

# State Review Panel

## Recommendation Process Protocol

2020-21



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Roles and Responsibilities	3
SRP's Method of Evaluation	5
Code of Conduct	Appendix A
Pre-Recommendation Meeting Worksheet	Appendix B
Action Decision-making Chart	Appendix C
Recommendation Options	Appendix D

## Introduction

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The State Review Panel (SRP) was created by the Education Accountability Act of 2009 to conduct a critical evaluation of the State's lowest-performing schools and districts. The evaluation is focused on the areas outlined in the Accountability Act:

- Whether leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results;
- Whether the infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement;
- The readiness and capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate actions to improve student performance;
- The readiness and capacity of personnel to engage productively with an external partner;
- The likelihood of positive returns on State investments; and,
- The necessity to remain in operation to serve students.

The SRP school/district evaluation process includes a robust document review, as well as an on-site review for schools/districts approaching the end of the Accountability Clock. After the on-site review, the SRP will reconvene to review the body of evidence for each school/district and come to consensus on recommended action. The purpose of the review process is to provide Panelists with evidence to recommend an action regarding each identified school and / or district to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education. The recommended actions available by law vary for traditional public schools, charter schools, and districts. The Panelists' approach to the recommendation may differ depending on the number of years of low performance (i.e., whether for early action, first time, or second time hearings before the State Board of Education); these are outlined in the Appendix C.

### **What is the purpose of the State Review Panel during the Recommendation Process?**

The purpose of the SRP is to provide an opportunity for an objective third party, composed of Colorado educators, to provide recommendations on next steps for identified schools and districts to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The Panel's recommendation complements, and balances information provided by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the district<sup>1</sup>. Members of the SRP are responsible for objectively reviewing and evaluating documents and site visit evidence from a given school or district on the Accountability Clock, then making a recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education regarding one or more courses of action.

### **What are the general steps in the Recommendation Process?**

The Recommendation Process is a multi-phase process that relies on available evidence from the first year of the school's/district's time on the Accountability Clock through the current year. The SRP analyzes all evidence of school and/or district performance collected through document review and on site, related to the six critical evaluation factors outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009. The SRP then documents its recommendation, which is shared with the Commissioner and State Board of Education.

#### *Evidence Review*

As part of being designated a State Review Panelist, the Panelists review schools' and/or districts' information using three methods: a review of documentation generated during their years as an identified school/district; a site visit conducted by the SRP; and a review of the school's/district's Pathways planning documented in its Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). First, the Panelists review both publicly available

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<sup>1</sup> District leadership will have the opportunity to submit a Stakeholder Input Form in order to document the district's interest in potential recommended actions. These will be shared with panelists prior to the on-site visit.

information and documents provided by the school/district against the six critical factors outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009. Second, they participate in a site visit, during where they gather additional evidence through focus groups with key stakeholders, classroom observations (school reviews only), and review of supplementary documents. As an outcome of the visit, a site visit feedback form is written, which includes ratings and findings for each key question that are supported by evidence collected through the above-mentioned processes.

#### *Recommendation Process*

Following the site visit, each Panelist prepares for the Recommendation meeting by considering all of the evidence.). In the preparation for the Recommendation meeting, Panelists study the collective evidence and consider the school's/district's capacity levels as *Not Effective, Developing, Effective, or Highly Effective* in each of the six critical factors. Relying solely on evidence gathered and analyzed through the document review and site visit processes, the Panelists convene via tele-conference for the Recommendation meeting. A facilitator supports Panelists to ensure all evidence is considered related to each of the recommended actions and to support the Panelists in resolving any differences in reaching a consensus Recommendation to be provided to the Commissioner and State Board of Education.

#### *Development of SRP Recommendation Form and Presentation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education*

The recommendation of the SRP is captured in the SRP Recommendation Form. The Recommendation Form is prepared by the Panelist who serves as the team writer, based on the consensus discussions of the SRP. Once the recommendation is drafted, it is reviewed collectively by the Panelists to ensure that it captures the team's discussions and final recommendation. The Recommendation Form includes the Panelists' recommended course of action for the school/district and attributes evaluative comments, evidence, and a rationale to justify the recommendation. Prior to submitting the report to the Commissioner, SchoolWorks provides three business days for the district to review the report for any errors of a factual nature. Factual corrections might include, for example: names, dates, historical references, program titles, or numbers of students, teachers. The district should use the Factual Correction Request form (see the Site Visit Protocol appendix) to request factual corrections and provide evidence to support the requested changes. At this time, the report can be reviewed internally and shared with the school's leadership, but it is not available for broad or public distribution. While the report may be edited, corrections are deemed factual in nature; the content of the recommendation report, however, will not be edited. The recommendation expressed in the Recommendation Form serves as the SRP's official Recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education. The Commissioner and State Board of Education receive a recommendation from the SRP and a detailed report on the school/district from CDE; they rely on these sources of evidence to inform their final decision. Once the Recommendation Form has been submitted to the Commissioner, the Commissioner will be responsible for circulating the Recommendation Form to the State Board of Education and district leadership. Once the Recommendation Form is sent to the State Board of Education, it will also become available to the public.

#### **How was this Recommendation Process protocol developed?**

The Recommendation Process protocol was developed by SchoolWorks in collaboration with CDE. It is based on requirements stated in the Education Accountability Act of 2009, as well as SchoolWorks' accountability work with school districts and State Departments of Education across the country.

## Roles and Responsibilities

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During the Recommendation Process, the State Review Panel serves in roles aimed to support the formulation of a recommendation to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education. This section explains the roles and responsibilities of the SRP Panelists, Recommendation Process Facilitator (SchoolWorks), and CDE. Panelists should read this section carefully to learn how to prepare for the Recommendation Process.

### State Review Panelists

To ensure there is sufficient expertise on the SRP to effectively evaluate whether a school or district has met the requirements for the recommended action(s), Panelists are assigned to schools and/or districts based on the areas of expertise they possess in alignment with the school's/district's need. These may include, for example, expertise in rural and/or urban settings; with English language learners; charter schools; alternative schools, online or blended learning schools; and/or in various leadership positions.

Success of the Recommendation Process relies heavily on team members':

1. *Adherence to the SchoolWorks' Code of Conduct (Appendix A)*
2. *Preparation for the Recommendation Process meetings*
  - Panelists review the Recommendation Process protocol in its entirety.
  - Panelists attend SRP trainings.
  - Panelists review all evidence in advance of the meetings.
3. *Collaboration with others under the Recommendation Process Facilitator's direction*
  - Panelists support and take direction from their Recommendation Process Facilitator.
  - Panelists base the recommendation on evidence gathered during the site visit.
  - Panelists actively participate in team meetings and support others' efforts to reach a unified recommendation based on evidence.
4. *Submission*
  - Panelists author and provide feedback on the draft of the Recommendation Form in accordance with pre-established timelines, ensuring that the form contains sufficient evidence, reflects the consensus of the team and a recommendation that the SBE can use to determine the best next steps for the school/district.

### SchoolWorks / Recommendation Process Facilitator

To be an effective partner in the process, the roles and responsibilities of SchoolWorks / Recommendation Process Facilitator include:

1. *Modeling and enforcing the Code of Conduct (see Appendix A)*
  - Team facilitators should exhibit the highest professional standards and are responsible for ensuring that their team does so as well.
2. *Coordination with CDE and the SRP*
  - Panelists are likely to have questions about the process. The Recommendation Meeting Facilitator should serve as the team's contact person to address these questions.
  - Before the SRP meetings, team members are provided with materials to review.
3. *Facilitation and management of logistics for the Recommendation Process meetings*
  - The Recommendation Process Facilitator organizes the Recommendation meeting and communicates with the team.

- The Recommendation meeting facilitator participates in all Recommendation meeting trainings and is responsible for facilitating the SRP Recommendation meeting.

4. *Submission*

- The Recommendation Process Facilitator oversees the writing of the Recommendation Form, ensuring that the Form contains sufficient evidence and reflects the consensus of the Panelists prior to submitting the recommendation to the Commissioner and State Board of Education.

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To be an effective partner in the process:

1. *Communicates the purpose and process of the State Review Panel clearly to all prospective Panelists, schools, and districts.*
2. *Recognizes the efforts of the SRP on behalf of the Commissioner and State Board of Education.*
3. *Provides SchoolWorks with all necessary documents.*

## SRP's Method of Evaluation

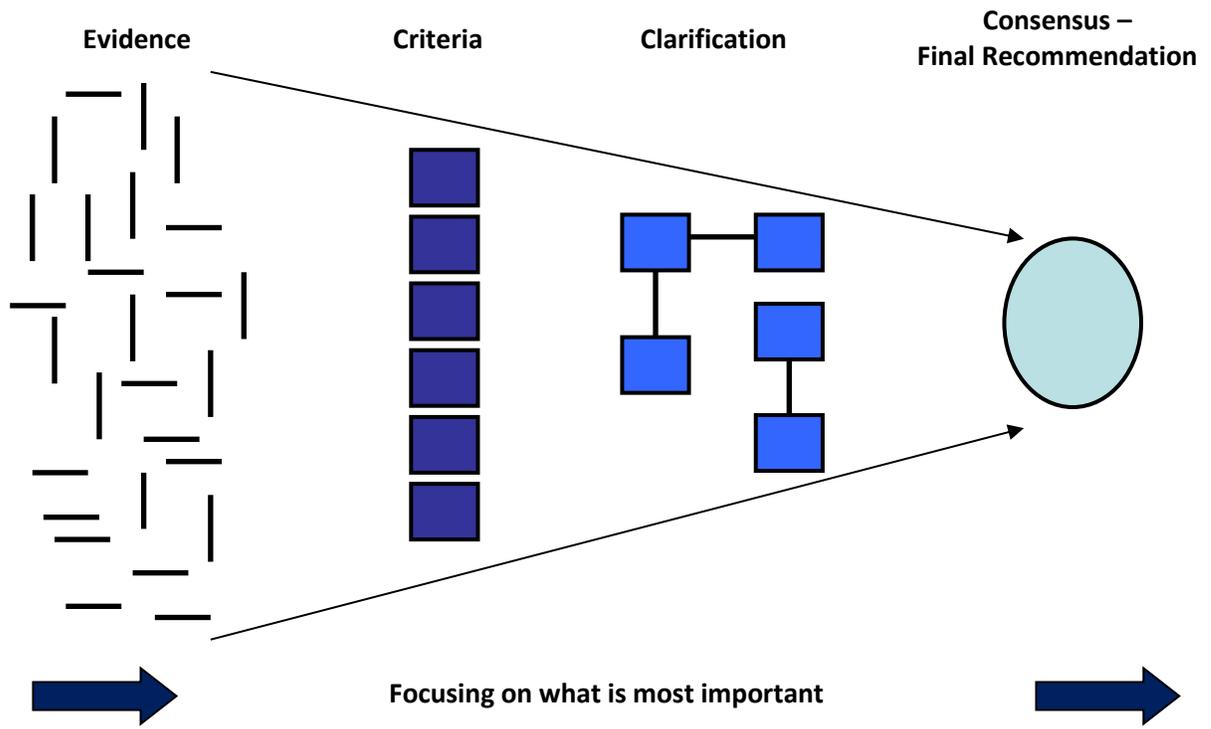
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### A. Principles Guiding the Process

The Recommendation meeting is built on four core expectations that drive the work of the team throughout the review to come to a consensus recommendation based on the school's or district's documentation.

- ***The process is criteria-driven.*** The SRP process is built on a set of criteria. Throughout the Recommendation Process, Panelists document whether the district/school has met the six critical factors outlined in the Accountability Act and refer to guiding considerations included in the process worksheets. Panelists use the Action Decision-making Chart (see Appendix C) during its team meetings to evaluate evidence of the school's performance and make a recommendation. A criteria-driven process ensures that Panelists are grounded in consistent expectations. The rubric's criteria also serve as a basis for professional dialogue.
- ***The process is an evidence-based system.*** The SRP's recommendation is based on evidence collected during the district/school's preceding years on the Accountability Clock, including both a robust document review and a site visit. The SRP builds a base of evidence for its recommendation that would lead any set of individuals to come to similar conclusions about the district/school's performance. Moving from evidence to recommendation is a cyclical process that depends on an open exchange of information among Panelists. While the SRP is required to address the rubric's criteria and base its recommendation on evidence, the process is not mechanical and requires some professional judgment by Panelists.
- ***The process is iterative, repeatedly checking on, and testing, the quality of the recommendation and the evidence that supports it.*** Panelists progress methodically and identify pieces of evidence to get to a recommendation. First, the SRP records *evidence* by reviewing documents and the site visit feedback form that was completing following the SRP site visit. The team discusses evidence to identify initial *trends* within the evidence. The SRP discusses preliminary trends and findings so that all the appropriate evidence is considered by the SRP. This ensures that the appropriate evidence is considered before the recommendation is finalized.
- ***The SRP uses its professional judgment to come to consensus on the recommendation.*** To be useful, the SRP must produce a focused Recommendation for the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education. Focusing on key evidence requires discerning only what is important and merits comment. Within the protocol, the SRP uses professional judgment to distinguish the key factors that deserve comment from the wealth of evidence available to them. This use of professional judgment is represented below.

# Moving from Evidence to Recommendation



## **B. Detailed Steps in the Process**

### ***SRP Training and Preparation***

- SchoolWorks conducts a training for all Panelists to review the Recommendation Process and review this protocol.
- SchoolWorks works with Panelists to establish a specific schedule for the Recommendation meetings.
- SchoolWorks sends a copy of the protocol, the schedule, and any other documents for pre-analysis to the SRP Panelists members.

### **Written Recommendation Form**

- The Panelist who serves as the team writer gathers all notes and other key evidence that have been collected by the team during its review to use in drafting the feedback form.
- The SRP completes the Recommendation Form that documents the evidence and provides a written record of the recommendation determined at the SRP's recommendation meeting.
- Before it is submitted to SchoolWorks, all team members provide comments on the draft Recommendation Form according to pre-established timelines.
- SchoolWorks reviews the draft for factual accuracy and to ensure sufficient evidence to support identified capacity levels.
- The district is provided an opportunity to review the Recommendation Form to identify any errors of a factual nature.
- The Recommendation Form is finalized and sent by SchoolWorks on behalf of the SRP to the Commissioner of Education.

## Appendix A: Code of Conduct

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### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SRP MEMBERS

The SRP's work is guided by a code of conduct. Adherence to the Code of Conduct allows the SRP to make recommendations based on the decision-making framework by considering the full range of evidence presented to the team and in the absence of external influences. Adherence to the Code of Conduct also creates a frank, professional environment in which the Panelist may evaluate the extent to which the school has met performance expectations.

**1. Demonstrate preparedness and professionalism.**

- a. Attend and participate in SRP member trainings.
- b. Read all materials provided to you prior to the SRP meetings.
- c. Complete pre-meeting assignments.
- d. Arrive on time; stay until the end.
- e. Demonstrate high engagement in the Recommendation meeting.

**2. Carry out work with integrity.**

- a. Treat all those on the team with courtesy and sensitivity. Try to minimize stress.
- b. Demonstrate mutual respect and valuing opinions. Show an interest in what is said.
- c. Focus attention and questions on topics that will reveal how well the school has met expectations.
- d. Be firm and persistent but be respectful.
- e. Share airtime. Provide opportunities for others to comment and question.
- f. Wherever possible, work to others' convenience.
- g. Maintain confidentiality. Do not disclose the substance of team discussions or recommendations with individuals beyond the SRP until such time as the State Board of Education takes action on the recommended action for the school.

**3. Be objective; base recommendations on evidence, not opinion.**

- a. Bring an open mind to SRP meetings to ensure a fair review.
- b. Do not criticize the work of an individual involved with the school or CDE. Base comments on school performance, not individual performance.
- c. Refrain from introducing "hearsay" as evidence.
- d. The recommendation must be robust, fully supported by evidence, and defensible.
- e. The recommendation must be reliable in that others would make the same recommendation from the same evidence.
- f. Be prepared to ask questions to establish whether a view is based on opinion or evidence.

## Appendix B: Pre-Recommendation Meeting Worksheet

Six critical evaluation factors	Site Visit Capacity Level	Notes
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.		
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.		
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on State investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.		

## Appendix C: Action Decision-making Chart

The tables below provide decision-making guidance for panelists when determining final Recommendations for districts and/or schools. When a district or school receives a progress monitoring visit, the Panel will be reviewing a district or school’s current implementation of their directed action. In a progress monitoring scenario, the State Board of Education may direct to continue implementation of the current action, modify the current action, or direct a new, different action from the statutory pathways. The tables below may help the panel in determining whether to recommend modifying a directed action or directing a new action.

*The black boxes indicate that if the school/district is rated in this area, this option should not be considered. The X and gray boxes indicate that if the school/district is rated in this area, this option can be considered. This is not meant to be a formula, but a guide for the Panelists to consider when determining a recommendation.*

**Innovation School Status** – The Innovation Schools Act of 2008 (Article 32.5) establishes a process to waive certain local and State statutory and regulatory rules for public schools to gain autonomies that allow for more flexible and effective practices to meet the needs of students in a school. The Panel may recommend a school for Innovation Status if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is interested in the option and is demonstrably effective in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, particularly with regard to leadership and personnel capacity, and that there are positive early indicators of change, as described above.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.			X	X
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.			X	X
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.		X	X	X
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.		X	X	X
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on State investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		X	X	X
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	yes			

**Management by a private or public entity other than the district** – The Panel may recommend a school be partially or wholly managed by a private or public entity other than the district if the document and on-site review indicate that the school may be effective in some of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act but is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity. In addition, there may be some evidence of positive early indicators of change.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.		X	X	X
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with and benefit from the assistance provided by an external partner.		X	X	X
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		X	X	X
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	yes			

**Conversion to a charter school** – A district might convert a district school to a charter school to provide more autonomy and flexibility to a school from statutory and regulatory requirements that may have created obstacles in the past. The Panel may recommend a school for conversion to a charter school if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is developing in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity, and shows limited evidence of positive early indicators of change. However, if there is a compelling need for the school to remain open to serve students, a charter school may meet the needs of the community. In some instances, a school may be Effective or Highly Effective in most areas and the panel may determine that the school would benefit from autonomy and flexibility. The district and community may express an interest in charter schools as a part of their community. Colorado law allows all local school boards to authorize charter schools, provided that a majority of students (other than online students) at a charter school authorized by a district reside in that district or in contiguous school districts.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X	X	X	
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.		X	X	X
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on State investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		X	X	X
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	yes			

**Closure** – The Panel may recommend one or more school closure (or multiple schools for closure if the district is on the accountability clock) if the document and on-site review indicate that the school is not effective in most of the six areas outlined in the Education Accountability Act, is demonstrably lacking leadership and personnel capacity, and shows limited evidence of positive early indicators of change. Further, there is not a compelling need for the school to remain open to serve students.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X			
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.	X			
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	X			
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	<i>no</i>			

**District reorganization** (Districts only) – District reorganization might be pursued to intervene in a district where persistent low achievement may be caused by ineffective governance or leadership by a district Board of Directors or by district leadership. The Panel may recommend district reorganization, including consolidation with a neighboring district, if there is agreement by the parties involved (e.g., community support, neighboring district).

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X			
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.	X			
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	X			
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	<i>no</i>			

### Charter-Specific Recommendation Options

**Revoke the charter for the school:** The panel may recommend that the authorizer revoke the school’s charter. This option is akin to closure of a traditional public school. This option is appropriate when the SRP cannot identify a need for the school to remain open.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X			
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.	X			
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.	X			
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	<i>no</i>			

**Replace the operator:** The panel may recommend that the charter school board replace the charter school’s operator if the causes of low performance relate to the school’s model or operations. Replacement of the operator may be appropriate if the SRP identifies a compelling need for the school to remain open to serve a particular community need.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.	X	X		
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X	X		
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.				
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.				
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	<i>yes</i>			

**Replace the governing board:** The panel may recommend that the school replace its Governing Board when the model and other systems and infrastructure are functioning reasonably well, but the school could benefit from new oversight and governance.

Protocol Criteria	I	D	E	HE
1. The leadership is adequate to implement change to improve results.	X	X		
2. The infrastructure is adequate to support school improvement.		X	X	
3. There is readiness and apparent capacity of personnel to plan effectively and lead the implementation of appropriate action to improve student academic performance.	X	X		
4. There is readiness and apparent capacity to engage productively with, and benefit from, the assistance provided by an external partner.				
5. There is likelihood of positive returns on state investments of assistance and support to improve the performance within the current management structure and staffing.		X	X	
6. There is necessity that the school/district remain in operation to serve students.	yes			

## Appendix D: Recommendation Options

The following options are available for districts, traditional public schools, and charter schools. For progress monitoring reports, the State Board will consider whether to continue the previously directed actions or direct the school/district to undertake additional or different actions from the statutory options.

Type of Required Action	Districts (C.R.S. 22-11-209)	Schools (C.R.S. 22-11-210)
Change in Management	That a private or public entity, with the agreement of the school district, serve as a lead partner in the management of the school district or partially or wholly manage one or more of the district public schools. The local school board and the department shall ensure that the private or public entity uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with school districts and schools under similar circumstances	With regard to a district public school that is not a charter school, that the district public school should be partially or wholly managed by a private or public entity other than the school district. The local school board and the department shall ensure that the private or public entity uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with schools under similar circumstances.
Charter School Conversion	That one or more of the district public schools be converted to a charter school	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be converted to a charter school if it is not already authorized as a charter school
Innovation Status	That one or more of the district public schools be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to Section 22-32.5-104 or that the local School Board recognize a group of district public schools as an innovation school zone pursuant to section 22-32.5-104	With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be granted status as an innovation school pursuant to Section 22-32.5-104
School Closure	That one or more of the district public schools be closed	That the public school be closed or, with regard to a district charter school or an institute charter school, that the public school's charter be revoked
District Reorganization	That the school district be reorganized pursuant to Article 30 of this title, which reorganization may include consolidation	n/a
<b>Options for Charter Schools</b>		
Charter Revocation	n/a	(V) That the public school be closed or, with regard to a district charter school or an institute charter school, that the public school's charter be revoked. (C.R.S. 22-11-210)
Replace the operator	n/a	(II) With regard to a district or institute charter school, that the public or private entity operating the charter school, or the Governing Board of the charter school should be replaced by a different public or private entity or governing board (C.R.S. 22-11-210)
Replace the Governing Board	n/a	(II) With regard to a district or institute charter school, that the public or private entity operating the charter school, or the Governing Board of the charter school should be replaced by a different public or private entity or governing board (C.R.S. 22-11-210)