

**Colorado Accountability, Accreditation, Student
Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force:
Interim Report**



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I. Introduction

Dear Reader,

The Colorado General Assembly created the Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force through H.B. 23-1241 “to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system.”¹ In particular, the Task Force will consider both academic opportunities or inequities that may be impacting achievement gaps, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address these inequities. The Task Force’s charge could not be more important as we seek to improve outcomes for all of Colorado’s students.



This interim report is meant to focus on the Task Force’s work and process to date in service of its charge, beginning August 2023. This report includes an overview of the legislation mandating the Task Force’s charge; a brief background on Colorado’s Education Accountability System; considerations made by the Task Force thus far; a summary of Task Force activities and initial findings and recommendations; and a preview of work to come throughout 2024, including the stakeholder consultation process. It does not include any final recommendations.



The process undertaken by the Task Force is helping to lay the groundwork for the Task Force to develop final findings and recommendations that could impact Colorado’s Accountability System. These findings and recommendations will be developed over the course of 2024 and will be presented in the final report to the Legislature by November 15, 2024. As this is an interim report, initial findings and recommendations laid out in this document may be modified.

We want to thank all 26 Task Force members for their dedication to our charge and their hard work thus far, and all that is to come in the remainder of 2024. The legislation’s intentional inclusion of diverse perspectives will help ensure any recommendations made by this group are created by a representative body dedicated to improving the performance of all of Colorado’s students.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Task Force in service of Colorado’s students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wendy Birhanzel and Hon. Rebecca McClellan

1241 Task Force Chair and Vice Chair

¹ [Colorado General Assembly](#) (2023)

II. Task Force Charge and Membership

A. Task Force Charge

Per H.B. 23-1241, the Colorado Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance and Resource Inequity Task Force was created “to study academic opportunities, inequities, promising practices in schools, and improvements to the accountability and accreditation system.”²

To complete this study, the Task Force, at a minimum, **shall consider**:

- (I) “Academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps;
- (II) Improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities;
- (III) Promising practices in schools and school districts; and
- (IV) Recommendations for legislation or rules, as necessary.”

To support the considerations of the Task Force, the Task Force **may review**:

- (I) “The results of the statewide education accountability systems audit report described in section 2-3-127;
- (II) the local accountability systems described in part 7 of Article 11 of title 22;
- (III) the results of the local accountability system grant program created in section 22-11-703;
- (IV) the annual report and evaluation from the high school innovative learning pilot program created in article 35.6 of title 22;
- (V) the results of the school transformation grant program created in section 22-13-103;
- (VI) the interim and final reports from the secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration task force Created in part 2 of article 35.3 of title 22;
- (VII) promising practices from other states as identified by Task Force members; and
- (VIII) leading indicators or instructional practices that could be added to the accountability measures.”

In addition, the Task Force “shall consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations.”

Lastly, the Task Force is required to submit to the Legislature by March 1, 2024, an interim report with initial findings and recommendations, and by November 15, 2024, a final report, with findings and recommendations.

B. Task Force Membership

There are 26 members on the Task Force. The Speaker of the House of Representatives appointed the Chairperson, Dr. Wendy Birhanzel, and the President of the Senate appointed the Vice Chair, Hon. Rebecca McClellan. The remaining 24 members were appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the House of Representatives Minority Leader, the Senate Minority Leader, the Governor, and Colorado Department of Education (CDE), as outlined in the statute.

² Ibid.

The Task Force is made up of a bipartisan, geographically diverse coalition of education stakeholders. Through their work, they are serving superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, students, advocates, and others.

A full list of Task Force members, who they represent, and who they were appointed by can be found in Appendix C.

III. Background

A. Overview of Colorado’s Education Accountability System

Colorado’s Education Accountability System is designed to “(a) provide valid and actionable information regarding the progress of all students toward meeting academic standards and (b) prioritize support for schools and districts identified for improvement.” Districts are issued performance ratings which help identify high-performing districts and schools to disseminate best practices, and low-performing schools and districts to offer direct additional resources and support or initiate corrective action if low performance persists over time.³

Colorado’s Accountability and Accreditation System consists of the following elements:⁴

- **Performance Frameworks:** Performance frameworks provide a statewide evaluation of student performance based on academic achievement, growth, and postsecondary workforce readiness data.
- **Public Reporting:** Interactive data visualizations and reports. These publicly available reports offer more information about the versions of the accountability frameworks and beyond which are available to the public. For example, they include data over time on enrollment, demographics, achievement, growth, and postsecondary workforce readiness.
- **Improvement Planning:** Building on a continuous improvement approach, schools and districts have multiple state, federal and grant improvement planning requirements and receive support with their performance management efforts. Appropriate resources are matched to their needs.
- **Public Engagement:** All schools and districts are required to have accountability committees, which provide recommendations to principals and local boards.
- **Supports and Interventions:** The state offers support to schools and districts to enhance their performance management efforts. Appropriate resources are matched to their needs. There are additional requirements and supports available to sites. The State Support System is driven by the state’s needs assessments, and supports are distributed using universal, targeted, and intensive tiers. The State Support System encompasses those schools and districts on the Accountability Clock (e.g., Priority Improvement, Turnaround).
- **Accreditation:** The state board is responsible for the annual accreditation of districts based upon performance frameworks. Likewise, districts are responsible for accrediting their schools based upon performance. The state accredits districts through an annual performance review using school and district performance frameworks. Districts then accredit their schools.
- **Awards:** Schools and districts can receive awards for exemplary performance, for example on academic achievement or growth scores.

B. Main Considerations of the Task Force to Date

To conduct its deliberations, the Task Force has considered the following, in accordance with the “shall consider” statements laid out in the statute:

³ [HumRRO](#) (2022)

⁴ [Colorado Department of Education](#) (2023)

- **“Academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps.”** The Task Force considered these opportunities and inequities to understand the opportunities districts and schools have that may lead to a quality school and may make it easier for them to be successful in Colorado’s current accountability system. Improvements the Task Force considers recommending to the accountability and accreditation system may expand and incentivize these academic opportunities.
- **“Improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities.”** The Task Force considered these improvements to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual elements that make up Colorado’s accountability system. This will help them recommend changes to the system, as necessary, to ensure all students have access to these opportunities.
- **“Promising practices in schools, districts, and the accountability system.”** The Task Force identified and considered these practices to determine how they could be applied to other schools and districts with similar student demographics to foster academic opportunities and address inequities.
- The Task Force has yet to consider **“recommendations for legislation or rules, as necessary,”** but will do so beginning in March 2024.

The Task Force has also considered the following, in accordance with the statute’s “may review” statements:

- **“The results of the statewide education accountability systems audit report described in section 2-3-127.”** The Task Force reviewed the audit’s findings during the September 26, 2023, meeting to guide its potential recommendations. The audit found that the “performance indicators and measures used in Colorado’s statewide education accountability system provide a reasonable and appropriate basis for objectively measuring the performance of districts and public schools.”⁵ The audit also points out inequities and areas for improvement in the current accountability system.
- **“The results of the school transformation grant program created in section 22-13-103.”** The Task Force reviewed this grant program to better understand how the accountability system can identify schools in need of additional support and how support can lead to school improvement. The Task Force learned about the grant program at the December 1, 2023, meeting through a presentation from CDE and research findings from an evaluation of the program conducted by CU Boulder.
- **“The interim and final reports from the secondary, postsecondary, and work-based learning integration task force created in part 2 of article 35.3 of title 22.”** At the January 9, 2024, meeting, members of the 1215 Task Force shared their final recommendations and process for stakeholder engagement. The 1215 Task Force’s recommendations will serve as considerations for potential recommendations from the 1241 Task Force.
- **“Promising practices from other states as identified by task force members.”** The Task Force reviewed some practices to learn how other states have approached accountability and accreditation. CU Boulder and the Center for Assessment presented Oklahoma’s, Michigan’s, and California’s accountability systems to the Task Force during the January 17, 2024, meeting. The

⁵ [HumRRO](#) (2022)

presenters also shared different views of school performance and common approaches to measure student growth taken by other states.

IV. Task Force Activities

A. Overview of Task Force Roadmap

At the first Task Force meeting on August 24, 2023, Task Force members met each other and began to develop a common understanding of their legislative charge and what success would look like for this group. At the second meeting on September 26, 2023, Task Force members furthered their knowledge of Colorado’s Education Accountability System by learning about the system’s history, purpose, and goals, and discussing the recent legislatively commissioned evaluation of the system. The group also discussed the characteristics of a quality school.

After gaining a baseline understanding of their charge and the accountability system, at the October 17, 2023, meeting, the chair and vice chair introduced a roadmap to guide the Task Force’s future deliberations and activities, in service of the group’s charge.

Roadmap: Phase I - Interim Report			
November 3	December 1	January 9	January 17
Refine and adopt the final road map.	Review & identify priorities from Nov meeting	Review & identify priorities from Dec meeting	Review & identify priorities from first Jan meeting
What are the academic opportunities that may impact academic achievement gaps?	What are promising practices within Colorado?	What are the opportunities for improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities?	Review & identify interim report details that outline the “ what(s) ” that are higher priority for the task force
What are the inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps?	What are promising practices from other states?	What are the opportunities for improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to address inequities?	
Look ahead to next meeting to identify areas to prepare resources.	Look ahead to next meeting to identify areas to prepare resources.	Look ahead to next meeting to identify areas to prepare resources.	Look ahead to next meeting to identify areas to prepare resources.
Throughout Phase I, the Task Force shall also, “consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations.”			

Roadmap: Phase II - Interim Report			
February 21	March 12	April 2	May 7
How do we improve on the “what’s” that were identified as priorities by the task force in the “Academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement” section?	How do we accomplish the “what’s” that were identified as priorities by the task force in the “Improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities and address inequities” section?	How do we incorporate priorities from the “promising practices in schools and districts” section?	How do “rules or legislation” need to change?
Throughout Phase II, the Task Force shall also, “consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations.”			

November 2023 through January 2024 is designated as “Phase I” on the roadmap. During this time, the Task Force prioritized key objectives and shaped the interim report. “Phase II” will begin in February

2024. This phase will focus on the development of the Task Force’s final recommendations, if there are any.

Throughout the course of these meetings, per the statute, the Task Force shall also “consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations.”

This roadmap is reviewed and discussed at each meeting, and Task force members also have the ability to raise questions about the process and next steps. Through a consensus approach, the Task Force may choose to make adjustments based on what has been learned and discussed. Meeting agendas are developed on a rolling basis using the objectives laid out in the roadmap and Task Force feedback from surveys administered between meetings.

There was consensus at the November 3, 2023, meeting among Task Force members to adopt the roadmap with minimal amendments. At the January 17, 2024, meeting, there was agreement among the group to update Phase II of the roadmap to better reflect the priorities the Task Force wishes to focus their potential recommendations on.

B. Main Discussion Topics at Task Force Meetings

Characteristics of a Quality School

Task Force activities and key information considered to date: To guide the Task Force’s future recommendations to improve the state’s accountability system, the chair and vice chair encouraged the Task Force to identify the attributes of a quality school. Aligning on the characteristics of a quality school can serve as a “north star” to orient the Task Force’s consideration of the four “shall consider” statements directed in the statute.

To this end, at the meeting on September 26, 2023, the facilitators presented a synthesized, non-exhaustive list of quality school characteristics based on the Task Force’s discussions at the August 24, 2023, meeting. While there wasn’t an attempt to gain consensus, the Task Force, discussed that a quality school:

- Produces strong and equitable academic outcomes for all types of learners;
- prepares students for a variety of pathways and choices after high school and for civic participation;
- addresses barriers to student learning by providing “wrap-around” services and creating community partnerships;
- gives students agency in their learning;
- creates an environment and culture where students feel belonging, happiness and physical and psychological safety;
- develops teachers to be highly effective;
- prioritizes evidence-based instructional materials, tools, and resources and uses data for school improvement;
- engages families in contributing to students’ and a school’s success; and
- establishes a strong focus and mission that reflects the community’s values.

Academic Opportunities and Inequities

Task Force activities and key information considered to date: During the meeting on November 3, 2023, the Task Force generated a list of academic opportunities and inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps – one of the elements the Task Force “shall consider,” as named in the statute. These opportunities and inequities that exist in Colorado’s schools could serve as advantages or barriers to a school’s quality rating on the accountability system.

While generating this list, many Task Force members noted that the presence of a certain resource results in an “academic opportunity,” while the absence of the same things results in an “inequity.” Therefore, they decided to address the opportunities and inequities as one list of “resource categories.”

At the meeting on December 1, 2023, the Task Force members also reflected on what the Task Force needs to further consider and study to ensure all students have equal access to academic opportunities. The Task Force raised the following considerations for further study:

- An approach to address resource inequities;
- the impact of resource allocation and funding on the accountability system;
- the impact of assessments on the accountability system;
- an understanding of how well the accountability system allocates resources to meet schools’ needs;
- the consideration of outlier schools;
- an understanding of how the accountability system is presented to families and stakeholders;
- the impact of educators, staffing, and their training on education opportunities and inequities;
- the expectations the current accountability system places on schools;
- an understanding of how student subgroup data is calculated and reported;
- an approach to support access to postsecondary pathways and better connect the accountability system to postsecondary and workforce initiatives.

Promising practices considered: Per the legislation, the Task Force is required to consider “promising practices in schools and school districts” in its deliberations. After developing the list of academic opportunities and inequities, during the January 9, 2024, meeting, the Task Force was asked to generate examples of how districts or schools have figured out how to mitigate identified inequities. These served as “promising practices” to demonstrate how students can have equal access to academic opportunities.

Preliminary findings: Drawing from the list of resource categories generated by the Task Force at the November 1, 2023, meeting, the chair and vice chair presented at the January 9, 2023, meeting a revised list of resources that all students deserve access to. This fulfilled one of the Task Force’s “shall” statements outlined in the legislation: “The Task Force shall consider academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps.” These resources include:

- **Personnel:** This includes trained, qualified, and diverse teachers, leaders, and other district employees that have expertise in creating quality learning environments and experiences. This means that personnel need access to data-driven professional learning related to high-quality instructional materials implementation and practices; differentiated instruction; behavioral interventions; culturally relevant practices; and state standards. Personnel also need adequate

time to engage in planning, professional development, instruction, and intervention. Districts should also have minimum numbers of staff and the ability to share staff, and personnel should have opportunities to engage in innovation. Staff need to be skilled in working with all students, including those that have an IEP, those that speak multiple languages, and those that are gifted.

- **Curriculum and Instruction:** Students should have access to data-driven, high-quality, rigorous grade level instruction and tasks that are worthy of their effort, aligned to state standards, culturally relevant, and related to the skills they will need to succeed in life, in order to empower and create the opportunity for passionate learning. Districts should also provide and students should have access to postsecondary/advanced learning opportunities. Districts should see students' identities as assets and have high-level expectations for all students, while also offering equal access to varied learning opportunities and differentiated instruction. This means districts should offer tiered supports such as intervention, tutoring, and extended learning opportunities/wraparound services both within and outside of school hours. In addition to high-quality instruction, students need access to high-quality curriculum, materials, and assessments that may help overcome inequities.
- **Funding:** Schools need funding to provide adequate resources to all groups of students regardless of background and to meet district and school priorities. This includes access to grants, equitable state and federal funding, and donations and fundraising through community and other private partnerships.
- **Governance:** Schools need supportive state and local policies, laws, priorities, and incentives that support all students' success, regardless of background. Laws and policies that protect students and enable educators to better meet the needs of all students are important. Districts and schools should be empowered to make choices on how to allocate resources in order to advance equity given their unique contexts.
- **Facilities and Transportation:** Students have access to high-quality facilities and transportation that allow them to access the resources and supports offered by their district and school of choice. This means that facilities and transportation are accessible to all and equipped to include and engage students with disabilities. Quality facilities in good repair, where students have space to learn in state-of-the-art buildings, impact a students' ability to learn. Space for things like sports, the arts, labs, and collaboration impact a students' school experience.
- **Family and Community Supports:** Schools have access to external community assets. These supports could include a strong school culture, community school models, parent/family engagement, and support from postsecondary and business. Supported and engaged families that have access in their community to what they need to thrive translates to students that are better able to access and succeed in their education.

At the January 9, 2024, meeting, the Task Force worked in small groups to provide examples of how these resources, when in place, support a school to be successful.

Questions for further consideration: The Task Force had a robust conversation about all of the things that lead to school quality and academic opportunities, as well as corresponding inequities that exist. In future deliberations, the Task Force will use the list of resources to frame the opportunities that exist in districts and schools that lead to positive outcomes in the state's accountability system. The Task Force acknowledged that some of these opportunities could be incentivized by the accountability system, whereas others are out of the purview of the system.

Education Accountability System

Task Force activities and key information considered to date: At the meeting on August 24, 2023, the facilitators asked participants to begin suggesting information or data they thought would be helpful to inform the Task Force’s deliberations. Members agreed that further information on (1) the state’s current accountability and accreditation system and (2) the legislatively commissioned evaluation of the system were two resources to prioritize.

In alignment with the Task Force’s priorities, to prepare for the September 26, 2023, meeting, Task Force members were asked to review the [evaluation](#), which was conducted by the research organization HumRRO and released in November 2022.

The following themes emerged as Task Force members shared their feedback on the evaluation. These items are NOT listed in order of priority. The order is random.

- While the evaluation found that Colorado's accountability system is working as intended, the evaluation also highlighted a number of inequities and areas where there are opportunities for improvement.
- Some stakeholders, particularly parents and families, find it challenging to understand and apply the data. There is an opportunity to make the data more accessible and improve the cadence of communications regarding accountability findings.
- State interventions are effective in their efforts to improve schools.
- The accountability system emphasizes student growth over achievement.
- Actively tracking growth in grades K-2 could enable future planning and identify needs earlier.
- The Task Force is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of performance bands and strategies to enhance school performance.
- The Task Force is interested in learning more about the alignment of assessments and how assessments impact educators’ instructional time.
- The Task Force is interested in better recognizing and incentivizing district and school best practices.
- The evaluation found that there may be issues with score variability in small systems, which comprise many districts in Colorado. CDE currently addresses small size variability through three-year frameworks.
- The Task Force is interested in considering ways schools and districts could own what is reported in the accountability system so they can better tell a story of what they are doing to support students.

At the September 26, 2023, meeting, the Chairs asked Lisa Medler and Marie Huchton from CDE to present on Colorado’s Accountability System, including its history, theory of action, and major components. Per H.B. 23-1241, “the Department shall provide information and staff support to the Task Force Chairperson to the extent necessary for the Task Force to complete its duties.” Among the many topics covered, Medler and Huchton explained the performance indicators used in the framework, how Colorado’s growth model works, how CDE handles data for small schools and subgroups, public reporting associated with the accountability system, improvement planning, public engagement practices, supports and interventions provided for identified schools, school accreditation processes, and various awards for school and district performance.

Given the statute’s guidance to allow for CDE support to carry out Task Force deliberations, CDE then presented at subsequent meetings to answer questions and provide analyses that allowed the Task Force to do its work. In particular, at the October 17, 2023, meeting, CDE provided a deeper dive presentation on the growth model and the proposed new approach to measuring On-Track-Growth. At the November 3, 2023, meeting, CDE guided the group through an exercise to examine how accountability framework assignments are aligned with different student demographics in schools. And finally, at the January 9, 2023, meeting, CDE gave a brief overview of how participation in state assessments impacts the accountability frameworks, and also demonstrated how to use the [Data Explorer Tool](#) to examine how elements of the accountability framework relate to student demographics. CDE also led the Task Force through an interactive activity to check their understanding and reinforce key findings from the audit, the purpose of the state’s accountability system, and the elements of the system.

There were many data points that CDE shared. Of note, CDE shared data that demonstrated an overall weak to moderate correlation between demographics and plan type assignments through the performance frameworks. Digging in further by performance indicators, they reported a very weak to no correlation between student subgroups (ML, Poverty, etc.) and growth. However, CDE reported an overall moderate relationship between achievement and identified student characteristics; of note, there was a high correlation between free and reduced lunch and achievement scores. Overall, there was a weak relationship between the postsecondary & workforce readiness (PWR) indicator and the district student groups; although there was more variability in the correlations when examining sub indicators. The scatterplots for achievement, growth, and the plan type assignments through the performance frameworks can be found in Appendix H.

At the December 1, 2023, meeting, CDE shared with the Task Force the [Accountability Reference Handbook](#), which tracks all questions asked by the Task Force to CDE and CDE’s answers to these questions, as they are relevant to advancing the Task Force’s work. This document will be a living resource updated with new information as questions arise, and it was updated again ahead of the January 9, 2024 meeting.

Promising practices considered: Per the legislation, the Task Force is required to consider “promising practices in schools and school districts” in its deliberations. At the December 1, 2023, meeting, CDE provided background and framing on the School Transformation Grant Program, one of the tools listed in the legislation that the Task Force may review.

The most intensive support offered to schools under this Grant Program is the Transformation Network, a highly collaborative three-year partnership between schools, their districts, and CDE. At the December meeting, researchers from CU-Boulder shared their findings from the evaluation of the Transformation Network. They found that the following conditions and practices led to better outcomes in former turnaround schools:

- Focused approach to defining major improvement strategies;
- partnering with state and district to advance a coherent vision for turnaround;
- integrating routine observations and professional learning through continuous coaching/PDSA cycles; and
- distributed leadership to advance a supportive and collaborative staff/school culture.

The presenters also included quotes from Prairie and Centennial school districts, two districts that were part of the Transformation Network, as an example of evidence that led to their findings.

Next, at the January 9, 2024, meeting, the Task Force heard from representatives of the 1215 Task Force, who made a series of recommendations for the accountability system’s PWR indicator, which therefore may be relevant to the 1241 Task Force’s potential recommendations to the accountability system. The 1215 Task Force recommendations to the PWR indicator in the accountability system are described in the below table.⁶

1215 Task Force’s Recommendations for Updates to PWR Measures in Colorado’s Accountability Performance Framework	
PWR Sub-Indicator	Suggested Change
SAT Evidence-Based Reading/Writing	Remove from the PWR Indicator
SAT Math	Remove from the PWR Indicator
Concurrent Enrollment	Not currently part of the performance framework; add this as a sub-indicator in the PWR Indicator
Graduation Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator
Dropout Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator; reduce the number of points so it is worth fewer points than Graduation Rate
Matriculation Rate	Keep in the PWR Indicator; modify reporting so military enlistment and industry credential attainment is required to be included. Consider increasing the weight of this measure, as it covers matriculation into a variety of beneficial PWR programs
District Option	Consider adding to the PWR Indicator

The 1241 Task Force will continue to consult with the 1215 members to answer questions and inform their future recommendations, as necessary. All of the 1215 Task Force’s recommendations can be found in the [Secondary, Postsecondary and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force Report](#).

Finally, at the January 17, 2024, meeting, both CU Boulder and the Center for Assessment presented information about other state’s accountability systems, which were meant to help the Task Force review other states’ approaches to accountability. The states included:

⁶ [Office of Postsecondary Workforce Readiness, Student Pathways Unit](#) (2023)

- **Oklahoma**, which has an accountability system that, according to the presenters, stays close to the requirements of ESSA;
- **Michigan**, which was presented as offering a dual system of accountability with multiple views of student success; and
- **California**, which was described as including a dashboard approach to share information on school performance.

The presenters also shared that while there is no “gold” standard when creating an accountability system, they offered the below list of design elements they emphasized are critical to any accountability system.

- **Theory of Action:** hypothesis for how the system will bring about the desired changes, including conditions and assumptions that must hold.
- **Guiding Principles:** core ideas that guide decisions about the system.
- **Design Priorities:** features that support the theory of action and guiding principles, as well as help navigate tradeoffs.
- **Characteristics and Features:** components that operationalize and support the theory of action, principles, and priorities.

CU Boulder will continue to be available to the Task Force to answer specific questions about other states’ approaches to accountability, as these inquiries are relevant to the work of the Task Force.

Areas for further study: At both the January 9 and January 17, 2024, meetings, the Task Force members considered what is working and what could be improved for each element of the state’s accountability system. **The focus of the discussions was *not* to reach consensus, and this list does not reflect whether consensus was reached.** In fact, you will note that there are contradictory statements throughout, because this was a brainstormed list by the Task Force members as areas where some thought the accountability system was working and where some felt the system was not working and needed to be looked into further. The following list became the starting point for further study and exploration of both how the Task Force could continue and improve on things that are working and how things might need to be adjusted:

Frameworks

- Brainstormed List of What Seems to be Working:
 - The frameworks’ indicators and what they measure seem to be the right ones.
 - The frameworks seem to adequately prioritize growth to help minimize disparities.
 - The frameworks seem to offer the right amount of flexibility to account for differences (e.g. for AECs).
 - The frameworks seem to allow for the right amount of comparability across Colorado’s schools.
 - The frameworks seem to drive the right amount of attention to state priorities, and schools are responding.
- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - Do the frameworks adequately consider the impact of N-size in the SPF ratings?
 - Is there the right balance between achievement and other measures in the frameworks, such as those related to postsecondary and workforce readiness?

- To what degree are frameworks comparable?
- Do the frameworks mask inequities within schools between groups of students behind a school's overall proficiency?
- How should AEC students be handled in the Accountability System?
- How should the frameworks allow schools to use local assessment measures that would include additional growth measures?
- Should the frameworks continue to rely heavily on data points that are attached to achievement test scores in high school and no other high school data points to show growth?
- How do the frameworks – specifically under PWR – prioritize matriculation attached to enrollment in higher education and other quality postsecondary options students may choose to pursue, and does that need to change?
- Should the frameworks include early childhood education to second grade data, such as chronic absenteeism?
- Should the frameworks account for where there are disproportionalities in discipline and how this plays into the larger accountability system?
- Should the frameworks be separated for elementary, middle, and high schools?
- Should the frameworks produce ratings that are heavily influenced by assessment participation rates? Should we study the correlation between ratings and opt out percentages?
- How can we account for the compounded impact for schools/districts with high percentages of English language learners also in poverty and the limiting impact that has on achievement? Conversely, are we minimizing consequences and accountability for wealthy, non-diverse schools and districts? Are growth measures accounting for this adequately?
- Should assessments be adjusted so they are at the end of the school year (and not two months before the end of the year)? If not, should the reporting language be adjusted? And beyond just testing schedules how can we ask questions about the responsibility and flexibility afforded to local boards to dictate schedules and reporting calendars?

Public Reporting

- Brainstormed List of What Seems to be Working:
 - Public reporting seems to make subgroup data adequately visible.
 - Public reporting through CDE's SchoolView seems to make the data transparent and accessible for stakeholders.
- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - How can we make the public reporting timelines ensure the state has data that is actionable for bright spots and for families and school leaders to make informed decisions?
 - How can we make the data and communication included in public reporting activities and tools available and accessible for families?
 - Can we provide helpful disaggregated data down to the classroom level and by student?
 - How can we make public reporting's visualization and reports for families better allow stakeholders to dig deeper into results?

- Should public reporting rely heavily on school leaders to interpret results, which impacts how and what information teachers and families receive?
- How can public reporting allow districts and schools to provide context behind ratings?

Improvement Planning

- Brainstormed List of What Seems to be Working
 - Improvement planning's concept of a unified improvement plan (UIP) and the flexibility it offers to school leaders on its priorities and implementation seems to be good.
- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - How can the improvement planning guidance offered by the state be more robust?
 - How can we shift the improvement planning process to focus less on compliance and more on genuine continuous improvement (e.g., inclusion of stakeholders such as parents and teachers, and allowing for different templates/processes)?

Supports and Interventions

- Brainstormed List of What Seems to be Working
 - Supports and interventions offered through CDE seem to provide helpful support to districts and schools with accompanying funding and thought partnership.
 - Supports and interventions seem to be improving as the state's focus shifts from directing action and being accountability focused to being more supportive for schools at the end of the clock.
- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - How can we create supports and interventions offered by CDE to highlight and prioritize early warning indicators to prevent schools from getting on the clock?
 - How can supports and interventions offered by CDE include enough state-led professional development by cohorts and state-facilitated partnering up of schools to learn from one another on topics of common interest?
 - How can we ensure that supports and interventions offered by CDE to schools taper off well?

Awards

- Brainstormed List of What Seems to be Working
 - The awards that are given seem to represent excellence.
- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - How can we better communicate the purpose of awards and their connection to the accountability system?
 - How can we make sure awards are better utilized and recognized as part of the accountability system? How can we make sure the system focuses on successes and strengths and ways to share the best practices taking place?
 - Should awards based on assessments be given to schools with low participation on assessments?

Public Engagement

- Brainstormed List of Questions to Explore for Potential Improvement:
 - How can we ensure that public engagement articulates the values the accountability system is prioritizing in the frameworks being used?
 - How can we improve all around for public engagement on the accountability system (i.e., how stakeholders are involved in the planning, decision making, and implementation before and after changes to the accountability system are made.)?
 - How can public engagement be timed with assessments and the release of frameworks better and convey the purpose and limits of summative assessments better?

Questions for further consideration: The brainstormed list of what is working and what could be improved in Colorado’s accountability system will be used to direct the Task Force’s future recommendations. The facilitators will work with the Task Force to decide which elements and opportunities to prioritize in Task Force discussions in future meetings.

V. Stakeholder Consultations

Per the statute, the Task Force “shall consult with parent organizations, student organizations, and additional stakeholders as needed to address questions necessary to finalize its findings and recommendations.”

Task Force members have begun to consider a stakeholder consultation process grounded in principles that enable timely input in accordance with Task Force deliberations and reporting timelines. In particular, the stakeholder consultation process should:

- Yield insights from stakeholders to inform and strengthen recommendations;
- provide key stakeholder groups at least one means to consult on recommendations before the Task Force completes its final report;
- make key information offered by stakeholders publicly available while protecting anonymity when appropriate; and
- enable efficient data interpretation and analysis from stakeholder consultations, in line with the resources available to the Task Force.

Recognizing the breadth of representation that already exists on the Task Force and the need to hear from voices who are historically underrepresented in these types of proceedings, the Task Force is in the process of solidifying answers to the following questions:

- What are the parameters for the feedback process?
- What information does the Task Force want to ask from parents, students, and additional organizations?
- How will the Task Force take note of the perspectives of various demographics, experiences, and groups?

Task Force members offered initial feedback on the stakeholder engagement process, and many emphasized a need to understand and clarify the task of stakeholders before developing the engagement process. Feedback also noted that there is a need to ensure the stakeholder engagement process does not forward a separate agenda, and that no one group of stakeholders be more highly regarded or prioritized in the process. Lastly, Task Force members highlighted the need to make stakeholder consultations accessible, particularly for student and parent organizations. This means avoiding jargon and simplifying content when necessary to allow parents and students to understand the complexities of state accountability and accreditation systems.

The Task Force is planning to conduct stakeholder consultations beginning in March 2024, in alignment with the timeline to begin drafting recommendations.

Until then, Task Force members are encouraged to utilize their existing networks to keep stakeholders informed of Task Force proceedings and bring their insights into Task Force discussions. Given their roles in Colorado’s education system, Task Force members’ networks represent teachers, school and district leaders, advocacy organizations, policymakers, and others.

VI. Looking Ahead

The facilitators will work with the Task Force to prioritize the brainstormed lists of what is working and what could be improved for each element of the accountability system in order to develop an updated roadmap that will guide the topics for the rest of the Task Force's 2024 meetings. Future meeting agendas will be developed using the roadmap as a guide.

In addition to these meetings, the Task Force will engage in stakeholder consultations to finalize findings and recommendations.

The Task Force will begin developing recommendations in March 2024. Final findings and recommendations will be incorporated into the final report, due to the Legislature on November 15, 2024.

VII. Appendices

A. Task Force Meeting Cadence and Structure

The Task Force met a total of seven times between August 2023 and January 2024. All but one meeting was held in person. All meetings offered the option to join remotely for those who could not attend in person. All meetings are open to the public.

Each meeting included a combination of small group work, full group discussions and share outs, and presentations from CDE and external stakeholders to advance the Task Force’s charge.

Education First is serving as the Task Force’s facilitators. Per the legislation, CDE was provided funding to contract with a facilitator to play a neutral role and help “guide the work of the Task Force.” The facilitator role includes managing Task Force deliberations in a way that encourages Task Force member participation and helps the group come to agreement on potential recommendations; working with the chair and vice chair to set meeting agendas and objectives; and planning the overall “arc” and purpose of the Task Force’s meetings over the coming year. The facilitators also prepare public-facing summaries after every Task Force meeting, drafted the March 2024 interim report, and will draft the November 2024 final report for the Colorado General Assembly.

B. Meeting Agendas

All meeting agendas, summaries, and public-facing materials are available on CDE’s 1241 Task Force [website](#). The lists below include the dates of each Task Force meeting, meeting objectives, and agenda topics.

August 24, 2023

Objectives

- Understand the goals of H.B. 23-1241 and the Task Force’s charge and responsibilities
- Begin to build working relationships with fellow Task Force members, the Task Force chair and vice chair, and CDE staff
- Articulate what success looks like for the Task Force and reflect on individual roles in contributing to that success

Agenda Topics

- Welcome, Lunch, and Task Force Member Introductions
- Words from the Task Force Chair, Vice Chair and CDE
- Aligning on Purpose: Building a Mutual Understanding of H.B. 23-1241
- Envisioning the Future: An Initial Conversation on Quality Schools

September 26, 2023

Objectives

- Finalize group norms, common definitions and common understanding of what is a “quality school,” to guide the Task Force’s deliberations moving forward

- Establish full group understanding of history, purpose, and goals of Colorado’s K-12 Accountability System
- Discuss recent legislative-commissioned evaluation of accountability system and elevate relevant implications for the Task Force’s work and goals

Agenda Topics

- Welcome and Adopt Task Force Norms
- Review and Consider: Accountability and Accreditation Terms and Definitions
- Working Agreement: What is a Quality School?
- Overview of Colorado’s K12 Accountability System
- Debrief the Evaluation of Colorado’s K12 Education Accountability System

October 17, 2023

Objectives

- Review group norms to guide the Task Force’s deliberations moving forward
- Build connections among each other in relation to the Task Force’s work
- Realign on the legislative charge of the Task Force
- Review and discuss a draft roadmap of upcoming meeting topics aligned to the legislative charge that includes the completion of the interim and final reports
- Discuss the Task Force’s follow up questions to CDE on the current accountability system

Agenda Topics

- Review norms
- Discussion & Activity
- Lunch & Small Group Activity
- Realign on Legislative Charge
- Review Roadmap
- CDE Accountability Follow-Up Presentation

November 3, 2023

Objectives

- Review norms and objectives
- Review progress to date and open questions
- Discuss and adopt a decision making process
- Refine and adopt the roadmap of upcoming topics aligned to the legislative charge that includes the completion of the interim and final reports
- Discuss and identify the academic opportunities or inequities that may impact academic achievement gaps
- Develop a stakeholder engagement process

Agenda Topics

- Review Norms and Objectives

- Review Progress to Date and Open Questions
- Review a Decision Making Process for Today's Work
- Refine and Adopt a Roadmap for Upcoming Topics
- Discussion: What are the Academic Opportunities or Inequities that May Impact Academic Achievement Gaps?
- Develop Parameters for a Stakeholder Consultation Process

December 1, 2023

Objectives

- Create a shared vision for the interim and final reports
- Review the academic opportunities and inequities discussed at the November meeting, and determine which are at consensus for further discussion
- Review progress to date and open questions
- Examine promising practices in schools and school districts
- Advance plans for consulting with stakeholders and experts

Agenda Topics

- Revisit Academic Opportunities and Inequities
- Promising Practices (in Colorado and Across States): Part 1
- Promising Practices (in Colorado and Across States): Part 2
- Parking Lot Follow-up: CDE Data Exploration
- Looking Ahead: Future Meetings, Planning for Stakeholder Consultations, and Vision for Reporting

January 9, 2024

Objectives

- Revisit the latest version on resource inequities
- Examine the state's system for accountability and accreditation: what are the opportunities for improvements to the accountability and accreditation system to expand and incentivize academic opportunities? To address inequities?

Agenda Topics

- Welcome and Overview
- CDE Presentation: Data Review
- Revisiting Resource Inequities
- Review Colorado's Accountability and Accreditation System
- Panel Discussion: 1215 Task Force's Findings and Recommendations
- The CO Accountability System: What is Working and What Could Be Improved? (Part I)
- The CO Accountability System: What is Working and What Could Be Improved? (Part II)

January 17, 2024

Objectives

- Review other states' accountability and accreditation systems to inform additional research and Task Force findings on Colorado's needs
- Begin to summarize findings on Colorado's accountability and accreditation system: Colorado's current accountability and accreditation system does X well in comparison to others and could do Y differently in comparison to other states
- Review a draft interim report: What suggestions to the report do Task Force members have after reviewing the draft?

Agenda Topics

- Welcome and Overview
- Continuation of January 9 Discussion on Accountability System
- Presentation: State Scan of Accountability Systems by CU-Boulder
- Small Group Discussion: Reflections on State Scan
- Small Group Work Time: Element by Element
- Whole Group Discussion: Colorado's Accountability and Accreditation System Needs
- Review Draft Interim Report

C. Task Force Membership

The following table lists the members of the Task Force, what education stakeholder groups they represent, and who appointed them, according to the statute.

NAME	REPRESENTING	APPOINTING AUTHORITY
Dr. Wendy Birhanzel (chair) , Harrison School District 2	Superintendent	House Speaker
Hon. Rebecca McClellan (vice chair) , Colorado State Board of Education CD6	State Board of Education	Senate President
Tomi Amos , KIPP Colorado Public Schools	Charter Network Leader	Governor
Dr. Rob Anderson , Superintendent, Boulder Valley School District	Superintendent (Urban)	Senate President
Amie Baca-Oehlert , Colorado Education Association	Statewide Teachers Organization	House Speaker
Pamela Bisceglia , Advocacy Denver	Statewide Organization Specializing in Equity and Inclusion	House Speaker
Dr. Brenda Dickhoner , Ready Colorado	Charter School Institute (Governing Board Member)	Senate Minority Leader
Kathy Durán , Expert in Multicultural Education	Expert in English Language Acquisition and Bilingual Ed	Governor
Lindsey Gish , DSST Public Schools	Teacher (Middle School)	House Minority Leader

Alison Griffin , Whiteboard Advisors	Workforce Development and Education Organization	Governor
Don Haddad, Ed.D. , Superintendent, St. Vrain Valley Schools	Superintendent	House Speaker
Dr. Rhonda Haniford , Colorado Department of Education	Colorado Department of Education	CDE Commissioner
Tammi Hiler , Office of Governor Jared Polis	Governor’s Office Representative	Governor
Ted Johnson , Pueblo School District 60	District Administrator (Rural Accountability)	Senate Minority Leader
Erin Kane , Douglas County School District	Superintendent	House Minority Leader
Dr. Anne Keke , Aurora Public Schools	Local School Board Member	Senate President
Ryan Marks , Colorado Charter School Institute	District Administrator (Accountability)	House Minority Leader
Nicholas Martinez , Executive Director, Transform Education Now	Statewide Parents/Families Organization	House Speaker
Tony May	Local School Board Member (Rural)	House Minority Leader
Dr. Robert Mitchell , Campo School District	Teacher (Rural)	Senate Minority Leader
James Parr , Montezuma Cortez/ Southwest Colorado	District Administrator (Rural Accountability)	Governor
Catie Santos de la Rosa , Denver Public Schools	Teacher (Elementary)	Senate President
Mark Sass , Executive Director, Teach Plus Colorado	Statewide Teachers Organization	Governor
Dan Schaller , President, Colorado League of Charter Schools	Charter School Organization	Governor
Jen Walmer	Statewide Education Policy Organization	Senate President
Lisa Yates , Superintendent Buena Vista School District	Superintendent (Rural Participant in Local Accountability System Grant)	Senate Minority Leader

D. Task Force Decision Making Procedures

To date, the chair and vice chair have proposed a way to gauge agreement and reach consensus on informal decisions by asking Task Force members to offer a thumbs up, thumbs sideways, or thumbs down on the topic. If consensus is not reached this way, or the Task Force is making a more formal decision, the Task Force will use majority vote, which will include an option for dissenting opinions when needed.

If a Task Force member is not present at a meeting, they must accept the votes of their colleagues, unless it is predetermined that a vote is needed by every member.

The chair and vice chair have emphasized that these are not static decision-making processes, and they may change from meeting to meeting depending on what decisions are being made. Moving forward, the Task Force will document in post-meeting summaries what decision making processes were used and how Task Force members voted on each item.

E. Interim Report

Per the legislation, the Task Force is required to submit to the Legislature by March 1, 2024, an interim report with initial findings and recommendations. The facilitators drafted the report, and Task Force members were given the opportunity to add their feedback and suggested revisions. The facilitators incorporated this feedback in the final version of the report.

F. Working Definitions of Key Terms

The [Working Definitions of Key Terms](#) includes a list of terms and definitions associated with Colorado’s Accountability and Accreditation system. These were presented to the Task Force at the meeting on September 26, 2023.

G. Accountability Reference Handbook

The [Accountability Reference Handbook](#) was created by CDE to answer the Task Force’s questions about the Accountability and Accreditation system. It is meant to be a living resource and will continue to be updated as the Task Force has new questions and requests for the Department.

H. References on Analysis on Plan Type Assignments and Student Demographics

CDE released a series of analyses on the relationship between plan type assignments (including each of the performance indicators - achievement, growth and postsecondary & workforce readiness) in November 2023 and January 2024. More details can be viewed in the [Analysis on SPF and Demographic Characteristics](#).

Here is a summary of the correlations

Absolute Value of r	Strength of Relationship
$r < 0.3$	very weak or no relationship
$0.3 \leq r < 0.5$	weak relationship
$0.5 \leq r < 0.7$	moderate relationship
$r \geq 0.7$	strong relationship

- Achievement. There tends to be an overall moderate relationship between achievement and the identified student characteristics. This is true across all school levels for multilingual learners and minority students (although there is a strong correlation at the elementary level). There is a

strong relationship between achievement and poverty across all school levels. For students with IEPs and Gifted students, there was a weak to moderate relationship.

- Growth. Across the board, there tends to be a very weak or no relationship to demographic groups. The exceptions are moderate relationships in ELA/EBRW for poverty at the elementary and high school levels, and for Gifted students at the high school level, and then all groups in math at the high school level.

Table 1. Correlations Between Demographics and MSS/MGP

	Mean Scale Score				Median Growth Percentile			
	Elem	Middle	Elem+Mid	High	Elem	Middle	Elem+Mid	High
English Language Arts								
% Multilingual	-0.57	-0.51	-0.56	-0.56	-0.2	-0.09	-0.15	-0.23
% Minority	-0.71	-0.6	-0.66	-0.64	-0.25	-0.11	-0.2	-0.26
% FRL	-0.82	-0.75	-0.79	-0.79	-0.33	-0.19	-0.29	-0.45
% IEP	-0.37	-0.47	-0.41	-0.52	-0.17	-0.2	-0.17	-0.28
% Gifted	0.49	0.57	0.49	0.6	0.22	0.2	0.19	0.44
Math								
% Multilingual	-0.55	-0.5	-0.54	-0.48	-0.14	-0.09	-0.1	-0.3
% Minority	-0.68	-0.63	-0.65	-0.58	-0.18	-0.16	-0.17	-0.34
% FRL	-0.79	-0.78	-0.77	-0.71	-0.25	-0.27	-0.25	-0.45
% IEP	-0.36	-0.47	-0.38	-0.52	-0.16	-0.19	-0.14	-0.37
% Gifted	0.46	0.61	0.43	0.6	0.18	0.25	0.18	0.41

Note. Correlations are color-coded according to the magnitudes described at the beginning of this document: Green = very weak or no relationship; yellow = weak relationship; orange = moderate relationships; red = strong relationship

- Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness. Overall, there was a weak relationship between the PWR indicator and the different student groups, ranging from -0.29 (MLs) to -0.41 (FRL). When breaking the PWR indicator down to the sub-indicators, however, more variability between the different measures appears.
 - The SAT (EBRW and Math) tended to have a moderate relationship. The exceptions being math for MLs (weak) and EBRW for FRL (strong).
 - Graduation, dropout and matriculation, on the other hand, tended toward a very weak to weak relationship for all student groups.

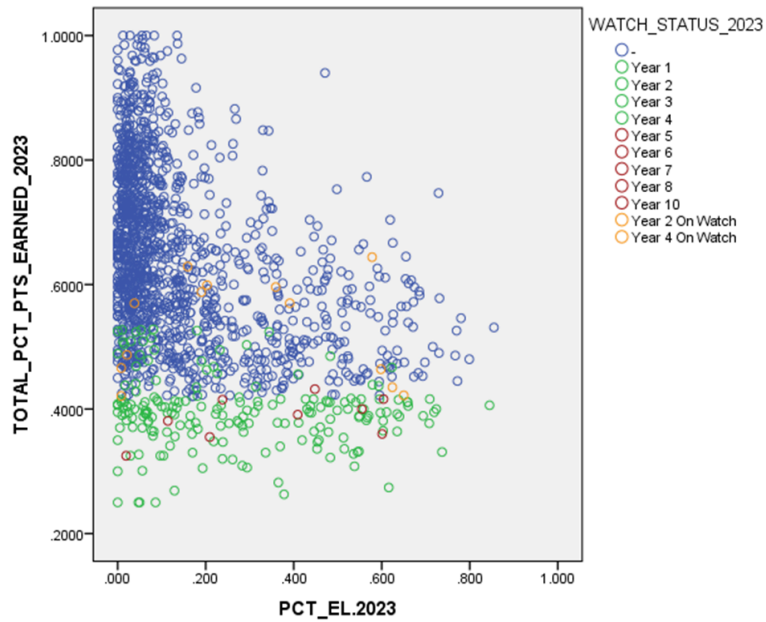
Table 3. Correlations Between PWR, Demographics, and Achievement/Growth

	SAT-EBRW	SAT-Math	Grad	Matr	Dropout
% Multilingual	-0.51	-0.45	-0.11	-0.16	0.38
% Minority	-0.57	-0.52	-0.18	-0.23	0.43
% FRL	-0.75	-0.68	-0.2	-0.32	0.48
% IEP	-0.52	-0.5	-0.16	-0.31	0.33
ELA MSS	-	-	0.28	0.44	-0.53
ELA MGP	-	-	0.24	0.2	-0.29
Math MSS	-	-	0.35	0.51	-0.5
Math MGP	-	-	0.35	0.43	-0.3

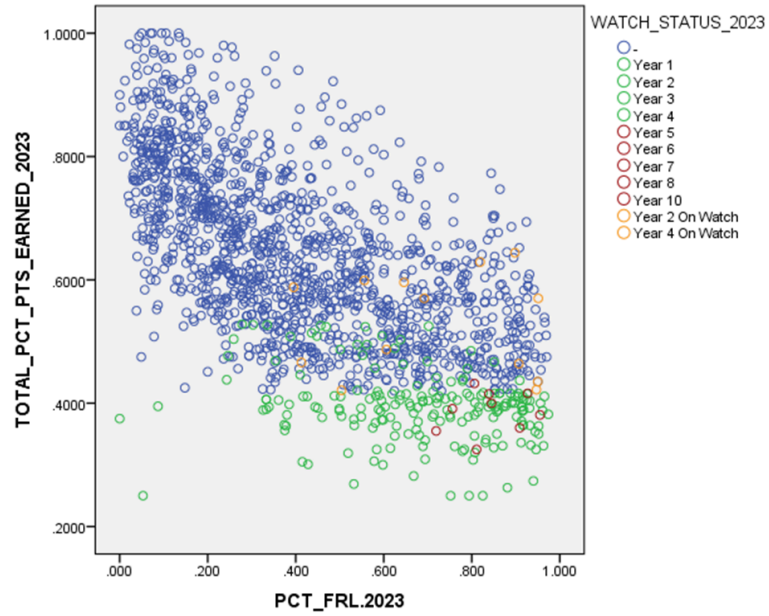
Note. Correlations are color-coded according to the magnitudes described at the beginning of this document: Green = very weak or no relationship; yellow = weak relationship; orange = moderate relationships; red = strong relationship

School Performance Framework plan type assignments were also visualized for the task force and summarized in the Accountability Reference Handbook. These graphs provided a closer look at schools on performance watch (e.g., Turnaround, Priority Improvement) and years on the accountability clock. Each dot represents a school. The higher the dot, the higher the percentage of points on the frameworks. The further to the right, the greater percentage of identified students groups (i.e., multilingual learners, free and reduced price lunch, minority students, students with IEPs).

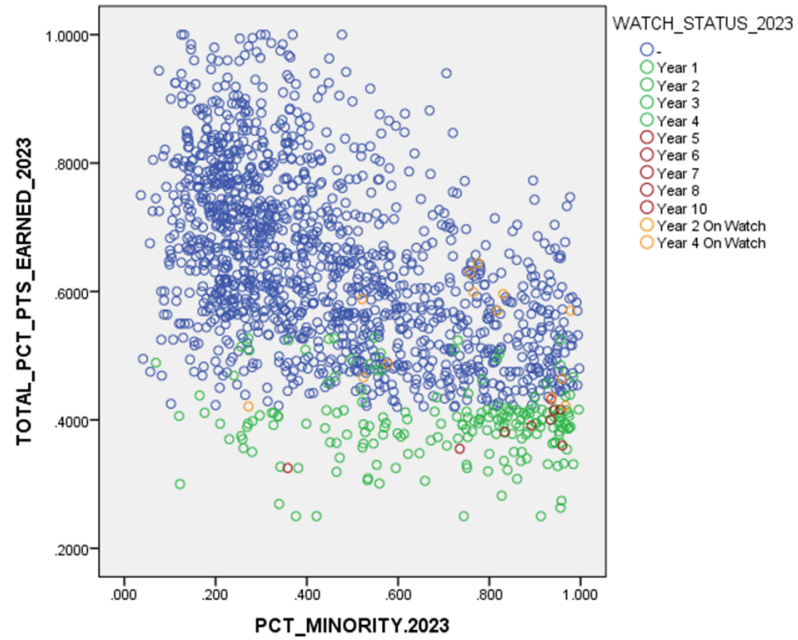
- Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points with Percent of Multilingual Learners. Summary: Status on the clock (green and red), on watch (yellow) and not on the clock (blue) are equally distributed across schools serving all concentrations of multilingual learners.



- Scatterplot of Schools by Percentage of 2023 Framework Points and Free/Reduced Price Lunch. Summary: Note that there is a high frequency of schools that are not on the clock (blue) that also have a high population of students in poverty. There is evidence of some schools on the clock with a lower percentage of students in poverty. The schools much further along on the clock (red) gather around the higher end of the poverty scale.



- Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent of Minority Students.
Summary: Similar to the FRL scatterplot, there is a high frequency of schools that are not on the clock (blue) that also have a high population of minority students. There are some schools on the clock with a lower percentage of minority students. The schools much further along on the clock (red) tend to cluster around the higher end of the minority scale.



- Scatterplot of Schools by 2023 Framework Points and Percent of Students with an IEP.
Summary:

