting standards.
2. Transparent and regular communication about academics within the state department and across layers of the education system
3. Strong support for local decision-making and ownership of change by districts and teachers (p. 12).

State-level leaders in Louisiana provided support to the state's teachers with resources such as a list of materials aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and training on identifying instructional resources aligned with the CCSS.

California policymakers have taken more detailed steps, with the state creating a Dashboard with accountability elements that identify districts needing more targeted services through a "System of Support," which is provided mainly through County Offices of Education. There are four features of California's System of Support:

1. a focus on serving particular student groups, especially those who have been historically underserved;
2. a focus on school districts as well as schools;
3. a focus on capacity-building rather than externally developed interventions; and
4. a continuous improvement approach (Grunow et al., 2018).

Polikoff (2021) summarizes the discussion about change to reach goals described in state-identified standards such as the Common Core (Hutt & Polikoff, 2020; Polikoff et al., 2020). The main question he explores is: to what extent is instruction aligned to standards? The method he uses to understand this question is to survey teachers about what they teach, and then he compares the answers to what the standards say they should teach. The results are a wake-up call: a high level of misalignment. As Polikoff explores different ways to reach alignment, he concludes that a high-quality curriculum is a solution to strengthening the support within the system. Not by providing a scripted curriculum, per se, but ongoing work with teachers that focuses on how they can more tightly align their instruction to standards – which are what the assessments are measuring.

Summary

In the current education climate, accountability and continuous improvement have converged, with evidence that when a system implements elements thoughtfully and with care, students benefit in multiple ways (Bryk et al., 2015; Grunow et al., 2018; O'Keefe et al., 2019). As seen in Louisiana and California, accountability can support continuous improvement systems, particularly when they use data that helps to inform instruction more quickly than annual assessments.

Perhaps the biggest lesson about the use of accountability or continuous improvement systems is that leaders need to focus on the human interactions throughout the system, but especially in the classroom, to ensure that teachers know what the accountability systems are measuring, what the continuous improvement systems are working to improve – and why (Gill et al., 2014; Lewis, 2015). Fullan and Quinn (2016) explain this concept as coherence. To explain, they provide a framework for coherence in systems, which is at once reminiscent of O'Day's (2002) framework and combines accountability with continuous improvement:

1. focusing direction;
2. cultivating collaborative cultures;
3. deepening learning; and
4. securing accountability.

Fullan and Quinn (2016) emphasize the importance of leaders pulling these four levers simultaneously with an eye toward individual and collective improvement. As they explain the highlights of what coherence is not and what it is, they highlight how human interactions are integral to coherence.

Appendix B: LASG Survey

Introduction This survey is part of the Local Accountability System Grant evaluation being conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA Consulting) for the Colorado Department of Education. The surveys should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Please complete this survey by May 29, 2023.

Your responses will be anonymous. Only aggregated data will only be shared with CDE and the public, individual responses will not be shared.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Steffen at CDE (steffen_l@cde.state.co.us) or Robert Reichardt at APA Consulting (rer@apaconsulting.net).

Q1 Please identify the district/school or accountability partner you are associated with.

_____

Q2 How would you judge your progress on the Colorado Local Accountability System Grant?

○ We have surpassed our goals for this project. (1)

○ We have met our project goals for the project. (2)

○ We are making progress towards our project. (3)

○ We are beginning to make progress towards are goals. (4)

○ We have not yet started to make progress towards our goals. (5)

Q3 Please describe the level of challenge associated with each Local Accountability System Grant activity.

	Not a challenge (1)	Slightly challenging (2)	A challenge (3)	Significant challenge (4)	Extremely challenging (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
Coordination within the district/school (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Alignment of vision for education system (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Developing consensus on standards and indicators aligned with vision (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Developing measures that are valid and reliable (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Data infrastructure, e.g., developing dashboards, data storage, data cleaning (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity to use data-informed decision making (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity to engage the public (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Changes in vision for the project (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to expertise (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q4 Please describe the level of success with each Local Accountability System Grant activity.

	Not a success (1)	Slight success (2)	A success (3)	Significant success (4)	Extreme success (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
Coordination within the district (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Alignment of vision for education system (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Developing consensus on standards and indicators aligned with vision (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Developing measures that are valid and reliable (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Developing data infrastructure, e.g., developing dashboards, data storage, data cleaning (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity to use information, e.g., data informed decision (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Capacity to engage the public (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Consistency in vision for the project (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to expertise (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Other (10) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Q5 What about your district/school context has contributed to the successes of the Local Accountability System Grant?

	Not important to success (1)	Somewhat important contribution (2)	Important to our success (3)	Very important to success (4)	Extremely important to success (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
District/school is the right size for this work, e.g., capacity, cross team coordination, scalability, etc. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Great people participating in the grant (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our existing data infrastructure (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our work on accountability/continuing improvement before the grant Consistent leadership (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Consistent staffing of the project (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to expertise (external and internal) (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to resources, e.g., time or money (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q6 What about your district/school context has been a challenge of the Local Accountability System Grant?

	Not a challenge (1)	Somewhat a challenge (2)	Challenging (3)	Very challenging (4)	Extremely challenging (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
District is the right size for this work, e.g., capacity, cross team coordination, scalability, etc. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Getting the right people to work on the project (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Our existing data infrastructure (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Not enough work on accountability/continuing improvement before the grant (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inconsistent leadership (e.g., shifting priorities) (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inconsistent staffing of the project (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
The pandemic (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to expertise (internal and external) (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Access to resources, e.g., time or money (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q7 How valuable have the following supports for the Local Accountability System Grant been?

	Not important to success (1)	Somewhat important contribution (2)	Important to our success (3)	Very important to success (4)	Extremely important to success (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
Assistance administering the grant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Networking convenings (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reviewing accountability system plans, e.g., theory of action (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Technical assistance, e.g., on accountability measures, stakeholder engagement, state and federal expectations (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q8 What additional supports for the Local Accountability System Grant would be useful to you?

	Not helpful (1)	Somewhat helpful (2)	Helpful (3)	Very helpful (4)	Extremely helpful (5)	Don't know/Not applicable (6)
Assistance administering the grant (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Networking convenings (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reviewing accountability system plans (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Technical assistance on accountability measures (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Organizing presentations at state conventions (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Posting supplemental reports and alternative improvement plans (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q9 What is this Local Accountability System Grant enabling you to do that is hard to do in the current system?

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Q10 Anything else?

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End of Block: Survey

Local Accountability System Grant Year 2 Evaluation

By Robert Reichardt, Jennifer Kramer-Wine, Christien Liable

APA Consulting

With assistance by Julie Oxenford-O'Brian

July 10, 2024

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Julie Oxenford-Obrian who provided participant logic models to support program descriptions and to the districts and accountability partners who provided both data and support in describing their programs.

Executive Summary

This is the second annual evaluation of the local accountability system grant (LASG). The evaluation design was created to comply with the legislative requirement for a quantitative evaluation. This evaluation addresses the following questions:

1. Is participation in the LASG associated with improvements in the four main components of accountability systems:
     a. Community engagement,
     b. Goals,
     c. Measures, and
     d. Change?

This question was addressed through case studies of five LASG participants who volunteered to provide data showing changes in their accountability systems: Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), Fountain Fort Carson School District (FFC8), Jefferson County School District (Jeffco), MOPP and S-CAP. Each of these LASG participants provided quantitative data that illustrates changes in their local accountability system supported by the LASG grant. Three LASG participants provided data showing changes in community engagement.

1. FFC8 provided data showing their efforts resulted in increased parent engagement in community forums.
2. Jeffco provided data showing how their *School Insights* accountability framework developed as part of their LASG activities.
3. S-CAP provided evidence of increased engagement of the education community in the LASG activities through the continued growth in district participation in S-CAP during LASG implementation.

Two districts provided data showing changes in accountability measures that reflected local goals.

1. BVSD had a local goal of reducing and eliminating student discipline disparities between different racial and ethnic groups. They provided data on student suspensions that showed both a decrease in suspensions and a reduction (but not elimination) in disparities in discipline.
2. MOPP data shows use of student achievement measures that are better aligned with alternative education campus (AEC) goals is associated with increases in accountability outcomes as measured in the state's AEC school accountability frameworks.

Taken together, these results show that the localities implementing the LASG can provide evidence of changes associated with local accountability systems. The evidence provided shows increased community engagement in shaping accountability systems and changes in measures that better reflect local values and goals. Grantees and CDE have shared lessons learned from this process with other

districts. Future evaluations have the opportunity to learn about how districts sustain these efforts as well as if and how these efforts can lead to changes in student outcomes.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This is the second of two evaluations by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) of the Colorado Local Accountability System Grant (LASG) program. Authorized by the Colorado State Legislature in Senate Bill (SB) 19-204[1], the LASG provides grant funds to enhance local accountability and continuous improvement systems[2]. This section begins with a description of the LASG followed by a short description of the evaluation. The following sections provide the results of the evaluation.

LASG Overview

As described in Colorado Department of Education (CDE) publications, the LASG local accountability system is supplemental to the state accountability system and may be designed to:

a) Fairly and accurately evaluate student success using multiple measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each student's success, including additional performance indicators or measures, which may include non-academic student outcomes such as student engagement, attitudes, and dispositions toward learning;

b) Evaluate the capacity of the public-school systems operated by the local education provider to support student success; and

c) Use the results obtained from measuring student success and system support for student success as part of a cycle of continuous improvement (22-11-703)[3].

Grants were awarded in March 2020 by CDE through a competitive process to 11 of the 14 applicants. Grant amounts range from $25,000 to $75,000 per year for a statewide grant total of $450,000 per year. The grants are intended to last for three years; however, grants were suspended soon after they were awarded for a year due to pandemic-caused disruptions. Currently, 10 grantees participate in the LASG.

As described by CDE, grantees are engaging in a wide variety of initiatives, including public reporting dashboards, site visit protocols, rubrics, development of nonacademic indicators, stakeholder engagement processes, and alternative approaches to improvement planning. All grantees have worked on defining their values, articulating their underlying structure, and defining a theory of action. Grant awardees include individual districts as well as consortia of participating districts:

- Boulder Valley School District, RE-2, Canon City School District, Greeley-Evans School District 6, and Gunnison Watershed School District
- Delta County 50J – Vision Charter Academy
- Student-Centered Accountability Project (S-CAP), including Buena Vista R-31, AkronR-1, Buffalo RE-4J, East Otero R-1, Frenchman RE-3, Hanover 28, Haxtun RE2-J, Holyoke Re-1J, Kit Carson R-1, La Veta Re-2, Las Animas RE-1, Monte Vista C-8, West Grand 1-JT, and Wiggins RE-50(J)
- Denver Public Schools

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[1] The bill text can be found here: https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb19-204
[2] Information about the grant can be found here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant
[3] This language was taken from a CDE LASG fact sheet, located at:
https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier

- District 49 (Falcon)
- Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8
- Garfield County School District 16 (withdrew due to constraints created by the pandemic)
- Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP), including New America School – Lakewood (Jefferson County), Brady Exploration School (Jefferson County), Denver Justice High School (Denver), Durango Big Picture School (Durango), HOPE Online High School (Douglas County), Jefferson High School (Greeley), New America School – Aurora (Charter School Institute), New America School – Thornton (Adams 12), Southwest Open School (Cortez), Rise Up Community School (Denver) and Yampah Mountain High School (Glenwood Springs)
- Jefferson County Public School District
- Northeast Colorado BOCES, including Plateau School District RE-5, Revere School District, Yuma School District 1, Lone Star 101, and Haxtun Re-2J
- Westminster Public Schools and Brush School District RE-2J[4]

While much of resources and attention from the state accountability system focus on lower-rated schools and districts, i.e., schools and districts identified for Priority Improvement or Turnaround, LASG grantees are generally higher rated on the state accountability framework. Grantees provided videos describing their work, which are available at this link: http://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant.

Grantees represent a wide range of contexts including small rural districts, large urban districts, as well as a consortium of alternative education campuses (AECs) as part of the Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)[5]. AECs have specialized missions and serve high-risk student populations including students experiencing homelessness, addiction, are in foster care, and/or are pregnant or parenting. Since 2002, the state has been working to support high-quality settings for vulnerable and challenging populations. AECs are able to select optional measures for their accountability and improvement planning in addition to state measures.

An important feature of the LASG is the option to work with Accountability System Partners that provide expertise in developing measures, designing infrastructure, and supporting data interpretation. These partners include Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), University of Colorado (CU) Boulder, CU Denver, Marzano Academies, Momentum Strategy and Research, Generation Schools, Battelle for Kids, WestEd, and Cognia[6].

CDE's role in the grant included helping to administer the grant, supporting ongoing improvement planning that complies with federal, state, and grant requirements, facilitating convenings of grantees to support networking, planning, and capacity building. CDE staff has also provided technical assistance to

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[4] The language describing grantee activities as well as list of grantees was taken from: https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/localaccountabilitysystemgrantflier
[5] More information about AEC accountability in Colorado can be found here: Alternative Education Campus Accountability | CDE (state.co.us)
[6] From the Year 2 Legislative Report at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant

grantees upon request. Technical assistance topics have included measurement development, reporting and visualization, and stakeholder engagement.

Outside Evaluation of the LASG

This is the second evaluation of the LASG and is required by the authorizing legislation (SB-19-204). *This is not an evaluation of any individual grantee or Accountability Partner*. The findings from the first qualitative evaluation included:

- Grantees felt they were meeting or making progress towards meeting their goals.
- Challenges were most often associated with data: capacity to make data-informed decisions and data infrastructure e.g., data dashboards, data storage, and data cleaning.
- The largest sustainability challenge identified by grantees is ongoing leadership buy-in.
- Accountability partners have provided valuate capacity to school districts as they do this work.
- CDE played an important role in presenting local accountability plans with the state accountability framework. This provided credibility to the local efforts.

This second evaluation uses quantitative information to provide information on impacts and changes associated with the LASG. **T**he goal of this evaluation is to provide quantitative information about the relationship between implementing the LASG and 1) public engagement components of local accountability systems and 2) changes in measures of student outcomes. The changes in community engagement are described using data provided by districts. Changes in student outcome measures are described using data from the district performance framework (DPF), the alternative education campus (AEC), school performance framework (SPF), and data provided by districts. The analysis plan for this evaluation was developed in consultation with Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff and participating districts.

This evaluation explores whether participating in the LASG led to changes in grantees' local accountability systems. In particular:

1. Is participation in the LASG grant associated with improvements in the four main components of accountability systems:
    a. Community Engagement,
    b. Goals,
    c. Measures, and
    d. Changes in Practice?
2. Do districts and schools participating in the LASG show improvement in measures of student achievement and growth in the state accountability framework between 2018-19 and 2022-23?
    a. Is the change for LASG participating districts larger than what is seen statewide?

The next section of this report reviews the accountability system model described in the year 1 report with a literature review. That model has four primary components: community engagement, goals, measures, and changes in practice. This is followed by four case studies of LASG participants and

resulting changes in their accountability systems. The final section of the report provides an analysis of state accountability data from the DPF.

This evaluation is part of multiple efforts to learn from LASG activities. CDE has produced three legislative reports that both describe the grant program as well as observations by CDE staff[7]. CDE and grantees have also collaboratively presented at Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE). In addition, the CU Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER) has also engaged in study of the grantees including mapping each grantee's theory of action.

System Model

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 laid the foundation for most of the school and district accountability systems in place today.[8] Current accountability systems follow the administrative model within which districts and schools are rated based on student outcomes, and these ratings are used to help target resources (Loeb & Byun, 2019). As accountability systems have evolved, they sometimes work on a faster cycle than the yearly cycle of NCLB accountability systems and are often described as continuous improvement systems.

Within accountability and continuous improvement systems, several critical elements are evident, including community or stakeholder engagement, clear goals or desired outcomes, measures of progress towards, and changes within the system or processes to move towards meeting goals. In either an accountability system or a continuous improvement system, these critical elements combine to form a theory of action: if stakeholders identify a set of desired outcomes, measure them, and use that data to inform changes to systems or processes, then student outcomes will improve. These two systems share components that are summarized in Figure 1 below.

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[7] Information is available here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/localaccountabilitysystemgrant
[8] This section uses information from the Year 1 evaluation to provide structure and context for the quantitative measures used in this analysis.

Figure 1: Critical Elements in Accountability and Continuous Improvement Systems

This representation of accountability and continuous improvement systems has several important elements. First, these elements are shown within a **cycle of improvement,** not as one-time events. Second, **information within the cycle flows bi-directionally**. For example, efforts to identify measures can influence goals as can efforts at change. Finally, this system operates in the **context of community engagement** that can occur throughout the entire cycle. Community engagement does not occur at any one time within accountability and continuous improvement systems but throughout the system.

Community engagement gathers information about what is needed in classrooms and schools to help students reach the community's expectations. The community encompasses people invested in the school system including parents choosing schools for their students, members of the school system and their professional community, as well as elected officials who set standards and decide school funding levels.

As community members consider what improvements need to be made within the system, they identify goals for students served by the system. Goals for students are generally long-term and revolve around students' readiness for postsecondary success (aka, readiness[9]). Once desired goals are identified, when appropriate, measures are used to track progress toward reaching the outcomes. In the case of the LASG, these measures should reflect local goals. NCLB required states to develop and use measures related to state academic standards. The original state measures included student proficiency on state assessments and have expanded to include student growth.

Changes to systems and processes within the public education system as part of accountability and continuous improvement are multi-layered. They can range from focusing on classroom interactions to how state leaders interact with district leaders. As highlighted in the O'Day framework, these changes often include resource reallocation. Nevertheless, all discussions about system and process change center on the essential question: how do we achieve desired outcomes?

It is important to note that all of the changes intended by the LASG, and grantees were impacted by the pandemic. The pandemic placed incredible stress on the school systems as they were working to implement the LASG. It created large measurement challenges including delayed assessments and other disruptions to longitudinal data collection. This interruption in data collection then slowed the use of data to inform and support changes in processes and systems. Thus, the pandemic was a barrier to implementing changes associated with LASG goals.

The next section of this report contains five case studies showing the results of district changes to their accountability systems followed by the legislatively required analysis of student achievement and growth.

Analysis of Changes to Local Accountability Systems

The following five case studies provide context to the quantitative data collected for the second evaluation report for the Colorado Department of Education's Local Accountability System Grants. Five districts volunteered for the case studies to illustrate the quantitative changes associated with LASG implementation in different districts or in the case of Alternative Education Campuses (AEC) groups of similar schools.

The case studies illustrate the unique circumstances that guide their thinking about local accountability system goals, measures, community engagement, and change. These local accountability systems reflect each community's values. Each of the five case studies uses quantitative data to illustrate changes in each entity's local accountability systems:

1. Fountain Ft. Carson – changes in community engagement to serve military families
2. S-CAP – changes in peer community engagement to tap educator expertise and knowledge

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[9] Readiness can be defined as prepared for college, a career, or the military. Some systems define readiness in terms of being prepared for civic engagement. Goals such as increased graduation rates, improved performance on nationally normed standardized assessments, or other meaningful goals are set.

3. Jeffco – changes in community engagement through the use of accountability frameworks reflecting local goals.
4. Boulder – changes in measures to reflect local goals to reduce disparities in discipline.
5. MOPP – changes in measures to better reflect the work of individual Alternative Education Campuses (AECs).

The following sections provide more detail on the five grants. The sections introduce the district with demographic information[10], then are divided into subsections that reflect the four critical elements of accountability and continuous improvement systems.[11]

Fountain Ft. Carson School District 8

Fountain Ft. Carson (FF8) is located south of Colorado Springs, minutes away from the U.S. Army Base, Ft. Carson. In fact, a few of the district's 13 schools are located on base. Over 7,880 students were enrolled in FF8 during the 2023-24 school year. Of the total, 52 percent of students received free or reduced lunch, 18 percent of FF8's students required special education services and 3 percent were English language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 2:[12]

Figure 2: Race and Ethnicity of Fountain Fort Carson Students 2023-24
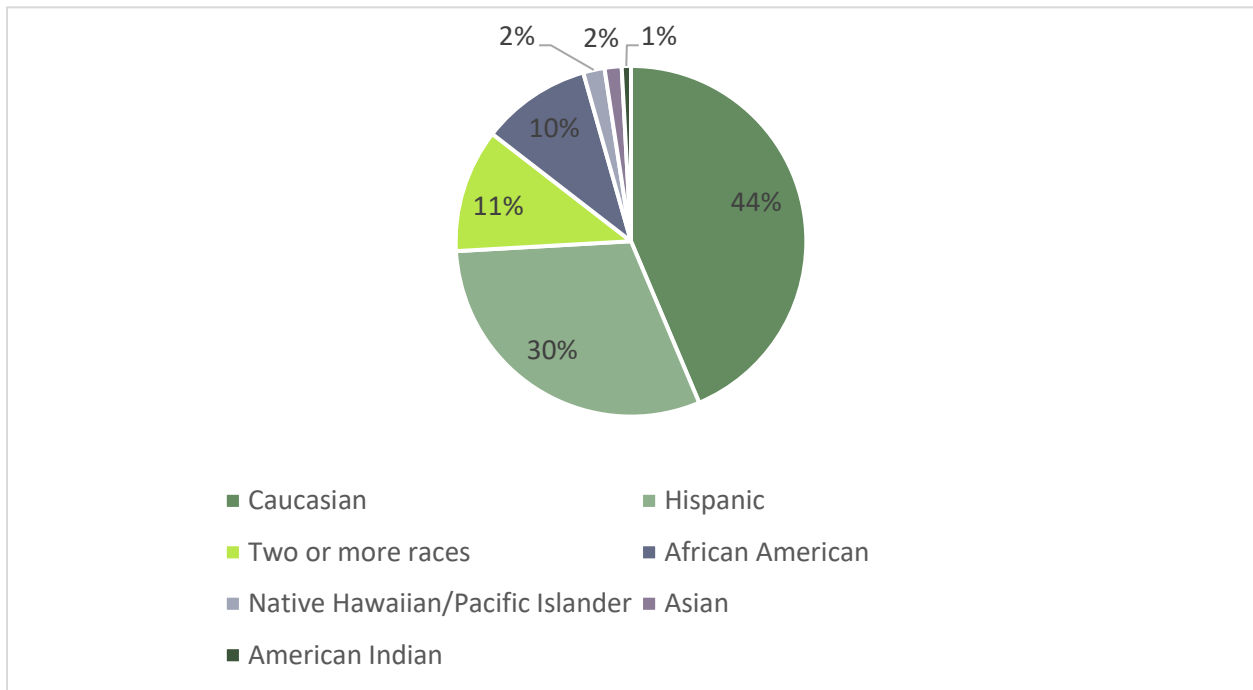
Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community Engagement

As part of the work supported by the Local Accountability System Grant, Fountain Ft. Carson's Local Accountability System was developed as part of a broader district strategic plan called District Effectiveness. It was presented to the Board of Directors on October 27, 2021. The plan has three priorities:

1. Learning and Achievement
2. Community Engagement
3. Operational Planning

The purpose, also called "The Why," of the Local Accountability System is focused on Community Engagement:

> FFC8 is committed to safe learning and working environments by providing effective safety and security protocols and practices, flexible communication systems, and the development of family, student, school, civic, business, and community partnerships.

FFC8's strategic plan includes an action plan, also called "the How".

> FFC8 is committed to improving educational outcomes for all schools by fostering a sense of belonging, providing needed resources, and promoting a culture of collaboration with all stakeholders:

- Family, student, school partnerships
- Civic, community, business partnerships
- Effective communication systems
- Safe & secure learning environments

Goals

The goals stated within FF8's districtwide Theory of Action focus on community knowledge of and engagement with the district's goals.

Short-term:

- Consistent implementation of critical feedback loops between district and school leadership, school staff, students, and parents to increase awareness about school and district improvement and effectiveness, as measured by stakeholder survey feedback.
- Parents, Students, Staff, and community members better understand the goals of the educational system and their roles in achieving those goals.

Intermediate term:

- Improved coherence in expectations for effective instruction and the development of the whole child across the district.
- Parents, Students, Staff, and community members should be able to clearly communicate the goals of the educational system and their roles in achieving those goals.

Long-term (impact):

- Increase public confidence about the effectiveness of school and district improvement efforts.

- Improved stakeholder agency at all levels with regard to achieving the goals of the education system.

Measures

As Fountain-Ft. Carson's leadership defined the measures of the Local Accountability System, they developed a Theory of Action. In addition, leadership wanted to identify unique ways to engage military families with the district's changing math curriculum. District leaders felt it was important for schools to focus on military families, who comprise approximately 70 percent of the families within the system. Military families also have a high mobility rate.

As the district operationalized the strategic plan, each school was asked to identify ways to connect families at least three times per year starting in the fall of the 2022-23 school year.

Change in Practice

Schools focused on engaging parents in instruction by creating sessions that extended after-school activities that parents usually attended such as performances. For example, at a band performance, the introduction could include a 30-minute presentation on the math curriculum that the school used.

One school held an event that solely focused on its math curriculum. Parents were introduced to the content, then moved through a series of classrooms, observing teachers teach the content. After the classroom sessions, parents reconvened in a plenary session, which had a panel discussion. The panelists were students who provided more detail about their classroom experiences and answered questions from parents. The school thought it was important to focus on math because students were learning different ways of approaching problems than their parents learned when they were in school.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

Figures 4 and 5 show the increase in parent participation in community forums in district elementary and secondary schools. They show the average number of parents participating in these events across schools at a given level (elementary and secondary) during different periods of the year. This data is based on parent sign-in sheets at these events.

Figure 3: Parent Participation in Elementary School Community Forums
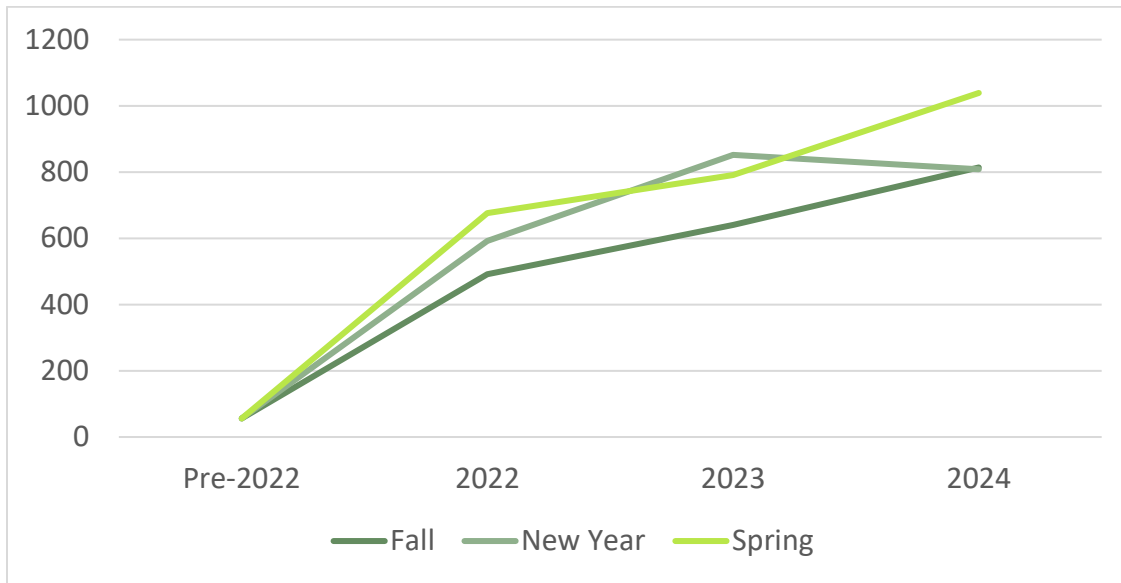
Source: FF8 data provided to the evaluation team

Figure 4: Parent Participation in Secondary School Community Forums
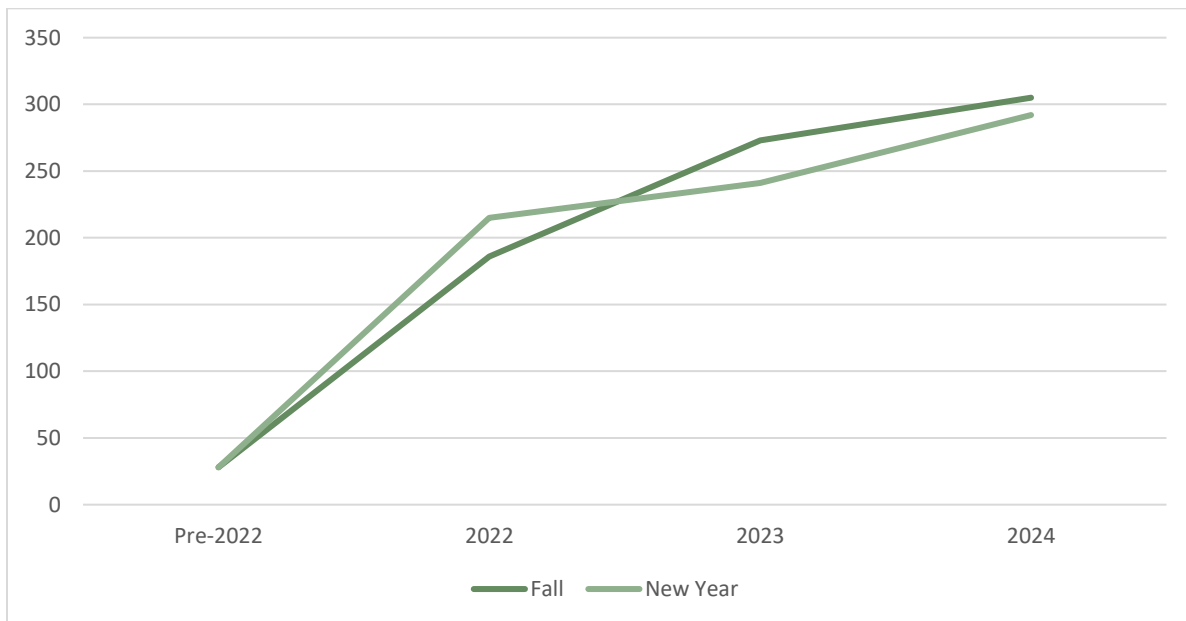
Source: FF8 data provided to the evaluation team

Parent participation in elementary schools increased by 14 to 18 times. Participation in secondary schools grew by 10 times. These large changes in parent participation and engagement in the district's accountability system reflect the successful implementation of the LASG and goals associated with community engagement.

Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP)

The Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP) was established in 2015 when five rural districts, Buena Vista, Buffalo, Kit Carson, La Veta, and Monte Vista, (S-CAP Core Districts) collaborated to establish an approach to accountability that would drive system improvement in rural Colorado. The leaders from the five founding districts decided to try visiting one another's districts to provide useful feedback that could facilitate their collective learning within their professional community and improvement efforts. The leaders were partly motivated by gaps in state accountability reporting caused by their smaller-sized schools[13].

The vision has evolved in several ways. First, the group has an official name, S-CAP. The visits are formalized into *System Support Reviews (SSRs)*. S-CAP districts also grew from a group of five; as of the 2022-23 school year, S-CAP includes 19 rural Colorado school districts and two external partners, Breezy Strategies and the University of Colorado, Denver Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER).

The total population for all 19 districts is 10,510. The average population of the districts is 556, with a range of 36 to 1,326. The average free and reduced lunch percentage is 57 percent, with a range of 37 to 81 percent. The race and ethnicity of the students in S-CAP districts are reflected in Figure 5.

[13] The first evaluation of the LASG noted that privacy concerns lead to significant limits in the publicly data available to rural districts. The state as subsequently provided restricted access to accountability data for district employees.

Figure 5: Race and Ethnicity of Students In S-CAP Districts 2023-24
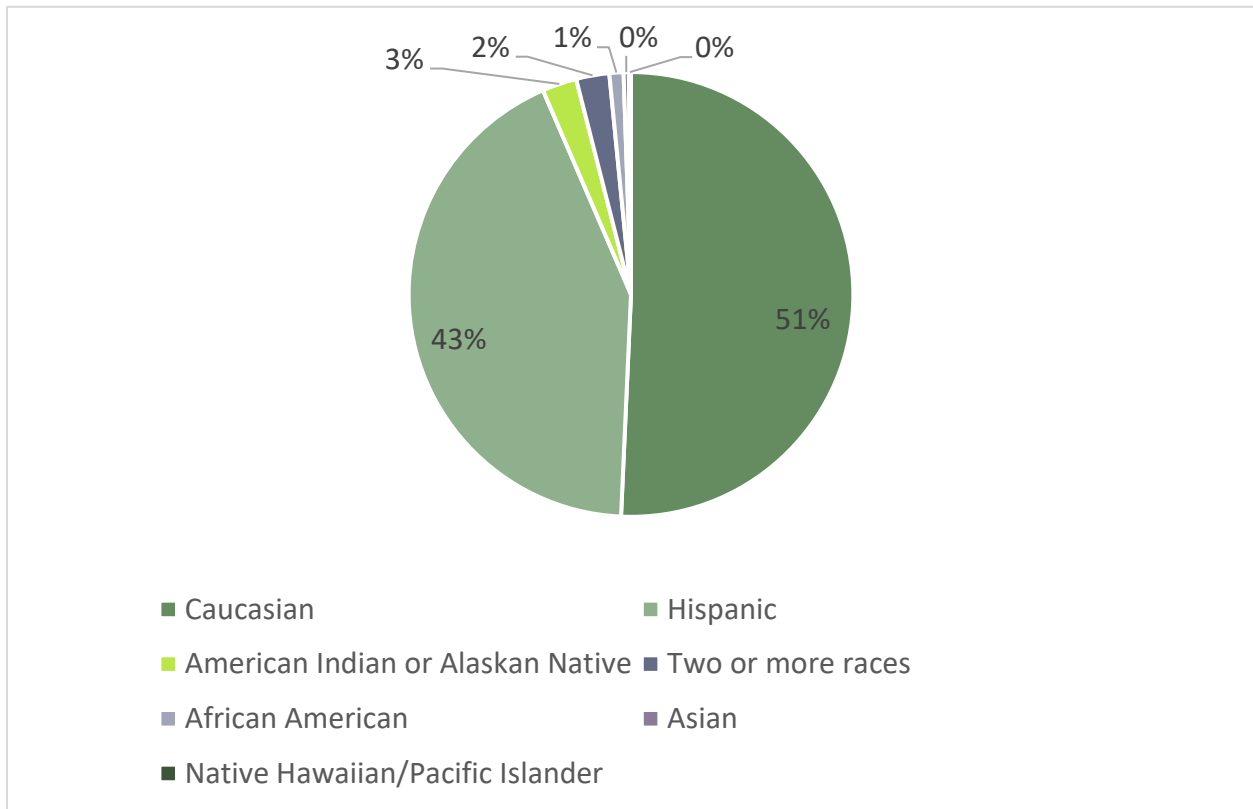
Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community Engagement

The S-CAP frameworks were initially developed by the S-CAP Core districts in 2015. The five districts piloted the frameworks over three years. Since 2018, representatives from all S-CAP districts have reviewed them annually (each summer).

At the first S-CAP Summer Summit in 2018, C-PEER reviewed the relevant research literature, developed the S-CAP Evidence map, summarized Findings, identified Performance Level Descriptors, and provided potential implications for revisions to the frameworks (S-CAP indicators at the student and system levels). S-CAP district staff members (superintendents, school leaders, and teacher leaders) and partners considered the research review and identified recommended framework updates. In addition, in preparation for their annual SSRs, district leaders updated background information and key documents.

Goals

Goals within S-CAP are two-fold: (1) to increase the number of small districts throughout Colorado that participate and (2) to identify goals for each member district.

To provide an example of district goals created within the S-CAP process, one school district, Wiggins School District, will be used as an illustration. Wiggins is located in northeast Colorado, with a town population of 1,200; the district's population is 880:

Wiggins

1. Empower Teachers to Collect and Analyze Data - *Data collection and analysis will be consistent across the district to aid in the process of incorporating interventions across all levels.*
   a. *The middle school and elementary school reached Performance status in 2023.*
2. Promote Professional Development to Ensure Implementation of Curriculum - *Staff will engage in targeted professional development designed to foster the use of the new curriculum with fidelity. As staff becomes comfortable with the curriculum horizontal and vertical alignment will take place.*
   a. Minority Students are improving, according to CMAS data, having gone from Does not Meet to Meet in student growth in just one year. Minority students also improved in growth, going from Does not Meet to Approaching.
3. Ensure Consistent Use of Language to Support All Students - *WSD recognizes the uniqueness of each student's background therefore WSD will continue to incorporate SIOP strategies amongst other tactics to garner students' success.*
   a. Minority students have reported to focus groups through the S-CAP process that their teachers are trying to connect with them more than ever before and that the word walls of common language have helped ease some of their anxiety in the classroom.
4. Build Professional Collaboration and Staff well-being - *It is proven that students cannot focus on their education if they feel unsafe. WSD will continue to keep our students safe from physical harm while focusing on student and staff mental health.*
   a. Wiggins was able to work with its insurance provider to offer staff lower insurance rates for those who take part in regular exercise. Several staff competed in competitions such as marathons and Tough Mudders. The friendly competition has led to camaraderie on top of better physical and mental fitness.

Measures

During SSRs, reviewers conduct focus groups of students, educators, family/ community members, and leadership interviews. SSR reviewers conduct classroom observations, capturing individual notes and team-based summaries for multiple classrooms in the district. Leaders and teachers from other S-CAP districts analyze and interpret evidence as part of the three types of System Support Reviews.

C-PEER bi-annually administers surveys to key stakeholders in S-CAP districts, including Students, Families, and Educators. The results are used during the SSRs. Breezy Strategies facilitates all aspects of the district System Support Reviews, including collecting evidence during the reviews.

S-CAP districts maintain S-CAP websites with support from S-CAP partners. Web sites are updated at least annually in conjunction with the districts' SSR.

As part of the ***Onboarding*** and bi-annual ***Comprehensive SSRs*** districts receive descriptive feedback and an overall rating regarding their evidence of student success and implementation of system supports described in the S-CAP frameworks. Separate teams of reviewers focus on Curriculum and Instruction, Learning Dispositions and Learning Climate, Leadership and Vision, and Professional Learning. These teams also rate the status of the district's implementation of systems of support (based on the performance-level descriptors). There are three types of SSRs:

1. ***Onboarding Year 1 SSR*** **(1 day)** for district in their first year with S-CAP. This orients districts to hosting an SSR with a more limited focus (two priorities among the S-CAP frameworks for

system supports) and is used by district leadership to initiate a conversation with their staff and local boards relative to establishing/updating strategic priorities.

2. **Comprehensive SSRs (2-days)** beginning year two and every other year after, aimed at supporting district identification and refinement of strategic priorities based on a review of evidence related to their students' success and system support (all framework areas). At the end of the second day of a comprehensive review, reviewers work across their teams to develop an Executive Summary regarding the district's level of implementation of the system supports for each of the S-CAP Frameworks.

3. **Focused SSR (1-day)** beginning year three and every other year after, aimed at monitoring and providing feedback regarding the progress of district implementation of their strategic priorities (identified or updated based on the prior years' comprehensive SSR). Note, during the 2020-21 school year all SSRs shifted to the "focused" 1-day format and were conducted virtually. Focused SSRs peer review teams are organized by the district's strategic priorities (typically aligned with the S-CAP frameworks). As described here, the focus is somewhat different. Through this process, district/school leaders receive feedback on evidence the review teams found regarding actions taken to implement their strategic priorities, the impact of the priorities, and stakeholder communication about resource allocation towards their strategic priorities.

During each type of SSR, peer reviewers work in teams (at least three people) organized by system support framework areas. They make meaning of the various evidence sources relevant to their focus. They engage in a structured process to combine the different types of evidence to summarize findings regarding the level of district implementation of system supports described by the S-CAP framework (multiple components).

Change in Practice

District leaders use the evidence and results of the S-CAP district System Support Reviews (SSRs) to develop and adjust their strategic priorities, associated actions, and resource allocation. Districts work through their internal structures to facilitate the process of developing strategic priorities and planning for their actions to address them. This includes engaging internal and external district stakeholders.

Districts generally identify four priorities, emerging from the SSRs findings that are aligned with and or address identified gaps related to the indicators in the S-CAP frameworks. Progress monitoring of district actions to implement their strategic priorities occurs through the bi-annual Focused SSRs.

During the 2019-20 school year, C-PEER conducted a study to assess 1) how S-CAP districts used their SSR findings to improve local systems and educator practices and 2) how S-CAP district staff used their experiences as reviewers for other districts to change their own practices. C-PEER research about the SSRs suggests that participating as a reviewer for other districts' SSRs correlates with individuals using their own district's SSR results to improve their practice.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

The S-CAP began prior to the LASG. However, the LASG did support the ongoing growth of the projects as evidenced by the continued growth of the number of participating districts after 2020 shown in Figure 6. In the school year 2019-20, when the LASG grants were awarded, there were 11 districts participating in S-CAP. By 2023-24 participation increased to 18 districts. This is both an indicator of increased engagement by the peer education community in the local accountability systems and as evidenced by C-PEER research showing increased engagement in professional learning by participating district staff.

Figure 6: Growth in S-CAP Participation
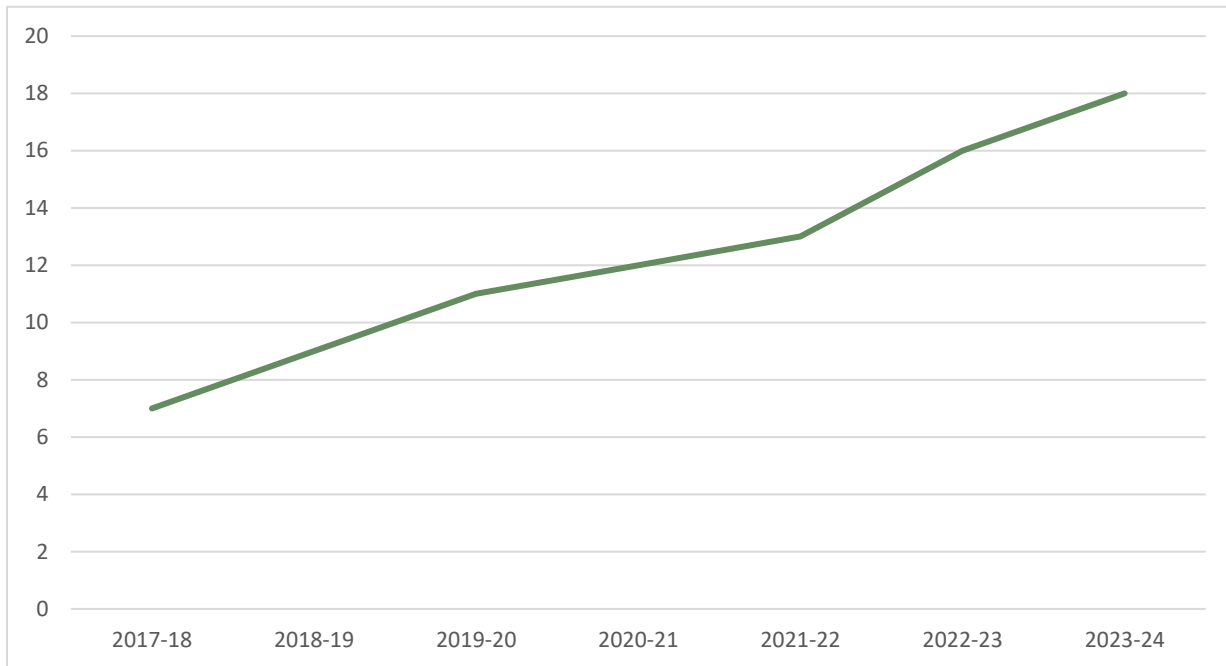
Source: S-CAP data provided to the evaluation team

Jefferson County Public Schools (Jeffco)

Jefferson County Public Schools (Jeffco) spans a 770-square-mile radius serving the western suburbs of Denver to the rural towns on the eastern edge of the Rockies. In 2023-24, 76,172 students[14] attended Jeffco in 155 schools across the district. Thirty-two percent of the PK-12 student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch; 12.8 percent receive special education services; and 6.2 percent are English-language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 7. [15]

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[14] https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/pupilcurrent
[15] https://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/about

Figure 7: Race and Ethnicity of Jefferson County Students 2023-24

Legend:
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Two or more races
- African American
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
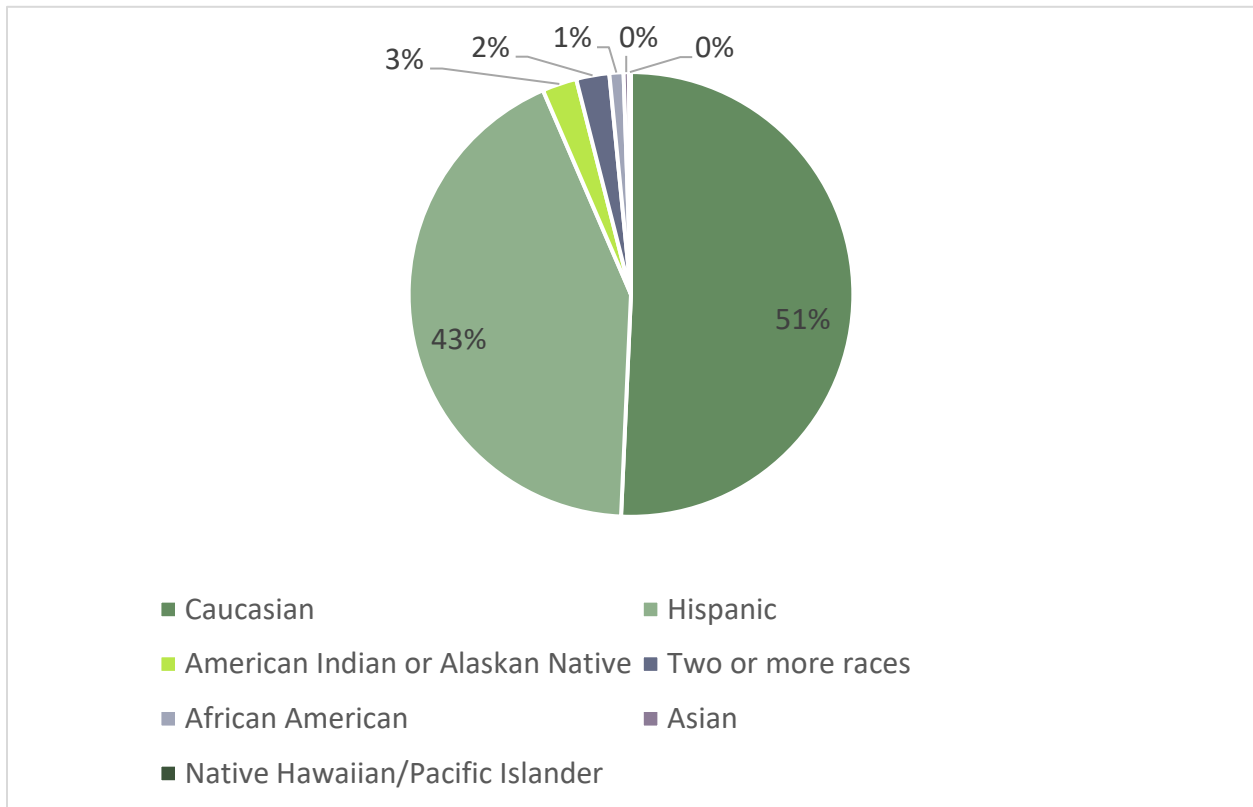
Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community engagement

Jeffco's Local Accountability System, School Insights, was created during a superintendent transition. School Insights was in use at the time of Tracy Dorland's appointment in April 2021, during the final months of the 2020-21 school year. Dorland was the district's 6th superintendent in ten years.

The Theory of Action behind *School Insights* was that if the district could provide more comprehensive, consistent, and standardized data dashboards for public review, then school communities could participate in the improvement process in a consistent/standardized way. The district staff developing School Insights engaged both district and school leadership in a series of meetings (large group, small group, and individual) focused on proposing and discussing indicators and evidence/data that would be included in *School Insights*. Jeffco's Executive Director of Instructional Data Systems and Chief Academic Officer also met quarterly with staff to develop School Insights.

Since its launch, *School Insights* has become a key source of school-level information/data for internal and external stakeholders across the district as they engage in improvement efforts. Between April 2021 and December 2022, over 20,000 users visited the site, spending an average of close to 5 minutes on the site.

Goals

The goal stated within the Theory of Action for School Insights is to level the playing field for families and communities across the district's 155 schools. School Insights dashboards are not designed or intended to summarize school performance. Rather, the goal of School Insights was to provide information to inform progress toward collaboratively established goals and to allow each school community to make shared judgments about their school's performance. Each school community engages in a process to define success and progress. District staff anticipated that school communities would feel empowered to implement meaningful improvement processes through this approach.

Measures

The performance indicators/outcomes included in *School Insights* include the following major categories with a variety of evidence sources/measures provided for each (identified below):

- School Basics:
  o Enrollment over time,
  o choice in/out,
  o demographics, and
  o federal program participation.
- School Culture:
  o student engagement,
  o family engagement, and
  o teaching and learning conditions.
- Academic Performance:
  o Statewide and district-administered assessment results,
  o Graduation rates, and
  o Dropout rates.

School Insights also provides information about each school's context, including a school profile with the neighborhood school boundary, mission, vision, staff-student ratios, and school-based program offerings, as well as a link to each school's website.

Change in Practice

Jeffco's stakeholders believe that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed in their future endeavors. Jeffco staff sought to inform progress toward this goal with academic benchmark data and school culture information to provide a more holistic view of each Jeffco school.

Jeffco district staff developed *School Insights* in response to the following challenges related to public display of various types of data about the district's schools:

- District reporting on various types of data (i.e., local assessment results, stakeholder surveys, etc.) was organized by the data sets rather than by the school. As a result, internal and external stakeholders were required to "put the pieces of data" together themselves to get a comprehensive picture of data available regarding each school.
- External entities were using CORA requests to access and display district data in ways inconsistent with the district values.
- Non-profit organizations were providing their web-based displays of Jeffco data that the district was not displaying – creating inequities in access to data across school communities.

- District leadership committed to being more transparent with the community about what data was available about Jeffco schools.
- District leaders wanted to "Own [their]own story."

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Engagement

Public engagement in the School Insights is used as an indicator of change caused by participation in the LASG. Figure 8 shows the increase in public engagement with the *School Insights* website. This data shows the number of visits to the website in 2022-23 and 2023-24. There were 5,927 visits in 2022-23 which increased to 6,718 visits in 2023-24, which is a 13% increase.

Figure 8: Local Accountability Measure Website Engagement over Time
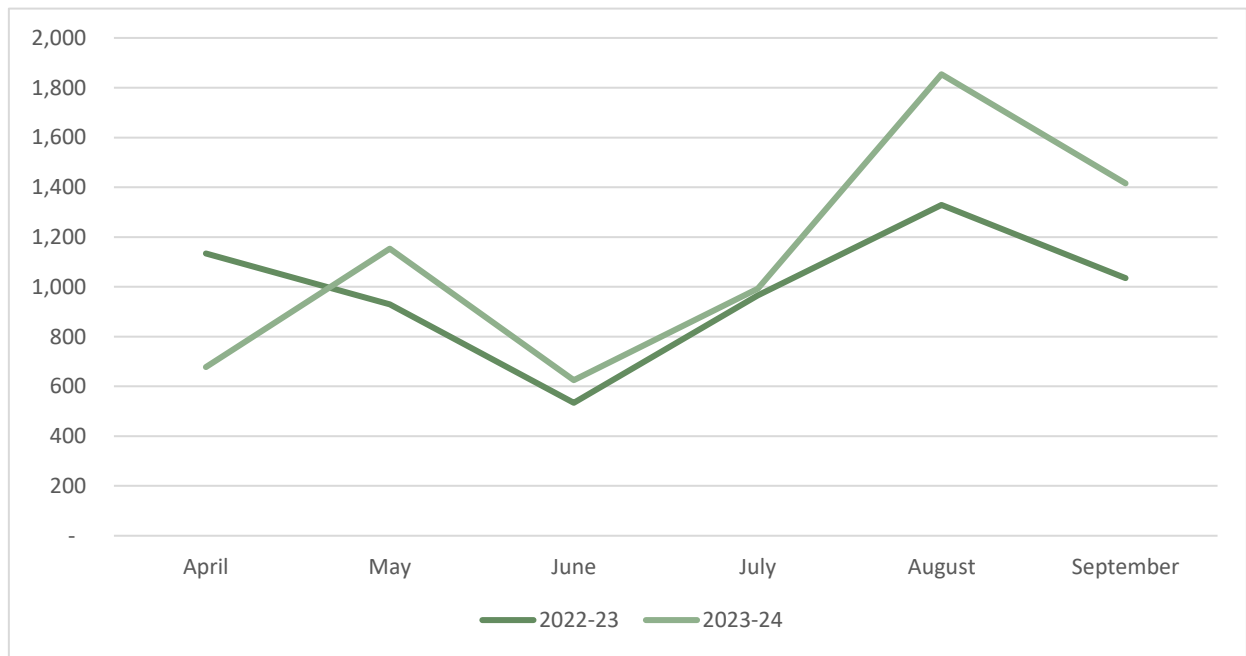
Source: Jeffco data provided to the evaluation team

Boulder Valley School District (BVSD)

Boulder Valley School District extends from the Rocky Mountains into the suburbs of Denver, covers more than 500 square miles, and includes 11 communities. The district has 56 schools and educates more than 28,000 students. Nearly 8 percent of Boulder's students are English Language Learners, 25 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch, and nearly 13 percent are in special education.

The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 9.[16]

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[16] 2023-24 report

Figure 9: Race and Ethnicity of Boulder Valley School District Students 2023-24
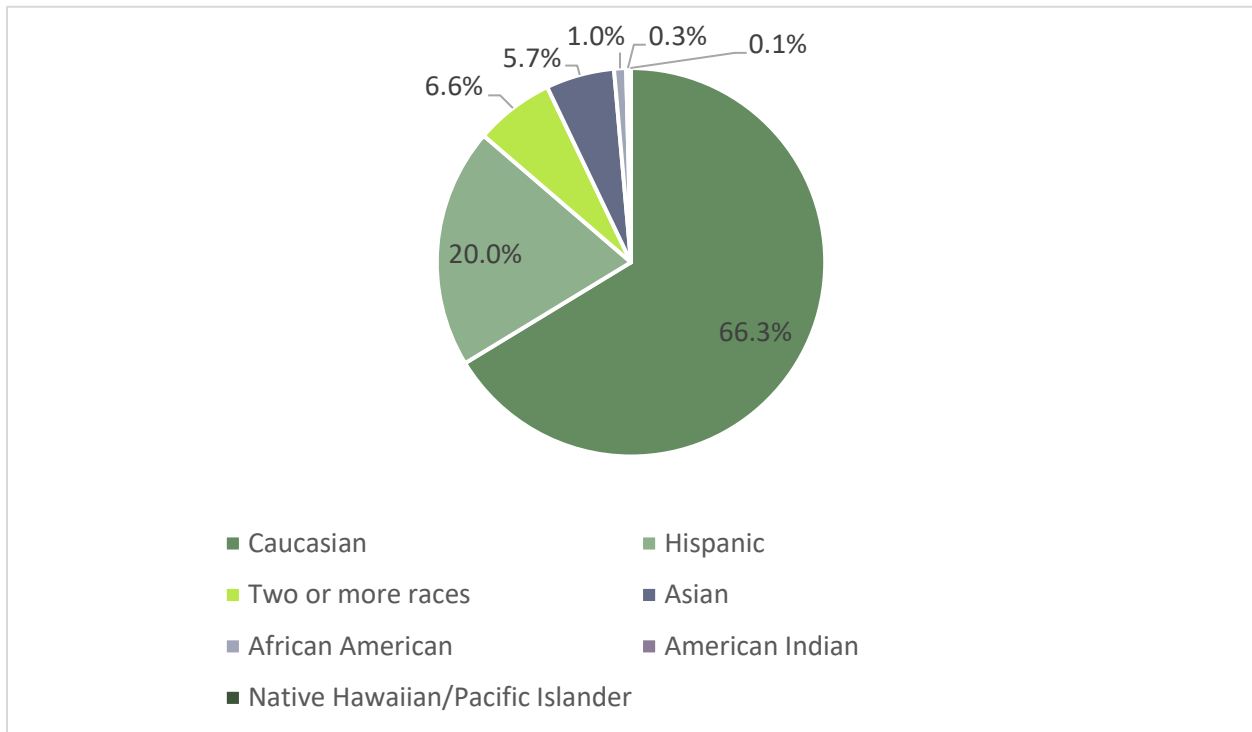
Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

Community Engagement

BVSD's Local Accountability System was developed amid community conversations about equity. The impetus for the community conversations was a request from the Boulder County chapter of the NAACP, which presented data to the school board in June 2020 illustrating how black students were disciplined at higher rates than white students (Bounds, 2020a). In addition, throughout the conversations, community leaders, parents, and students raised concerns about how School Resource Officers (SROs), who were police officers from local jurisdictions, interacted with students. As a result, during the start of the 2020-21 school year, the community conversations centered on whether to remove SROs from schools.

The community conversations were held in two formal pathways: through the District Accountability Committee (a legislatively required committee) and a newly formed Equity Council. Both advisory groups advised the district to eliminate the SRO role and suggested different ways to interact with students, such as restorative practices. The Board adopted the recommendations to eliminate SROs on November 10, 2020, and the SRO program was phased out by January 2022 (Bounds, 2020b).

Goals

The community conversations about SROs opened the door to discussing disparities across the district. The Center for Assessment, Design, Research, and Evaluation at the University of Colorado - Boulder (CU – Boulder) worked with the team to identify goals and measures. As a starting point, the team began with the sense from the community that the current accountability system did not highlight the disparities within the system.

Boulder's strategic plan states: "We strive to close historically large gaps between the performance of our student body as a whole and that of economically disadvantaged students and students of color, particularly Latinx students."[17] As such, the district sought to add goals such as decreasing the number of suspensions and the suspension rates. The district also aimed to set quarterly goals to enable more timely resource decisions.

Focusing on all discipline data also led district leaders to disaggregate suspension data further. As of the 2023-24 school year, the district's focus is mainly on decreasing out-of-school suspensions. Their theory is that in-school suspensions are guided by an adult who will focus students on something productive and helpful; students are still supervised and do not fall behind in the same way as students who are punished with out-of-school suspensions. This approach is especially helpful for students who prefer being at home rather than at school. In addition, each building has a school safety advocate who focuses on ensuring Boulder Valley's schools are community-oriented spaces.

Change in Practice

The focus on proportionality enables the district to allocate resources where disparities exist. For example, when local accountability was first created, the district held monthly meetings focused on discipline and suspension data. Thinking together regularly pushed administrators from all buildings to characterize and react to behavior. Ultimately, the district shifted toward restorative interventions, which enabled the proportion of Black and Brown students to decrease within a year.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Local Measures

In many ways, the local accountability goals and measures reflect changes envisioned by the community. Figure 10 shows changes in suspension rates by race/ethnicity group. For all groups, the suspension rates decreased. This is evidence of local goals being developed and reached as a result of LASG activities.

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[17] The complete array of measures used to monitor this goal can be found on Boulder Valley's website.

Figure 10: Differences in BVSD Suspension Rates Over Time by Race and Ethnic Groups
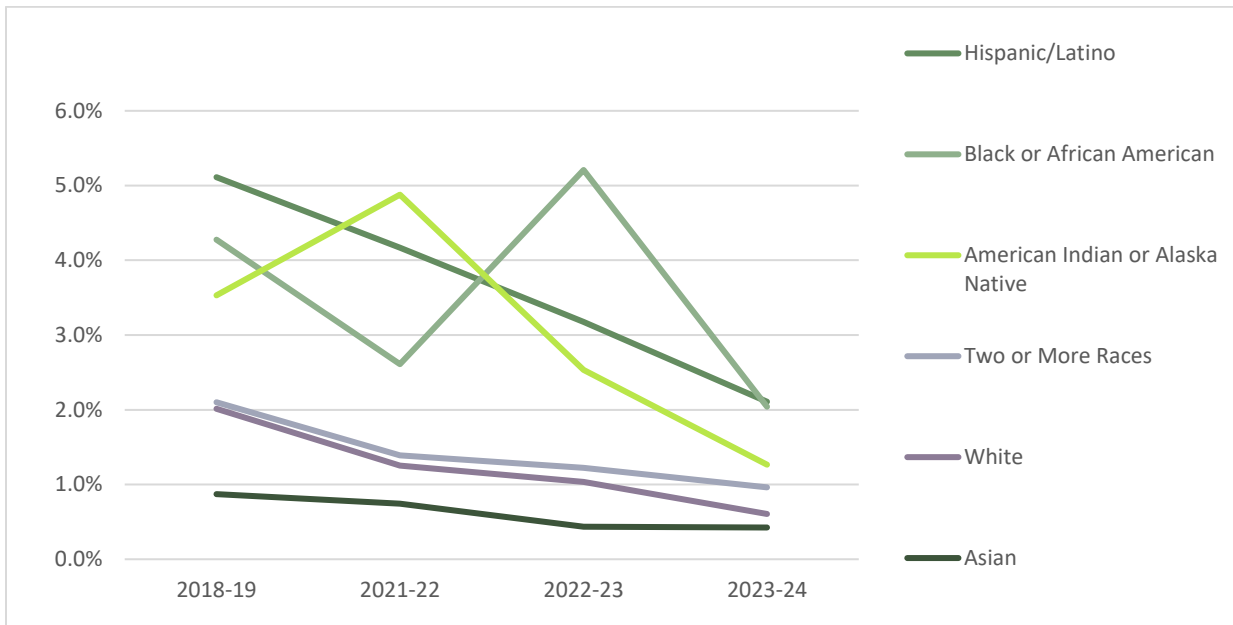
Source: BVSD data provided to the evaluation team

However, BVSD also had the goal of reducing the gap between the suspension rates for white students and students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly Hispanic/Latino students and black or African American students. The evaluation team created a measure of disparity, which is the difference between the average suspension rate for all students in the district and the suspension rate for each racial/ethnic group. This data is shown in Figure 12 below. A negative difference means the suspension rate for that group was lower than the district average. As differences approach zero, the size of the disparity (by this measure) is reduced.

Figure 12 shows that for most groups, the disparity in suspension rates decreased, which was part of the district's goal of reducing disparities. However, the district was unable to close the "historically large gap" in disparities between student groups. The decreases in suspension rates and the reductions in disparities are significant, positive accomplishments for BVSD. However, the goal of eliminating disparities may not have been an achievable goal during the timeframe of this evaluation.

Figure 12: Differences between the Average Suspension Rate and Rates for each Race/Ethnic Group
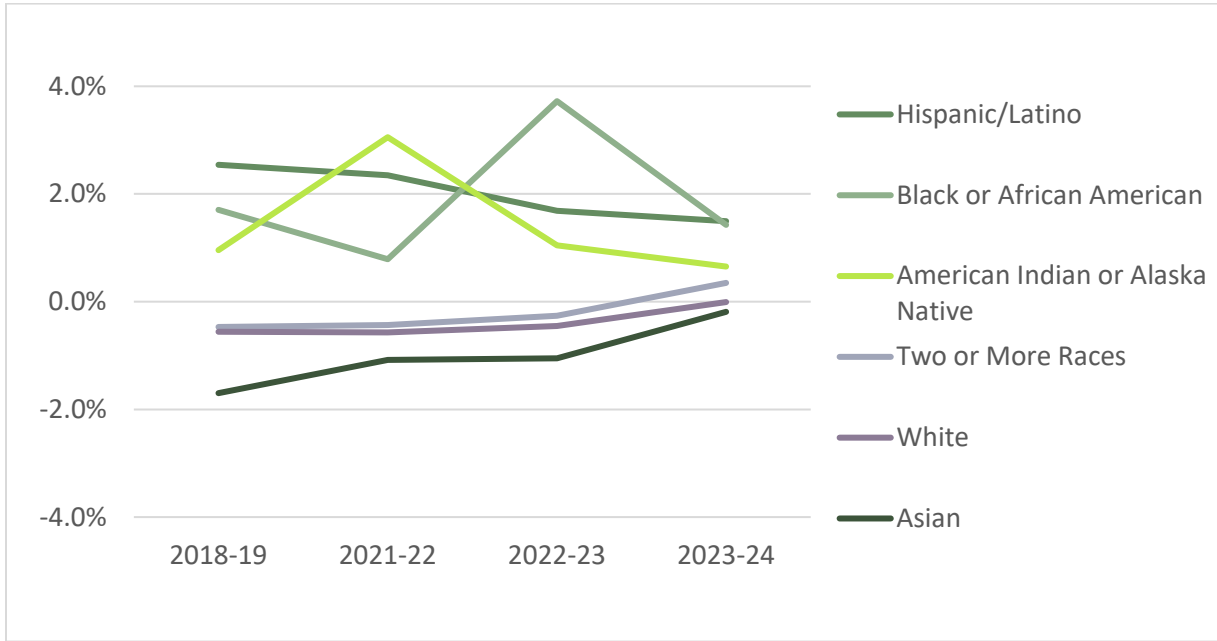
Source: BVSD data provided to the evaluation team

Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP)

The Measuring Opportunity Pilot Project (MOPP) includes 11 alternative education campus (AEC) schools[18]located in a wide array of communities across Colorado. MOPP schools include Denver Justice High School, Grand Mesa Choice, Grand Mesa High School, Hope Online, Jefferson High School, The New America School – Aurora, Lakewood and Thornton campuses, New Legacy Charter School, Southwest Open School, Rise Up Community School, and Yampah Mountain High School.
In the 12 MOPP schools there were 2,846 students during the 2023-24 school year; 79 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch; 13 percent were special education students; 22 percent were English language learners. The race and ethnicity of the student population are reflected in Figure 12 below:

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[18] AECs have specialized missions and serve high-risk student populations, including students experiencing homelessness, addiction, are in foster care, and/or are pregnant or parenting.

Figure 12: Race and Ethnicity of Students in Schools Supported by MOPP 2023-24
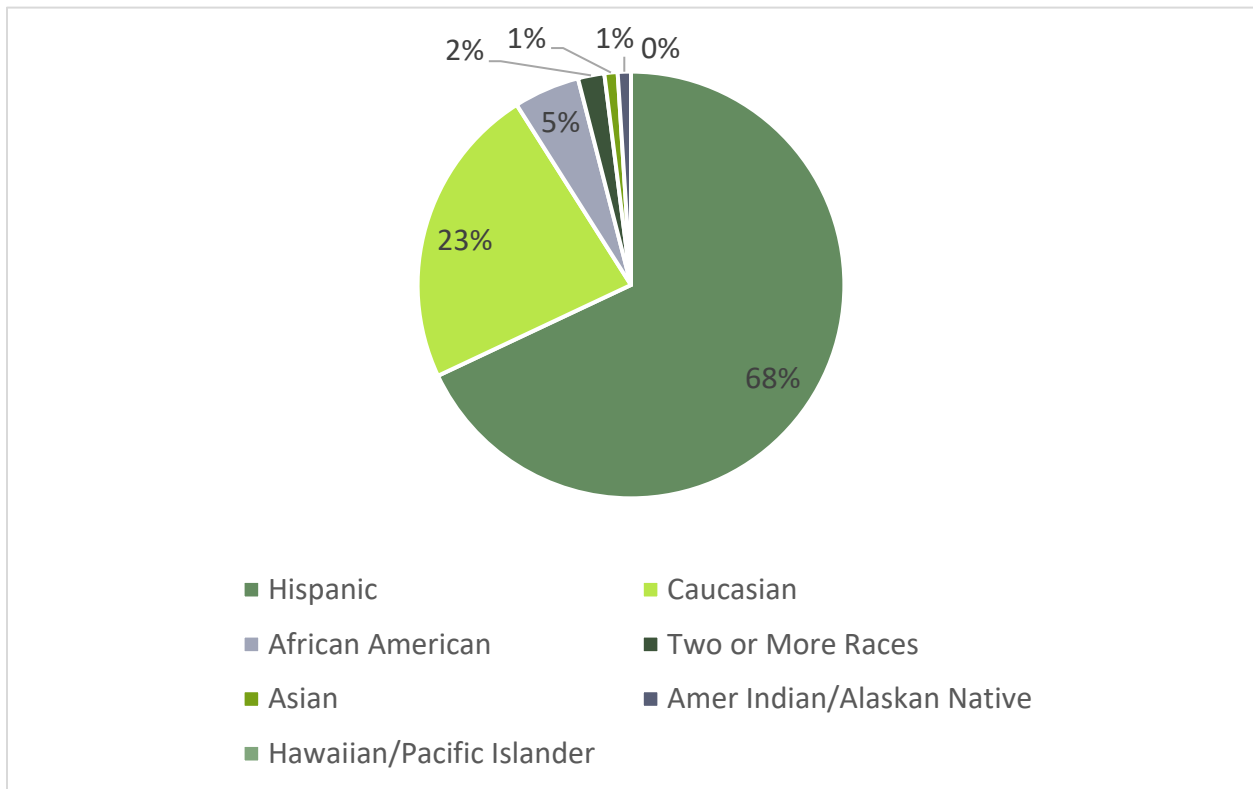
Source: CDE Pupil Membership Data

MOPP schools work in partnership with two organizations, Momentum Strategy and Research and the New America Schools (the MOPP project team). A different third-party evaluator has conducted broader evaluation of MOPP, which tells a more complete story of this partnership (Nicotera, 2024).

Community Engagement

The MOPP project team helped schools identify key measures that they could use for mission-based indicators in the SPF. The MOPP project team collected and organized data to create *School Accountability Roadmaps*, which provided schools with different options for measuring each SPF indicator. The *School Accountability Roadmaps* increased awareness of measures available from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and other possible measures that fit within the AEC SPF.

MOPP School Accountability Roadmaps included measures for the following:
- Academic Achievement & growth (e.g., NWEA MAP data)
- Student Engagement (e.g., Student return rate, discipline rate, Panorama SEL Survey results, student re-engagement rate)
- Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (e.g., Course completion rate, Work Keys Certificate Rate)
- Other Optional Measures (e.g., SEL & School Climate survey, student satisfaction survey, Panorama Survey, measurements above, but for specific populations served, college credits earned in specific programs)

The MOPP project team suggested schools participate in the diagnostic review process if school staff was receptive to feedback and could use support in implementing their improvement plans. Site review teams include administrators from other schools led by a representative from Momentum.

The *Diagnostic Review* *Process* comprised a subset of MOPP school leaders who participated in two-day site visits that include reviewing school artifacts, stakeholder interviews, and classroom observations. The review also included collecting data from key artifacts, common interview scripts, and common classroom observation processes. Using the data collected during these processes, participating schools were scored on a rubric.

On the second day of the qualitative site review, the site review teams use the *Continuous Improvement Prioritization Protocol* to synthesize information from their artifact review, classroom observations, and interviews to consider the school's overall strengths and areas for improvement, which helped prioritize action steps.

Goals

MOPP started with the assumption that traditional accountability measurements did not tell the complete story of how AEC students improve. In addition, AECs participating in MOPP viewed the cut points offered by the state as absent from the context of AEC students' lived experiences. MOPP strived to identify more accurate and representative AEC metrics that were mission-specific, aligned to student needs, assessed student progress, assessed the impact of interventions and targeted programming, and included innovative measures and non-academic successes.

The Local Accountability Measures established the Student-Centered Growth System, which includes three domains: Academic Standing, Academic Participation & Engagement, and Social Emotional Well-Being.

Measures

Measures for each of the MOPP *Student-Centered Growth System* are described below with examples of how each domain has been individualized for different schools.

- **Academic Standing**: Measures in this domain address where students are, academically speaking (e.g., Are they behind in credits? Are they on grade level in reading?), and the domain includes a total of 3-5 measures that can be reassessed to track students' long- and short-term progress. Examples include:
    - Number of core credits accumulated or grades at previous school in relation to the student's age or cohort
    - Prior or incoming assessments of academic skill (e.g., NWEA MAP, STAR 360, iReady)
- **Academic Participation & Engagement**: The engagement domain includes 3-5 measures to assess students' behaviors and/or attitudes toward schooling (e.g., Are there gaps in the student's attendance? How many behavior incidents are in the student's record? How connected does the student feel to school?) that can be reassessed to track changes to the students' engagement over time. Examples include:
    - Attendance rate at previous school
    - Behavior records from prior school
    - Survey on attitudes toward learning/school
- **Social Emotional Well Being**: The social-emotional domain includes measures to assess the social-emotional challenges students face (e.g., low self-esteem, hopelessness, experience of trauma), as well as social-emotional strengths (e.g., resilience, self-efficacy) and supports (e.g., a

supportive adult) the students have that help them navigate those challenges. Change measures should be aligned with the schools' programming and support services and evaluated multiple times a year. Examples include:
- o Number of challenges or barriers to success (e.g., trauma, 504 plan)
- o Number of strengths and opportunities (e.g., resilience, supportive adult, motivation)
- o MOPP also supported the identification and adaptation of an SEL Survey (based on school demand) and later added the school climate. Nine schools used this survey (Chaffee County HS, Denver Justice, Grand Mesa HS, HOPE, NAS Aurora, NAS Lakewood, NAS Thornton, SWOS, Yampah Mountain).

Change in Practice

The AEC-specialized SPF includes optional, mission-specific metrics, a Student Engagement Indicator, and alternative cut points on state-required metrics. The MOPP project team support for the Student-Centered Growth System included:

a. **Documenting Student Needs**: Schools identify measures currently being used and data being collected and used within the indexing system.
b. **Tracking Student Progress**: Schools collect data on students' progress across each domain, using benchmarks identified by the MOPP project team.
c. **Understanding School Progress**: Schools provide their data to the MOPP project team, which then consolidates the data and outcomes from other alternative schools nationwide—allowing for more appropriate comparison points.

In addition, since SEL was adopted as an "optional indicator" by many MOPP schools, the project team created an SEL assessment tool. As a result, Momentum developed a survey following the CASEL SEL Framework:

- Self-awareness: self-concept
- Self-awareness: emotional knowledge
- Social awareness
- Self-management: emotion management
- Self-management: goal management
- Self-management: schoolwork
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision making

For accountability, schools can submit their total average survey score (the mean score) from the spring survey administration. The school could submit the average percent positives for each scale and the overall survey for the Supplemental Accountability Report. The percent positive calculation is the percentage of students who responded 'easy' or 'very easy' to each item. That data is then combined into the percent positive averages using the items' averages across all survey participants. The MOPP Project Team created a tool so that analysis could be done through an Excel Calculator to help support the schools in data reporting.

One goal of the AEC SEL survey is to analyze growth for internal school use and accountability purposes. However, during the 2022-23 administration, the numbers of students who took both the fall and winter surveys was not high enough to be considered for growth reporting. For example, 1,134 completed fall-

to-winter surveys, yet only 137 matching student IDs were found in fall-to-winter administrations. The MOPP Project Team hopes to have more matches in 2023-24 to start analyzing AEC growth norms.

Evidence of Change Supported by the LASG: Local Measures

As discussed in the Goals section above, MOPP supported their participating schools in identifying and changing assessment measures used in the state accountability frameworks with *School Accountability Roadmaps*. MOPP's intention was for the AEC SPF to better reflect each school's impact on student outcomes. The change in measures was related to improvements in school ratings as shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Changes in MOPP Supported School Percentage of Points Awarded

*Changes during this period include pandemic related
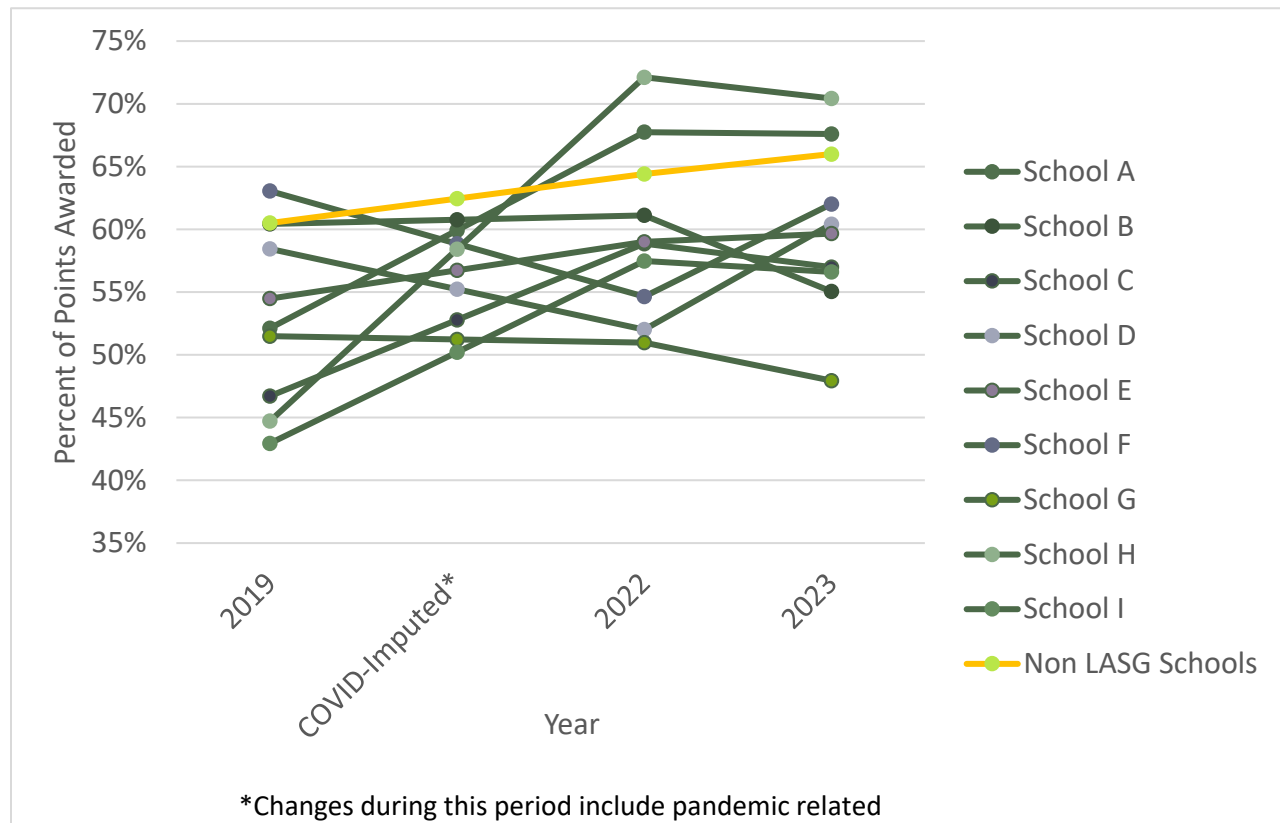
Source: MOPP data provided to the evaluation team

During the implementation of the LASG, the majority of schools working with MOPP showed increases in the percentage of points awarded. However, these increases were not larger than the average change for AECs. The validity of this analysis is also complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had large impacts on students and student outcomes during this time period.

Association of LASG Participation with Student Assessment Results

The analyses conducted for the year two evaluation reports are required by the legislative text authorizing the LASG. Senate Bill (SB) 19-204 requires the evaluation to include information on student

achievement and growth by grade level for students in districts that participated in the LASG and those that did not. This analytic approach suggests an assumption that participation in the LASG should impact student achievement. There are multiple reasons for the LASG grant to not be associated with changes in student assessment scores. For example, the work on the grants may have focused on other components of the accountability system that are not directly related to student assessment scores such as public engagement or goals other than achievement such as student discipline.

Figure 14 below shows the mean CMAS score and growth percentile by Figure 14 shows the results before the LASG grant 2019—representing school year 2018-19, and two years (2022 and 2023) after the grant began. It also shows the change from 2019 to 2022 (Change'22) and change from 2019 to 2023 (Change'23). The bold/italics indicates better outcomes for LASG students than for those in non-LASG participating districts.

There are two clear takeaways from this table. First, there was an overall decline in student performance from before to after the grant, as shown by declines in the Math and ELA scores in both Change columns ('22 and '23). There is not strong evidence that LASG districts had better student outcomes than non-LASG districts. Instead, there is no clear pattern of differential student outcomes between LASG and non-LASG districts.

Figure 14: Changes in Middle School Student Outcomes During LASG Implementation

Status	Measure	2019-20	2022-23	2023-24	Change '22	Change '23
LASG Participants	Math	728.1	723.3	722.5	-4.7	-5.5
	ELA	736.1	733.5	733.4	***-2.6***	-2.6
	Math Growth	47.6	46.3	43.7	***-1.3***	-3.9
	ELA Growth	48.4	47.3	44.9	***-1.1***	-3.5
Non-LASG Participants	Math	730.3	726.3	726.7	-4.0	-3.6
	ELA	740.2	737.5	738.7	-2.7	-1.5
	Math Growth	48.9	44.2	46.4	-4.7	-2.5
	ELA Growth	48.9	46.9	47.9	-2.0	-1.0

Source: CDE District Accountability Frameworks

Importantly, change in student outcomes may not be an appropriate measure of the LASG at this point. First, many participants in the LASG were not focused initially on improving student outcomes, but instead on improving one or more of the components of their accountability systems. However, these changes in local accountability system components, may ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. Second, the LASG is a relatively limited and small grant. While the grant provided opportunities for districts to make changes, the ability to sustain the changes is uncertain. The prior evaluation found that building and sustaining the capacity needed to implement and maintain accountability systems was a constant challenge for districts. Furthermore, the district-level experience with the pandemic that began in March 2020 added complications that hindered student outcomes. For these reasons, the data,

unsurprisingly, does not yet show a clear association between participation in the LASG and improved student outcomes at the district level.

Conclusion

The case studies of five different participating districts or consortia do show changes in accountability systems concerning community engagement, goals, measures of success, and changes in operations associated with the accountability systems. These findings, in concert with quantitative data, show that the LASG has supported positive changes in local accountability systems.

When given the opportunity and support, districts can expand accountability systems to enable continuous improvement. The case studies highlight the unique elements of grantee's accountability work. Notably, each grantee identified the core values and worked to identify appropriate measures. Once the measures were identified, frequent discussions enabled either the development of measures or a deeper understanding of how the additional measures can inform continuous improvement. Moreover, districts were able to demonstrate change in their systems as a result of their accountability work:

1. Fountain Ft. Carson – change in community engagement to serve military families meaningfully
2. S-CAP – changes in peer community engagement to leverage educator expertise and knowledge
3. Jeffco – increases in community engagement through an on-line accountability framework reflect local goals
4. Boulder – changes in measures to reflect local goals for reducing disparities in discipline
5. MOPP – changes in measures to better reflect the work of individual Alternative Education Campuses (AECs)

In addition, each grantee cited their strategic plan as they explained how the LASG grant evolved over time. Because the community engagement work focused broadly on the strategic plan of the whole district, the work to identify the additional measures for the local accountability system strengthened the communities' understanding of all the work districts are doing to support student learning and improve their systems. In other words, the community engagement did not solely focus on the accountability system additions.

This report is also intended to provide quantitative information on the impact of participation in the LASG on school or district operations. The analysis of state level accountability data does not show different changes in student growth or achievement for districts participating in LASG and districts not participating in LASG. The lack of impact associated with the LASG is not surprising given the short timeframe and the focus on changing accountability systems as a first step in the broader effort to improve student outcomes. Furthermore, LASG participants achieved the aforementioned goals even while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic environments.

The new measures identified by grantees and their use in continuous improvement systems will take more time to see to their full impact on student outcomes. Future research should examine whether districts were able to develop leading indicators of change and student learning. The evaluation team recommends that CDE continue to evaluate the LASG to understand the changes implemented by districts and how measures developed are associated with student achievement and other important outcomes.

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