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Institute Charter Schools See Continued Enrollment Growth

DENVER, CO (January 21, 2022) – The [Charter School Institute](http://www.csi.state.co.us) (CSI) portfolio of public charter schools is serving just under 22,000 students in preschool through 12th grade this school year, making it the 14th largest local education agency in the state of Colorado, according to data recently released by the state.

CSI's 42 charter public schools are located across the state, up and down the Front Range and in western Colorado. Schools range in size from just over 25 students at Kwiyaqat Community Academy, a charter school that opened this year on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation, to Pinnacle Charter School in Federal Heights serving just over 2,000 K-12 students.

The CSI portfolio of schools offer sixteen unique educational models including alternative education campuses, classical education, project-based learning, and language immersion.

While the state saw fairly flat enrollment from the prior year (0.4% increase), CSI student enrollment saw nearly a 6% increase. Contributing to this increase was the addition of one school as well as the buildout of grades and the expansion of seats at existing CSI schools. School models with the greatest enrollment growth this year include early college, personalized learning, military, and classical.

Responding to Community Needs

Contributing to this increase was the way in which many CSI schools have continued to nimbly respond to the needs of their local communities.

Many schools continued to offer a fully remote option to families in response to COVID-19. A handful of schools made use of the flexibility offered by the state through the [variance process](#) to continue offering blended learning and supplemental online learning for families.

Additionally, as statewide data showed an increase in homeschool students since 2019, so too did the CSI portfolio. Thirteen CSI schools are offering homeschool enrichment options for the 2021-22 school year.

[Colorado Military Academy](#) in Colorado Springs offers a STEM program to homeschool families to experience flight through hands-on labs and activities. Mark Hyatt, board action officer at Colorado Military Academy, shares, "Colorado is the #1 state per capita for Aerospace jobs, and CMA's goal is to prepare Colorado students for these critical STEM opportunities." CMA's homeschool enrichment program, Falcon AeroLab, meets weekly and offers enrichment in powered, glider, helicopter, and vertical wind tunnel flights, as well as radio-controlled airplanes and drones. The program brings in speakers such as astronauts, engineers, pilots, and mechanics. Students attend field trips to venues like Wings Over the Rockies, Space Foundation, Challenger Learning Center, and the Air Force Academy.

Across town, [Colorado International Language Academy](#), a language immersion program, offers a homeschool enrichment option to students in grades K-6. This option gives homeschool students access to Spanish, French, German, or Mandarin Chinese one day a week in a small class environment. Barbara Rutter, school leader at CILA, shares, “During the pandemic, many families who opted to homeschool to minimize the risk to their family members welcomed the opportunity for their students to begin or continue learning a language and interact face-to-face with a group of peers.”

Across the state, the [Colorado Early Colleges](#) network offers students the opportunity to start working on college-level courses as soon as they are college ready. This allows students to earn a combination of high school and college credits as they pursue a high school diploma and an Associate degree or higher. The network offers core, lab, and elective courses and access to college courses to supplement homeschool programming.

Responding to School Needs

Just as CSI schools have been able to respond to the needs of their unique communities, CSI has been shifting its supports to meet the needs identified by the growing portfolio—many of them the same needs felt by schools across the state and nation as we continue through the pandemic.

Mental Health

CSI hired a Mental Health Program Specialist at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year in response to schools’ needs.

“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 Betsy Basch, CSI Mental Health Program Specialist.

Basch is available to provide resources, consultation, problem-solving, and training in-person, electronically, or by phone. Several schools have engaged in trauma-informed training this year with Basch as well.

Student Equity

Student access and equity has been at the forefront of conversations as schools and CSI have navigated another year of learning amidst the pandemic.

To support this work, CSI revised its Equity Screener, identifying additional ways for the reports to lead to meaningful conversations and improvements within schools.

Brooke Farck, CSI’s Equity and Improvement Specialist, shares, “The dynamic support and school partnership opportunities that have come about from conversations with schools are going to greatly benefit students. I am excited to continue to partner with additional schools and provide support as we advance equity and access for all.”

Food Services

In its second year of operation, the [Colorado Charter School Institute](#) (CSI) School Food Authority works with 23 charter school buildings, 2 of which are schools authorized by their geographic school district and the remaining authorized by CSI.

Leading the effort to oversee school nutrition programs is Ilene Agustin, CSI School Nutrition Program Manager. With over fifteen years of school nutrition experience, Agustin has not let the gargantuan task of [establishing a School Food Authority](#) stop her from ensuring each participating charter school is able to implement a program that best meets the needs of its community.

Agustin supports schools in determining the options available based on the resources they have (staffing, facilities, local vendors) and their specific goals (local sourcing, culturally relevant menus, scratch cooking). Importantly, Agustin empowers schools to make decisions that work for their communities and provides them the technical assistance and resources to transform their visions into reality.

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About the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI)

CSI is a statewide charter public school authorizer in Colorado, currently authorizing 42 schools from Towaoc to Steamboat Springs, Grand Junction to Colorado Springs and serving over 21,000 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 <https://www.csi.state.co.us/> and follow CSI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)