COLORADO
Department of Education

2026-27 Alternative Education Campus (AEC) Accountability Handbook

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Accountability and Continuous Improvement Unit

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The purpose of this handbook is to describe the process by which a public school may apply to be designated as an Alternative Education Campus and the methods by which the Department will evaluate the performance of Alternative Education Campus for the 2025-26 school year.

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Alternative Education Campus Accountability

Overview

Colorado's education accountability system is based on the belief that every student should receive an excellent education and graduate ready to succeed. For more information about general state accountability processes, see the District Accountability Handbook. This handbook focuses on state processes for a specialized set of public schools, referred to as Alternative Education Campuses (AECs). AECs have specialized missions, nontraditional methods of instruction delivery, and serve high populations of traditionally underserved students and students with severe limitations. Overall, AECs serve over 20,000 students in over 90 schools across Colorado. This handbook primarily focuses on CDE guidance and policy in two distinct areas: **AEC Designation** and the **AEC School Performance Framework**.

AEC Designation

Districts[1] may apply to CDE for one of their schools to be designated as an AEC, which allows the school to be accredited using the Alternative Education Campus School Performance Framework. The designation process requires that the school meet the criteria outlined in C.R.S., §22-7-604, most often by enrolling a student population of at least 90% high risk students. High risk students are those who meet one or more of the following conditions:

- Habitually Truant
- Juvenile delinquent
- Dropped out of school
- Expelled from school
- History of personal drug or alcohol use
- History of personal street gang involvement
- History of child abuse or neglect/foster care
- Has a parent or guardian in prison
- Has an IEP
- Family history of domestic violence
- Repeated school suspensions
- Pregnant or parenting
- Migrant child
- Homeless child
- History of serious psychiatric or behavioral disorder
- Over-age (21 years of age or younger) / under-credit

Schools annually request a new or continuing AEC designation for the upcoming school year to be approved each August by the State Board of Education. This AEC designation process is detailed later in this guidance document.

AEC School Performance Framework (SPF)

The Colorado Alternative Education Campus School Performance Framework (AEC SPF) evaluates all approved AECs on four indicators of student performance: Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness, and Student Engagement. Within these performance indicators, AECs are accountable for many of the same measures and metrics as traditional schools, but the cut-points have been adjusted to be more appropriate for AEC student populations. AEC SPFs also include some alternate measures (e.g., best-of

[1] Note: The word "district" is used as an umbrella term throughout this document and captures traditional school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and the Colorado Charter School Institute.

completion rate) for all schools and allow districts to submit supplemental optional measures for inclusion once approved by the Department. The AEC SPF and optional measures submission process is detailed later in this guidance document. The table below highlights the differences between the AEC and traditional SPF.

Comparison of Performance Indicators by SPF Type

AEC SPF	Traditional SPF
Academic Achievement	Academic Achievement*
Academic Growth	Academic Growth*
Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness	Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness*
Student Engagement	^

*Includes disaggregated student groups (i.e., Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible, Minority Students, Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities), not included in the AEC SPF.
^ Indicator is available on the AEC SPF only, not included in the Traditional SPF.

Districts may also choose to submit their own district-created AEC performance framework, if it meets the minimum state requirements outlined in Accreditation Guidance (see the section on "Accreditation Process for Using a District-Created School Performance Framework"), and is approved by the Department.

Accountability Implications

Like traditional schools, AECs receive a plan type assignment of Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or Insufficient State Data. The improvement planning expectations and accountability expectations are also the same for AECs as for traditional schools. If a public school is required to implement a Priority Improvement plan or Turnaround plan for five school years, the state board must recommend that the public school's district or authorizer take one of several actions specified in statute with regard to the public school. AECs are required to submit their Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) annually, unless they meet biennial flexibility requirements (i.e., Performance plan type).

Improvement Planning as an AEC
AECs are encouraged to collaborate with the CDE's School Improvement Planning team (uiphelp@cde.state.co.us) to use the UIP process to leverage data beyond what is included in the school's performance framework.

History

Below is a brief history of Colorado AECs:

- **2002:** C.R.S., §22-7-604.5 was constituted to establish the current definition of AECs for Colorado. Originally, this law was written to exclude AECs from the School Accountability Reports (SARs), which were first created in the 2000-01 school year.
- **2008:** The Colorado Coalition of Alternative Education Campuses (CCAEC) was asked by the Associate Commissioner of Education to provide a proposal for what an alternative accountability framework could look like. The CCAEC surveyed AECs and held multiple stakeholder meetings to develop this proposal which forms the basic structure for what is used today.
- **2009:** SB 09-163, the Colorado Education Accountability Act, provided the foundation for an aligned accountability system. Through this Act, it was determined that AECs, as well as all other specialized public schools, were no longer exempt from state accountability. Instead, as codified in C.R.S., §22-11-

210(1)(b), evaluation criteria for AECs "shall take into account the unique purposes of the campuses and the challenges posed by students enrolled in these campuses."

- **2011:** CDE implemented a new AEC-specific performance framework based on both state required and district selected optional measures across four performance indicators: Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, Student Engagement, and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness.
- **2015:** HB15-1350 created the AEC accountability work group to review existing accountability measures and propose new measures for AECs. Due to the change in administration of state assessments, accountability for AECs was paused and 2015 school performance frameworks were not released
- **2016:** Based on the AEC work group recommendations, HB16-1429, alters the percentage of high-risk students in an AEC from 95% to 90% high-risk and modifies several high-risk indicators for qualification as an AEC.
- **2020:** In response to the evolving conditions under COVID-19, the department paused performance frameworks for the 2020-21 school year.
- **2022:** The transitional accountability period ended and the production of AEC performance frameworks resumed.
- **2025:** CDE convened three AEC stakeholder workgroups to discuss AEC framework policies, AEC collections, and AEC support to inform optional measures policies, components of collections and monitoring, and professional development offerings. HB 25-1167 included new requirements pertaining to AECs.

2025 Legislation - HB 25-1167 - Alternative Education Campuses

For alternative education campuses (AECs), HB25-1167 directs CDE to:

- Allocate grant priority points to AECs;
- Include students who are 21 years of age or younger in the AEC's high-risk student pupil count;
- Prepare and post a report on enrollment trends, student demographics, and student mobility in AECs; and
- Exempt AECs with an enrollment of less than 250 students from losing their designation due to a fluctuation in enrollment for one school year.

Annual Calendar

The table below describes a typical yearly AEC accountability process. For more information about each of these actions, see the corresponding section in this guidance listed in bold (i.e., AEC Designation, AEC SPF).

2026-27 Calendar

Timeframe	District/Authorizer Action	CDE Action
September 2026		**AEC SPF:** Preliminary release of AEC SPF to Districts. **AEC Optional Measures:** CDE publishes lists of sunsetting and measures to be re-normed for the upcoming year.

Timeframe	District/Authorizer Action	CDE Action
October 2026	Districts submit documentation through the New Optional Measure Application for the following year's optional measures. **AEC Designation:** Districts submit October Count data to CDE (used to pre-populate sections of the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection).	New Optional Measure Application opens to districts at the beginning of the month.
November 2026	New Optional Measure Application Closes to districts on Nov 1.	New Optional Measure Application closes Nov 1.
December 2026		**AEC SPF:** Final release of AEC SPFs to Districts. CDE notifies districts of their approval/denial for New Optional Measures
January 2027	**AEC Designation:** Districts submit their intent to apply for new schools that do not have current year AEC designation New Optional Measure Application Closes to districts on Feb 1 for 2028 SPF.	New Optional Measure Application closes Feb 1 for 2028 SPF
March 2027		**AEC Designation:** Alternative Education Application/Renewal Collection opens to Districts in mid-March.
April 2027	**AEC Designation:** District completes the Alternative Education Application/Renewal Collection for all qualifying schools for the upcoming year through Data Pipeline.	**AEC Designation:** Alternative Education Application/Renewal Collection closes at the end of the month.
May 2027		**AEC SPF:** Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection opens to Districts in mid-May.
June 2027	**AEC SPF:** AECs must submit aggregated optional measure data through the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection.	**AEC SPF:** Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection closes at the end of the month.
August 2027		**AEC Designation:** AEC designations are approved by the State Board of Education and announced to schools and districts.

Alternative Education Campus Designation

Districts must apply for their school to be officially designated as an AEC. The application/renewal process requires schools to demonstrate they meet the criteria established in C.R.S., §22-7-604.5 and 1 CCR 301-57, which defines an Alternative Education Campus. Schools that meet these criteria are evaluated on the AEC School Performance Framework (SPF) instead of the Traditional SPF.

Requirements

To be considered an AEC, a school must be open, serving students, and meet all the following requirements, as outlined in C.R.S., §22-7-604.5:

- Is an autonomous public school
- Has an administrator who is not under the supervision of an administrator at another school
- Has a separate budget from any other public school
- Has nontraditional methods of instructional delivery
- Has a public process to ensure accountability
- Serves one of the following student populations *at the time of the most recent October Count administration*:
    - All students have severe limitations which preclude appropriate administration of state assessments pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-409;
    - All students attend the school only on a part-time basis and come from other public schools where the part-time students are counted in the enrollment of the other public school; or
    - More than 90% of students have either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) pursuant to C.R.S., §22-20-108 and/or meet the definition of a "high-risk" student as illustrated below
- Has a specialized mission to serve special needs or at-risk population

The state of Colorado defines "high-risk" students as those who:

- Dropout – student has dropped out of school.
- Habitually Truant – student has at least four excused or unexcused absences from public school in any one month or at least ten excused or unexcused absences from public school in any one year (note the definition of "habitually truant" in C.R.S., §22-7-604.5 differs slightly from C.R.S., §22-33-107(I) as there are no age restrictions and includes excused absences)
- Child Abuse or Neglect – student has a documented history of child abuse or neglect, and/or involvement in the foster care system, and/or has been an adjudicated ward of the court.
- Parental Loss – Student has a parent or guardian in prison or on parole or probation and/or has experienced the loss of a parent or sibling.
- Mental/Behavioral Health Issue – Student has a documented history of a mental or behavioral health issue and/or has experienced significant trauma.
- Gang Involvement – Student has documented history of personal street gang involvement or has immediate family members with documented histories of street gang involvement.
- Drugs or Alcohol – Student has a documented history of personal drug or alcohol use or has parents or guardians with documented dependencies on drugs or alcohol.
- Domestic Violence – Student has a documented history of domestic violence in the immediate family.
- Pregnant or Parenting – Student is under the age of twenty and is a parent or pregnant woman.
- Repeat Suspensions – Student has a documented history of repeated school suspensions.
- Over Age & Under Credit – Student is over traditional school age for their grade level and lacks adequate credit hours for their grade level. See Appendix A for how CDE has operationalized the definition of over age and under credit.
- Homeless Student—Student is homeless as defined by C.R.S., §22-1-102.5 (2)

- Migrant Student—Student is a migrant as defined by C.R.S., §22-23-103 (2)
- Juvenile Delinquent—Student is committed to the department of human services or in detention awaiting disposition of charges

Appendix B lists the documentation requirements for each of the high risk identifiers.

New or Newly Designated Schools

Newly established schools are not eligible for AEC status initially, as the AEC status is derived from the population of students served by the school. Districts that are interested in opening a new AEC may apply for AEC designation during their first year of operation. The annual timeline for this process is to notify CDE of interest in becoming an AEC **by January 31st** of each year and completing the AEC application as a "new designation".

Newly designated schools will receive an AEC SPF in the first year of designation (i.e., if a school is approved by the state board in August as an AEC, they will receive an AEC SPF in September), unless otherwise requested through Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection, see the Actual Measures Collection section in this guidance.

By April 24, 2026: Submit AEC Designation for New and Existing AECs. Districts are required to complete the Alternative Education Application/Renewal Collection to designate a school as an AEC.

Designation Timeline

Month	**New** (Application Collection) **and Existing** (Renewal Collection) **AECs**
Beginning in August	**All:** District collects information about entering students' high-risk status and keeps that information secure per district policy.
January 31	**NEW AECs (Application Collection) ONLY:** District notifies CDE of intent to apply for AEC designation.
February	**All:** CDE pre-populates Data Pipeline with applicant school information.
April	**All:** District submits Alternative Education Application Collection for schools for the following school year.
May - July	**All:** CDE Audits and Applications. New applicant schools/districts will receive a site visit which will include review of year one optional measures. Audits are done on a rotating basis and as needed for data verification
August	**All:** CDE recommends approval for schools that meet the AEC criteria to the State Board of Education. The state board determines whether to officially approve AEC designations during the August board meeting.

Required Data

Pre-Populated Data

CDE will pre-populate information in Data Pipeline at the student level for the October Count population of students at a given school using the most recent Student October, Student December, and Student End of Year

data submissions. State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs) are restricted to the October Count population; no SASIDs are added or deleted outside of this collection. The following fields come directly from the district's data submissions, and the data as submitted in those collections are used as verification for inclusion in a given high-risk category (data source is in parentheses):

- District and school information (Student October)
- Student's SASID (Student October)
- Student's Date of Birth (Student October)
- Student's Grade (Student October)
- Student's Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG) (Student End of Year)
- If the student is on an IEP (Student December)
- If the student has been committed or detained (Student End of Year)
- If the student has previously dropped out (Student End of Year)
- If the student has been expelled (Student End of Year)
- If the student is a migrant (Student October)
- If the student is homeless (Student October)

For each individual AEC, once a student has been identified for a high risk category, that high risk indicator will carry over to the following year, as long as the student maintains enrollment in the same school as of the next October Count. For example, if a student is identified for a high-risk category in 2025 the student's high-risk category will appear in the same school's pre-populated information for 2026 and beyond. Note that a student's high risk category would not transfer to another AEC.

If there is an error with a school's October or December Count submission or if there are issues with the pre-populated data, the district should reach out to CDE for additional support.

If a student is not marked in one of the pre-screened high-risk categories above, but should have been, refer to the Documentation Requirements for High Risk Students for the data sources that can be used to identify students by each category.

District Provided Data

Several of the "high-risk" designations are not supplied in Student October, Student December, or Student End of Year submission files and cannot be pre-populated by CDE. These fields can be designated by districts based on intake information and documentation gathered about students while students are enrolled at the AEC. Refer to the Documentation Requirements for High Risk Students document for the data sources that can be used to identify students within each category.

Documenting High-Risk Factors

Schools are encouraged to create a standard intake procedure that collects information about qualifying high-risk factors for all students entering the school. This documentation is used by schools to tailor engagement methods for students and by CDE to complete the school's application/renewal template or in case of a data audit. Appendix B lists the required documentation for each of the high risk identifiers

The high-risk categories that only a district can identify are:

- Pregnant or Parenting
- Domestic Violence
- Drugs or Alcohol
- Gang Involvement
- Mental/Behavioral Health Issue
- Parental Loss
- Child Abuse or Neglect or in Foster Care
- Habitually Truant
- Justified Expulsion
- Over Age/Under-Credited

Exceptions for AECs Not Meeting 90% High-Risk

CDE may only recommend AECs for approval to the state board if the AEC serves at least 90% IEP and/or high-risk students, and the school is not 100% part-time enrolled students. There is an exception for small systems where there are some flexibilities on this criteria for existing AECs to minimize fluctuations in AEC status. CDE recommends that districts contact the department prior to submitting the application(s) to discuss all relevant options.

Single Year Exemption for AECs with less than 250 students

AECs with less than 250 students can be granted a waiver if the AECs total enrollment did not fall below the 90% threshold by more than 3 students, as described in HB 25-1167. This exemption is only available for a single year, and is only available to established AECs. AECs must meet the 90% threshold, if applicable, in their initial application. Established AECs which are granted this waiver are required to meet the 90% threshold the following year; this waiver cannot be granted in two consecutive years.

Exceptions Process

To use the small systems exception, the district should request a meeting with CDE. The district will be asked to review the student level data. If CDE determines the criteria has been met and the school has not used this exception in the prior year, the district will be asked to complete the exception in data pipeline. CDE will recommend approval to the state board with an approved exception.

As with the designation pre-populated data file, the enrollment counts mentioned above are based on a given October Count dataset.

Alternative Education Campus School Performance Framework

Each August, CDE produces a traditional School Performance Framework (SPF) report for every eligible school in the state. SPF reports are preliminarily issued to districts for all schools, including all AECs. For schools with current AEC status, CDE generates a preliminary AEC SPF report each September. Supplemental optional measure data submitted through Data Pipeline and accepted by CDE are included on the AEC SPF. The reports notify districts of an AEC's plan type—Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, Turnaround, or Insufficient State Data. AECs are optionally permitted to submit a request to reconsider their plan type, see the section "Note on Alternative Education Campuses" in request to reconsider guidance. Final AEC SPFs are released to districts and approved by the state board by December. The table below outlines this process.

AEC SPF Timeline

Month	Action
September	**All:** Preliminary AEC SPF released to districts (incorporates all state-required measures and optional measures submitted during the Actual Measures Collection)
October 15	**Optional:** Request to Reconsider deadline
December	**All:** Final AEC SPF released publicly

AEC: Insufficient State Data

Insufficient State Data (ISD) ratings are assigned when the state does not have enough data to assign a district rating or school plan type. Beginning in 2022, AECs were eligible for this plan type. Districts are encouraged to submit optional measure data to ensure AECs have reportable data for all applicable performance indicators to receive a rating.

Purpose

The purpose of the AEC SPF is to account for the special student population AECs serve, including to:

- Differentiate among AECs, identifying less effective AECs for additional support and highlighting more effective AECs so that others can learn from their practice.
- Represent the performance of 12th graders not included in traditional state academic achievement and growth measures (as most AECs serve more students in the upper high school grades than lower grades.)
- Provide AEC-relevant student- and school-level benchmarks for state-required measures. These measures are normed against only AECs statewide.
- Provide a common understanding of quality among AECs for a given measure being used by multiple sites.
- Provide an overall rating for an AEC which is meaningful and reflective of the effectiveness of that AEC.

State-Required Indicators and Measures

The AEC SPF includes four performance indicators: (1) Academic Achievement, (2) Academic Growth, (3) Student Engagement, and (4) Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness. Each of the performance indicators are weighted and include measures, metrics, and cut-points that are required by CDE where sufficient data exist at the school. The table below summarizes the weights and state-required measures for each performance indicator. Optional measures may be submitted for each indicator, this process is described in the next section. CDE reserves the

right to remove or change measures, required or optional, as needed to assure the integrity and quality of school evaluations.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Weight	State-Required Measures
Academic Achievement	15%	• CMAS mean scale score – English Language Arts, Math • CMAS Science mean scale score • PSAT mean scale score – Reading & Writing, Math
Academic Growth	35%	• Median growth percentiles – English Language Arts/Reading & Writing, Math
Student Engagement	20%	• Attendance Rate • Truancy Rate
Postsecondary Workforce Readiness	30%	• Best-Of Completion Rate • Dropout Rate • SAT mean scale score - Reading & Writing, Math

** For schools with out PWR, serving only grades K-8) the weights are slightly different

Establishing Cut Points (Required Measures)

The measure-level cut-points for the AEC SPF derive from the baselined normative performance of AECs which can be found in the Calculation Guidance for Alternative Education Campuses. In almost all cases (Median Growth Percentiles are the only measure that differ), state-required cut-points translate into ratings of:

- **Does not meet AEC norms:** Below the 40th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- **Approaching AEC norms:** 40th - 60th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- **Meets AEC norms:** 60th - 90th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide
- **Exceeds AEC norms:** At/above 90th percentile rank compared to AECs statewide

For state-required metrics and cut-points, CDE provides the results for each AEC and their AEC percentile rank performance. The Annotated AEC Performance Framework lists these cut-points each year. All data is based on three years of data, where available.

Flexible Measure Level Weighting

Measures for the Academic Achievement and Academic Growth indicators are weighted by N size. For measures in these indicators, points eligible are assigned according to the number of students who participated in each measure. Measures where a greater number of students participated are worth comparatively more weight. Optional measures contribute to the N count when calculating measure points possible. The individual weight of each measure in these indicators is derived from: the total points eligible in the indicator (PE), the total number of students represented in all measures in the indicator (Total N), and the total number of students represented in the measure in question (Measure N):

Achievement and Growth

Measure Points Possible = (Measure N/Total N) x PE

Measures for the Student Engagement and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness indicators are not weighted by N size. These measures are apportioned equal weight within their indicators. Optional measures are included in the measure count. The individual weight of each measure in these indicators is derived from: the total points eligible in the indicator (PE) equally divided amongst the measures in that indicator:

Student Engagement and Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness

Measure Points Possible = (PE/Count of Measures)

Note that due to rounding policies, points eligible at the measure level may not sum up perfectly to the total points eligible at the indicator and overall level as displayed on AEC SPF reports.

Optional Measures

Districts may request CDE review and include optional measures within each of the performance indicators on its AEC SPF reports. At a minimum, the optional measures must:

- Fall under one of performance indicators that are in the AEC SPF;
- Meet the criteria outlined below in guiding principles and under each of the performance indicators.

Request to Reconsider Process for AECs

While AECs are eligible to participate in the Request to Reconsider process, AECs cannot submit local data or measures for inclusion through the Body of Evidence condition; therefore, submission of local measures through the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection must occur before frameworks are generated.

Guiding Principles for Approving AEC Optional Measures

As a result of the AEC Workgroup that was conducted during the 2024-25 school year, workgroup members approved the following principles of an approvable optional measure for inclusion in a school's AEC SPF framework:

1. **Optional measure is a technical fit with performance frameworks**
    - Optional measure cleanly fits within existing indicator structure
    - Optional measure uses quantitative data in a way that can be consumed by the frameworks/submitted through Data Pipeline (i.e., in numerical format).
    - Optional measure includes data that is not otherwise represented by any state required or currently approved optional measure. Approvable optional measures include (but may not be limited to):
        i. Data of non-continuously enrolled students in grades tested by state assessments
        ii. Data from grades not tested by state assessments
        iii. Data from a local assessment that has not been approved for use as an optional measure previously.
    - Optional measures are not approvable in the following cases (not exhaustive):
        i. Uses state assessment data that would otherwise appear on the framework in a state required measure

ii. Is a new and potentially more rigorous calculation method of a previously approved and established optional measure assessment (this would replace the previously approved measure)
iii. Uses the same local data point from the same student more than twice (used in two separate indicators, not the same indicator) in the same performance framework

2. **Optional measure uses student outcome/performance data**
   - Data for optional measure is based on student outcomes or performance at the AEC in question. Non-student data and data from students while at another school or site is not approvable.
   - Data for optional measure is broadly representative of the school's overall population
     i. Measure should capture as much of the student body as possible (not restricted to a subpopulation or specific grade without strong rationale)
     ii. Participation in the assessment/measure should represent a large majority of the potential population (e.g., 75%)

3. **Optional measure has established rigor and validity needed for accountability use**
   - Academic achievement and growth optional measures are aligned to Colorado Academic Standards
   - Academic measures and student engagement survey based optional measures are state or nationally normed. If external norming is not possible, a strong rationale for establishing cuts will be required.
   - Technical specifications are available for optional measure assessment or instrument
   - Validity of optional measure assessment or instrument has been established prior to or during negotiation for use on frameworks
   - All approved optional measures are eligible for review based on validity and rigor; this process may occur annually and could result in changes to individual measures' approval status

4. **Optional measure demonstrates sufficient variability in performance to justify use in a normative accountability system**
   - It is possible for both a student and a school to fail an optional measure
   - Data is variable enough to establish cut points for all four rating categories (i.e., exceeds, meets, approaching, and does not meet)
   - Cut points are established such that there is meaningful differentiation in performance data, including across sites or at a single site across years
     i. All approved optional measures are eligible for annual review of variability and may be adjusted to ensure appropriate rigor for use on accountability frameworks

District Responsibilities

Districts are responsible for creating a process with their AEC schools to review and select appropriate supplemental optional measures, and for reporting accurate and complete results to CDE. Where the selected optional measure requires a school or its district to gather data that is not otherwise routinely submitted to CDE, the district and/or AEC is responsible for the cost of gathering such data. The district must gather data reliably and must describe in their submission the methods used to generate the data. This data is also subject to CDE monitoring.

Using Optional Measures for Continuous Improvement
CDE's intention is to initiate and foster a process of research, development, and continuous improvement among all AECs. Thus, CDE encourages the ongoing efforts to develop rigorous measures that accurately capture the success of AECs in fulfilling their missions.

Submission Process

The Actual Measures collection is the current process whereby CDE accepts and incorporates local measure data into the AEC SPFs for both schools with an AEC designation already in place, and schools that are receiving an AEC designation for the first time. There are two components of this process, the New Optional Measure Application and the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection, described below.

Supplemental Optional Measures Timeline

Month	Action
Beginning in October	New Optional Measure Application opens. Districts indicate intent to use a new optional measure on their AEC SPF. A new measure is any measure that a school has not used within the last three SPF cycles.
December	CDE notifies districts with an approval or denial of the submitted proposed measure by December 15th.
Jan 2027	New Optional Measure Application opens for the 2028 SPF. Districts indicate intent to use a new optional measure on their AEC SPF. A new measure is any measure that a school has not used within the last three SPF cycles.
March 2027	CDE notifies districts with an approval or denial of the submitted proposed measure by March 15th.
May	Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection opens, districts submit optional measures, including newly approved optional measures for inclusion in AEC SPFs.
June	Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection closes.

New Optional Measure Application

The Optional Measures Negotiation process and Planned Measures Collection have been merged into a single New Optional Measure Application. This update was made in alignment with recommendations from the 2024-25 AEC stakeholder workgroup to provide better responses, more transparency, and ensure that measures are normed appropriately across all AECs. **If a district would like to use a new optional measure on their AEC SPF, they must engage in this process.** Note that any measure that a school has not used within the last three SPF cycles is defined as new and must be included in an application.

By November 1, 2026: Complete New Optional Measure Application. The purpose of this application process is to notify CDE of the intent to use a new optional measure for the 2027 AEC SPF. This collection is moving to Jan-March and will open in Jan 2027 for the 2028 SPF.

- **STEP 1:** Before engaging in this process, AECs should review the Calculation Guidance for Alternative Education Campuses and the AEC SPF Flat File for a description of existing measures that have been used on the AEC SPF. The section Optional Submission Requirements by Indicator describes measure requirements by AEC SPF performance indicator. These documents can support AECs in understanding the types of optional measures that are submitted for each performance indicator and can assist AECs in choosing a measure that is the best possible fit for a school's model and mission.
- **STEP 2:** Complete the following components:
    i. **EXISTING AEC SPF MEASURES (Measures that have been previously approved by CDE for other AECs):** A district narrative that presents the rationale for a proposed optional measure in alignment with the above guiding principles. A rubric (see Appendix C) will be used to determine alignment with the guiding principles. At a minimum, the district narrative should describe:
        - Measure population and its representativeness of the school overall
        - Any administration information about the assessment, survey, or practice
        - Alignment to Colorado Academic Standards (if applicable)
    ii. **PREVIOUSLY UNUSED AEC SPF MEASURES (Measures that haven't been approved by CDE):** Any AEC that is planning to use a measure that has not already been submitted for the AEC SPF previously (by any district) must also submit supporting documents, in addition to the above data narrative. Districts and AEC leaders are encouraged to engage in office hours prior to the application deadline if they fall into this category. Supporting documents should include:
        - Calculation details for the measure
        - Validity checks for the measure
        - Preliminary cut points for the measure and rationales for cut point selection for the measure
        - National norms for the measure (if applicable)
        - Vendor specifications as appropriate
- **STEP 3:** Submit the form by the November 1st deadline.

Reviewing and Approving Applications

Upon receipt of any final materials, the Department will review the request and provide final approval/denial for the current application cycle. The review will be conducted by a cross-unit CDE team. CDE staff will evaluate the extent to which the application meets the conditions and criteria outlined in Appendix C and whether the supporting documents support approval. Appendix D describes examples of approvable or deniable measures with sample rationale. CDE will provide rationale if a measure is denied (e.g., issues with validity, lack of supporting documentation, adherence to guiding principles). Appendix D describes examples of approvable or deniable measures with sample rationale. If a new optional measure is denied by the Department, the district will receive specific information on the denial and may submit additional data to reassess the following year. **CDE will communicate with districts on the status of their application by December 15th.**

Incorporating New Optional Measures

Any new optional measure applications must include all required elements by November 1 to be considered. Any optional measure that has been approved should be submitted during the current school year Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection for inclusion in the next AEC SPF. Any optional measure not approved for the current cycle will not be accepted in the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection. Districts may resubmit an application during the next application cycle.

Actual Measures Collection

By June 26, 2027: Submit Actual Measures for New or Existing AECs. Districts are required to complete the Alternative Education Campus Actual Measures Collection to officially submit optional measures for inclusion in the AEC SPF or to opt out of the optional measure submission.

The following are required elements of the submission:

- Approved optional supplemental measures and supporting aggregate data that the district wishes to include on their schools' AEC SPF reports.
    - Districts will only be able to select measures in data pipeline that have been approved for use by the school. No new measure applications will be accepted during the Actual Measures Collection.
- Signatures of the school principal, district superintendent or authorizer executive director, and the local board president, as evidence of agreement by the school and the district as to the school's selected AEC measures, metrics, and cut-points and verification of the accuracy of the data submitted.

CDE will not accept changes after the submission process concludes, including changes due to data submission errors.

Optional Measure Submission Requirements by Indicator

This section describes the requirements for optional measure submission by performance indicator. For more information, the Calculation Guidance for Alternative Education Campuses and the Optional Measure Cut Point Lookup Document includes the measures for which CDE has provided approved metrics and cut-points for exceeding, meeting, approaching, and not meeting AEC norms.

AECs with Limited State Assessment Data

Districts are encouraged to submit optional measures for their AECs in each indicator area if statewide assessments are not available and sufficient local data are available (i.e., the count of students included in the measure is greater than 16 for achievement, student engagement, and postsecondary and workforce readiness, and 20 for growth).

Academic Achievement

AECs with state assessment data may request to include additional alternative standardized assessment data, if it meets the above criteria. Assessments other than the statewide assessments must be aligned with the academic standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013, optional supplemental measures may include:

- Reliable and valid interim assessment achievement results, meaning interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013 (e.g., Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress, Renaissance Learning's STAR assessments, Accuplacer Diagnostic).

If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process. To be included on the AEC SPF, state required and

optional measures in Academic Achievement must have an N size of at least 16 students; data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period. See the section Submission Process for more information on submitting optional measures.

Academic Growth

AECs with state growth data may request to include additional student longitudinal academic growth data, if it meets the above criteria. The measures of student longitudinal academic growth must be consistent with the measures set forth in C.R.S., §22-11-204 (2) Optional supplemental measures may include:

- Norm-referenced growth on reliable and valid interim assessments, meaning those interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013.; or
- Criterion-referenced growth on reliable and valid interim assessments, meaning those interim assessments that are nationally- or state-normed and are capable of measuring progress on the standards adopted by the local school board or Institute pursuant to C.R.S., §22-7-1013

If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process. In order to be included on the AEC SPF, state required and optional measures in Academic Growth must have an N size of at least 20 students; data can be aggregated over a 3-year time period. See the section Submission Process for more information on submitting optional measures.

Student Engagement

Student engagement will be measured by the school's attendance and truancy rate, if sufficient data are available, and may also be measured using other measures selected by the AECs and its district and approved by the Department. Optional supplemental measures may include:

- Re-engagement rate, consistent with the re-engagement rate defined by the State Board in 1 CCR 301-84;
- Returning student rate; and/or
- Pre-and post-scores on reliable, research-based psychosocial instruments reflecting educationally significant psychological, behavioral or attitudinal change in enrolled students.

If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process. In order to be included on the AEC SPF, state required and optional measures in Student Engagement must have an N size of at least 16 students; data can be aggregated over a 3 year time period. See the section Submission Process for more information on submitting optional measures.

Postsecondary Workforce Readiness

Postsecondary and workforce readiness will be measured in a manner that is consistent with C.R.S., §22-7-1008, C.R.S., §22-7-1003 (16), and C.R.S., §22-11-204 on measures that are selected by the AEC and its district and approved by the Department. Optional supplemental measures may include the following:

- Student graduation rate, consistent with the graduation rate defined by the State Board in 1 CCR 301-1;
- Transition success rate (required for non-degree granting AECs);

- Post-completion success rate;
- Performance on workforce readiness assessment (e.g., Work Keys or Accuplacer Placement); and/or
- Course/credit completion rate.

If a measure does not have state defined metrics and cut-points, the AEC and its district shall submit proposed metrics and cut-points and provide a research-based rationale for the selection of these metrics and cut-points during the New Optional Measure Application process. In order to be included on the AEC SPF, state required and optional measures in Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness must have an N size of at least 16 students; data can be aggregated over a 3 year time period. See the section Submission Process for more information on submitting optional measures.

Sunsetting Optional Measures

An optional measure is considered for sunset when:

- **The measure does not meet all AEC guiding principles for optional measures** (i.e., technical fit, student outcome/performance data, rigor and validity, sufficient variability in performance).
- **There has been a lack of consistent use of the measure** (e.g., the measure has not been used in 3 years.)
- **The methodological approach cannot be maintained year over year.**

After the release of preliminary AEC frameworks, CDE will review optional measures currently in use and create a list of sunset measures based on these criteria. CDE will release this list to the field by November. Sunsetting measures will be allowed to be used for a final time during the following year's framework cycle. However, after the next cycle these measures will no longer be available.

Measures flagged for sunset could be re-approved if renegotiated with necessary adjustments to bring them in line with guiding principles. This renegotiation would go through the New Optional Measure Application.

Re-Norming Optional Measures

A measure that meets all guiding principles except sufficient variability will be identified for potential cut point re-norming. Rigor of cut points for an existing optional measure will be reviewed every five years. This prevents cut points from changing every year but allows for consistent and predictable analysis of current cut points. This also allows for time to work with the field if needed to establish new cut points.

After the release of preliminary AEC frameworks, CDE will review optional measures currently in use and create a list of measures flagged for cut point review. CDE will release this list to the field by November. Cut points are then investigated and updated; new cut points are published as soon as they are available.

Measures that have been identified for re-norming will be allowed to be used for a final time with the currently established cut points during the following fall framework cycle. However, after the next cycle these measures will be used with the new cut points only.

Optional Measure Data Requests

There are some optional measures that CDE will pull and provide the data to a district upon request. These measures include best-of graduation rate, WIDA Access MGPs, Access on track rate and matriculation rate. Data for all CDE-calculated optional measures are aggregated across the three most recent years of data, as available,

and has all state accountability inclusion rules applied. This data is available to districts/schools who have these related measures approved for use. To make this official data request, complete this Optional Measures Data Request Form. This form is available to districts during the Actual Measures Collection window in May-June.

Site Visits, Monitoring and Audits

The CDE AEC accountability team schedules site visits for new schools, routine monitoring visits on a 4-year rotating schedule and audit visits as necessary when there are concerns about data quality for the AEC Designation or Optional Measures collection. These visits may be virtual or in-person and will consist of a cross-departmental team from CDE. Scheduling will be done in collaboration with the district and school personnel.

Site Visits

Before CDE can make a recommendation to the State Board of Education about a new AEC designation, a site visit to the school is required. These visits have typically been used to check data quality, establish relationships with school or district leaders, and to address questions about AEC collections, status, and accountability.

This site visit will include a review of the documentation requirements and data collection systems related to the AEC Application process.

Schools are scheduled for a site visit specifically because the schools are applying for AEC designation for the first time. CDE will provide the school and district with an agenda for this site visit at least two weeks prior to the scheduled visit. During the visit, CDE will request a description of how the application process was completed, an example of the schools intake process, a description of how data on district-identified risk categories are collected and sourced.

The District Accountability Contact are encouraged to be present at the site visit. CDE requests that additional, relevant representatives from a district and school attend to discuss these data. These representatives may include school leaders, special service providers, intake/enrollment specialists etc.

Intent to apply for AEC designation is submitted in January, and new school site visits will take place in February - March. This allows CDE to answer questions and onboard new AEC school leaders and district staff *prior to* the opening of the AEC designation collection.

Monitoring

Monitoring visits are structured and regularly scheduled for schools with a focus on technical assistance and policy clarification. These visits do not indicate any concerns with data integrity or institutional practices. CDE makes an effort to complete a monitoring visit for every AEC designated school every four years.

As with the new applicant visits, these visits focus primarily on questions about AEC collections, status, and accountability. Monitoring visits are scheduled in the fall in collaboration with the district and school leadership.

If CDE has questions or concerns about the quality of the data submitted by the school/district which remain unresolved, then that same school may be chosen for an audit in May-June.

Audits

The following information will be used to determine if an audit visit is necessary:

- **Authorizer Request:** CDE will audit the designation data supplied by the authorizer/school if the authorizing Local Education Agency (LEA) requests it.
- **Data Concerns:** When CDE staff reviews the data submitted for the AEC Renewal Application collection, inconsistencies or errors in the data are determined. Data concerns can often be resolved quickly

through phone calls and emails with district and school staff. If the data concerns cannot be resolved through these channels, CDE will schedule an audit with the school and district.

- **Certification Concerns:** Districts submit data as part of the AEC Renewal Application process which confirm the school's eligibility to receive AEC designation. On occasion, CDE staff will have questions regarding this data. Data concerns are often resolved quickly through phone calls and emails with district and school staff. If concerns cannot be resolved through these channels, CDE will schedule an audit with the school and district.

Data Requested Prior to Visit

For each audit, CDE staff will request data for review prior to the visit. Each audit site will be required to submit the following:

- A description of how the application process was completed and how that work was divided between school and district level staff.
- An example of the school's intake process and documentation.
- A description of how and where sensitive student records are stored and who has access to them.
- For any district-identified high risk categories provided, the school/district must provide a de-identified documentation sample which supports those designations. The school/district must also provide a description of how those data are collected and sourced.

If the data provided resolves CDE staff's questions and concerns, the audit visit may be cancelled.

Concerns about Data Quality

In an instance where data quality concerns are unable to be resolved, CDE would not recommend the school receive AEC status to the State Board of Education for the following year. The school would need to reapply as an AEC, and the school would not receive an AEC plan type until the next accountability cycle. The below table provides an example of this process.

AEC Designation Lapses Due to Data Quality - Example

Framework Year	Official Framework	Designation Status
2024	**Fall 2024:** AEC SPF	**Spring 2025:** AEC Renewal Collection; data quality concerns cannot be resolved by an audit **August 2025:** CDE recommends the state board does not approve AEC designation
2025	**Fall 2025:** Traditional SPF	**Spring 2026:** AEC Application Collection **August 2026:** CDE recommends the state board approve the AEC designation.
2026	**Fall 2026:** AEC SPF	**Spring 2027:** AEC Renewal Collection **August 2027:** CDE recommends the state board approve the AEC designation.

Technical Assistance and Support

Informational Webinars and Office Hours

CDE staff will hold informational webinars and office hours for the designation/renewal collection and the optional measures collection. These webinars will be recorded and posted publicly on the AEC Accountability website.

Informational Webinars

New AEC Leader Webinar: September 9, 2026 10:00-12:00 noon

Optional Measures Webinar: September 24, 2026 1:00-3:00 pm

AEC Accountability Overview: January 13, 2027 10:00-12:00 noon

Designation Collection Webinar: March 4, 2027 1:00-3:00 pm

Office Hours

New Optional Measure Application Office Hours: If a district would like individualized assistance from CDE, register for Office Hours (held via TEAMS) here. Office Hours will begin the first week of October and will be held from 1-3 pm every Tuesday and Thursday until the New Optional Measure application process concludes.

Designation Collection Office Hours: If a district would like individualized assistance from CDE, register for Office Hours (held via TEAMS) here. Office Hours will begin March 15 and will be held from 1-3 pm every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the collection window.

Actual Measures Collection Office Hours: If a district would like individualized assistance from CDE, register for Office Hours (held via TEAMS) here. Office Hours will begin May 15 and will be held from 1-3 pm every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the collection window.

General Questions and Support

Contact Improvement and Innovation Unit (AEChelp@cde.state.co.us) or April Thompson (thompson_april@cde.state.co.us).

Appendix A. Defining Over-Age and Under-Credit for AECs

Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) have an option to select "over-age and under-credit" (OAUC) as a criteria for identifying a student as high-risk on their AEC application. In statute, this is defined as "[A student who] is over traditional school age for his or her grade level and lacks adequate credit hours for his or her grade level." (C.R.S., §22-7-604.5 (1.5) (n)). In past years, districts have defined this criterion in many different ways. It is important the state uses a standardized and consistent definition across all sites. On February 7, 2014, AEC Stakeholders were convened to discuss the options for operationalizing the definition of OAUC. CDE staff then reviewed feedback from the stakeholders and came together to finalize the criteria, as listed below.

Operationalized Definition

For High School Students (can be identified)

- Operationalize by credit accumulation based on anticipated year of graduation (AYG).
  - 1 or more years behind credits required for graduation, based on anticipated year of graduation, or students with an anticipated year of graduation of 2024 or older. (See table below).
  - This could be in overall credits or in core content credits, determined by the district.
- Once a student is identified by the school as OAUC, they are always identified in that school that way, even if they subsequently catch-up (as that's our goal for them).
- **New for 2026 AEC Designation:** Students that are 21 years of age or younger who have sufficient credits to be eligible for a diploma by the end of the school year, as described in HB 25-1167.

For Elementary and Middle School Students (cannot be identified)

- No criteria would be available to identify an elementary school student as OAUC.
- Many other criteria exist to identify elementary students as high-risk.
- Other Measures: In consultation with state legal experts, it was determined that state statute does not allow for an interpretation beyond credit hours. Course failures, state assessment results, and retention are not included in an interpretation of the statutory language.

The table below should be used as a reference for how to measure over-age and under-credited students in your district/school for reporting on the AEC Application.

OAUC Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG) and Credits Missing Table

Anticipated Year of Graduation	**All Credits** (based on credits accumulated at the end of 2025-26 school year)	**Core Credits** (based on credits accumulated at the end of 2025-26 school year)
2024 or earlier	Student has earned less than 100% of credits required to graduate	Student has earned less than 100% of core content credits required to graduate
2025	Student has earned less than 100% of credits required to graduate	Student has earned less than 100% of core content credits required to graduate

Anticipated Year of Graduation	**All Credits** (based on credits accumulated at the end of 2025-26 school year)	**Core Credits** (based on credits accumulated at the end of 2025-26 school year)
2026	Student has earned less than 75% of credits required to graduate	Student has earned less than 75% of core content credits required to graduate
2027	Student has earned less than 50% of credits required to graduate	Student has earned less than 50% of core content credits required to graduate
2028	Student has earned less than 25% of credits required to graduate	Student has earned less than 25% of core content credits required to graduate
2029	Student has not earned any credits required to graduate	Student has not earned any core content credits required to graduate

Appendix B. **Documentation Assurance for High Risk Identifiers**

About Documentation Assurance for the AEC Designation Collection

As referenced in C.R.S., §22-2-308 (5) (a), "a district local education agency may be asked to voluntarily submit data in order to receive a benefit, such as grant funding or special designations". Confirmation of students' high-risk status is necessary in order for the Department to verify that a school is meeting the criteria for the Alternative Education Campus (AEC) special designation. It is the responsibility of the district accountability contact of a district submitting an AEC Application on behalf of a school to verify documentation from students, parents/guardians, physicians/licensed mental health workers, or school administrators/teachers that would permit a student to be designated high-risk. Upon signing the AEC Application, the district accountability contact assures that the following conditions have been met and verifies accuracy of the information.

The documentation assurances described below are not required to be submitted, but confirmation of high-risk status is necessary in order for CDE to validate that a school qualifies for AEC status. CDE reserves the right to audit district files to ensure compliance with the requirement to maintain appropriate documentation supporting students' identified high-risk categories as reported in submitted data to CDE.

If you have documentation on site that is not included in this list, and you would like to know if it is acceptable for use with the AEC Designation Collection, please contact us.

Note: It is important that districts and schools follow the guidelines outlined in state and federal law C.R.S., §22-1-123, and FERPA (the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act") 20 U.S.C. sec. 1232g (b) regarding the confidentiality and protection of student data records and information. CDE recommends districts maintain the confidentiality of these records. LEAs are advised to consult with legal counsel should they have questions.

Documentation Assurance for Habitually Truant Identification

A student is considered eligible to be reported as Habitually Truant if the student has four excused or unexcused absences from public school in any one month or ten excused or unexcused absences from public school during any school year. Absences due to suspension or expulsion of a student are considered absences.

When reporting a student flagged as "Habitually Truant," any/all of the following documentation sources below are considered allowable. Please keep appropriate records and update these records as needed:

1. Attendance records showing absence patterns from any previous school year
2. Truancy court records from the any previous school year
3. RITS enrollment records from the any previous school year

Documentation Assurance for Justified Expulsion Identification

A student is considered eligible to be reported as Justified Expulsion if the student has engaged in behavior that would justify expulsion but was not expelled.

When reporting a student flagged as "Justified Expulsion," any/all of the following documentation sources below are considered allowable. Please keep appropriate records and update these records as needed:

1. Notes in files, Student Information System, etc., detailing the behavior incident, the school/district's discipline program, and the course of action for the behavior incident
2. Transition notes, if relevant, and if a particular behavior incident may have led to a transfer to the student's current school

Documentation Assurance for Over-Age and Under-Credit Identification

See Appendix A

Documentation Assurance for "Other High-Risk" Identification

A student is considered eligible to be reported as "Other High-Risk" if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- students who have documented histories of personal drug or alcohol use or who have parents or guardians with documented dependencies on drugs or alcohol
- students who have documented histories of personal street gang involvement or who have immediate family members with documented histories of street gang involvement
- students who have documented histories of child abuse or neglect
- students who are wards of the state or who are in the foster care system
- students who have parents or guardians in prison or on parole or probation
- students who have documented histories of domestic violence in the immediate family
- students who have documented histories of repeated school suspensions
- students under the age of twenty years who are parents or pregnant women
- students who have a documented history of a serious mental or behavioral disorder, including but not limited to an eating disorder, suicidal behaviors or deliberate, self-inflicted injury
- students who have experienced a loss of a parent or sibling
- students who have experienced significant trauma

Note that the shared experience of a global pandemic does not qualify as meeting the "other high-risk" definition on its own.

When reporting a student flagged as "Other High-Risk," any/all of the following documentation sources below are considered allowable. Please keep appropriate records and update these records as needed:

1. The student was consulted regarding his/her high-risk criteria asserting this information is true; OR
2. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of said student(s) was/were consulted regarding the student(s) high-risk criteria asserting this information is true; OR
3. A treating physician/licensed mental health worker treating said student(s) was/were consulted regarding the student(s) high-risk criteria asserting this information is true; OR
4. A licensed school administrator/teacher overseeing said student(s) was/were consulted regarding the student(s) high-risk criteria asserting this information is true; OR
5. A verifiable source not mentioned above was/were consulted confirming the student(s) high-risk criteria asserting this information is true.

Appendix C. **Rubric for New Optional Measures**

Decision Guidance and Interrater Consistency

The scoring rubric is designed to support consistent evaluation of optional measure submissions. Final approval decisions should be informed by rubric scores, but should not be based on score totals alone. Reviewers should use professional judgment in combination with rubric results to determine the most appropriate decision. Score ranges should be used to support consistency across reviewers.

Use of Score Ranges

Total scores provide general guidance for decision-making:

- Higher scores typically indicate that a measure is well-developed and suitable for use with minimal or no revisions
- Moderate scores may indicate that a measure is generally appropriate but requires clarification, refinement, or additional evidence
- Lower scores may indicate that significant revisions are needed before the measure can be considered for approval

Critical Criteria Considerations

Certain criteria are foundational to approval and should be considered carefully regardless of total score. If a measure demonstrates significant concerns in any of these areas, reviewers should consider whether approval is appropriate, even if the total score is relatively high.

- Technical Fit with the AEC SPF
  Measures must align to a defined indicator, produce quantitative data, and integrate into the Data Pipeline. Measures that do not meet these requirements are not appropriate for approval without substantial revision.
- Student Outcome Integrity
  Measures must reflect meaningful student outcomes that are attributable to the AEC. Measures that rely on prior or external data, or that do not clearly represent student performance, may not be appropriate for approval.
- Rigor and Validity
  Measures must demonstrate sufficient technical quality, including defined cut points, clear methodology, and evidence of validity and reliability.
- Sufficient Variability
  Measures must be designed to produce meaningful differentiation in performance across students. Measures that do not support all performance levels (including ‘does not meet’), or rely on cut points that do not differentiate performance may not be appropriate for approval.

Consistency in Reviewer Judgment

To support consistency across reviewers:

- Decisions should be grounded in evidence provided in the submission
- Reviewer justifications should clearly reference specific elements of the submission and rubric criteria
- Similar types of measures should be evaluated using consistent expectations across submissions
- When uncertainty exists, reviewers should prioritize clarity, defensibility, and alignment to the guiding principles

Use of Approval Categories

Final determinations should reflect both the overall strength of the measure and any required revisions:

- Approved - The measure meets expectations and can be used within the AEC SPF
- Approved with Conditions - The measure is appropriate for use but requires specific revisions, clarifications, or additional documentation
- Revise and Resubmit - The measure shows potential but requires substantial changes before it can be considered for approval
- Not Approved - The measure does not meet the necessary criteria for use within the AEC SPF

Criteria	Description	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Technical fit	The measure aligns well with the established AEC SPF and integrates seamlessly within the accountability system.	Clearly aligned to a specific AEC SPF indicator	Aligned to an AEC SPF indicator with minor clarification needed	Partial or unclear alignment to an AEC SPF indicator	Does not align to an AEC SPF indicator
		Produces quantitative data that is fully compatible with Data Pipeline	Quantitative and likely compatible with Data Pipeline	Quantitative data present but unclear submission feasibility	Not quantitative OR cannot be submitted through Data Pipeline
		Demonstrates clear, non-duplicative value (not already captured by required or approved measures)	Adds generally new information, but some overlap may exist	Potential duplication with existing measures	Clearly duplicates a state-required measures OR an existing optional measure
		Data source is clearly defined and not reused in conflicting ways	Data source is defined but could be clearer	Data source or usage is unclear or inconsistently described	Data source unclear or inappropriate
		Submission shows strong understanding of framework integration	No major duplication issues	May require moderate revisions to fit framework	Cannot be integrated into framework without major redesign
Use of [illegible]	The measure relies on reliable student outcome or performance	Clearly measures a defined student outcome	Measures a student outcome, though definition may need minor clarification	Student outcome is unclear, indirect, or partially defined	Does not measure a student outcome (e.g., input, perception, activity)

Criteria	Description	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
	data to assess effectiveness and student success.	Outcomes are fully attributable to the AEC; Data is entirely from students enrolled at the AEC with no reliance on prior school or external data	Mostly attributable to AEC (minor ambiguity possible)	Attribution to AEC is weak or partially unsupported	Not attributable to AEC (uses prior or external data)
		Includes a strong majority of students (e.g., ≥75% of students eligible for the measure)	Includes a majority of students, but not fully representative	Limited population coverage OR unclear rationale	Covers a small or non-representative subset of students
		Participation rate is high (≥75%) OR there is a clear plan to achieve ≥75% participation and is structurally embedded (e.g., required administration), feasible given schedule and population, and barriers identified and mitigated	Reasonable plan for strong participation; Some details missing, but generally feasible	Participation plan is unclear or weak; Risks to achieving sufficient participation	No clear plan for participation; Likely low participation; Significant barriers not addressed
		Population is clearly defined and representative	Minor gaps in population clarity or inclusion	Some inclusion of data outside AEC context possible	Data source undermines validity of outcome
Rigo r and	The measure demonstrates the necessary rigor and	Measure is state or nationally normed, or strongly justified if locally normed	Norming approach is defined but may require clarification	Norming unclear or weakly justified	No clear norming approach

Criteria	Description	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
	validity to be used for accountability purposes.	Academic measures are clearly aligned to Colorado Academic Standards (if applicable)	Standards alignment is present but not fully detailed	Limited or partial standards alignment	No standards alignment (if required)
		Full technical specifications provided including calculation method, administration process, and scoring	Technical specifications are mostly complete	Technical specifications incomplete	Missing or unclear technical specifications
		Strong evidence of validity either external validation or well-supported internal validation	Validity evidence is present but limited	Minimal or unclear validity evidence	No evidence of validity
		Reliability is clearly addressed through standardized scoring or inter-rater reliability processes	Reliability is addressed but not fully developed	Reliability not clearly addressed	No reliability safeguards
		Cut point methodology is clearly defined and well-justified, and rationale for thresholds is supported by data or established benchmarks	Cut point methodology is defined but rationale could be stronger	Cut point methodology present but weak or poorly justified	Cut point methodology not defined or not usable
Sufficient Varia	The measure captures enough	Clear evidence or strong expectation of variation in student performance	Adequate variability demonstrated	Limited variability in data	Little to no variability in results

Criteria	Description	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
	variability in performance to justify use in a system that compares performance across different individuals or groups.	Students and schools can perform at all levels, including "does not meet"			Not possible for students/schools to fail
		All four performance categories are defined and expected to be represented in data	Most performance levels represented	Some performance levels rarely represented	One or more performance levels missing
		Expected or observed distribution demonstrates meaningful spread across categories	Expected or observed distribution shows some differentiation	Distribution is clustered or uneven	Distribution is flat or uniform
		Cut points create clear differentiation	Cut point differentiation generally functional but may need refinement	Cut points do not clearly differentiate performance	Cut points do not support meaningful differentiation in performance
		No evidence of ceiling effects or artificial inflation	Minor concerns about clustering or spread	Risk of inflated or compressed results	
		Measure supports cross-school comparison and/or longitudinal comparison			Measure not appropriate for normative accountability

Rubric for New Optional Measures

Appendix D. **Example Rationale for Approving/Denying New Optional Measures**

This section highlights approvable and not approvable optional measures in alignment with the guiding principles. The rationale is meant to support districts and AECs as they complete the district narrative for the New Optional Measure Application process.

Examples of Approvable and Not Approvable Measures for Each Guiding Principle

1. Optional measure is a technical fit with performance frameworks

Approvable: Median percentile rank for Achievement for STAR Enterprise

- This measure is approvable because it cleanly fits with the Academic Achievement indicator (i.e., it is a measure of student achievement), it uses quantitative data (i.e., median percentile ranks), and it is not duplicative with any current approved measure (i.e., captures data from STAR - a local assessment that has not yet been approved for use as an optional measure for this AEC).

Not Approvable: Qualitative reports on student engagement and school culture

- This measure is **not** approvable because it does not use quantitative data (i.e., qualitative reports) and therefore cannot be submitted through Data Pipeline or included within the performance framework structure. In this instance, this data could be better served as a part of the data narrative within the Unified Improvement Plan.

2. Optional measure uses student outcome/performance data

Approvable: Student re-enrollment rates based on population of eligible students for non-transition schools

- This measure is approvable because it is based on student outcomes for that AEC (i.e., student re-enrollment at the AEC) and captures as much of the student population as possible (i.e., all eligible students).

Not Approvable: Attendance change rates from students' previous schools compared to current school

- This measure is **not** approvable because it is based on student outcomes from students while at another school.

3. Optional measure has established rigor and validity needed for accountability use

Approvable: NWEA MAP Conditional Growth Percentiles

- This measure is approvable because it is nationally normed, technical specifications are available for the measure, and validity of the measure has previously been established for use on the frameworks. See the Optional Measure Cut Point Lookup Document.

Not Approvable: Locally developed content assessments with little established internal or external validity

- This measure is **not** approvable because it is unclear whether the locally developed content assessments are aligned to Colorado Academic Standards or state/national norms and the validity has not been established prior to use on the frameworks. High-level considerations for using local assessments are to determine if there is alignment to norms at the state or district level, if the assessment is compared to other students or assessing mastery of specific skills or knowledge, and if the test is appropriate for the grade level and population tested.

4. **Optional measure demonstrates sufficient variability in performance to justify use in a normative accountability system**

Approvable: Student discipline rates with district-specific cut points

- This measure is approvable because it is possible for a student or school to fail the measure and data is variable enough to establish cut points (i.e., district-specific cut points already exist). For this measure, cut points would need to be regularly revisited for rigor.

Not Approvable: FAFSA completion rate for a school that requires all students to complete a FAFSA application

- This measure is **not** approvable because it is not possible to fail the measure (i.e., all students are required to complete a FAFSA) and, because of this, it is likely that the data is not variable enough to establish cut points for all four rating categories.

Other Examples of Not Approvable Measures and Associated Rationale

Student Engagement Survey: A school serving students with significant special needs requested a student engagement measure based on a national life skills survey. The survey was given by staff and staff provided the answers. The survey was largely based on life skills successfully gained by the students. These life skills included, balancing a checkbook, self care, accessing transportation etc. We were unable to approve this survey because the school did not have a rubric for success in these areas, there were concerns with inter-rater reliability, and the data was provided by the staff, not the students, so it was unclear if the measure was appropriately student driven.

ICAP Completion/Portfolio Completion: ICAP completion is a graduation requirement in Colorado. Unless the progress toward ICAP completion is being tracked by all students in a credit earning course with a sole focus on ICAP that can be passed/failed, this measure is hard to approve and is likely more appropriate to use the measure to track graduation requirements instead.

PWR Measure: A school requested a measure based on work based education and skills. Students were all involved in internships or apprenticeship programs. The measurement and progress would be completed by supervisors in the workplace. This measure was unable to be approved based on inter-rater reliability, no norms across workplaces, and overall concerns with how data is generated and measured.