Colorado ESSA Summit

Colorado's second statewide ESSA Summit took place on January 17, 2017 and brought together almost 200 educators from 39 school districts. The purpose of the ESSA Summit was to provide a meaningful opportunity to gather feedback from teachers, wellness specialists, school leaders, district leaders, and school board members to inform the development of Colorado's ESSA state plan. Districts were encouraged to bring a team comprised of these various roles. The event was hosted by six organizations: CASB, CASE, CEA, CBA, CEI, and PEBC.

ESSA Summit Event Structure and Data Collection

The event was designed to both capture feedback from the field, and to expeditiously develop an accessible summary of the feedback for key decision makers.

Following an overview of ESSA, participants attended breakout sessions focused on the following topics:

- Accountability: 'N' Size and Other Indicator
- Accountability: School Identification and Student Participation
- Assessment
- Effective Instruction and Leadership
- School Improvement

In each break-out session, stakeholders involved in the ESSA plan development process presented a brief summary of key decisions points. After discussing the decision points in small groups, each group captured feedback through an online survey platform. The online survey was designed to capture nuances from the small group discussions by providing an open text box after each question to document different perspectives that emerged regarding the decision points. After the event, the link to the online survey was emailed to attendees so they could provide additional comments or make the survey available to others who could not attend the summit.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Members of the Research and Impact team at CEI used the feedback submitted through the survey to create five separate summaries that synthesize quantitative and qualitative data on the key topic areas captured in the online survey. The visuals presented in the summaries represent the small group responses. The rates are calculated using the following method:

$$\frac{\text{number of small groups that selected each response option}}{\text{total number of small group survey submissions specific to the topic area}}$$

Most survey items allowed respondents to select all options, which is why rates do not total 100%. Individual responses submitted after the event were the same or similar to group responses and are reflected in the qualitative data.

Contact Information

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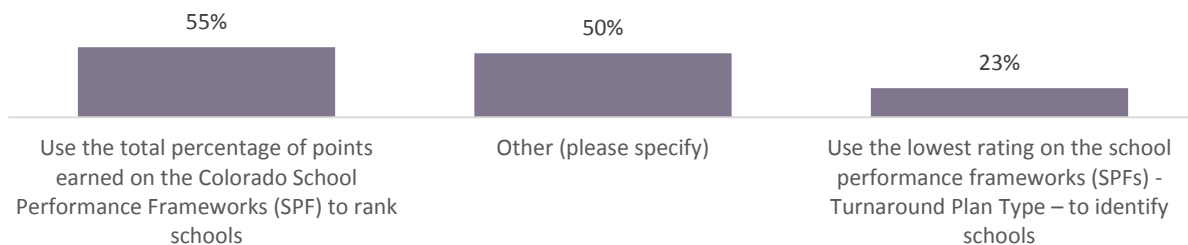
Overview and Participation

The information in the Colorado ESSA Summit Accountability: School Identification and Student Participation Feedback Summary reflects perspectives on the method for identifying and exiting comprehensive and targeted support schools and reporting rules.

Twenty-two surveys about the Accountability: School Identification and Student Participation decision points were submitted by small groups during the break-out sessions. The summary provided after each question includes overarching themes and direct quotes that reflect the spectrum of responses provided by small groups and individual respondents submitted after the event.

School Identification

1. **What criteria and methods will Colorado use to define the lowest performing 5%?**

55%	50%	23%
Use the total percentage of points earned on the Colorado School Performance Frameworks (SPF) to rank schools	Other (please specify)	Use the lowest rating on the school performance frameworks (SPFs) - Turnaround Plan Type – to identify schools

The majority of submitted surveys preferred that Colorado use the total percentage of points earned on the SPF to identify the lowest performing 5% of schools. Several respondents provided additional feedback about their responses.
- If Turnaround schools do not equal 5%, then use the total percentage points and include schools in the bottom tier of Priority Improvement.
- Compare schools based on some participation threshold; either criterion-referenced, such as 95% or norm-referenced using actual participation rates.
- Not in favor of using the SPF without some significant reworking of the process (particularly n size).
- The implications of these two options were critical to understand prior to offering feedback; wanted to know what value is driving the decision on this issue.
- It would be nice if the state could get to a place where more of a body of evidence serves to identify lowest performing schools, like identification of conditions for learning (climate/culture, etc.).

2. **How often will Colorado identify schools for comprehensive support?**
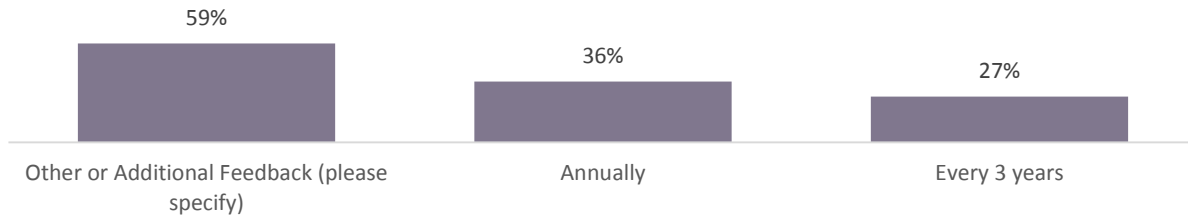
Most of the submitted survey responses recommended an alternative, or hybrid, of the two options provided as described in the feedback below.
- Hybrid model. The state should identify schools for comprehensive support annually, with 3 years to implement, plan, and monitor. This would also be a time to provide them with targeted support to increase stability and provide time for improvements to take hold.
- Once a school hits the performance targets, they should continue to receive support and funding for an additional year.
- If the state goes with an annual identification process, there should be no requirements for improvement until year three as this would provide adequate and fair time to show growth or improvement.
- Biannual identification would allow for an adjustment for factors beyond the control of the teacher or school in one year.
- Three years is a more reasonable timeline to plan and show progress.
- Every two years. If there is a way to add schools every year while keeping schools on the list for three years, we think that is an option worth exploring.

3. **How will Colorado use "all indicators" in the analyses for identifying schools for targeted support and improvement?**
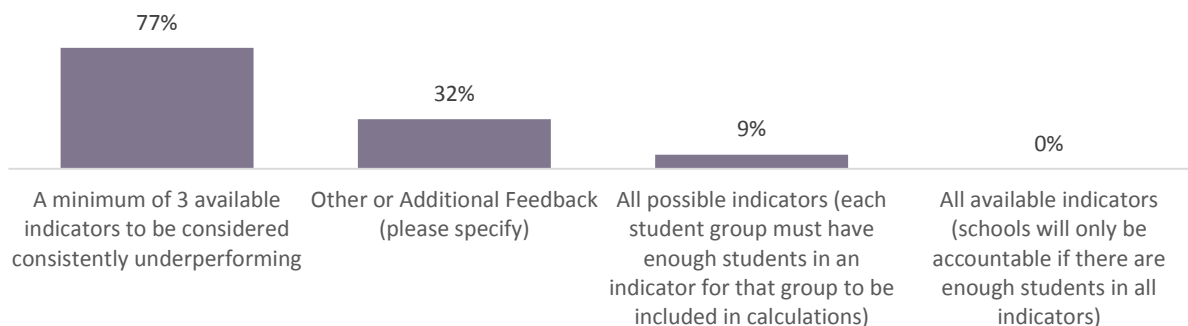
The majority of responses recommended that a minimum of three available indicators should be used to identify schools for targeted support.
- The state should include achievement and growth and graduation rates.
- Reduce the n size for growth data.

- There must be special consideration for small schools for whom low performing subgroups may be masked by this approach.
- There is a need to understand the impact of this decision on dollars and how it may over-invest in some schools and under-invest in others; this would be important to better understand, communicate and consider before a final decision is made.
- Want to know if the indicators available provide an accurate and full picture of student performance.

4. **How will Colorado define chronic? In other words, how many years is a fair and equitable number of years to allow schools identified for additional targeted support to meet exit criteria before they are identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement?**

A range of comments and questions were shared about this question. While several indicated that schools should be identified as a 'targeted' school for three years before they are moved to the 'comprehensive' support category, others thought it should be four or five years.
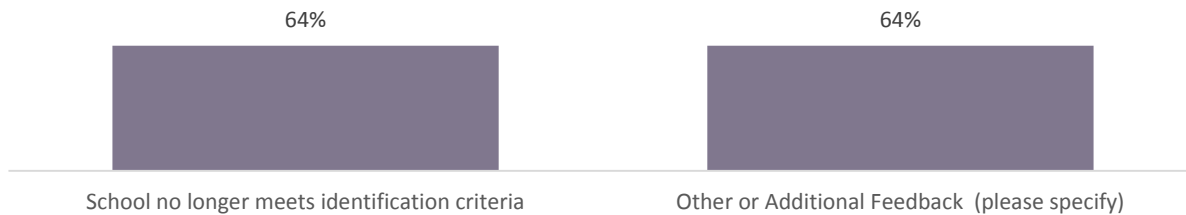
- Need to balance the urgency of school improvement with giving schools a chance.
- Four years is a better option as it takes three years for full implementation of curriculum.
- Like the sense of urgency that three years creates, and believe it is doable for review and monitoring progress.
- If a school was able to project that they would remain chronic in the second year, they should be able to move into the comprehensive category prior to the third year.
- If the three years included the year of identification and if identification happened in December or January, would that really mean two and a half years to improve? Build in district flexibility for making this decision.
- What would happen if a school needed more targeted support after three years?
- Each school is different and impacted by so many different factors. It is hard to know how long is long enough to show improvement and what would the measure of improvement be?

5. What criteria will Colorado use to exit targeted schools from comprehensive status?

64%	64%
School no longer meets identification criteria	Other or Additional Feedback (please specify)

In addition to the selected response option of exiting targeted schools from comprehensive status when they no longer meet identification criteria, survey respondents offered several considerations for this decision point.

- Three years on and one year to transition off with monitoring 1-2 years after exiting comprehensive status.
- Two consecutive years of not meeting identification criteria.
- Growth of students should be the major consideration for moving a school out of a comprehensive status.
- Additional local criteria may illustrate the needs specific to a school and district.
- Continue funding and support for an additional year to ensure maintenance of efforts.
- "N" size in rural districts impact exit criteria more dynamically.
- Request that the state not use the term "CSI School" for schools identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement because schools authorized by the Charter School Institute are commonly referred to as "CSI Schools."

Student Participation in Assessment

6. How do we want to resolve the conflict between the federal requirements that state 95% of all students must participate and the state requirements that specify parents have the ultimate decision in whether or not their child(ren) participate in academic assessments?

Range of perspectives on how to address the conflict between federal and state participation requirements. Some believe Colorado should stick with the current process while others believe that Colorado's laws and practices should change because of the negative impact of opt-outs on school ratings. There were also recommendations that Colorado should push back on the federal requirements. Respondents also took the opportunity to articulate values that the assessment system should reflect.

- Hold an opt-out seminar to educate families regarding federal/state requirements.
- If parents are submitting the required documentation for opt-out, then their child should not be considered part of the total. Then determine the 95% based up the total that would be taking the assessment.

- "Participation" might be defined more broadly beyond student participation in high-stakes testing. We might encourage the state to be forward-thinking about this issue; e.g. plan for application of block chain technology that is rapidly developing for micro-credentialing student competencies, rather than at specific points of time/day with high-stakes testing.
- The state needs to give districts the flexibility to administer tests that students will find valuable.
- Incentivize the schools financially for having more than 95% participation in the assessments.