

Mission-Driven Accountability for Colorado Alternative Schools

Momentum Strategy & Research is focused on informing alternative school accountability systems across the nation through a comprehensive national database of alternative school information, performance data, and related policy elements. Momentum's efforts in Colorado include support for alternative education campuses (AECs) in demonstrating how innovative measures of success can be used for accountability purposes. This project grew out of recommendations by a State legislatively-mandated workgroup in 2015 that called for integrating qualitative measures in the School Performance Framework by: *"capturing the essential unique qualities of effective AECs, and including additional performance measures that are relevant to a school's unique design and mission."*¹

Opportunity Measure Demonstration Project

The recommendation by the AEC Accountability Workgroup led to the collaboration between Colorado AECs and Momentum to design the Opportunity Measure Demonstration Project (OMDP), which provides a more effective evaluation of unique measures, including for potential accountability purposes.

The OMDP provides external review panels to validate unique, mission-driven outcomes tied to interventions, programs, or services provided to the school's students. The term "opportunity measure" refers to the multiple pieces of information and data, both qualitative and quantitative, that taken together explain mission-specific student outcomes.

The OMDP is coordinated by Momentum in conjunction with participating schools and is funded by a combination of philanthropic funds and school contributions. Participating schools provide data around their identified opportunity measure, and Momentum helps schools refine their identified opportunity measures for submission. The materials as submitted then go to external review panels, each assembled to provide a balance of perspective and expertise. The panelists review and discuss the submitted information, and each panelist provides both feedback for school improvement and ratings, based on rubrics, for potential accountability purposes.

Momentum compiles the reviews, ratings, and attendant information provided by each panel and provides it to participating schools with an opportunity for further feedback.

As the process is refined, the ultimate goal is that an alternative school's "opportunity measure" would be captured on their School Performance Framework (SPF) and taken into account in determining the school's overall performance level on the SPF. Making this a reality requires an ability to demonstrate to the Colorado Department of Education that unique components of alternative school programs can be fairly and objectively evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Next Steps – Year 2 Pilot

The first year of the Opportunity Measure Demonstration Project included 11 schools as full participants, with other schools participating as part of review panels. Year-one OMDP activities were reviewed by a program evaluator, and with her recommendations and the project team's experiences, year-two of the OMDP will feature significant improvements and the opportunity to serve additional schools and partners. Momentum has space to add 5 schools to the OMDP in year-two. If your school is interested in participating or learning more, please contact Liz Hackett at lhackett@momentum-sr.org.

¹ Full report can be found at: https://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/2015_aec_awg_final_report