

HB25-1278 K-12 Accountability Bill Explained

High-Level Talking Points:

- HB23-1241 created a 26 member task force with diverse stakeholders at the table.
- This task force generated a consensus report recommending 30 changes, transforming the K-12 accountability system.
- We have taken a highly stakeholdered task force report and stakeholdered it some more which has led to the amended bill in front of you.
- While the task force could not find consensus on everything and there are plenty of unsolved concerns with the accountability system, this bill brings forward significant and substantial changes to the accountability system for all stakeholders.
- The biggest changes are in the categories of:
 - State Testing
 - Data Influencing School and District Accreditation Ratings
 - Postsecondary Workforce Readiness
 - Accountability Clock
 - Addressing Insufficient Data
 - Areas of Continuous Study
- Within an effort to live within the financial constraints of this fiscal year and the coming fiscal years we removed a package of studies from the introduced bill and found cost offsets for the rest of the bill.

Detailed Summary if Needed:

The 2025 K-12 Accountability Bill culminates a multi-year effort to reform and update the K-12 accountability system. After an audit performed in 2021, the Accountability, Accreditation, Student Performance, and Resource Inequity Task Force was created by HB23-1241. 26 members, representing all viewpoints, participated in over 150 hours of meetings to create 30 unanimous recommendations to reform the K-12 accountability system. The bill sponsors have taken this extensively stakeholdered task force report and stakeholdered it some more to put forward this bill.

The 30 recommendations can be understood in 7 buckets:

1. Changes to State Testing
2. Changes to Data Influencing School and District Accreditation Ratings
3. Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Changes
4. Accountability Clock Changes
5. Addressing Insufficient Data
6. Areas of Continuous Study

State Testing

The task force considered the reasons why students and families may not be participating in the CMAS tests. To address the low hanging fruit, the task force recommended the following changes to state tests included:

- Releasing test results sooner
- Providing smaller and more flexible assessments for students
- Address access concerns by translating state assessments
- Studying a process to implement adaptive assessments

Data Influencing School and District Accreditation Ratings

To make the accreditation system more equitable between various districts and schools, the task force recommended the following changes to the data influencing the district accreditation ratings.

- Adding requirements to earn a Distinct rating label
- Counting students for 2 years after their completion of an IEP
- Disaggregating student groups (ELL, at risk, etc.) when calculating a school or districts rating
- Provide guidance to local boards on how to monitor the improvement process

Accountability Clock

The overall goal of the task force recommendations is to provide support early to those schools and districts early on the clock while providing flexibility at the end of the clock. Changes recommended to the accountability clock include:

- Develop system to identify early indicators of distress
- Provide resources and supports to schools and districts early on the clock
- Provide guidance, support, and flexibility for schools and districts late on the clock

Postsecondary Workforce Readiness

The task force recommended aligning the accreditation system evaluation factors with recent work to incentivize postsecondary credentials and pathways (the "big blur"). This reform includes beginning to recognize schools and districts that provide resources for students to receive workforce credentials and certificates while in school, adding to the existing indicator that measures successful workforce progression post-high school.

Addressing Insufficient Data

The task force looked to address low participation in the accreditation system directly. The task force recommendations recognize this problem is multifaceted, as low participation can interact with Colorado's laws that allow test opt-outs. The task force focused its recommendations on providing guidance to schools and districts around test opt-out communications and requiring schools and districts with low participation to explain how they address low test participation. The bill also creates a requirement for schools with low test participation to create a "corrective action plan." The corrective action plan is designed to create discussion between the school community.

Continuous Study

150 hours was insufficient to address every area in a system as comprehensive and essential as the K-12 accountability system. The bill directs the Department of Education to perform studies of the following areas:

- Student count thresholds (N-size) for accountability calculations and reporting
- Ways to reduce the volatility of small districts and schools

The task force also recognized the need for the accountability system to continue to be reevaluated at regular intervals.

