

An Overview of Exclusive Chartering Authority (ECA)

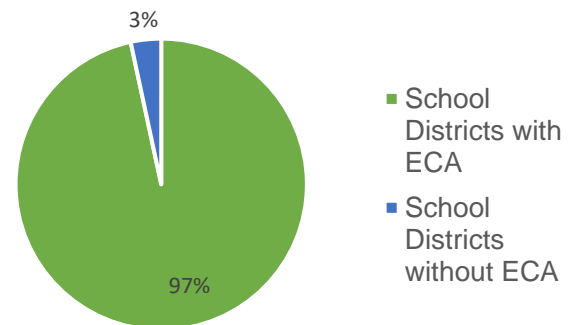
Exclusive Chartering Authority (ECA) is a policy in Colorado that gives a school district full control over opening and overseeing charter public schools in its boundaries. This means only the local school board can approve and manage charter schools in these districts.

ECA is granted by the Colorado State Board of Education based on specific criteria to ensure that districts treat charter schools fairly and equitably.

Which Districts Have ECA?

Most Colorado school districts have ECA. Of the 178 school districts in Colorado, 172 have ECA. Of the 6 districts without ECA, 3 of them have fewer than 3,000 students and are automatically granted ECA upon request.

Districts with ECA maintain control over the approval, monitoring, and renewal of charter public schools within their boundaries.



What is CSI and When Can CSI Authorize a Charter School?

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) is a statewide charter public school authorizer created by the Colorado legislature in 2004 to serve as an additional pathway to authorization.

CSI may consider charter applications in districts that meet one of the two criteria below:

- Districts without ECA, or
- Districts that choose to release a charter school to apply to CSI.

In these situations, CSI may have concurrent chartering authority with the school district—that is, a district may oversee some charter schools and CSI may oversee some charter schools within the same geographic district. Historically, CSI has received new or transfer school applications from charter schools located in districts that met each of the above criteria. Several CSI schools were released by the local school district to apply to CSI.

Common Topics

Retention of Authority

A local school district never loses its ability to authorize charter schools in its district by releasing an applicant to apply to CSI. Instead, in some cases where the district is already overseeing charter schools, the district and CSI may have concurrent chartering authority.

Application Process

If a district releases an applicant to CSI, the applicant is required to go through CSI's rigorous application process that complies with statute and incorporates best practice. CSI's thorough pre-application orientation process encourages only applicants demonstrating capacity and readiness to submit an application, and only 1 in 2 applications are approved and open.*

Community-Based

Whether authorized by a district or CSI, students attending charter schools have deep connections to the community and the local district. In fact, many families have children attending both CSI charter schools and local district schools.

Partnerships

While authorized by CSI, CSI charter schools can partner with districts, BOCES, and other educational entities for a variety of services.

- For example, some CSI charter schools contract with the local district for the provision of food services.
- Others seek to partner with the district in its MLO and bond.
- In some cases, CSI and local districts execute a memorandum of understanding that outlines expectations for transparency in communications, data sharing, and performance monitoring.

*Nothing limits an existing CSI school from applying to transfer to the local school district. Should a CSI charter school seek to transfer, it would be required to go through the local district's application review process. In fact, CSI schools have successfully transferred to the local school district.