



2017-2018

Annual Report




COLORADO
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE

Index

Our singular focus on public charter schools translates into tailored customer service, a keen understanding of their unique needs, and the ability to better advocate for them.



1 Welcome Letter

Welcome Letter from the CSI Executive Director and CSI Board Chair	04
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2 About Us

Who We Are	06
Who We Serve	07

3 Our Schools

Preliminary Academic Ratings	08
School Highlights	09
Portfolio Updates	10

4 Our Work

Student Services Screener	11
Mill Levy Equalization	12
Financial Efficiency	12
A Focus on AECs	13
Transportation	14
Engagement	15
Looking Ahead	16

5 Our People

Meet Our Team	17
Meet Our Board	18

Dear Friends and School Leaders...



From CSI Executive Director, Dr. Terry Croy Lewis and
CSI Board Chair, Luke Ragland

It is a privilege to share our annual review of the 2017-2018 school year. The CSI staff and Board of Directors are immensely grateful for the hard work put in by all of our schools, educators, students, and families. CSI had many successes this year, and there are continued obstacles CSI will work to overcome. As we reflected on our achievements during the 2017-2018 year, a common theme emerged: turning ideas into action.

Whether it was moving closer to funding equity via the CSI Mill Levy Equalization Fund, addressing accountability issues for our Alternative Education Campuses (AECs), or removing transportation obstacles for families, CSI was focused on turning ideas into action.

We've worked to turn big ideas into tangible actions by staying true to three key concepts:

1) Small wins are symbolic and push us forward.

In several examples we highlight in this report, the level of change necessary is significant. In these instances, CSI practiced an unwavering determination and strict discipline, as well as a pragmatic willingness, to take the small first step. We did this knowing that this could lead to greater, more significant change. These small wins kept us motivated to push further and provided the momentum for persistent advocacy.

The most telling example of this was our efforts for Mill Levy Equalization—last year marked a small, but important, first step toward funding equity between CSI schools and their district-

authorized charter school peers. While we have a long way to go to ensure that CSI schools have access to the same level of funding as their district school peers, we have made one successful step up the hill. The additional funding was deeply appreciated by our schools, yet more work needs to be done.

2) Internal and external relationships make us stronger. Thinking about the accomplishments highlighted in this report, it is notable that CSI did not go it alone. Rather, CSI tapped into its strong partnerships with its schools, with its partners, and with other like-minded organizations to drive change rather than just talking about it. These relationships were crucial in creating the right conditions to translate ideas into action, and they will continue to be essential as we sustain these changes and drive towards greater change in the coming year.

Our focus on AECs highlights the importance of relationships. In tackling the challenge of an accountability system that needs to respect and balance the unique nature of AECs, and the need to hold all public schools accountable for performance, CSI collaborated with university researchers, AEC school leaders, leaders from districts with AECs, the Colorado Department of Education, and the Colorado League of Charter Schools. This collaboration led to vigorous conversations and perspective sharing with the ultimate goal of forming recommendations moving forward. More details about this work group and its outcomes can be found in this report.



3) Aligning our actions with our mission and purpose is essential. Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, is that these changes were not made just for the sake of change. These are ideas that align with our fundamental purpose as an organization—to ensure that all students have access to high-quality public school options, particularly those that serve at-risk students. This direct alignment to our mission empowers our team to drive forward with a confident and clear focus towards actions that can help to meet our mission.

A great example of mission-aligned action is that of our Student Services Screener and tiers of supports. Developed in 2016-2017 in partnership with the National Center for Special Education

in Charter Schools, last year marked the first full year of implementation. This work has led to important conversations related to access and equity at each of our schools, and is based on the fundamental belief that all children deserve access to high-quality options. You can read more about the screener and its early outcomes in this report.

We are excited by the many ideas that were transformed into actions in 2017-2018, and we recognize there are still large obstacles ahead. We are excited to see what CSI, its schools, and its partner organizations are able to do together to turn more ideas into actions and work towards achieving our important mission in the coming year. Stay tuned.

Sincerely,

CSI Executive Director, Dr. Terry Croy Lewis

CSI Board Chair, Luke Ragland

Who We Are

Mission

Our mission is to foster high-quality charter public school choices, particularly those closing the achievement gap for at-risk students.

Vision

Our vision is to be recognized as the nation's most effective charter school authorizer by building a portfolio of high-performing charter public schools that serve all students and utilize innovative educational designs.

History

2004

The State Legislature created the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) in 2004.

2009

Procedures for Exclusive Chartering Authority (ECA) were adjusted allowing districts with ECA to maintain it indefinitely in most instances. This limited the opportunity to apply to CSI for authorization.

2018

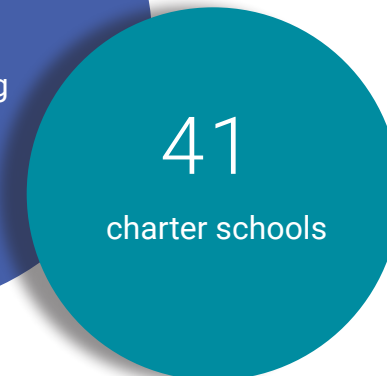
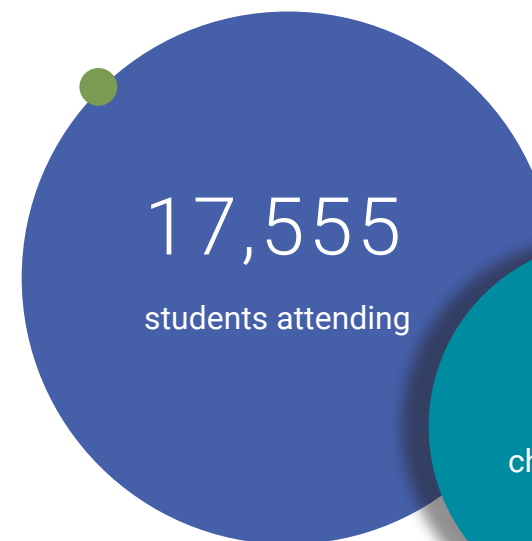
As of spring 2018, CSI authorizes 41 schools across the state.

CSI is a statewide charter school authorizer committed to creating and sustaining a portfolio of high-quality public school options that meet the needs of all students. Our approach to authorizing balances autonomy and accountability.

Who We Serve



CSI is committed to fostering high-quality charter school options, with a particular focus on service to and performance of underserved populations. We take an active approach to evaluating and improving upon service to all students.



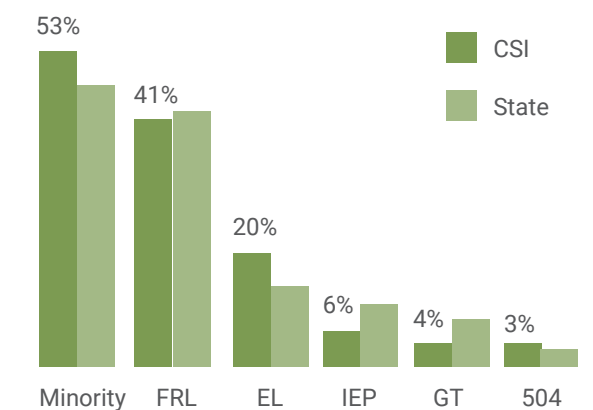
For the second year in a row, CSI was named the fastest growing district in Colorado, making CSI the 16th largest district in the state.

As a statewide authorizer, CSI's portfolio of schools collectively serve a student population that is reflective of the state average across most subgroups.

Demographic Comparison

+1,128 students

6.9%
increase in enrollment



Preliminary Academic Ratings

CARS ratings reflect 2017-2018 academic data and may differ based on financial and organizational performance.

School	City	CARS Rating	Model	Grades
Animas High School	Durango		Project-based Learning	9-12
Caprock Academy	Grand Junction		Core Knowledge	K-12
Colorado Early Colleges Aurora (new)	Aurora		Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins	Fort Collins		Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Parker	Parker		Early College	9-12
Colorado Military Academy	Colorado Springs		Military Academy	K-8
Colorado Springs Charter Academy	Colorado Springs		Core Knowledge	K-8
Colorado Springs Early Colleges	Colorado Springs		Early College	9-12
Community Leadership Academy	Commerce City		Core Knowledge	PK-5
Crown Pointe Academy	Westminster		Core Knowledge	K-8
Early College of Arvada	Arvada		Early College	6-12
Frontier Charter Academy	Calhan		Core Knowledge	K-8
Global Village Academy Colorado Springs	Colorado Springs		Language Immersion	K-8
Global Village Academy Fort Collins	Fort Collins		Language Immersion	K-8
Global Village Academy Northglenn	Northglenn		Language Immersion	K-5
High Point Academy	Aurora		Core Knowledge	PK-8
Indian Peaks Charter School	Granby		Core Knowledge/Expeditionary	K-8
James Irwin Charter Academy	Colorado Springs		Core Knowledge	K-5
Launch High School	Colorado Springs		Blended Learning/Entrepreneurship	9-12
Montessori del Mundo	Aurora		Dual-Language Montessori	PK-6
Monument View Montessori (new)	Fruita		Montessori	PK-3
Mountain Middle School	Durango		Project-based Learning	6-8
Mountain Song Community School	Colorado Springs		Waldorf	PK-8
Mountain Village Montessori	Steamboat Springs		Montessori	PK-6
New Legacy Charter School	Aurora		Alternative Education Campus	9-12
Pikes Peak Prep	Colorado Springs		College Prep	K-12
Ricardo Flores Magon Academy	Westminster		College Prep	K-8
Ross Montessori School	Carbondale		Montessori	K-8
Salida Montessori Charter School	Salida		Montessori	K-8
Stone Creek Charter School	Avon/Gypsum		Core Knowledge	K-8
T.R. Paul Academy of Arts & Knowledge	Fort Collins		Arts Integration	K-8
The Academy of Charter Schools	Westminster		College Prep	K-12
The New America School Lowry	Aurora		Alternative Education Campus	9-12
The New America School Thornton	Thornton		Alternative Education Campus	9-12
The Pinnacle Charter School Elementary	Federal Heights		Core Knowledge	K-5
The Pinnacle Charter School Middle	Federal Heights		Core Knowledge	6-8
The Pinnacle Charter School High	Federal Heights		Core Knowledge	9-12
Thomas MacLaren School	Colorado Springs		College Prep	6-12
Two Rivers Community School	Glenwood Springs		Place based	K-8
Victory Prep Academy Middle	Commerce City		Core Knowledge	6-8
Victory Prep Academy High	Commerce City		Core Knowledge	9-12

● Performance with Distinction ● Performance ● Improvement ● Priority Improvement ● Insufficient Data

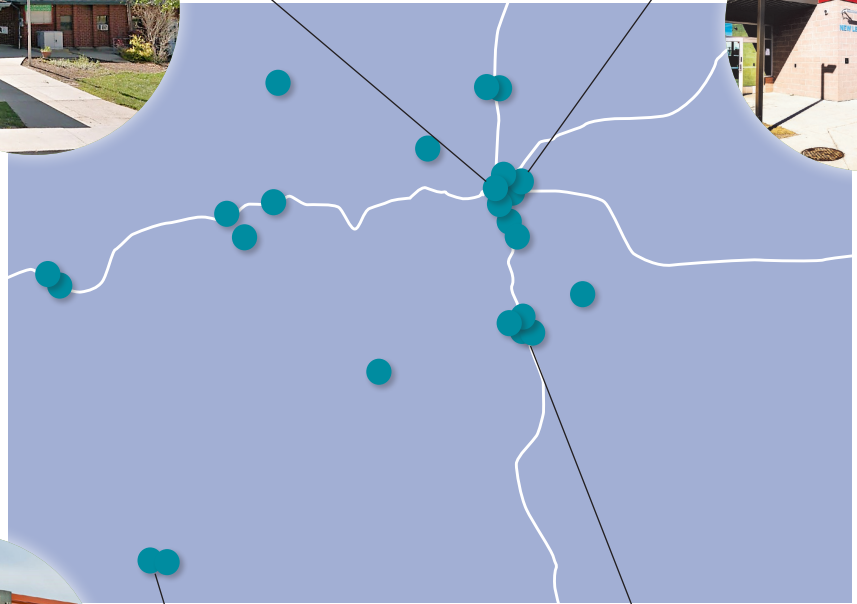
School Highlights

A successful school is more than strong academics. CSI schools experienced many other successes in the 2017-2018 school year. Here are a few highlights:

Ricardo Flores Magon Academy in Westminster was awarded the BEST Grant to build a new PK-8 facility.



New Legacy Charter School in Aurora was awarded a 4-year EARSS (Expelled and At-Risk Student Services) Grant, and is also rolling into year 2 of a 3 year School Health Professionals Grant.



Mountain Middle School in Durango and Pediatric Partners of the Southwest partnered to open a new student-based health center.



Thomas MacLaren School and Global Village Academy - Colorado Springs swapped buildings to better address their facility needs.

Portfolio Updates

CSI’s portfolio is ever evolving, with new, expanding, transferring, and closing schools. For charter schools with a choice in authorizer, “fit” becomes an important factor in a school’s decision to apply to CSI.

2017-2018 Authorization Decisions



Approved Applications



Monarch Classical School of the Arts was approved in the fall of 2017. Monarch is a K-5 classical school located in Colorado Springs.



Golden View Classical Academy was approved as a transfer in the spring of 2018. Golden View is a K-12 classical school located in Golden.

Applicants with the option to apply to CSI undergo a rigorous application review.

47%

of new school applicants are approved by the CSI Board.

Expansions of Existing Schools

School	Location	From	To
Mountain Village Montessori	Steamboat	PK-5	PK-6
Launch High School	Colorado Springs	9-10	9-11
Mountain Middle School	Durango	6-8	4-8
Montessori del Mundo	Aurora	PK-4	PK-5

Thomas MacLaren School in Colorado Springs was approved for an expansion to begin in 2018-2019. Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins & Parker had approved enrollment increases and added satellite offices. The New America School - Thornton transferred out of the CSI portfolio. Pikes Peak Prep in Colorado Springs closed. Global Village Academy - Fort Collins has reduced its grade levels to grades K-5.

Student Services Screener

CSI believes that every child should have access to high-performing public school choices. We are committed to the creation and success of high-quality charter public school options that offer diverse educational models to best meet the needs of every child.

The 2017-2018 school year marked the first full year of implementation of the student services screener and tiers of support. The screener underwent modest revisions to respond to the feedback of schools, and differentiated screeners for Alternative Education Campuses and Early College models were developed to better reflect the unique aspects of these school models.

Each school received a Screener Report in January 2018 that showed a snapshot of the school’s performance in terms of access and equity for students with disabilities, gifted students, English language learners, and students identified under section 504.

The Screener set benchmark expectations for subgroup data in the areas of enrollment, stability of enrollment, academic growth, secondary completion rate (high schools only), discipline, and compliance. Each school was then identified as Tier 1, 2, or 3 based on its data.

In the spring, each Tier 2 and 3 school engaged in the Support Plan process with a CSI Student Services case manager. This personalized process results in the development of specific goals, objectives, and action steps designed to address one or more areas of need identified in the Screener, with the ultimate goal of improving access and equity.



Mill Levy Equalization



CSI believes that every public school student deserves equal access to public resources. One small step towards funding equity for CSI schools was accomplished during legislative session.

House Bill 17-1375

To promote transparent equity in educating students in public schools, and specifically in how districts distribute local Mill Levy Override (MLO) funds among its schools, the General Assembly passed HB 17-1375. Beginning in FY 2019-20, the law requires school districts to either distribute at least 95% of its per pupil MLO revenue to its schools, including charter schools and innovation schools, or have developed a plan that describes how the MLO dollars will be equitably distributed to all district schools.



Mill Levy Equalization Fund

Recognizing that CSI schools do not have access to revenue generated by local Mill Levy Overrides, HB 17-1375 created the CSI Mill Levy Equalization (MLE) Fund but did not appropriate dollars into the fund. The Governor's November 1st budget request for FY 2018-19 included \$5.5M for the CSI MLE Fund to be distributed to CSI schools to ensure parity between students attending CSI schools and students attending district charter schools. The request was approved, thereby making a first, small step toward funding equity for all public school students. This additional \$5.5M was allocated to CSI schools at the beginning of FY 2018-19.

Financial Efficiency



While 3% of CSI's revenue was allocated for operations, CSI operated at 2%. After fulfilling statutory requirements, CSI returned excess revenue to its schools.

\$1,280,439

Returned to CSI schools

\$77

Per student

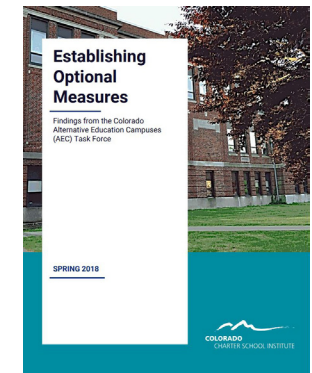
A Focus on AECs



In the summer and fall of 2017, CSI convened a task force to provide input regarding Alternative Education Campus (AEC) accountability issues, to develop policy recommendations around the selection, submission, and verification of optional measures for AECs, and to explore issues around alternative accountability.

In the spring of 2018, the Colorado Charter School Institute, in collaboration with Safal Partners, produced a report titled "Establishing Optional Measures: Findings from the Colorado Alternative Education Campuses (AEC) Task Force". This report addressed three primary questions:

1. How can CSI improve its own process and timeline for finalizing optional measures for AECs?
2. How should the school and the authorizer decide which optional measures to include in the AEC School Performance Framework (SPF)?
3. What is required to sufficiently clarify how an optional measure is operationalized?



Since recommendations and next steps were agreed upon, CSI has:

- Engaged in dialogue with schools to further explore issues
- Used recommendations from the task force to inform the development of CSI Board policy regarding the selection of optional measures and corresponding guidance
- Worked with the Colorado Department of Education to provide input on re-norming attendance and truancy measures
- Started work on the development of a bank of measures

AECs in Colorado

13%

of schools in Colorado are charter public schools

24%

of AECs are charter public schools

AECs enroll higher populations of at-risk students, including students of color, students with disabilities, English Learners, and students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Nearly one third of AECs in Colorado are charter schools. This, along with the findings from this report, illustrates the clear need for CSI and other authorizers to focus on supporting AECs.

Transportation



CSI is committed to continuing to advocate for and support CSI schools in providing transportation to students.

The Colorado Charter School Institute is dedicated to promoting transportation options for CSI schools and their students. During the 2017-2018 school year, CSI hosted a transportation compliance webinar with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), participated in CDE's Transportation Advisory Committee meetings, publicly supported reduced-cost RTD passes in the Denver-metro region for youth and low-income individuals, conducted a transportation panel at the CSI Spring Regional Meetings, and assisted several schools in working with their geographic districts on transportation-related issues.

"CSI supports the proposed reductions to RTD passes for youth and low-income individuals because it will help more of our most underserved students and families access quality education options across the Denver-Metro region."

- from the CSI Letter to the RTD Board



Update

On September 18, 2018, the RTD Board of Directors officially approved the creation of an RTD youth pass which will take effect January 1, 2019!



Engagement



CSI's team of experienced educational professionals are partners in the ongoing success of its schools. Here are some ways CSI engages with its schools.

Regional Meetings

In the 2017-2018 school year, CSI staff traveled to each of its three regions: Denver, Colorado Springs, and the Western Slope in September, December, and May. Each of these meetings featured a school leader strand and a strand of sessions with a specific CSI department focus. The goals of these meetings were to increase in-person communication and support with schools, promote CSI school collaboration and networking, and provide focused trainings for school staff.

Governing Board Events

CSI also facilitated Board to Board Networking & Training events over the course of the year. These events were designed to offer training, support, and networking opportunities for CSI school boards. Topics included budget feedback, accreditation & CARS 2.0, governance training, legal requirements and implementation, finance training, summer board retreats, and strategic planning.

97%

of schools participated in one or more regional meetings

100%

of schools were visited by a CSI staff member

"We believe we are entering a new level of partnership with CSI... We value their input and seek their assistance on a consistent basis in discussion around achievement and growth. I expect to use their analysis as a critical piece of our work in setting measurable achievable goals that continue us on our path to sustained annual excellence. I would expect our school to be considered an example of how an authorizer and charter school can work together to achieve mutual goals with shared expertise."

- David Floodeen & Tony Fontana, leadership of The Academy in Westminster

Looking Ahead



Authorizing Best Practice

With support from the federal National Leadership Activities grant, CSI will collaborate with Colorado, California, and Florida authorizers to strengthen district-led charter school authorizing, including small and rural authorizing, through education and engagement activities.



Funding Equity

CSI will continue the fight for funding equity for its charter public school students. For the 2019 legislative session, CSI will advocate for \$25.7M to the Mill Levy Equalization Fund. This amount represents parity between students in CSI schools and district schools, and will help to close the funding gap in Colorado.



Preschool

CSI understands the importance of high-quality preschool options and is committed to supporting its schools in the creation and expansion of programs to meet the needs of their communities. CSI will be working on the following initiatives to support Preschool programs:

- Expansion of the CSI Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) Council
- Development of preschool guidance
- Improvement of the quality monitoring process for preschools and kindergartens that receive CPP and ECARE slots



Rural Schools

Rural schools face unique challenges. CSI will be working in the coming year to ensure its rural schools have access to professional development, equitable funding, and resources.



Governance

CSI places significant emphasis on the value of strong and effective school governing boards. To this end, CSI has increased supports for governing boards to include: training events, networking, personalized coaching, and site visits.

Meet Our Team

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LEGAL & POLICY TEAM



Terry Croy Lewis, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Trish Krajniak
Marisa Bayless

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT TEAM



Ryan Marks
Aislinn Walsh
Jessica Welch
Greg Nusz

DATA SUBMISSIONS TEAM | COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Janet Dinnen
Julie Eddy
Ryan Hartung
Sarah Clark
Amanda Oberg

FINANCE TEAM



Amanda Karger
Cassie Walgren
Allegra Matus
Marcie Robidart
Julia Linares-Roake

STUDENT SERVICES TEAM



Clare Vickland
Matt Hudson
Kimberly Caplan
Nick Stachokus

NOT PICTURED: Mina Parthasarathy (Infinite Campus Support), Tami Boley (PowerSchool Support), John Brendza (School Support Liaison)
CSI welcomed Marisa Bayless, Julia Linares-Roake, and Greg Nusz to the team beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

Meet Our Board



Luke Ragland
Board Chair

Liz Aybar-Conti
Vice Chair

Frank McNulty
Secretary



CSI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Governor of Colorado and the Commissioner of Education. The CSI Board is statutorily required to be mission-driven and politically balanced which ensures steady leadership of our organization and stable oversight of our schools.



Tom Brinegar
Treasurer

Yee-Ann Cho

Bob LaPalme*



Eric Lerum

Antonio Parés

Kristi Pollard

*Bob LaPalme’s term ended July 1, 2018. Tamara Olson has been appointed by the Governor to fill the vacant seat.



www.csi.state.co.us