

COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE

ADVANCING EQUITY

Annual Report 201<mark>8-2019</mark> Our mission is to foster high-quality charter public school choices, particularly those closing the achievement gap.

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Two Rivers Community School in Glenwood Springs

WELCOME



Dear Friends,

It is an honor to share our 2018-2019 year in review for the Colorado Charter School Institute. As we reflected on the many notable accomplishments of our students, schools, staff, and organization, as well as the real challenges we faced, it became apparent that a common thread to describe this past year was the **laser-sharp focus on advancing** equity.

Conversations about access and equity guide most of our organization's efforts. We discuss and examine structural barriers and resource limitations that can impact access to high-quality school options. We highlight the exemplar strategies and practices that have led to positive outcomes for our schools. And we continue to identify ways we can impact change at the organizational level to advance equity within our portfolio.

As an authorizer focused on high-quality school options that meet the needs of all students, we have taken an active approach to advancing equity. This is apparent in the organizational initiatives we have launched, the cohorts and partnerships we have established, and in our continued advocacy on behalf of our 18,000+ students.

Aligned Organizational Initiatives

In line with our mission of fostering high-quality school options for all students, CSI committed additional resources to support its special populations this past year. In fact, *every single CSI department* implemented programming to advance equity for one or more special populations.

This report specifically highlights the ongoing work and collaboration between our Student Services and Evaluation & Assessment teams. In order to advance equity, we must be able to recognize what the data is showing us and lead the conversation to identify root causes and determine effective practices to address the challenges. As you'll see in this report, the early outcomes of this work are promising.

Collaboration within the Portfolio and through Partnerships

In addition to the work within our departments, CSI launched multiple cohorts to gather emerging and existing leaders across our schools to dive more deeply into systems, structures, and practices that support school improvement. Approaching the issue from different vantage points, the core focus for every cohort was exploring opportunities to increase access and improve the performance of all students. In total, our cohorts reached over 20 staff members in 16 schools. School-level staff worked to establish a culture of continuous improvement within their schools through the School Improvement Fellowship. They utilized structures to engage in a systematic problem-solving approach through the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Cohort. They addressed relevant topics and problems of practice for new leaders through the Year 1 Cohort.

CSI also partnered with organizations to advance leadership capacity and expand professional development offerings across our schools. While our schools continue to find creative ways to do more with less than their equitable share of public education revenue, CSI committed additional resources to offer school staff opportunities for development in areas such as special education and English Learners.

Advocacy Efforts

While we can advance equity through our continued organizational commitment, the reality is that other barriers to equity must be addressed through advocacy.

Our schools came together to advocate for funding equity—and specifically mill levy equalization by reaching out to their legislators and testifying at the Capitol. The voice of CSI was heard loud and clear, resulting in a near unanimous denial of a bill to strip CSI schools of mill levy equalization. CSI also took another small step towards funding equity by the end of legislative session.

We hope you enjoy our year in review and are as energized as we are to continue our focus on ensuring that our students have equitable access to a high-quality education and resources in communities throughout the state.

Teny hay Lewis

Dr. Terry Croy Lewis CSI Executive Director

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Luke Ragland CSI Board Chair

WHO WE ARE

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) is a state charter school authorizer established by the Colorado legislature in 2004. We believe that every child should have access to high-performing school choices. We offer our schools the flexibility to choose the educational models and methods that best meet the unique needs of their students and communities, and we hold them accountable to clear expectations for academic, financial, and organizational performance.

Mission

Our mission is to foster highquality 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.

CSI's work is founded upon three principles of high-quality authorizing:



ACCESS

to high-quality school options for all students



AUTONOMY

for schools to innovate to best meet the needs of their students



ACCOUNTABILITY

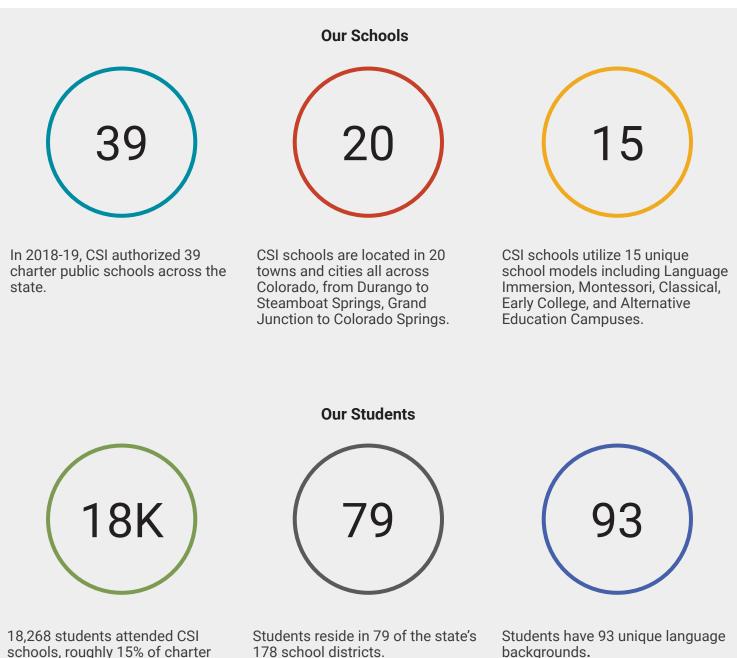
for schools in meeting clear expectations for performance



Montessori del Mundo in Aurora

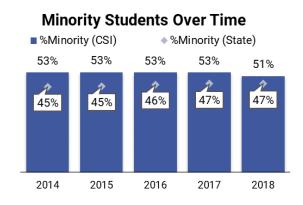
WHO WE SERVE

CSI is committed to fostering a portfolio of high-quality public school options that best meet the needs of all students.

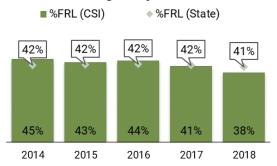


schools, roughly 15% of charter school students in Colorado.

As a statewide authorizer, CSI's portfolio of schools serves a student population that is reflective of the state average across most subgroups. Service to students who qualify for special education or Section 504 plans continues to trend upward.



Lunch Eligibility Over Time

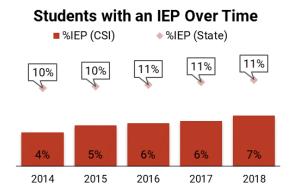


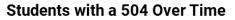


%ELL (CSI)

%ELL (State)

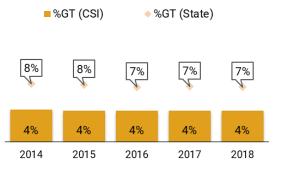






■ %504 (CSI) ♦ %504 (State) 3% 3% 2% 3% 2% 3% 2% 2% 2% 1% 🔁 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Gifted Students Over Time



ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL INITIATIVES

Continued Commitment to Serving All Students

CSI remains committed to fostering high-quality charter school options with a particular focus on service to and performance of at-risk students. Importantly, CSI takes an active approach to evaluating and improving upon serving all students well.

In 2015, the CSI Board passed Board Resolution 1549, which affirmed CSI's commitment to closing the achievement gap and charged staff with increasing and improving services for students.

The following year, CSI commissioned a Special Education Report to review the state of its special education programs and services and provide recommendations for moving forward. In 2017, CSI collaborated with the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools to develop the Student Services Screener and Tiers of Support to assess and support schools in providing equal access and quality programs to students who qualify for specialized supports. A SPED MOU was also established to articulate clear roles and responsibilities for special education school staff.

In 2018, CSI expanded its special education initiatives by partnering to offer capacity building and professional development for special education staff at CSI schools.

Moving forward, CSI is working to increase financial resources to better support students with special needs.

Expanded English Language Development Training

CSI hosted its first ever English Language Development (ELD) professional development series in 2018-19 in line with its organizational focus to advance equity. Trainings took place regionally, and attendees included English Learner Coordinators as well as general education teachers and staff from both CSI and non-CSI schools.

Training topics included aligning programs and procedures to support linguistically diverse students, lesson-planning considerations and differentiation strategies for a culturally and linguistically diverse student population, and practical ways to use student-level English language proficiency data in future year planning. Over 65 staff members from 26 CSI schools attended!

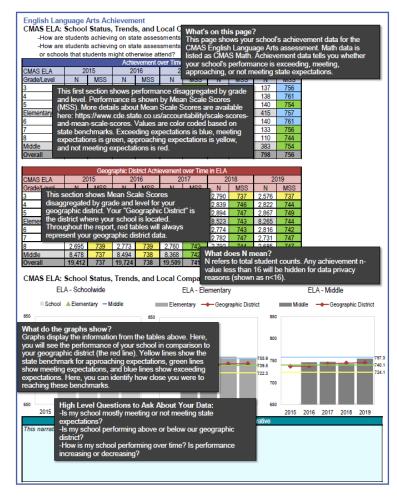


Accountability Training for School Leaders & Board Members

In order to make meaningful changes that can advance access and equity, a strong understanding of a school's data is crucial.

In addition to collaborating with the Student Services team to use data to initiate conversations about access and equity, the Evaluation and Assessment team also provided in-depth training to school leadership and school board members on CSI's accountability system.

Team members supported school stakeholders in interpreting the results of the CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS) report for their particular schools. Over the past year, CSI staff provided CARS training to over 25 of its schools. Additionally, resources like the annotated CARS report have been created for schools to access as they review their school's data.



Annotated CARS Report

"We believe we are entering a new level of partnership with CSI based on our trust in their leadership and expertise. We value their input and seek their assistance on a consistent basis in discussions 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."

- School Leader, 2018-2019

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH COHORTS



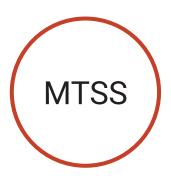
The Year 1 Cohort was launched in 2018-19 to build supports and develop peer-to-peer relationships among new CSI school leaders. Operating a charter school comes with unique challenges, so the opportunity to connect with others in similar situations helps to build stronger leaders and in turn makes a positive impact on schools and communities.

The 2018-19 cohort included leaders across 6 schools that met virtually throughout the school year. Monthly sessions focused on timely topics, leadership development, and opportunities for leaders to discuss problems of practice.

All of the school leaders who regularly participated in the cohort meetings returned to their schools for the 2019-20 school year. The School Improvement Fellowship (SIF) was launched in 2018. There is no "one size fits all" solution for school improvement. but the SIF provides school leaders with some elements of an effective continuous improvement system and connects them with peers who are grappling with similar challenges. This first year, SIF participants built their networks, increased the quality of school improvement planning, and came away with new tools to help facilitate and manage change at the school level.

SIF

School leaders from 8 CSI schools met quarterly and engaged with other fellows and outside experts in areas of organizational leadership and systems improvement.



The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Collaborative was created in partnership with a cohort of CSI schools and the Colorado Department of Education. The Collaborative was made possible through a State Personnel Development grant to expand MTSS work across the state. In its third year, it has provided a platform for school personnel to work together to create solutions for challenges at their schools.

The Collaborative provided a venue for school staff to share best practices and lessons learned as well as gain insights from other school leaders facing similar issues. CDE and CSI facilitated five meetings throughout the year, offered background knowledge, and provided a framework for problem-solving. School personnel worked together to brainstorm ways to more effectively address school issues and implement MTSS.

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS



CSI partnered with the RELAY Graduate School of Education to offer the Special Education Leadership Academy to CSI school staff. This partnership helps to build capacity in CSI schools by training and developing special education teachers and leaders. It also helps schools create a strong special education pipeline at a time when finding qualified special education staff can be a challenge. The Special Education Leadership Academy helps build a strong foundation for special education teachers to become leaders in their buildings.

"I always felt like I walked away with information that I could immediately implement or add to my list of things to do. Even the weeks where I was exhausted, work was busy and the last thing I wanted to do was participate in a 2-hour online class, I did it and all those feelings were gone as soon as I signed on."

- CSI School RELAY Participant



CSI partnered with the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) to reserve a designated number of seats for select 2-4 day Professional Development Institutes and make them available to CSI school staff at a significant discount. Training topics included Effective Mentoring & Coaching, Thinking Strategies, Minds on Math, and Science. Schools may not have adequate funds to send staff to trainings, or may be unsure of where to find external professional development, so this partnership allows CSI to offer quality professional development opportunities to CSI schools at a discount, ensuring equitable access to high-quality learning and supports.

ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH ADVOCACY

Setting the Context

In 2017, the General Assembly passed House Bill 17-1375 to promote equity in educating public school students, and it specifically outlined the way in which districts could distribute local Mill Levy Override (MLO) funds among their schools. The law requires school districts to either distribute at least 95% of their per pupil MLO revenue to all of their schools (including charter schools) or to establish a plan that describes how the MLO dollars will be equitably distributed to all district schools.

Recognizing that CSI schools do not have access to revenue generated by local Mill Levy Overrides, HB17-1375 created the CSI Mill Levy Equalization (MLE) Fund and allowed the legislature to allocate funding on an annual basis. Funding would ensure parity between students attending CSI schools and students attending district-run schools.

During the 2018 legislative session, the General Assembly allocated \$5.5 million to the CSI MLE Fund to be distributed in the 2018-2019 school year to CSI schools.

Protecting Our Access

The 2019 legislative session kicked off with a bill (HB19-1190) seeking to strip CSI schools of the Mill Levy Equalization Fund. Students, teachers, parents, school leaders, our fellow district-run charter schools, and education partners stepped up to ensure our voices were heard loud and clear: all public school students, including those attending CSI schools, deserve access to public resources.

One of those powerful voices was that of Sabrina, a New Legacy Charter School student. With her two-year old, Avyan, on her lap, Sabrina shared powerful testimony of her personal journey, from dropping out of school and becoming pregnant to the support and education that she and her son received at New Legacy Charter School. Thanks to the testimony and advocacy of Sabrina and many others, CSI's access to funding equity was protected with a 12-1 defeat of HB19-1190.



CSI believes that every public school student deserves equal access to public resources. During the 2019 legislative session, another small step towards funding equity for CSI schools was achieved.



New Legacy Charter School student, Sabrina, and her son testifying at the Capitol

Advancing Funding Equity

The mechanism allowing CSI schools to access mill levy equalization dollars was maintained, which was a significant victory for students attending CSI schools.

As legislative session continued, the General Assembly ultimately appropriated \$7 million to the CSI Mill Levy Equalization Fund to be distributed in the 2019-2020 school year to CSI schools. In doing so, CSI schools would receive \$317 per student in additional funds.

Students attending CSI schools still see over \$1,200 less than their district peers. While there is still a long way to go to achieve funding equity through the CSI Mill Levy Equalization Fund, the outcomes from the 2019 legislative session marked another small step forward.

Per Pupil Mill Levy Override/Equalization Dollars

Traditional School



District-Authorized Charter School



CSI-Authorized Charter School



ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

OPERATIONAL

Through purposeful efforts to maintain a lean organization that fulfills its role as a model authorizer and meets the needs of its portfolio, CSI returned nearly \$1 million of unused funds back to schools at the end of the 2018-19 school year.



FINANCIAL

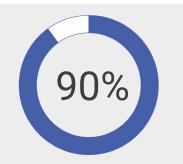
Through intentional communications on grant opportunities and advocacy for charter school eligibility to apply for certain grants, the CSI portfolio accessed greater levels of state and federal grants in the 2018-19 school year.

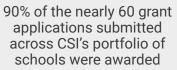


Grants awarded to CSI schools have steadily increased and doubled this past year.



The CSI portfolio received over \$21 million in grants, including a \$15 million BEST Grant





PRELIMINARY ACADEMIC RATINGS

CARS ratings reflect 2018-19 academic data and may differ based on financial and organizational performance.

School	City	CARS Rating	Model	Grades
Academy of Arts & Knowledge	Fort Collins		Arts Integration	K-5
Animas High School	Durango		Project-based Learning	9-12
Caprock Academy	Grand Junction		Core Knowledge	K-12
Colorado Early Colleges Aurora	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-9
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	$\overline{\mathbf{O}}$	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-8
Golden View Classical Academy	Golden		Classical	K-12
High Point Academy	Aurora	\bigcirc	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
Monarch Classical School of the Arts*	Colorado Springs		Classical	K-8
Montessori del Mundo	Aurora		Dual-Language Montessori	PK-6
Monument View Montessori	Fruita		Montessori	PK-4
Mountain Middle School	Durango	$\overline{\mathbf{O}}$	Project-based Learning	4-8
Mountain Song Community School	Colorado Springs		Waldorf	PK-8
Mountain Village Montessori	Steamboat Springs		Montessori	PK-8
New Legacy Charter School	Aurora		Alternative Education Campus	9-12
Ricardo Flores Magon Academy	Westminster		College Prep	K-8
Ross Montessori School	Carbondale		Montessori	K-8
Salida Montessori Charter School	Salida		Montessori	PK-8
Stone Creek Charter School	Avon/Gypsum		Core Knowledge	K-8
The Academy of Charter Schools	Westminster		College Prep	PK-12
The New America School Lowry	Aurora		Alternative Education Campus	9-12
The Pinnacle Charter School	Federal Heights		Core Knowledge	K-12
Thomas MacLaren School	Colorado Springs		College Prep	K-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 Turnaround Insufficient Data *school name changed ^closed at the end of the 2018-19 school year

AUTHORIZATION UPDATES

CSI's portfolio of schools is dynamic. Schools can be added to the CSI portfolio through the approval of new schools, the expansion of existing CSI schools, or from the approval of an existing charter school to transfer from a district authorizer to CSI. Schools can leave the CSI portfolio through non-renewal, closure, or by transferring from CSI to a district authorizer. The CSI portfolio saw several changes in the 2018-19 school year:



New school applicants that have the option to apply to CSI for authorization undergo a rigorous review process. Just under 50% of new school applications are approved by the CSI Board. CSI develops customized expansion applications based on factors such as the proposed scope of the expansion, the school's existing body of evidence, and the amount of time since the school's most recent charter renewal. Academic, financial, or operational issues - or a combination of these - can lead to school closure. The three schools that closed at the end of 2018-19 all experienced operational and financial challenges. Schools that do not receive a five-year renewal term may be eligible for a performance contract. Performance contracts establish milestones that, if met, automatically extend the contract an additional two years. If milestones are not met, then the school comes up for renewal near the end of the current contract term.

LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Behind every successful school is an effective leader. We at CSI believe leaders are found at all levels of an organization, and this belief was confirmed by the many members of the CSI family that were identified as finalists and recipients of the 2019 Colorado League of Charter Schools Hall of Fame Awards.



CHARTER SCHOOL LEADER OF THE YEAR

Mary Faith Hall Thomas MacLaren School Colorado Springs The Charter School Leader of the Year Award recognizes an individual directly involved with a charter school who has demonstrated significant influence in developing or maintaining a charter school, improving school accountability and performance, or driving other aspects of school excellence.



ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Jesse Hutt Animas High School Durango The Advocate of the Year Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated significant influence in the public policy arena by working in advocacy, policy, organizing, or other areas which grow, support, or protect the charter school movement.



MOST VALUABLE CHARTER CONTRIBUTOR

Violeta Apodaca The Pinnacle Charter School Federal Heights The Most Valuable Charter Contributor Award recognizes a charter school staff member, volunteer, or parent who is making a significant impact in their school and demonstrates exceptional leadership in and commitment to charter school operational excellence and a passion for charter school growth.



CHARTER SCHOOL EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Lauren Martinez Mountain Song Community School Colorado Springs The Charter School Educator of the Year Award recognizes a charter school educator who is dedicated to closing the achievement gap and preparing students for success, demonstrates a superior ability to inspire a love of learning, and collaborates with their colleagues and charter school community to put student success in the forefront of their work.

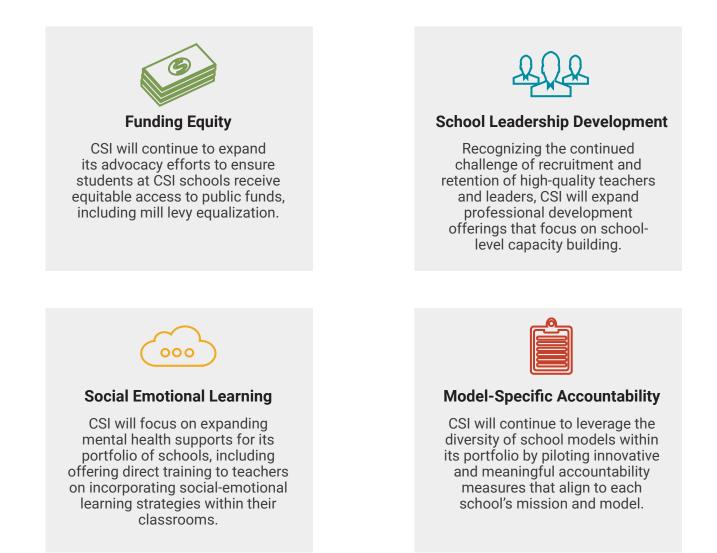


CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER OF THE YEAR

Dr. Terry Croy Lewis Colorado Charter School Institute The Charter School Authorizer of the Year Award recognizes an active or retired charter school authorizer employee or administrator with a strong passion for school choice who has demonstrated a commitment to high levels of student achievement and advocacy on behalf of charter schools.

LOOKING AHEAD

While much was accomplished in 2018-19, we know we have a long way to go to achieve equity. Here are some initiatives we will further in the coming year:



"CSI has come a long way, [and is] still evolving every day. If you talk to the CSI staff, all of them are striving every day to make the organization better and better. And I think the best days for CSI are yet to come."

- Luke Ragland, CSI Board Chair

CSI TEAM

CSI's team of experienced educational professionals are partners in the ongoing success of our charter schools. We understand the challenges that public charter schools face and hold schools accountable for the academic achievement of their students and the financial and organizational success of their schools.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR















21

Terry Croy Lewis, Ph.D.

Clare Vickland

Matt Hudson

Kim Caplan

STUDENT SERVICES TEAM

Nick Stachokus Michael McManus

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT TEAM



Ryan Marks



Aislinn Walsh



Jessica Welch



Greg Nusz



Anastasia Hawkins



Marisa Bayless

DATA SUBMISSIONS TEAM | COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Janet Dinnen

Amanda Karger



Julie Eddy



Ryan Hartung

FINANCE TEAM



Marcie Robidart Julia Linares-Roake





Dave Sever



NOT PICTURED: Mina Parthasaranthy (Infinite Campus Support), Tami Boley (PowerSchool Support), John Brendza (School Support Liaison); SPED Coordinators: Katherine Sisk, Josh Nichols, Brian Printz, Donna Day. CSI welcomed Michael McManus beginning in the 2019-20 school year.

Jessica Rogers









Emma Post



Allegra Matus



Cassie Walgren

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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.



Luke Ragland Board Chair



Liz Aybar-Conti Vice Chair



Frank McNulty Secretary



Tom Brinegar Treasurer



Yee-Ann Cho*



Eric Lerum



Tamara Olson



Antonio Parés



Kristi Pollard

*Yee-Ann Cho's term ended July 1, 2019. Jill Anschutz has been appointed by the Governor to fill the vacant seat.



COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE

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