



COLORADO
CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

Coming Together

Academy of Arts & Knowledge, Fort Collins



*Our mission is to foster
high-quality charter public
school choices for **all** students.*



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WELCOME LETTER

Dear Friends,

We are excited to share our 2020-2021 year-in-review for the Colorado Charter School Institute. This year was uniquely challenging. More than ever, we had to work together to overcome unprecedented challenges and continue offering a high-quality education to all students. Our annual report theme – “**Coming Together**” – reflects the ways in which CSI and our schools united to stay true to our mission and in service to students across our state.

Our mission is to foster high-quality charter public school choices that serve **all** students. In the 2020-2021 school year, we authorized 42 schools serving over 20,000 students. CSI charter schools are located in 23 different towns and cities and offer 16 different educational models, ranging from Early College to Alternative, Montessori to Project-Based and more.

While our schools are diverse in location, educational model, size, and the communities they serve, they all share a dedication to *coming together* to provide the best possible education for students.

Responding to the varying needs across the state, CSI offered supports to schools in new ways this year.

This report highlights many of the ways we have *come together* over the 2020-2021 school year:

To support our schools and their communities

Responding to the varying needs across the state, CSI offered support to schools in new ways this year. Each CSI school was assigned a CSI staff member who served as a “support contact” throughout the year. These support contacts had regular communication with school leaders as they navigated the school year. Recognizing the challenge in procuring personal protective equipment (PPE), CSI connected with a multi-state cooperative to procure safety equipment on behalf of schools and supported schools in accessing COVID tests for staff and students. CSI also worked to secure grant funding related to health initiatives, partnered with organizations to equip students and staff with the tools to build resilience, and expanded school food service offerings through the CSI School Food Authority.

To re-envision authorizing

CSI prioritized “community-responsive authorizing” with every department shifting to meet the changing needs of our schools as they in turn responded to the needs of their students and communities. It was clear that charter school accountability during COVID-19 would need to look different. The CSI team, in partnership with authorizers from across the state and nation, came together to re-envision accountability while keeping expectations high for student achievement.

To grow together

Ongoing professional development and school improvement initiatives remained critically important. CSI once again offered its Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Collaborative as well as its School Climate Collaborative. School teams met virtually throughout the year to build on ideas and implement new strategies to improve their processes. CSI also increased training and networking opportunities for school board members and developed an orientation series for new board members.

To advance equity

CSI maintained its focus on serving all students with the CSI Board passing a resolution on CSI’s Commitment to Equity. This commitment outlined ways to pursue equity within the organization and among the CSI portfolio of schools. CSI staff worked to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into organizational goals and policies. Staff also refined CSI’s Equity Screener, which provides data to support schools in determining how they can best serve various student populations.

We hope you enjoy this year-in-review as we continue to *come together* to expand the frontiers of public education.



JILL ANSCHUTZ
CSI Board Chair



DR. TERRY CROY LEWIS
CSI Executive Director

WHO WE ARE

Our mission is to foster high-quality charter public school choices for all students.

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 use innovative educational designs to serve all students.

WHAT IS AN AUTHORIZER?



An authorizer is an entity approved by the state legislature to 1) open new charter schools 2) monitor existing charter schools and 3) close failing schools.

Charter schools are accountable to their charter authorizer for meeting local, state, and federal requirements.



Fundamental principles of authorizing include:

- ✓ **Access** to high-quality school options for all students
- ✓ **Autonomy** for schools to best meet the needs of their students
- ✓ **Accountability** for schools in meeting high expectations



The CSI approach to authorizing charter schools balances autonomy and accountability. CSI offers its schools the flexibility to choose the educational models and methods that best meet the unique needs of their students and communities, and holds them accountable to clear expectations for performance.

OUR WHY

At CSI, we believe that all children should have access to high-quality school options and that families should be able to choose the schools that best meet the unique needs of their children. That's our why. Recognizing that each person's why for choosing their charter school is personal, we continue to highlight the personal whys for CSI students, parents, school leaders, and staff on our website.



DIEGO
MOUNTAIN SONG
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

"I'm very grateful we found a school where she and her classmates are taught to develop their sense of intellect and imagination."



SABRINA
NEW LEGACY CHARTER
SCHOOL

"New Legacy is preparing my son and I in a way no other school could. They offered me flexibility and a sense of community."



XAVIER
GLOBAL VILLAGE ACADEMY
NORTHGLENN

"Teachers from all over the world educate my son. He brings home different traditions, cultures, and languages!"



AXIS International Academy, Fort Collins

CSI PORTFOLIO

School	City	Model	Grades
Academy of Arts & Knowledge	Fort Collins	Arts Integration	K-5
Animas High School	Durango	Project-based Learning	9-12
Ascent Classical Academy Douglas County	Lone Tree	Classical	K-12
Ascent Classical Academy Northern Colorado	Fort Collins	Classical	K-6
AXIS International Academy	Fort Collins	Language Immersion	K-5
Caprock Academy	Grand Junction	Classical	K-12
Colorado Early Colleges Aurora	Aurora	Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Colorado Springs	Colorado Springs	Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins	Fort Collins	Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Douglas County	Parker	Early College	9-12
Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins West	Fort Collins	Early College	6-8
Colorado Early Colleges Windsor	Windsor	Early College	6-9
Colorado International Language Academy	Colorado Springs	Language Immersion	K-6
Colorado Military Academy	Colorado Springs	Military Academy	K-11
Colorado Springs Charter Academy	Colorado Springs	Core Knowledge	K-8
Community Leadership Academy	Commerce City	Core Knowledge	PK-5
Coperni 2	Colorado Springs	Personalized Learning	K-8
Coperni 3	Colorado Springs	Personalized Learning	K-7
Crown Pointe Academy	Westminster	Core Knowledge	K-8
Early College of Arvada	Arvada	Early College	6-12
Global Village Academy Northglenn	Northglenn	Language Immersion	K-8
Golden View Classical Academy	Golden	Classical	K-12
High Point Academy	Aurora	Core Knowledge	PK-8
James Irwin Charter Academy	Colorado Springs	Core Knowledge	K-5
Launch High School (closed at end of 2020-21)	Colorado Springs	Blended Learning/Entrepreneurship	9-12
Montessori del Mundo	Aurora	Dual-Language Montessori	PK-6
Monument View Montessori	Fruita	Montessori	PK-4
Mountain Middle School	Durango	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

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 also be closed due to poor academic, financial, or operational performance.

The CSI portfolio saw several changes in the 2020-21 school year:

3

NEW SCHOOLS
APPROVED

12

RENEWAL
SCHOOLS

1

SCHOOL
CLOSURE



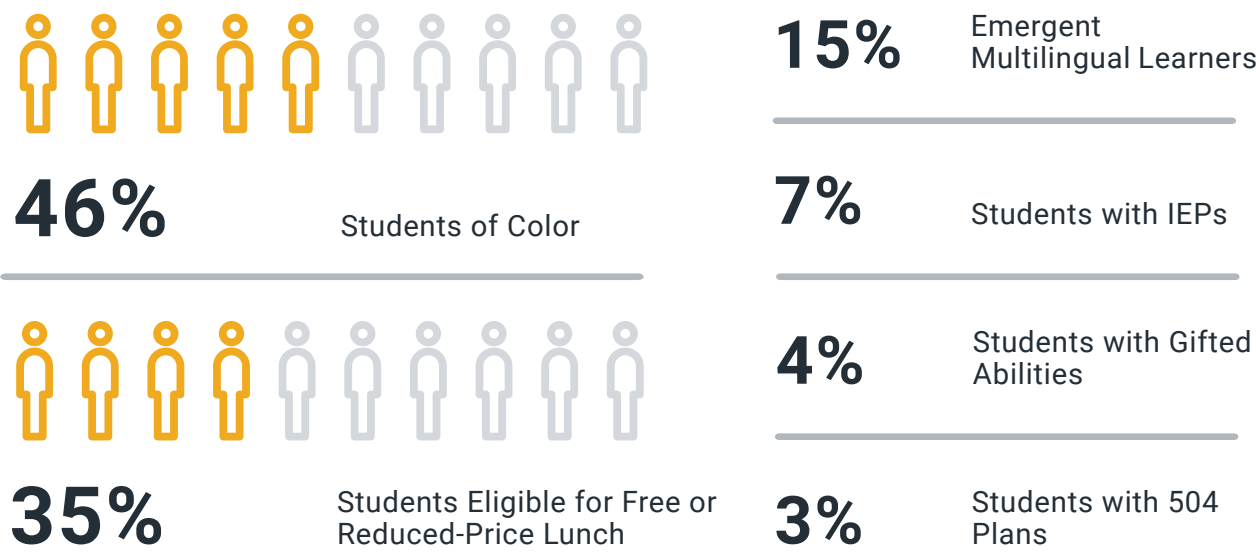
Ascent Classical Academy of Northern Colorado, Fort Collins

WHO WE SERVE

CSI is committed to fostering a portfolio of high-quality public school options that best meet the needs of all students. CSI schools offer unique educational models to students across the state of Colorado.



CSI's portfolio remains comparable to the state in service to students of color, Emergent Multilingual Learners, and students with 504 plans. Additionally, CSI's service to students with IEPs continues to trend upwards.





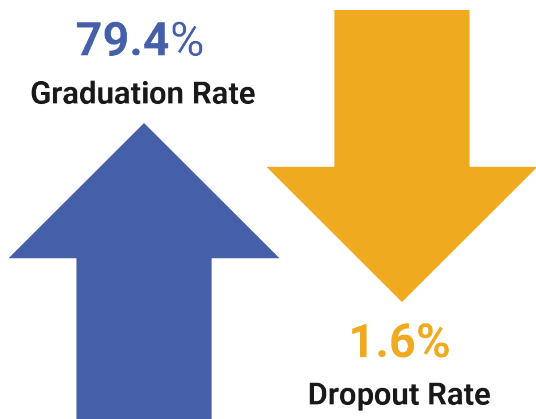
Montessori del Mundo, Aurora

Dual-Language Montessori
Language Immersion
Arts Integration
College Prep
Place-Based
Project-Based
Personalized Learning
Entrepreneurial
Alternative Education Campus
Waldorf
Core Knowledge
Montessori
Wellness
Military Academy

Classical Early College

PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE

Despite the disruption in state academic testing, CSI has remained committed to letting schools know how they are doing on available performance metrics and providing information to help schools develop and improve. Here are some postsecondary highlights from the 2019-2020 school year:



GRADUATION RATE

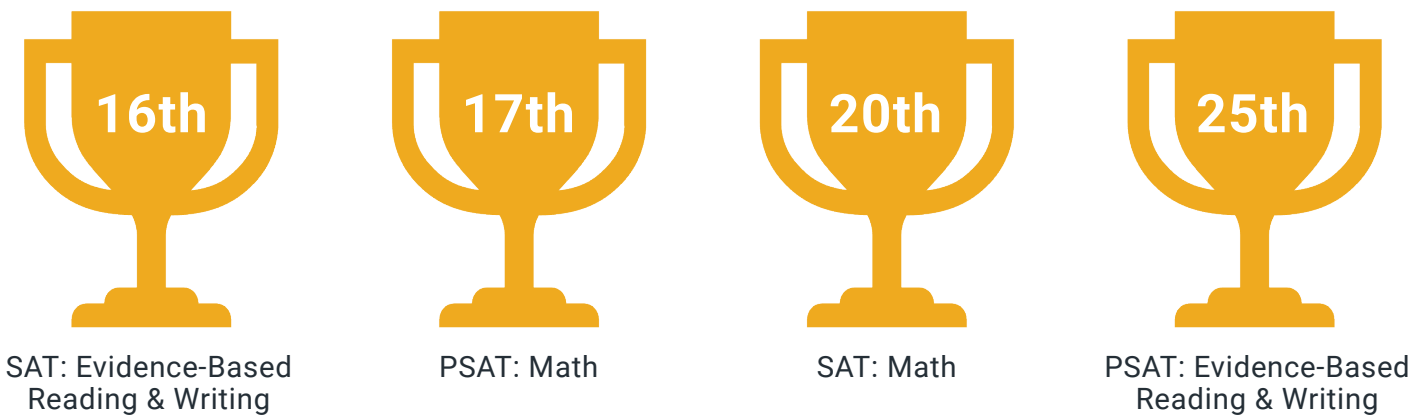
CSI's graduation rate continues to increase. Since 2016, CSI's portfolio-wide graduation rate has increased to 79.4% and all reported subgroups have also seen steady increases as well.

DROPOUT RATE

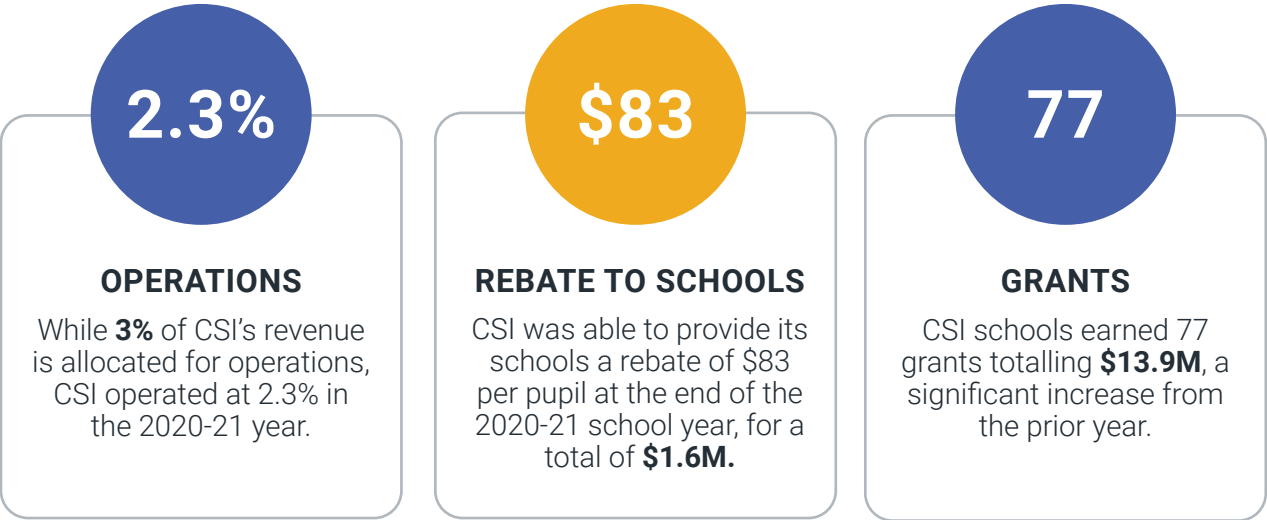
CSI's dropout rate continues to decrease. Since 2016, CSI's portfolio-wide dropout rate has decreased to 1.6% and all reported subgroups have also seen decreases in dropout rates from the prior year.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Of 120+ districts in the state with reportable data for the percentages of students meeting or exceeding state expectations in 2020-21, CSI high schools ranked:



OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

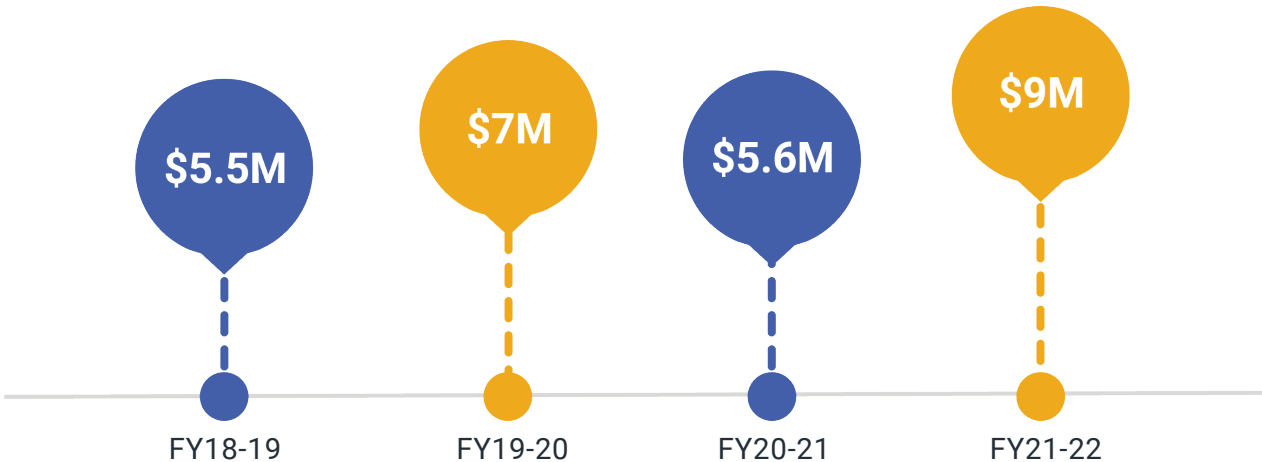


MILL LEVY OVERRIDE EQUALIZATION

In recognition that districts should allocate resources equitably to all students, regardless of the type of public school the student is enrolled in, the General Assembly passed HB17-1375. The law requires school districts to distribute funding received from local property taxes generated by Mill Levy Overrides (MLO) on an equal per pupil basis to all of its public schools, including district charter schools.

Recognizing that CSI schools have no access to local tax revenue, HB17-1375 created the Mill Levy Equalization Fund. It is up to the legislature to put money into the Fund each year.

The Fund saw modest gains in the last few years, receiving \$9M for FY21-22. The intent of HB17-1375 will not be achieved until the 20,000+ students attending CSI public charter schools have the same access to public funding as their district peers. Full funding parity requires \$41M.



Ross Montessori School, Carbondale



COMING TOGETHER

In the 2020-21 school year, CSI and our schools came together like never before to stay true to our mission and serve all students. We expanded supports, re-envisioned authorizing and accountability, grew together, and continued to work to advance equity.

COMING TOGETHER

to Support



CSI delivered
50,000+ masks
to CSI schools



CSI's School Food
Authority served over
**500k breakfasts &
lunches**



CSI disbursed
over **\$8 million**
in federal COVID
relief funding

SCHOOL SUPPORT CONTACTS

CSI staff members were assigned to act as a support contact for each CSI school. School leaders met weekly with their CSI support contact to address ongoing concerns and needs related to COVID-19. This support was well-received and many found that having a single point of contact allowed for increased efficiency in getting school needs met across CSI departments.

KAISER PERMANENTE GRANT

Kaiser Permanente granted \$24,500 to 6 CSI schools to help launch a tool to support schools and districts in identifying and taking tangible steps to prioritize health and well-being during a pandemic.

Grant funds were used on a variety of interventions, including supplementing the salaries of non-instructional school staff to perform outreach to families in need of assistance due to job loss, partnering with community mental health partners to provide easier pathways to mental health care for school communities, and providing staff with targeted professional development in response to challenges produced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ASSET SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

CSI teamed up with ASSET Education to equip schools with additional tools to help students build resilience and reduce stress. Through this partnership, CSI educators -over 80 in total- were trained in how to implement a curriculum of concrete tools to support their students' social-emotional health and wellbeing.



**In a year of so many
uncertainties, the ASSET
curriculum was a gift. I am so
thankful to be able to implement
a program that empowers
students to take ownership of
their personal wellness.**



- Bethany, Stone Creek Charter School Teacher

COMING TOGETHER

to Re-envision

COMMUNITY-RESPONSIVE AUTHORIZING

At the onset of the pandemic, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) called for “authorizing to be more responsive to the needs of communities – to listen to what students, families, and educators need and to act boldly even if that meant doing things outside of traditional authorizing activities”.

CSI was in full agreement. Each department at CSI – from student services to data submissions to evaluation and assessment – shifted to meet the changing needs of our schools.

An Approach, Not an Answer

Like many authorizers, CSI continues to grapple with how to best balance support and compliance for our charter public schools. This challenge, however, was exacerbated by the pandemic, and led to many questions:

- *How can we continue to offer needed supports?*
- *How can we continue to hold schools accountable while recognizing the unprecedented challenges they face?*
- *And, how can we communicate consistent expectations amidst so much change and uncertainty?*

While we couldn't offer definitive answers to each question or scenario that arose, we could offer clarity in our approach as we sought to address each question.

Clarifying Expectations

As part of a community-responsive approach, it was important that we clarify and reiterate our expectations for schools and CSI staff.

- We expect CSI schools to be responsive to the needs of their students, families, and communities.
- We expect CSI staff to be responsive to the needs of schools.

While the principles of high-quality authorizing—namely, access, accountability, and autonomy—need to be upheld especially in the midst of a pandemic, we recognized that they may look a bit different than before. And, that's okay. We have been clear with our staff and schools that we will uphold these pillars of quality authorizing.

Community-responsive authorizing is our framework for communicating our approach and expectations to stakeholders.

ACCOUNTABILITY DURING COVID-19

Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, CSI remained committed to clearly communicating with schools on how they were doing, helping schools develop and improve, and providing opportunities for regular check-ins and public transparency.

Annual Accountability

While state and federal accountability systems were paused, CSI's accountability system continued with a more limited scope.

Charter Renewal

The pandemic not only impacted annual school accountability processes but those specific to charter renewal. Two primary adjustments to the charter renewal process included:



Expanded Body of Evidence

An expanded body of evidence review was added to replace the state assessment data that would have been collected in 2019-2020. This provided schools an opportunity to demonstrate an extension of a pre-existing trend or establish a positive trend in performance.



Virtual Site Visits

On-site visits were replaced with virtual visits. Visits included classroom observations and interviews with leadership, staff, and students. CSI learned a great deal about our schools through this revised process.



High Point Academy, Aurora

Mountain Song Community School, Colorado Springs



GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

CSI believes that behind every successful charter school is a high-performing governing board. Accordingly, CSI supports the advancement of its school governing boards through training, coaching, facilitation, and networking opportunities hosted throughout the year and across the state.

In addition to the standard offerings—like the quarterly school board newsletter, live training, and guidance resources and tools—CSI introduced some new offerings in 2020-21:

- ✓ CSI's departments came together to release a **CSI orientation training series for new school board members** highlighting topics such as CSI accountability, compliance monitoring, financial oversight, special populations oversight, and understanding the charter contract.
- ✓ CSI utilized its **Board Meeting Compliance Checklist** as a tool to provide timely and improvement-oriented feedback to school boards.
- ✓ CSI, the Colorado Department of Education, and the Colorado League of Charter Schools came together to simplify communications about the **governance supports available to all charter school board members**.

COMING TOGETHER

to Grow

MTSS COLLABORATIVE

In the final year of the five-year School Personnel Development Grant, CSI once again offered its Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Collaborative.

20 participants across 11 CSI schools focused on MTSS with an emphasis on problem-solving at both the student and systems level. Collaborative members shared and learned from colleagues at other CSI schools as the group explored and discussed practical implementation strategies to provide the support that students and adults need in each member's school context.

CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE

CSI partnered with the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) in 2020-21 to provide a year-long working group focused on school climate through the lens of social emotional learning (SEL).

32 participants across 12 CSI schools sought to examine and improve the way their school systems meet the social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and mental health needs of students. Participants developed their content knowledge while simultaneously developing an implementation plan specific to their school model and community.

Getting to listen to other schools' plans, goals, and achievements was very beneficial, as it gave us new ideas to reach our own plans and goals.

Collaborating with others has helped to identify and refine interventions for our school. Folks often offer insight that we wouldn't have access to otherwise.

Hearing from other schools was invaluable - getting to hear their successes, and even some of their struggles, helped to put ours into perspective.

I have learned a lot about MTSS and strengthened my resolve to keep pushing to use data to drive decisions and to make sure the focus is on student success.

COMING TOGETHER

to Advance Equity

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

This past fall, the CSI Board of Directors passed a resolution on CSI's Commitment to Equity. The CSI Board made a commitment to:

- Apply an equity lens in decision-making,
- Prioritize diversity on the Board and in Board Officer positions, and
- Hold CSI staff accountable for pursuing equity within the organization and among the CSI portfolio of schools.

The Board also directed CSI staff to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the organizational goals, consider policies to advance DEI within the organization and within the CSI portfolio of schools, and to advance diverse opportunities in charter schools and charter school models.

PARTNERING FOR EQUITY

CSI partnered with the Colorado Department of Education to offer a six-part Equal Access Webinar Series. This series highlighted equitable practices for multilingual and multicultural learners, equipping authorizers and charter school leaders with the knowledge and tools to ensure that charter schools are open to all students and that school policies or programs are free from barriers to access for diverse students. CSI-led trainings included:

- School Policy Review Through a Multicultural Lens
- Identifying and Addressing Enrollment Barriers to Multilingual Families
- ELD Implementation and Program Evaluation
- Equity of Access and Outcomes Screener for Special Populations
- ELD Accurate Identification
- Accountability for Non-Traditional School Models

Additionally, Clare Vickland and Ryan Marks partnered with other experts in the field to contribute a chapter to the book *Challenges to Integrating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs in Organizations*.



REFINING THE EQUITY SCREENER

After three years of implementation and positive early outcomes, the CSI team reflected on and refined the Screener tool and accompanying supports during the 2020-21 school year.

Through this yearlong and collaborative process, the Screener tool and related supports have been updated to:

- Offer an interactive dashboard of information
- Provide staggered data releases to increase timeliness of information
- Provide additional comparison metrics

The Screener 2.0 will be implemented in the 2021-22 school year for CSI schools.

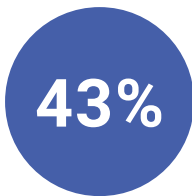
EARLY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS



Since 2017, the percent of special populations meeting stability rate standards has increased by 28%



Since 2017, the percent of special populations meeting completion rate standards has increased by 69%



Since 2017, service to students with 504 plans has increased by 43%



Global Village Academy, Northglenn

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2020-21 year presented challenges but also gave us an opportunity to come together and move forward stronger than ever. As we look ahead to 2021-22 and the years beyond, we will take the lessons learned and relationships made and will continue our commitment to fostering high-quality educational options for all students. A few initiatives we look forward to sharing more about next

EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

The pandemic increased the prevalence of mental health needs of teachers and students, on top of the already heightened mental health issues within our state. CSI is in the process of expanding mental health resources, consultation, problem-solving, and training in 2021-22.

FINALIZATION OF CARS 3.0

CSI has begun the process for evolving its annual accountability system, the CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS), to include a more comprehensive and meaningful evaluation of charter school quality.

Thomas MacLaren School, Colorado Springs





Two Rivers Community School, Glenwood Springs

“

**I am so proud of the ways
CSI staff and schools came
together over the past
year. We've learned from
each other and found new
ways to support our school
communities.**

”

- Dr. Terry Croy Lewis, CSI Executive Director

OUR 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 financial and organizational success.

Executive Director

Dr. Terry Croy Lewis

Communications & Data Submissions Team

Janet Dinnen, Chief of Staff

Amanda Oberg, Communications Manager

Julie Eddy, Data Manager

Ryan Hartung, Data Submissions Specialist

Jessica Tribbett, Data Submissions Specialist

Evaluation, Accountability, & School Improvement Team

Ryan Marks, Director of Evaluation, Accountability, & School Improvement

Jessica Welch, Improvement & Implementation Specialist

Greg Nusz, Research & Evaluation Specialist

Aislinn Walsh, Performance & Accountability Analyst*

Finance & Operations Team

Amanda Karger, Director of Finance & Operations

David Sever, Controller

Ilene Agustin, School Nutrition Program Manager

Marcie Robidart, Grants Fiscal & Accounting Manager

Allegra Wenger, Human Resources Manager

Julia-Linares Roake, Accounts Payable & Grants Technician*

Emma Post, Grants & Accounting Technician

Legal & Policy Team

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Stephanie Aragon, Legal & Policy Associate

Student Services & Professional Learning Team

Clare Vickland, Director of Student Services & Professional Learning

Kimberly Caplan, Gifted Education & Professional Learning Manager

Michael McManus, Career Pathways & School Programs Coordinator

Justo Yanez, School Improvement & Equity Specialist*

Matt Hudson, Director of Special Education

Donna Day, Special Education Coordinator

Josh Nichols, Special Education Coordinator

Brian Printz, Special Education Coordinator

Nick Stachokus, Special Education Coordinator

CSI bid farewell to Aislinn Walsh, Julia Linares-Roake, and Justo Yanez as they continued on in their professional journeys. CSI welcomed Betsy Basch, Brooke Frarck, Cherish Trammell, Collin Phillips, Kali Winn, Veronica Russell, and Willyn Webb for the 2021-22 year.

OUR BOARD

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.



JILL ANSCHUTZ
BOARD CHAIR



LUKE RAGLAND
VICE CHAIR



ERIC LERUM
SECRETARY



TOM BRINEGAR
TREASURER



ANTONIO PARÉS*
BOARD MEMBER



TAMARA OLSON
BOARD MEMBER



DANYELL LEWIS*
BOARD MEMBER



MARIBEL OBREQUE
BOARD MEMBER



BRENDA DICKHONER
BOARD MEMBER

*Nicholas Martinez and Kenny Smith have been appointed by the Governor to fill the seats formerly held by Antonio Parés (whose term ended July 1, 2021) and Danyell Lewis.

Front cover photo: Ascent Classical Academy Douglas County, Lone Tree
Back cover photo: Animas High School, Durango



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COLORADO
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