

Performance Watch

What to Know at Year 4 of the Accountability Clock



In 2009, Colorado’s legislature passed the Education Accountability Act, creating a system to hold the state, school districts and schools accountable for student academic performance on specific indicators and measures, including performance and growth on state tests and graduation rates.

Performance Watch describes the overall process of state intervention in the state’s most struggling schools and districts based on state performance ratings. Those that do not meet expectations are assigned a rating of *Priority Improvement* or *Turnaround*, placing them on the **Accountability Clock** until they receive a rating of *Improvement* or higher for two consecutive years. Learn more about Performance Watch and how years on the clock advance [here](#).

What happens after five years on the Accountability Clock?

The state accountability law only allows schools and districts to remain on the clock for five years before state intervention. After five years of low performance (i.e., five years on the clock), the school or district participate in a hearing with the State Board of Education. At the hearing, the board must direct a course of action (**pathway**). The state board also has discretion to act prior to the end of the Accountability Clock for schools and districts assigned a *Turnaround* rating if adequate progress is not being made.

At the state board hearing, the board must direct the school or district to implement a course of action—or pathway—designed to dramatically improve student achievement. While pathway options are provided by state law, Year 5 schools and districts (or Year 3 or 4 schools and districts pursuing [Early Action](#)) have an opportunity to propose a chosen pathway and explain how it can be tailored to best meet their students’ needs. Pathway options vary for schools, districts, and charter schools; learn more [here](#).

CDE Supports

At Year 4, a CDE **Turnaround Support Manager (TSM)**—typically a former school or district leader with a successful turnaround track record—will be assigned to your school or district, if one has not been assigned already. Additionally, CDE assigns a **Support Coordinator** to all districts with schools on the accountability clock.

The TSM supports your team through the preparation, hearing, and subsequent progress monitoring process. Soon after preliminary ratings are released, your TSM will reach out to provide information and may schedule school visits to learn more about leadership and staff and the school or district’s unique context.

Districts and schools planning for pathways are eligible to receive **pathways planning grants**. Districts and school implementing a directed action are eligible to receive **implementation grants**. Both grants are available through the Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) grant. Learn more [here](#).

What happens at Year 4 on the clock?

While the school or district may receive an *Improvement* rating or higher and avoid a Year 5 state board hearing, preparation should begin in Year 4. Before directing a pathway at the Year 5 hearing, the board will consider the district’s pathway proposal, a CDE report on the school or district, a State Review Panel recommendation, and any public comment received. State board hearings can occur as early as November of the same year of Year 5 identification, so schools and districts should aim to enter the school year with a proposal that has broad stakeholder support.



Year 4 Activities: Required and Recommended

Required activities during Year 4 on the Accountability Clock include typical planning requirements (e.g., early childhood education needs assessment, parent involvement strategies) and local actions (e.g., parent notification, local hearing), as well as Year 4-specific activities:

- **Identify and Communicate a Pathway Preference:** As part of the Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) process, schools and districts in Year 4 must describe how they would implement one of the pathways the state board may direct (see more [below](#)).
- **Participate in a State Review Panel Visit:** Based on its evaluation, the State Review Panel will recommend a pathway to the state board for the Year 5 hearing. Learn more [here](#).

The following are suggested activities for Year 4 on the Accountability Clock:

- **Identify Pathway Planning Communication Leads:** CDE suggests that the school and district each identify a point person to interact with CDE on pathway planning and provide updates to the local board.
- **Convene Stakeholders:** While regular and frequent stakeholder engagement is encouraged, CDE recommends additional stakeholder engagement as the school and district collaboratively select a pathway and prepare a proposal for the state board. Engagement should include discussion with the local board on pathway options.
 - Note that the innovation status/zone pathway option requires staff approval.
- **Consider CDE Supports:** Your TSM or Support Coordinator will provide you with up-to-date information on available state supports. Some common support options include [EASI Pathways Planning](#) and the [Turnaround Network](#).
- **Consider Early Action:** Schools and districts at Year 3 and 4 may opt for **Early Action**. To use this option, schools and districts must select an improvement pathway to propose to the state board at a hearing in Year 4. The board may approve or deny the request but may not select an alternative pathway. Learn more [here](#).

Potential Pathways

Pathway options vary for schools, districts, and charter schools. Find detailed pathway guidance documents [here](#).

For schools receiving directed action:
The state board may direct innovation status, full or partial external management, charter school conversion, replacement of the charter board or operator, or closure/charter revocation.

For districts receiving directed action: The state board may direct an innovation zone, external management, or reorganization; for one or more schools in the district, the board may direct innovation status, external management, charter conversion or closure.

Key Events in Year 4	Typical Deadline (may vary by year)
If applying for Early Action, submit a written Letter of Intent	Fall of Year 3 or 4
State Review Panel visit	Spring of Year 4
Year 4 UIP attachment due – See Below	January 15 th
EASI applications due – Year 4 applications may include a Pathways Planning grant request	November of Year 4
State Review Panel report finalized and shared with district	Summer of Year 4
Turnaround Support Manager (TSM) visits	May begin as soon as ratings are released in the Fall

Year 4 Accountability Clock Worksheet: Instructions

To support long-range planning for potential state board-directed action, Year 4 schools/districts and Year 3 schools/districts considering Early Action must describe how they have explored each of the potential pathways.

In the future, a worksheet will be built into the online Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) system. In the interim, this requirement can be fulfilled by attaching a separate document to the school or district's UIP(s). A worksheet is provided below; this form may be used, or the district may develop its own to fulfill the requirement.

Using the steps below, complete the Year 4 Accountability Clock Worksheet and attach the document to the school or district's UIP:

1. Review all the possible pathways permitted by state law. Available pathway options vary for schools, districts, and charter schools; learn more [here](#).
 - Note: The EASI grant (available in the Fall) offers dollars to assist with exploring pathway options and planning to pursue a pathway.
2. Consider the feasibility of implementing each possible pathway, identifying those that would have the most positive effect on student performance within your unique context. Think about which pathway(s):
 - Has the greatest likelihood of improving student outcomes?
 - Has the highest likelihood of being implemented to a high degree of fidelity?
 - Would garner stakeholder support?
 - Would meet needs that the district or school cannot currently meet?
3. Record reflections in the Year 4 Accountability Clock Worksheet, focusing on the preferred pathway(s).
 - (For charter schools only) Explain how these reflections were considered in collaboration with the district authorizer.
 - Explain the district's role in implementing the preferred pathway(s), including any barriers and needed supports.
 - Briefly address the other pathways, explaining why they are not feasible options for the school or district.
 - If currently implementing a Turnaround plan type, explain how the current chosen Turnaround strategy aligns with the preferred pathway(s).

At the Year 5 hearing, the state board will be looking for evidence that the school or district sincerely explored all possibilities. In addition to supporting long-range planning for potential board-directed action, the Year 4 Accountability Clock Worksheet provides a written record of the deliberation and stakeholder engagement process used to identify the best path forward for dynamic improvement.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE staff can help schools and districts understand each potential pathway, how they can review options, and meet requirements. Reach out to your [CDE Support Coordinator](#) or Turnaround Support Manager.
- CDE Accountability, Performance and Support resources can be found [here](#).
- CDE's Early Action fact sheet can be found [here](#).



Year 4 Accountability Clock Worksheet

Upload this form into the school/district online UIP under “Add Attachment.” Contact the Improvement Planning office or your assigned Support Coordinator with any questions.

District Name:		School Name:	
Names & roles of leaders completing form			
Describe the preferred pathway(s), including an explanation of the rationale, feasibility, and possible barriers. Also describe a basic implementation plan, including the role of the district and stakeholder engagement.			
Innovation Status	External Management	Convert to a Charter School <small>For Non-Charters Only</small>	Change Charter Operator or Board <small>For Existing Charters Only</small>
		School Closure	District Reorganization <small>For District Only</small>
Describe any current practices the school/district is implementing that support the preferred pathway(s).			
Describe the process used to consider the remaining applicable options and a rationale for why they may not be the preferred pathways at this time.			