



FAQ: HB21-1294

K-12 Education Accountability Systems Performance Audit

What will HB21-1294 do?

At its most basic level, [HB21-1294](#) will direct the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) to contract with a public or private entity to conduct a performance audit of the statewide implementation of K-12 standards and assessments and the statewide accountability system.

The goal of this independent audit is to address the effectiveness of the accountability system in objectively measuring the performance of public schools and districts in delivering a system of thorough and uniform public education for all students.

The audit must be completed by November 15, 2022. Following review by the Legislative Audit Committee, the report must be submitted to the Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education, and the education committees of the General Assembly.

What kinds of questions will the audit ask?

The audit will ask questions like the following:

- Does the system create or maintain bias?
- Is the system accurate, credible, and comparable?
- Are the interventions and supports directed by the system helping students?

These questions are broken into several specific directives that include the following:

- Is the system effective at measuring the performance of public schools (currently focused on the academic growth model, achievement, and postsecondary and workforce readiness)?
- Is the system able to identify successes and drive effective support for improvement?
- Does the system contain or maintain institutional or cultural biases?
- Are the interventions effective at supporting and improving outcomes?
- Do the interventions or the system cause students to lose access to non-tested subjects?
- Do the interventions support “at-risk” students?

- If, and how much, accountability outcomes correlate to levels of poverty, disability and/or minority populations
- If all students get access to same learning opportunities and resources as “high-income peers”
- If the system is a credible way to compare schools/districts
- If schools are struggling to support/serve “at-risk” students AND if interventions are successful

Why is this bill needed?

Colorado adopted the statewide system of standards and assessments in 2008 ([SB08-130](#)) and the statewide education accountability system in 2009 ([SB09-163](#)). One goal of these legislative acts was to make sure Colorado’s systems met federal guidelines set forth in NCLB and, more recently, ESSA. The result of this legislation, today, is the accountability and accreditation system for our public schools and districts. Schools and school districts accredited (rated) with Priority Improvement Plan or lower for several consecutive years may be subject to a variety of state mandated interventions, including takeover.

Over a decade old, our school accountability system has never had a comprehensive performance audit (essentially an evaluation).

We don’t know if our accountability system is achieving the goals set out in [statute 22-11-102 and 22-7-1002](#).

We don’t know if our accountability system maintains or creates inequities for students or families based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, age, or economic status.

We do know that, according to the [Legislative Council Staff Issue Brief 14-17](#) (from 2014), there are racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in achievement. These disparities remain unresolved and appear to be impacted by the same inequities and biases the auditor will be reviewing.

Why does CEA support this bill?

CEA’s 39,000 members believe that we need a high quality, well calibrated, accountability system that supports our students, public schools, and educators. It’s our responsibility to ensure that students have exceptional learning in every public school, regardless of the color of their skin and the neighborhood they live in. HB21-1294 can help continue this work by taking an overdue look at our system of accountability for our public schools, with a critical lens of ensuring equity and being free of bias.

CEA’s support for this bill can be wrapped up in THREE critical Questions:

- **Equity.** Does the system contain or maintain racial, cultural, and socio-economic biases, resulting in students being treated unfairly or denied resources? Can we review the system to see if it is meeting the needs of ALL our students?

- **Resources.** Our public schools are underfunded and resources are limited. Are the resources and interventions available to our students and public schools supporting student growth and equity?
- **Time.** How much instructional time does a student have and what impact does our accountability system have on students and their access to instruction, intervention, and diverse courses?

What can I do to show my support for this bill?

[Contact your State Senator](#) and tell them to support HB21-1294!