



## Traditional Unified Improvement Plan Template Quality Criteria: School-Level

### Overview

The Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) provides districts and schools with a consistent and streamlined template for capturing improvement planning efforts that increase student learning and that satisfy multiple strands of state and federal planning requirements. CDE developed these Quality Criteria to offer guidance for creating high-quality improvement plans, to clarify requirements for school-level UIPs and to guide the state and local review of UIPs for identified schools (i.e., Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, On Watch, ESSA-identified schools). This document outlines the criteria for “Meeting Expectations” on each of these requirements.

### Directions for use

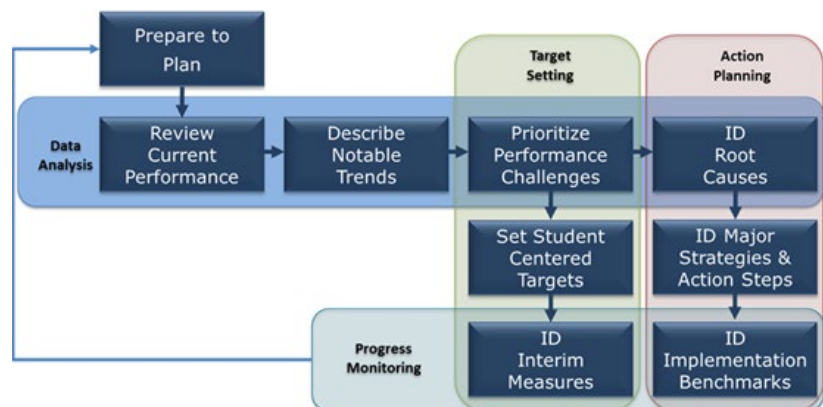
- Use the criteria for “All schools” in this document to guide strong improvement planning within the UIP.
- Consult the “Plan Details” section of the “My School” tab in the [UIP Online System](#) to determine the school’s unique accountability and program requirements.
- Alternatively, use the school’s state and/or federal identifications and other context (e.g., grades served, grants awarded, etc.) to identify the criteria described in this document that the school is responsible for satisfying.

### 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:

1. Investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent **performance challenges**?
2. Identify **root causes** that explain the magnitude of the performance challenges?
3. Identify evidence-based **major improvement strategies** that have likelihood to eliminate the root causes?
4. Present a well-designed **action plan** for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?
5. Include elements that effectively **monitor** the impact and **progress** of the action plan?

**UIP Flow Map**  
*Relationship of the major planning elements of the Traditional UIP Template*



## Structure of the Quality Criteria

Organized by the “Big Five,” this document outlines the various UIP elements and includes criteria that, if addressed, lead to a well-developed improvement plan. Most of these criteria blend best practice with state and/or federal accountability requirements. Schools should aim to meet or exceed the criteria listed in this document. The most effective plans build a vision for improvement that remains coherent across each section of the plan: the root causes and strategies are aligned to identified challenges and targets, and the action plan is deliberately sequenced to put the identified strategies into practice. Requirements that only apply to some schools are labeled separately (see the “Key to Icons” table on the next page). *Grayed out sections will not be reviewed by CDE during the current school year.*

“Big Five” Guiding Question	Plan Elements within Traditional UIP Template
Does the plan investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent <b>performance challenges</b> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brief Description</li> <li>● Prior Year Targets</li> <li>● Current Performance</li> <li>● Trend Analysis</li> <li>● Priority Performance Challenges</li> </ul>
Does the plan identify <b>root causes</b> that explain the magnitude of performance challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Root Causes</li> </ul>
Does the plan identify evidenced-based <b>major improvement strategies</b> that are likely to eliminate the root causes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Major Improvement Strategies</li> <li>● Planning Form</li> </ul>
Does the UIP present a well-designed <b>action plan</b> for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Major Improvement Strategies</li> <li>● Planning Form</li> </ul>
Does the plan include elements that effectively <b>monitor</b> the impact and <b>progress</b> of the action plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Target Setting</li> <li>● Planning Form</li> </ul>

## Assurances within the Online UIP

Several planning elements have been identified that can be addressed as assurances to reduce the length of narrative in the UIP. Within the online system, assurances will be customized to each school/district, based on their identification(s), students served, or other contextual factors.

Schools are responsible for fulfilling the requirements expressed in these assurances. While artifacts and evidence related to these assurances are not required to be included in the UIP, sites may be asked to provide these artifacts during a state or federal monitoring process. Districts are responsible for ensuring the completion of actions associated with these expectations. These may also be valuable artifacts to share with CDE staff or external providers that are providing technical assistance to the site.



If the school cannot attest to the completion of any of these assurances, the UIP should include a narrative explanation of how the school will address this assurance moving forward.



**NOTE: Schools identified for Comprehensive Support (CS), Targeted Support (TS), or Additional Targeted Support (A-TS) through the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are responsible for satisfying a specific set of federal requirements in their UIP.**

These requirements are identified in two ways throughout this document:








1. Requirements for all schools that are also included in CS-specific requirements are called out with the blue “CS” button in the “Topic” column of the criteria tables below.
2. Additional requirements that are specific to schools with federal identifications are called out with these buttons (see “Key to Icons” at right) in the “Who must address this requirement?” column of the Quality Criteria tables below.

**Title I School Wide Requirements:** In 2024-25, schools may continue to use the traditional UIP to meet schoolwide Title I planning requirements. LEAs must ensure that schools continue to meet the requirements. For more information, please see [Title I Schoolwide Planning](#). The Title I team can support districts in navigating meeting these requirements; for support, please contact the [Title I team](#) or [Regional Contacts](#).

Key to Icons Used in Quality Criteria tables	
	All Schools
	Schools submitting Improvement Plans
	Schools submitting Priority Improvement Plans
	Schools Submitting Turnaround Plans
	Schools on Year 4 of the state Accountability Clock
	Schools identified for Comprehensive Support through Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) <i>*See Note at left*</i>
	Schools identified for Targeted Support through ESSA
	Schools identified for Additional Targeted Support through ESSA
	Schools serving grades K-3
	Schools serving grades 9-12
	Schools that have received an Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) Grant
	Schools that have received a Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant






## Assurances within the Online UIP

Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Criteria
<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>		
	<b>Data Analysis</b> 	<p>The Unified Improvement Plan is the result of thorough data analysis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data was analyzed from both local and state sources.</li> <li>• Data was disaggregated by student demographics (e.g., students with IEPs, Free &amp; Reduced Lunch eligibility, Multilingual Learners, race/ethnicity), as applicable.</li> <li>• Current school performance was analyzed relative to local, state and federal metrics and expectations (e.g. SPF metrics, ESSA indicators).</li> </ul>
	<b>Data Analysis</b> <i>Math Acceleration K-12</i>	<p>Math Acceleration assessment performance data from at least the last two school years has been analyzed. Data were disaggregated by grade level, performance levels, and student demographics (e.g., Free &amp; Reduced Lunch, IEP, Multilingual Learners).</p>
	<b>Data Analysis</b> <i>READ Act</i>	<p>K-3 READ Act assessment performance data from at least the last two school years has been analyzed. Data were disaggregated by grade level, by the percentage of students who have significant reading deficiencies, and by the percentage of students who achieved grade level expectations in reading.</p>
	<b>Prior year Early Literacy Grant Goals and previous efforts (Trends)</b>	<p>Data analysis includes reflection on and identification of trends related to all three goals designated within the Early Literacy Grant as well as the Literacy Evaluation Tool.</p>
<b>STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT</b>		
	<b>Stakeholder Input on Plan Development</b> 	<p>The plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders, including the principal and other school leaders, teachers, and the School Accountability Committee (SAC).</p>
	<b>Stakeholder Progress Monitoring</b>	<p>The school will involve stakeholders—at a minimum, the School Accountability Committee—in progress monitoring the implementation of the plan throughout the school year.</p>






## Assurances within the Online UIP

Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Criteria
	<b>Stakeholder Awareness</b>  <i>ESSA School Improvement</i>	Stakeholders were made aware of reasons for ESSA identification and were active partners in reviewing performance on related indicators and providing input on strategies or interventions related to identification.
	<b>Family Notification and Local Board Adoption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Written notice of the initial plan type was shared with families within 30 calendar days of identification.</li> <li>● The SAC met to provide input on the improvement plan prior to the public hearing.</li> <li>● A public hearing was held at least 30 calendar days after the date on which the district provided the written notice.</li> <li>● The local board reviewed and adopted the plan.</li> </ul>
<b>TARGET SETTING</b>		
	<b>ELG Funding Target (Growth)</b>	The school has set a target (either in the UIP or in the Early Literacy Grant documentation) for moving students in K-3 who are identified as below expectations or well below expectations up a tier on the identified READ Act assessment by end of year.

1	Does the plan investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent performance challenges?	
Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Meets Expectations
<p><b>NOTE: The criteria in this section should be addressed through the UIP's Data Narrative section, including the Brief Description, Reflection on Prior Year Targets, Current Performance, Trend Analysis, and Priority Performance Challenges.</b></p>		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">ALL</div>	<b>Identification of Priority Performance Challenges</b>	<p>The plan identifies a limited number of Priority Performance Challenges (3 or fewer) of appropriate magnitude to focus the school's improvement efforts.</p>
	<b>Address Indicators</b>	<p>Priority Performance Challenges identify performance metrics that are meaningfully related to indicators on the performance framework. Focusing on these challenges is likely to increase performance in areas of need identified in the school's data analysis (e.g., areas where the school is not yet meeting state or federal expectations).</p>
	<b>Evidence for Prioritization</b>	<p>The Current Performance and/or Trend Analysis sections present compelling evidence that demonstrates the need to focus on the identified Priority Performance Challenges (e.g., positive and negative performance trends, school performance relative to state and local expectations).</p>
	<b>Rationale for Prioritization</b>	<p>The plan includes strong rationale for the selected Priority Performance Challenges. This may include a number of contextual factors, such as enrollment shifts, local strategic plan priorities, and previous improvement efforts.</p>
	<b>Address Indicators</b>  <i>ESSA School Improvement</i>	<p>The plan clearly and explicitly aligns at least one Priority Performance Challenge to <a href="#">reasons for ESSA identification</a>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Graduation Rate (Comprehensive Support - Low Graduation)</li> <li>● Overall Performance (Comprehensive Support - Lowest 5%)</li> <li>● Performance of Specific Student Group (Targeted or Additional Targeted Support)</li> <li>● Participation Rate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality Criteria continue on the next page</b></p>		




1	Does the plan investigate the most critical performance areas and prioritize the most urgent performance challenges?	
Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Meets Expectations
	<b>Rationale for Prioritization</b> <i>ESSA School Improvement</i>	The rationale describes how at least one target was selected because of the specific reason for ESSA identification (i.e., Graduation Rate, Overall Performance, Participation Rate, Performance of Specific Student Group)
	<b>Rationale for Prioritization</b> <i>READ Act</i>	The rationale describes performance patterns that led to prioritizing early literacy. If the data analysis does not support prioritizing early literacy, then an explanation is included to document rationale for the school-wide direction.
	<b>Rationale for Prioritization</b> <i>Math Acceleration K-12</i>	The rationale describes performance patterns that led to prioritizing math. If the data analysis does not support prioritizing math, then an explanation is included to document rationale for the school-wide direction.
<b>Quality Criteria continue on the next page</b>		

2 Does the plan identify root causes that explain the magnitude of performance challenges?		
Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Meets Expectations
<b>ROOT CAUSES</b>		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Actionable Root Cause</b>	Root Causes identify the underlying reasons for the identified Priority Performance Challenges. Root causes are under the control of the school and aimed at the level of school systems, structures, and practices.
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Root Causes Analysis Process</b>	The plan explains how root causes were identified, including data sources used, stakeholders involved in the root cause identification process, and a strong rationale for selection. Process and perception data are leveraged in the validation of Root Causes.
<b>K-3 + PI T</b>	<b>Early Learning Needs Assessment</b>	The plan summarizes findings from an Early Learning Needs Assessment that <a href="#">meets the minimum requirements</a> and commits to next steps based on those findings.
<b>K-3 + T</b>	<b>Early Learning Needs Assessment for Schools in Turnaround</b>	The plan identifies appropriate research-based next steps, based on the findings of an Early Learning Needs Assessment, to improve early childhood programs and partnerships.
<b>CS A-TS</b>	<b>Identification of Resource Inequities</b> <i>ESSA School Improvement</i>	The plan describes the process used to review the school's resource allocations (e.g., instructional time, early interventions, teacher quality, family engagement, professional development) and identify potential inequities.
<b>EASI</b>	<b>Identification of Systems Needs of School</b> <i>EASI: Exploration or Transformation Network</i>	The plan integrates the results of a diagnostic review or system needs assessment funded by an EASI Grant.
<b>9-12</b>	<b>Analysis of course taking patterns</b>	The plan includes an analysis of student course taking patterns by disaggregated groups.
<b>Quality Criteria continue on the next page</b>		







<b>3</b>	<b>Does the plan identify evidenced-based major improvement strategies that are likely to eliminate the root causes?</b>	
Who must address this requirement?	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<b>MAJOR IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Alignment to Root Causes</b>	The plan identifies Major Improvement Strategies that logically connect to the Root Causes identified in the plan. If implemented as described, the strategies have a likelihood of positively impacting results in the Priority Performance Challenges.
	<b>Evidence-Base</b> 	The plan provides clear rationale for the selection of Major Improvement Strategies, including the evidence-base for the strategy. This may include an explanation of why the strategy is a good fit for the school's context, identified needs, student population, and staff capacity.
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Assigned Resources</b>	The plan assigns adequate resources (e.g., budget allocations, staffing) as needed to support the implementation of identified Major Improvement Strategies.
<b>Clock Year 4</b>	<b>Year 4 Description of Potential Pathway</b>	The plan provides a full description of the school and district's exploration of all potential pathways. This includes identification of a preferred pathway, an overview of other options considered, and a rationale for the selection of the preferred pathway.
<b>T</b>	<b>Turnaround Strategy</b>	The plan identifies a state-required turnaround strategy and articulates an action plan that is aligned to the needs identified in the data analysis. (Select from dropdown in the UIP Online System.)
<b><i>Quality Criteria continue on the next page</i></b>		






4			Does the UIP present a well-designed action plan for implementing the major improvement strategies to bring about dramatic improvement?	
Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Meets Expectations		
ALL	Action Steps	The plan lists critical, high-leverage Action Steps that must be taken to achieve the Implementation Benchmarks and ultimately, the identified strategy. Action Steps may name one-time, individual actions, or they may name ongoing or recurring activities. At least some action steps should outline discrete, individual actions that must be completed to meaningfully implement the strategy.		
	Progress Monitoring in Action Plan CS	The plan includes Action Steps dedicated to monitoring plan implementation and impact (i.e., by reflecting on Implementation Benchmarks and Interim Targets to identify needed implementation adjustments).		
K-3	Actions to Address K-3 Reading <i>READ Act</i>	The plan includes evidence-based Action Steps that will likely have a meaningful impact for K-3 students identified as having significant reading deficiencies.		
I PI T	Actions to Address Math <i>Math Acceleration K-12</i>	The plan includes evidence-based Action Steps that will likely have a meaningful impact for students identified as being below grade level or struggling in math.		
PI T	Actions Promoting Family Engagement	The plan includes high leverage Action Steps, aligned with Family, School and Community Partnering standards, to increase parent engagement at the school.		
CS A-TS	Actions to Address Resource Inequities	The Action Plan outlines how any resource inequities identified in the Root Cause analysis will be addressed.		
9-12	Action to address Inequities in course taking patterns <i>Student Course Taking Report</i>	The plan includes Action Steps to address identified patterns of significant disparity in disaggregated groups taking challenging coursework.		

**Quality Criteria continue on the next page**



5	Does the plan include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?	
Who must address this requirement?	Topic	Meets Expectations
<b>TARGET SETTING</b>		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Measures and Metrics</b>	Annual Targets specify the measure (e.g., CMAS results, graduation data) and metric (e.g., mean scale score, graduation rate) that will be used to gauge progress on Priority Performance Challenges.
	<b>Quality of Target</b> 	The plan sets ambitious, attainable targets that align to the Priority Performance Challenges (SPP). Where possible, targets are set using the same measure as SPP (e.g., if the SPP is focused on SAT mean scale score, target is focused on SAT mean scale score).
<b>K-3</b>	<b>Targets</b> <i>READ Act (Grade Level Expectations)</i>	The plan sets target(s) to ensure that each student achieves grade level expectations in reading by the end of grade 3.
	<b>Targets</b> <i>READ Act (SRD)</i>	The plan sets ambitious and attainable target(s) for reducing the number of students who have significant reading deficiencies, as measured by the school's READ Act assessment.
	<b>Targets for below grade level OR struggling students</b>  <i>Math Acceleration K-12</i>	The plan sets ambitious and attainable target(s) for reducing the number of students who are below grade level expectations or are struggling in math, as measured by local or state assessments.
<b>Quality Criteria continue on the next page</b>		

<b>5</b>	<b>Does the plan include elements that effectively monitor the impact and progress of the action plan?</b>	
<b>Who must address this requirement?</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>
<i><b>Interim Targets</b></i>		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Alignment to Annual Target</b> 	The plan identifies Interim Targets that are aligned to an Annual Target to assess the impact of the Major Improvement Strategies on student performance during the year.
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Quality of Interim Targets</b> 	Interim Targets specify expected student progress more than once during the year.
<b>IMPLEMENTATION BENCHMARKS</b>		
<b>ALL</b>	<b>Alignment to MIS</b>	Each Major Improvement Strategy has at least one aligned Implementation Milestone.
	<b>Quality of Implementation Benchmarks</b> 	Implementation Benchmarks for each Major Improvement Strategy enable staff to determine whether implementation of strategies is occurring in an effective manner.
	<b>Plan Duration</b>	Implementation Benchmarks span at least the duration of plan public posting (e.g., two years for districts exercising biennial flexibility).

