

**For Immediate Release**

**September 13, 2021**

**Press Contact**

Amanda Oberg  
Communications Manager  
720-985-1481  
[amandaoberg@csi.state.co.us](mailto:amandaoberg@csi.state.co.us)

## **State Assessment Results and What that Means for Charter School Supports and Accountability: One Authorizer's Approach**

Results from state assessments taken last spring [show significant drops in achievement](#) and growth across tested grades and subjects. This, coupled with the lower participation rates across the state and changes to tested grade levels, means greater challenges with interpreting the data.

Results from charter schools overseen by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) largely mirror state trends. As a [statewide charter authorizer](#), CSI oversees 41 schools across the state of Colorado. CSI schools offer 16 unique education models and are located in 23 towns and cities, serving over 20,000 students.

The results released by the Colorado Department of Education did not come as a surprise given the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted many aspects of education.

"Instruction and services to students were delivered in a variety of formats last year, as necessary based on community health concerns," shares Clare Vickland, CSI Director of Students Services and Professional Learning.

This year, CSI schools have all kicked off the 2021-22 school year in-person and have contingency plans should periods of remote learning be required due to changing public health conditions.

### **Continuing School Accountability**

While the state's accountability system has been paused for a second year, CSI has remained committed to providing a regular and transparent process for evaluating school performance.

"Despite limited state assessment data, we will continue to let our schools know how they are doing and will continue to provide information to help schools develop and improve," shares Ryan Marks, CSI Director of Evaluation, Accountability, and School Improvement.

This past year, in the absence of state assessment data, CSI continued its review of school financial and operational performance in its [annual charter school evaluation](#).

Additionally, CSI adjusted its [charter school renewal](#) process to incorporate additional, local measures of school performance that schools could use to demonstrate academic progress.

In making these adjustments, CSI prioritized transparency, evidence-based decision-making, and consistent expectations for schools. "The limited state academic data simply required us to get creative with how we could better evaluate and support schools as a charter authorizer," shared Marks.

## **Prioritizing School Supports**

CSI is focusing on how to support schools in using the information they have—whether it be from state assessments, local assessments, or qualitative data collected from teachers—to help guide planning for the coming year.

Additionally, CSI is using feedback from schools to determine priorities for the coming year:

### **Continuation of Cohort Learning**

CSI is continuing the use of a cohort model to bring teams from CSI schools across the state together. Last year, 24 staff members from 7 schools engaged virtually in the School Climate Collaborative to focus on developing a systematic approach to school climate.

“Creating systems, structures, and practices to quickly respond to the needs of students and communities is more vital than ever,” shares Jess Welch, CSI Improvement and Implementation Specialist.

“Drawing from the research related to ‘networked improvement communities’, we are continuing to offer a year-long intensive cohort with a focus on school improvement. School teams participating in this year’s cohort will deploy evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement protocols to meet the needs of the students and families they serve.”

### **Advancing Mental Health Supports**

CSI is also increasing mental health supports. “We know the pandemic increased the prevalence of mental health needs of our teachers and children, on top of the already heightened mental health issues within our state,” shares Mental Health Program Specialist Betsy Basch.

In fact, in May of 2021 the Children’s Hospital of Colorado [declared a State of Emergency](#) for youth mental health.

With the addition of a Mental Health Program Specialist position, CSI schools now have a consultant available to provide resources, consultation, problem-solving, training in-person, electronically, or by phone.

“We have learned a great deal from this pandemic. It has helped us to reimagine how we as an authorizer can partner to support the unique needs of our schools while still holding them accountable for performance,” shares Dr. Terry Croy Lewis, Executive Director of CSI.

###

### **About the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI)**

*CSI is a statewide charter public school authorizer in Colorado, currently authorizing 41 schools from Cortez to Steamboat Springs, Grand Junction to Colorado Springs and serving over 20,000 PK-12 students. As a charter authorizer, CSI focuses on the outputs—that is, the quantitative evaluation of academic, organizational, and financial school performance—providing schools the flexibility to focus on and make decisions about inputs like instructional strategies, educational programming, internal assessment system, facility selection, and staffing. The focus on outcomes rather than processes allows CSI to be neutral on educational model and maintain a diverse portfolio of school models, which include Classical, Early College, Alternative, and Montessori models. Learn more at [www.csi.state.co.us](http://www.csi.state.co.us) and follow CSI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*