**Unified Improvement Plan Quality Criteria (District Level)**

**Overview**

The Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) is intended to provide districts and schools with a consistent format to capture improvement planning efforts that streamline state and federal planning requirements and increase student learning. CDE developed the Quality Criteria to offer guidance for creating high quality improvement plans and to establish the criteria for state and local review of district level UIPs, especially for districts on the accountability clock (i.e., Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan, Accredited with Turnaround Plan).

To determine the district’s unique accountability and program requirements, access the pre-populated report through the UIP Online System (<https://cdeapps.cde.state.co.us/index.html>).

**The Big Five Guiding Questions**

The “Big Five” are five guiding questions that outline the major concepts of the improvement planning process. The questions build upon each other and facilitate alignment across the entire plan.

Does the plan:

➊ Investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent ***performance challenges***?

➋ Identify ***root causes*** that explain the magnitude of the performance challenges?

➌ Identify evidence-based ***major improvement strategies*** that have likelihood to eliminate the root causes?

➍ Present a well-designed ***action plan*** for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?

➎ Include elements that effectively ***monitor*** the impact and ***progress*** of the action plan?

**Structure**

Organized by the “Big Five,” the various plan elements are further defined and include questions that if addressed*, lead to* a well-developed improvement plan. Most of these questions blend best practice and accountability requirements. Those requirements that only apply to some districts are labeled separately. The most effective plans build a case that remains coherent across each section of the plan, rather than simply addressing each section independently. To better understand the alignment between the UIP (see flow map graphic) and the “Big Five,” the table on the next page provides a matrix. Location within the online UIP system is also included.

**Crosswalk between the “Big Five,” Sections of the Planning Process and Tabs within the Online UIP**

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| **Big Five Question** | **Section of Planning Process****(see flow map graphic)** | **UIP Online Tab** |
| **Main Tab** | **Sub Tab** |
| ➊ Does the plan investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent ***performance challenges***? | * Gather and Organize Data
* Review Performance
* Describe Notable Trends
* Prioritize Performance Challenges
 | Section III: Data Narrative | * Brief Description
* Prior Year Targets
* Current Performance
* Trend Analysis
* Priority Performance Challenges
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| ➋ Does the plan identify ***root causes*** that explain the magnitude of performance challenges? | * Identify Root Causes
 | Section III: Data Narrative | * Root Causes
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| Section IV: Action Plans |
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| ➌ Does the plan identify evidenced-based ***major improvement strategies*** that are likely to eliminate the root causes?  | * Identify Major Improvement Strategies
 | Section IV: Action Plans | * Major Improvement Strategies
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| ➍ Does the UIP present a well-designed ***action plan*** for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?  | * Identify Major Improvement Strategies
* Identify Action Steps
 | Section IV: Action Plans | * Major Improvement Strategies
* Planning Form
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| ➎ Does the plan include elements that effectively ***monitor*** the impact and ***progress*** of the action plan? | * Set Performance Targets
* Identify Interim Measures
* Identify Implementation Benchmarks
 | Section IV: Action Plans | * Target Setting
* Planning Form
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| ➊ | **Does the plan investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent performance challenges?***Applicable Plan Elements: Data Narrative, Notable Trends, Priority Performance Challenges* |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition** | **Quality Criteria Questions** |
| **Brief Description**  | The brief description describes the “data story” and process of the district’s data analysis.  | Does the plan:* Include a description of the district’s demographic and other relevant contextual information about the district and/or community?
* Include a brief statement about who (e.g., district staff, school staff, District Accountability Committee) was involved in the development of the UIP?
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| **Current Performance (Including****Previous Performance Targets)** | Current Performance: An explanation of the district’s current performance relative to expectations. Previous Performance Targets: Evaluation of previous year’s targets in order to determine whether targets were met and previous year’s improvement efforts were making the desired improvements or should be modified. | Does the plan:* Include an explanation of the district’s current performance relative to local, state and federal expectations (e.g., DPF, ESSA)?
* Include a reflection on previous improvement efforts and performance targets to verify or adjust PPCs and guide focus of the plan?
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| **Notable Trends****(within Data Narrative)** | Notable trends are statements that help describe performance on specific elements such as content areas and groups/subgroups of students.  | Does the plan:* Describe both positive and negative trends for performance using at least three years of state and local data (if available)?
* Include trends that are at the appropriate level of detail given the district’s context?
* Include an explanation of the data sources that were included or excluded for analysis?
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| **Priority Performance Challenges** **(within Data Narrative)** | Priority performance challenges are specific performance challenges that the district has prioritized based on negative notable trends. Note: performance challenges should not address budgeting, staffing, curriculum, instruction, etc. | Does the plan:* Identify no more than five performance challenges that describe the strategic focus for the district at the appropriate magnitude?
* Identify performance challenges focused on student performance, rather than on adult actions?
* Provide a rationale for prioritizing performance challenges?
* Include performance challenges that are aligned to trend analysis?
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| **Program Requirements****(within Data Narrative)** | If applicable, the following program requirements must be included in the data narrative section:* READ Act
* Student Course Taking
* Gifted Education
* ESSA School Improvement
* Title IA
* 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 | **READ Act*** Does the data narrative include trend data that considers K-3 literacy data?

**Student Course Taking Report*** Does the plan include an analysis of student course taking patterns by disaggregated groups?

**Gifted Education**Does the plan:* Include trend data for gifted student performance at aggregate or grade range level, and within disaggregated groups of students (e.g., minority, gender, Free and Reduced Lunch, English Language Learners)?
* Provide trend analysis of gifted students for at least one of the following 1) Achievement at the Advanced level 2) Move-up growth, and/or 3) Median Growth Percentiles?
* Clearly identify the needs of gifted students in at least one priority performance challenge for which the district did not meet state or local expectations in student achievement, growth, or growth gaps; or for which the gifted data indicate a divergent performance challenge for gifted students/student group?

**ESSA School Improvement*** Does the plan provide a description of how it is supporting low performing schools to exit the ESSA school improvement designation and how it is monitoring implementation of the school(s)’s plan? This can be answered in the data narrative or the action plan.

**Title I, Part A*** If identified, does the plan indicate that the district conducted an analysis of the equitable distribution of teachers (ESEA requires districts to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified or out-of-field teachers)?

**21st Century Community Learning Centers** * Does the data narrative include a description of how the district identified, through its comprehensive needs assessment, how to meet the needs of its students through 21st CCLC out-of-school time programming?
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| ➋ | **Does the plan identify root causes that explain the magnitude of performance challenges?** *Applicable Plan Elements: Data Narrative, Root Causes* |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition**  | **Guiding Questions**  |
| **Root Causes**  | Root causes are statements that describe the deepest underlying reasons for low performance that are within the district’s control.  | Does the plan:* Provide an explanation of how root causes were identified, including the data (e.g., process data, perception data) used to select and verify the root cause(s)?
* Include root causes that are associated with at least one priority performance challenge?
* Include root causes that are under the control of the district?
* Identify root causes that have a likelihood to address the priority performance challenges?
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| ➌ | **Does the plan identify evidence-based major improvement strategies that are likely to eliminate the root causes?** *Applicable Plan Elements: Data Narrative, Action Plan* |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition**  | **Guiding Questions**  |
| **Major Improvement Strategies** | A major improvement strategy is a statement that describes the district’s overall approach to improve performance. | Does the plan identify major improvement strategies that:* Are evidence-based?
* Are aligned with and respond to the priority performance challenge(s) and root cause(s)?
* Have a likelihood of addressing the root cause(s)?
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| **Program Requirements** | If applicable, include the following program requirements in the major improvement strategies section:* Accredited with Turnaround Plan
* Accredited with Priority Improvement Plan
* ESSA School Improvement
* Pathways Early Action Grant
 | **Accredited with Turnaround Plan*** The plan must provide detail on its selected state-required Turnaround strategies (i.e., Turnaround Partner, District Management, Innovation Designation, School Management Contract, Charter Conversion, Restructure Charter, School Closure, Other Strategy of Comparable or Greater Effect). This is in addition to the required addendum.

**Accredited with Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan*** Does the plan include major improvement strategies that convey a sense of urgency and have the likelihood of resulting in adequate change in performance for the district to exit the accountability clock within a reasonable time frame?

**ESSA School Improvement*** Does the plan provide a description of how it is supporting low performing schools to exit the ESSA school improvement designation and how it is monitoring implementation of the school(s)’s plan? This can be answered in the data narrative or the action plan.

**Pathways Early Action Grant*** Does the plan include a major improvement strategy regarding the pathway plan?
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| ➍ | **Does the plan present a well-designed plan for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?** *Applicable Plan Element: Action Plan* |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition**  | **Guiding Questions**  |
| **Action Steps** | Action steps are activities that detail how the district plans to implement the major improvement strategies. They include personnel, funding source and timeline. | Does the plan include action steps that:* Are directly aligned with and sufficiently detailed to explain how the district will carry out the associated major improvement strategy?
* Are achievable and can be completed within the designed timeframe?
* Guide plan implementation for two academic years?
* Include specific personnel responsible for overseeing implementation?
* Identify funding sources or other resources necessary to implement the action steps (if necessary)?
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| **Program Requirements**  | If applicable, the following program requirements must be included in the action step section:* Accredited with Priority Improvement/Turnaround
* READ Act
* Student Course Taking Report
* Gifted Education
* Title I, Part A
* Pathways Early Action Grant
* 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 | **Accredited with Priority Improvement/Turnaround*** Does the plan include action steps to increase parent engagement at the district?

**READ Act*** Does the plan include strategies that address the needs of K-3 students identified as having significant reading deficiencies?

**Student Course Taking Report*** If the district identified a pattern of significant disparities in disaggregated groups taking challenging coursework, does the plan include action steps to address these issues?

**Gifted Education**Does the plan:* Include actions that address the Tier II or Tier III strategies or approaches that are evidenced-based in gifted education (e.g., supplemental curriculum, compacting, acceleration, higher level critical and creative thinking, expanded/extended opportunities, grouping with appropriate instruction, adjusted pace for direct instruction and formative practice)?
* Describe the professional development that will have positive and long term impact to improve performance of gifted students (or to increase capacity of educators working with gifted students)?
* Include activities for parental awareness and involvement in improvement strategies?
* Describe how gifted education funds will be used to support improvement strategies and action steps?

**Title I, Part A**□       As appropriate based on analysis in Section III (data analysis and narrative), identifies actions to address gaps in the equitable distribution teachers.  For more information on identifying gaps and selecting strategies to reduce gaps, visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/equitabledistributionofteachers>. **Pathways Early Action Grant*** Does the plan embed action steps related to the pathway being pursued within a larger strategy?

**21st Century Community Learning Centers*** Does the action plan include 21st CCLC activities that align with the district’s major improvement strategies?
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| ➎ | **Does the plan include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?** *Applicable Plan Element: Action Plan* |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition** | **Guiding Questions**  |
| **Performance Targets** | A performance target is an outcome-driven statement that answers the following question: What would success look like in [insert performance indicator] within [insert specific period of time]? | Does the plan:* Include targets that are specific, ambitious, yet attainable?
* Include targets that address the priority performance challenge(s)?
* Articulate performance targets that specify the measure (assessment method) and metric (standard of measurement)?
* Describe articulated performance targets that if achieved, result in the district meeting state expectations in a reasonable timeline?
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| **Interim Measures** | An interim measure clarifies expected student performance at regular time intervals throughout the school year (e.g. monthly, quarterly). | Does the plan:* Include interim measures that give the district the ability to assess progress more than once per year?
* Include interim measures that specify the measure (assessment method) and metric (standard of measurement) used?
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| **Implementation Benchmarks** | Implementation benchmarks provide information about the quality, fidelity, and success of the action plan.   | Does the plan:* Include implementation benchmarks that allow staff to monitor the effectiveness of their efforts and make mid-course adjustments?
* Identify the measures to be used, the type of data to be collected, when, by whom, and how often data will be collected and evaluated?
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| **Program Requirements**  | If applicable, the following program requirements must be included in the action step section:* READ Act
* Gifted Education
 | **READ Act**Does the plan:* Specify target(s) for reducing the number of students who have significant reading deficiencies?
* Specify target(s) to ensure that each student achieves grade level expectations in reading?

**Gifted Education*** Does the plan specify target(s) for gifted education students that is/are consistent with the related priority performance challenge (e.g., group, measures)?
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|  | **Additional Documentation**  |

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| **Plan Element** | **Definition** | **Guiding Questions**  |
| **Additional Documentation** | If applicable, the following required addendum must be included in the plan:* Accredited with a Turnaround Plan
* Gifted Education
 | **Accredited with a Turnaround Plan*** Required for districts accredited with a Turnaround plan type.

**Gifted Education*** Integrates the academic accountability requirements for the gifted student disaggregated group into the district’s overall plan for improvement and growth. It is highly recommended that improvement foci blend with the district’s data narrative and action plan, unless gifted student data directs efforts toward a different content area, grade level, or student sub-group.
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