

Colorado Charter School Institute



Call for Applications

2015-2016



The Colorado Charter School Institute is currently accepting New School Applications for schools proposing to open in 2017-18

Applications are due March 17, 2016

The mission of the Charter School Institute shall be to foster high-quality public school choices offered through Institute charter schools that deliver rigorous academic content and high academic performance in a safe environment and on par with the highest performing schools, including particularly schools for at-risk students.

Dear New School Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Colorado Charter School Institute. CSI believes that promoting a variety of successful and innovative educational designs is paramount when expanding and enhancing school choice within the state of Colorado. We are happy to provide you with the information you'll need to get started on the charter application process with CSI. After responding to this Call for Applications, you will have a good idea of the review and decision-making process, and we will have a good idea of the vision for your school.

Currently, CSI authorizes 35 charter schools across the state, serving nearly 15,000 E-12 students. Our aspiration is to authorize quality charter schools that focus on excellence in student achievement, sound finances and governance, and sustainability. Of particular interest to CSI are those schools with strong outreach to at-risk student groups.

CSI is committed to a positive collaboration with both new and expanding charter schools, and stands ready to provide you with the information you need to submit a complete application. While we cannot help you develop or write the components of your application, you are more than welcome to reach out to CSI for more information, clarification, or referral to appropriate resources. In our mission to serve the students of Colorado, we are also happy to work in partnership with local school districts to support the review, development, or oversight of quality charter schools.

Thank you for your interest in creating positive choices for students throughout Colorado. We look forward to further discussions with you about your vision.

Sincerely,

Kristen Stolpa, Chief Authorizing Officer

The vision of the Charter School Institute is to be a national leader as a highly effective charter school authorizer by building a portfolio of high performing public charter schools through authorizing practices that promote a variety of successful and innovative educational designs, including an emphasis on schools that serve at-risk youth.

Background

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) was created by the Colorado State Legislature in 2004 as an independent state agency to provide charter schools with an alternative to the local school district. CSI is governed by a nine-member Board of Directors. Seven members are appointed by the governor and two by the commissioner of education. CSI began operations in February 2005 approving two charter schools.

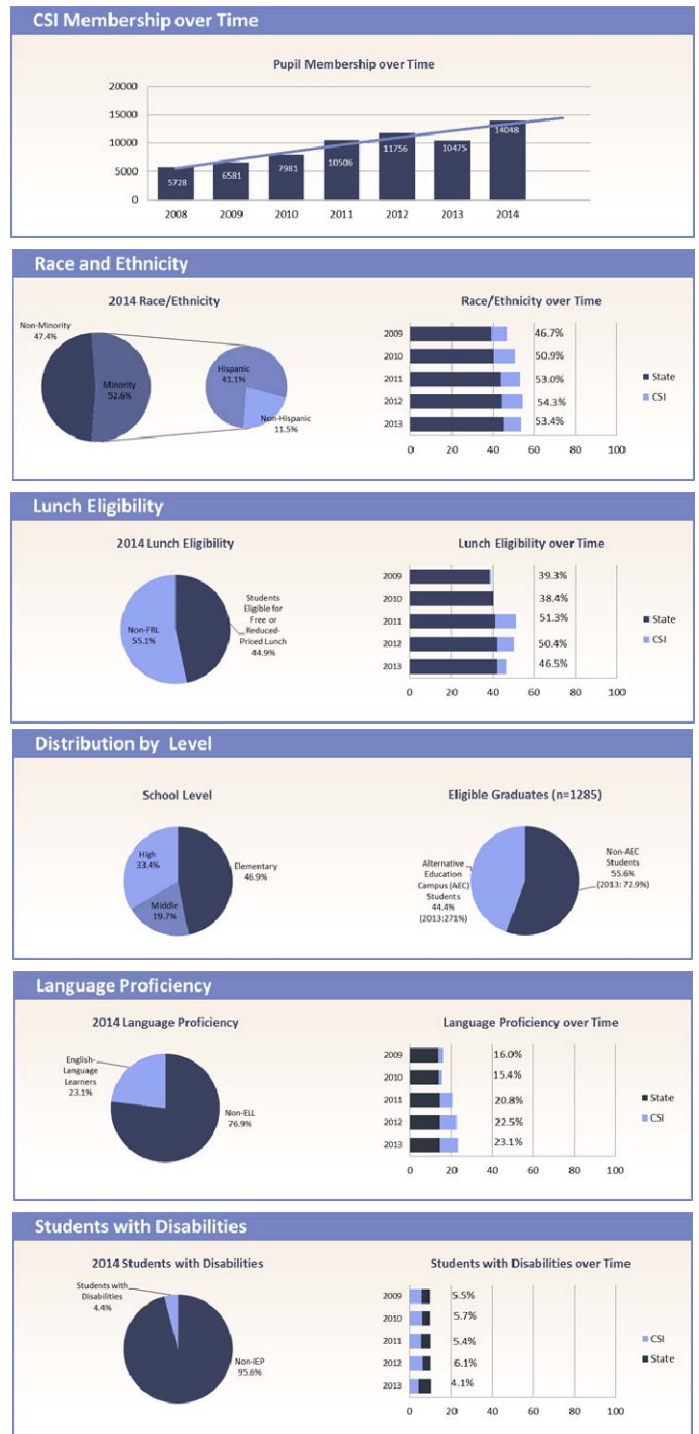
Priorities

CSI pursues its vision through the development and execution of model authorizer practices. As supported by national best practice and research, these practices provide a high level of autonomy to each charter school as they implement their educational models with as little interference as possible. In exchange for this high degree of autonomy, CSI provides consistent and meaningful accountability, in accordance with law, rule and policy, in the areas of student performance and school compliance.

Model Authorizer

The Institute, in accordance with national best practice, is devoted to developing a variety of accountability methods to be utilized as a means for providing schools and authorizers with in-depth analysis and explanation of performance throughout their charter term. In collaboration with local and national educational partners, these evaluation tools serve to inform and facilitate charter school development and renewal. In building these systems, it is the goal of the Institute to fulfill its role as the "model authorizer," and partner with schools and districts to provide an increase in high-quality choice options throughout the state of Colorado.

CSI Demographics



About CSI

The Charter Schools Act was adopted in Colorado in 1993. The General Assembly considered several alternative authorizer proposals before passing the Charter School Institute (CSI) Act in 2004. CSI authorized two charter schools in 2005 and now has a total of 35 schools in its portfolio with more than 15,000 students in attendance. CSI serves as an authorizer, accrediting its schools and ensuring they remain in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, and it also provides various services to its schools, including data submissions, customized data analysis, and tiered levels of support based on school performance.

Value-Added Authorization

There are many reasons why schools would seek to be authorized by the Charter School Institute. We believe that our singular focus on charter schools translates into tailored customer service, a keen understanding of the unique needs of charter schools, a consistently transparent and collaborative approach to all issues, and the ability to better advocate for charter schools' needs.

As an independent 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 non-model specific and maintain a diverse portfolio of school models.

CSI also offers a Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor and Commissioner of Education, that reflects the diversity and stability needed to ensure long-term stability for our portfolio of schools. Lastly, CSI is designed to pass through a maximum level of funding directly to its schools and is therefore competitive both financially and with regard to the services offered to our schools when compared to many of the districts statewide.

Model Authorizer

As supported by national best practice and research, CSI practices provide a high level of autonomy to each charter school as they implement their educational models with as little interference as possible. In exchange for this high degree of autonomy, CSI provides consistent and meaningful accountability, in accordance with law, rule and policy, in the areas of student performance and school compliance.

CSI's Authorization Advantage

- ⇒ Statutory mission to authorize innovative and high quality charter schools throughout Colorado
- ⇒ Strong, diverse, connected, and politically stable board of directors appointed by the Governor and Commissioner of Education
- ⇒ Charter focused staff and systems oriented around efficiency and quality
- ⇒ Competitive overall fee package
- ⇒ Annual evaluation system providing transparent accountability expectations and value-added analyses of school performance data
- ⇒ Strong charter school advocacy focus
- ⇒ Authorization systems that reward performance with diminished bureaucratic burdens

What is a Quality Charter School Authorizer?

According to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), the three core principles of quality charter school authorizing are:

1. Maintain high standards for schools;
2. Uphold school autonomy; and
3. Protect student and public interests.

This means that CSI will ask all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission; a quality educational program; a solid business plan; effective governance and management structures and systems; founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities; and clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully. A proposed school leader should be able to demonstrate the capacity to design, launch, and manage a high performing school.



Essential Elements of a Quality Application

According to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, a primary principle of quality authorizing is to ensure the implementation of a comprehensive application process that includes clear and rigorous criteria. The authority to open and establish a charter school should be granted only to applicants that have a sound plan for, and demonstrate the capacity to operate, a quality, high-functioning public charter school in alignment with those criteria. A copy of the CSI new school rubric can be found here: http://www.csi.state.co.us/prospective_schools

A successful application will reflect the following essential components:

- ⇒ A demonstrated understanding of the population the school intends to serve.
- ⇒ A comprehensive and research-based curriculum and assessment program designed to hold all students to high standards, including a plan to meet the differentiated needs of all students.
- ⇒ A clear plan for evaluating pupil performance across the curriculum, aligned with state performance standards, school performance goals, and accreditation requirements.
- ⇒ A plan for recruiting and hiring a strong and compatible leader.
- ⇒ A strong, knowledgeable, diverse, and capable board of governance or leadership team committed to best practices in school governance, business operations, and financial management.
- ⇒ A balanced budget and financial plan including revenues and expenditures complying with state and federal accounting and reporting requirements that demonstrates diligence in financial practice and alignment to other components of the application.
- ⇒ Multiple viable school facility options with a clear needs assessment for space utilization.



Who may apply?

An application may be submitted by one or more individuals, or by a nonprofit, governmental, or other entity or organization. Schools and current non-charter public schools may not apply to CSI through this process.

Applicants seeking to open schools in districts rated as "Priority Improvement" or "Turnaround" by the Colorado Department of Education through the District Performance Framework Report (www.schoolview.org/performance) will receive priority consideration by CSI.

For new charter schools planning to locate in districts that have retained exclusive chartering authority (ECA), a resolution from that district's school board releasing the school to apply to CSI will be required before the CSI Board can formally consider the application. A list of districts with their chartering authority status can be accessed from the Colorado Department of Education's website: www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/distauthinfo. Applicants in these districts may consider submitting an application to both the geographic district and to CSI.

For schools planning to locate in districts which have not retained exclusive chartering authority, applicants may submit a proposal directly to CSI without seeking the consent of the geographic district.

Regardless of the school's location, notice of the CSI submission must be provided by the applicant to the geographic district during the application process as described in the New School Application.

How to Apply:

Application materials for the Spring 2016 cycle will be published to CSI's Prospective Schools page in January 2015, and can be accessed on the CSI Prospective Schools website: www.csi.state.co.us/prospective_schools

Letter of Intent: Submit prior to application (January-March 2016)

The applicant will electronically submit the Letter of Intent and the Executive Summary of the intended plan for the school to CSI, ideally, before submitting the application. (Applicants typically submit the Letter of Intent and Executive Summary in late-January or early February.) CSI will respond, acknowledging receipt of the submission. These documents will be used to initiate the application review process.

Application: Due March 17, 2016

The applicant will submit a completed application by the deadline. A completed application includes the nine application components, applicable addenda as identified by completing the Letter of Intent, and the required budget and baseline target templates. CSI will notify the applicant of the application's completeness. For incomplete applications, the applicant will have 15 days to provide CSI the missing components. If the application is deemed to be complete, CSI will begin the official application review process.



Applicant Interview: TBD by CSI (April—May 2016)

The applicant team will attend an interview conducted by the CSI Application Review Team.

Geographic Meeting: TBD by Applicant (April—May 2016)

The applicant will hold a public hearing in the geographic location of the proposed school.

Applicant Presentation to the CSI Board: TBD by CSI (May 2016)

The applicant will be asked to make a short presentation to the CSI Board during a public hearing.

Performance Management Committee Meeting: TBD by CSI (May 2016)

The CSI staff will present the staff recommendation report to the CSI Board Performance Management Committee. The applicant will also receive a copy of the report.

CSI Board Vote: TBD by CSI (June 2015)

The CSI Board will vote to approve or deny the application.

The following page provides a visual of the application process.

Questions may be directed to Ryan Marks, at ryanmarks@csi.state.co.us.



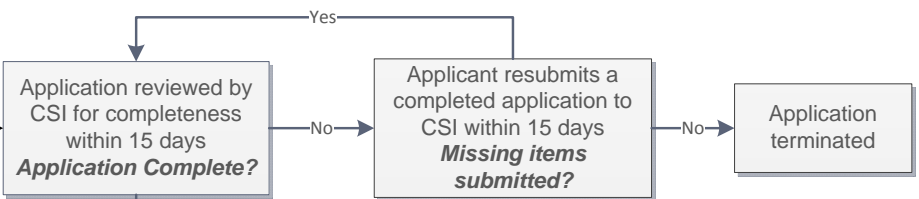
CSI New School Application Timeline of Events

December 2015
CSI New School Application released

Sign up to receive notifications when new school application materials are made available at www.csi.state.co.us/prospective_schools.

March 2016
Formal application submitted to CSI

Before applying to the Institute, ensure the following have occurred:
 Applicant meets with CSI to discuss application process
 Applicant meets with community members to gauge interest
 Applicant notifies home district of intent to apply to CSI
 Applicant submits Letter of Intent to CSI



90 Day Clock Begins

March-April

- Comprehensive review conducted by CSI Review Team
- Additional information may be requested from the Applicant

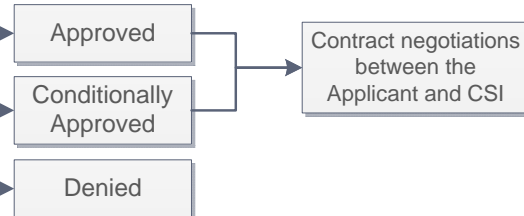
April-May

- Applicant holds geographic meeting
- Applicant interviews with CSI Review Team
- Applicant presents to CSI Board

June

- CSI Review Team recommends approval or denial to CSI Board

June 2016
CSI Board votes on application



July/August 2017
New charter school opens under CSI

Resources

In preparation for application planning, the following resources may be valuable. Applicants are encouraged to consider the value of application development and review services offered by some of these or other agencies.

CSI's Prospective Schools Page: www.csi.state.co.us/prospective_schools

CSI's Prospective Schools page provides a wealth of information surrounding CSI's application cycles, including a detailed application timeline for each cycle, sample applications from previous cycles, a listing of CSI services offered to schools above and beyond authorization services, as well as access CSI's charter school resource center, which provides online resources related to charter school development.

Colorado Department of Education—Division of Choice and Innovation: www.cde.state.co.us/choice

This resource focuses on expanding learning opportunities beyond the typical school building, day, and calendar; ramping up the supply of quality online and blended learning options; supporting new schools and programs and replicating those with proven track records of success; and identifying policy or system changes needed within CDE and across the state in order to meet the needs of 21st century learners. CDE also administers the federal Charter School Program grant for the state. Information regarding this grant can be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/GrantPrograms.asp>

Colorado Education Initiative: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/>

The Colorado Education Initiative is an independent, non-profit that collaborates with the Colorado Department of Education as well as schools and districts across the state to accelerate student achievement. CEI believes that increased student achievement for all Colorado students requires effective leaders in every school, effective educators in every classroom, and healthy and engaged students who come to school ready to learn.

Colorado League of Charter Schools: <http://www.coloragoleague.org>

The Colorado League of Charter Schools is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to supporting the charter schools in the state. The League is committed to helping these schools reach higher levels of student performance and overall success by providing information and resources, including technical support, advocacy, public relations assistance, and much more.

Donnell Kay Foundation: <http://www.dkfoundation.org/>

The Donnell-Kay Foundation is a private family foundation aiming to improve public education and drive systemic school reform in Colorado through research, creative dialogue, and critical thinking. Donnell-Kay provides operating and program dollars to innovative school and non-profit projects statewide, with a focus on metro Denver's urban schools.

Catapult Leadership: <http://www.catapultleadership.org/>

Catapult Leadership prepares and supports talented leaders to open and manage high performing, autonomous schools and works to create conditions for these schools to thrive.

Training Modules for Governing Boards: [Click here for instructions on accessing the modules](#)

When governing board members commit to professional development and training, this best practice is modeled for other members of the school community including administration, staff, and the parent community at the school. This is a free online board training resource for all new and returning board members.

CSI staff is happy to supply applicants with additional information, clarification, and direction toward resources up until the application is submitted to CSI.

Please contact Ryan Marks at (303) 866-2572 or ryanmarks@csi.state.co.us.



Addendum

2015-2016



Call for Applications to propose and implement high-quality educational models that will effectively address the current disparities in services and outcomes for at-risk students in Colorado

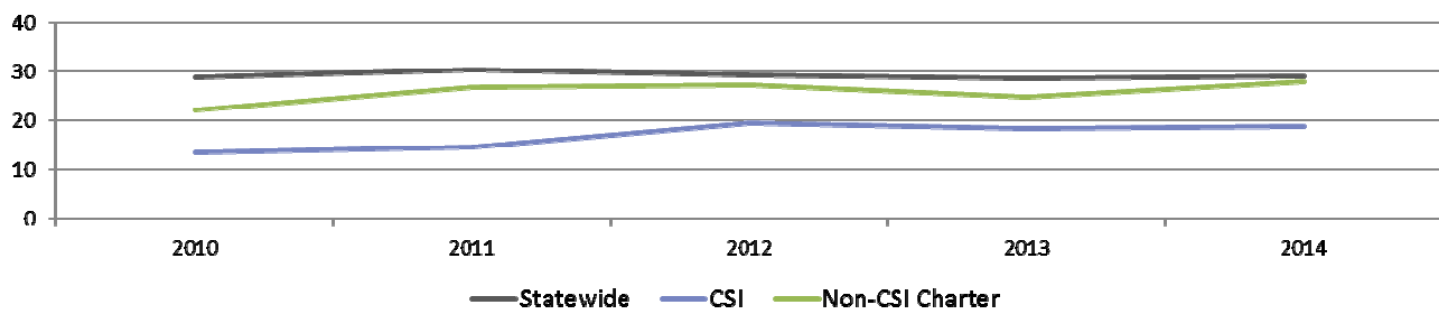
The Need to Address Current Disparities in Services & Outcomes for At-risk Students

The Colorado General Assembly adopted the Charter School Institute (CSI) Act in 2004 and the Colorado Charter School Institute was established with the mission to “foster high-quality public school choices offered through institute charter schools, including particularly schools that are focused on closing the achievement gap for at-risk students.” At the end of 2014, CSI completed its 10th year of operation and the Board of the Charter School Institute reviewed portfolio wide student outcomes data for at-risk students against its mission to emphasize success with traditionally underserved populations. This review identified several noteworthy findings, including:

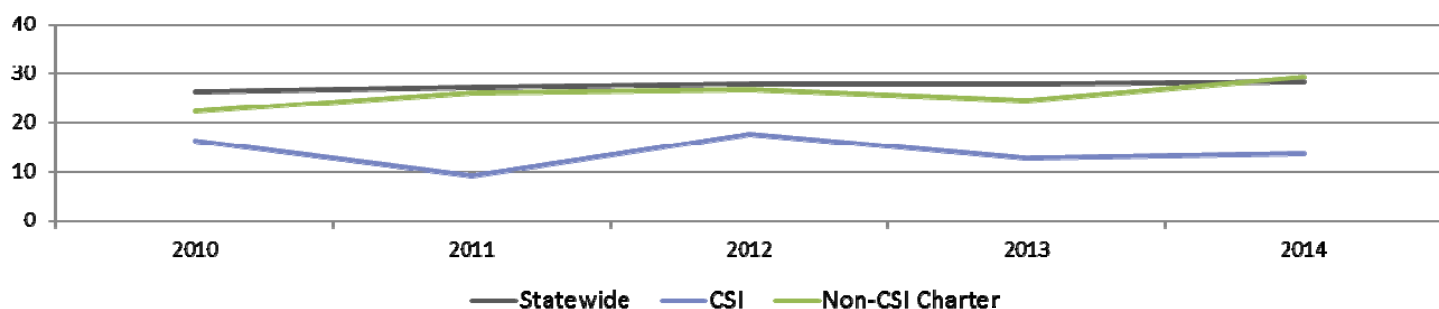
- ◆ The disparity between traditionally underserved CSI populations and their peers was less than half of the disparity observed statewide, and significantly lower than the general charter sector.
- ◆ The most recent years of data suggest the CSI achievement gap has begun to widen, a trend that does not mirror historical success or statewide movement.
- ◆ Portfolio service to some at-risk populations has begun to decline in recent years, with the service profile of many schools falling far below the demographic composition of their geographic district and neighboring schools.

Given these findings, and the mission of CSI, the CSI Board reaffirmed its commitment to raise the academic achievement and educational opportunities for these traditionally underserved populations in Board Resolution 1549. The CSI Board commended those CSI schools that are having consistent and continued success in addressing these achievement gaps and acknowledged that the challenges are immense and solutions to date are rare.

Reading Achievement Gap



Mathematics Achievement Gap



Programmatic Priorities

By issuing this Call for Applications, CSI seeks applicants to propose and implement high-quality educational models that will effectively address the current disparities in services and outcomes for at-risk students in Colorado. CSI believes that promoting a variety of successful and innovative educational designs is paramount when expanding school choice within the state of Colorado. Accordingly, CSI does not limit the Call to those that utilize specific educational models. Rather, CSI welcomes all applicants, particularly those applications that propose to serve at-risk students through the use of a scalable, measurable, and sustainable model that incorporates one or more of the following areas of emphasis: an innovative educational model/program, seek to serve small or rural communities, or include a strong focus on or demonstrated success in achieving postsecondary workforce readiness.

◆ **Innovative educational model/program**

Innovative, research-based applications that propose school models with strong potential to accelerate student success through dramatically different school designs, instructional strategies, uses of technology, staffing models, governance arrangements, family and community engagement strategies, and other approaches.

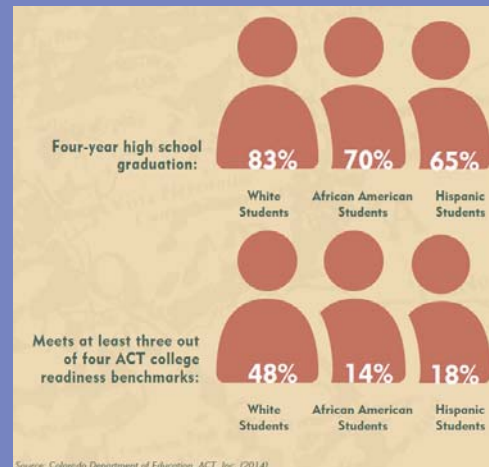
◆ **Service to rural communities**

Research-based applications that propose to locate in a district that is considered to be rural and address many of the challenges, limitations, and opportunities facing Colorado's rural communities.

◆ **Success in postsecondary workforce readiness**

Research-based applications that propose to meet Colorado's Postsecondary Workforce Readiness measures and provide students with "the knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential to high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and compete in the global economy including content knowledge, learning and behavior skills".

Demographics and the Achievement Gap



Colorado's National Achievement Gap Rankings

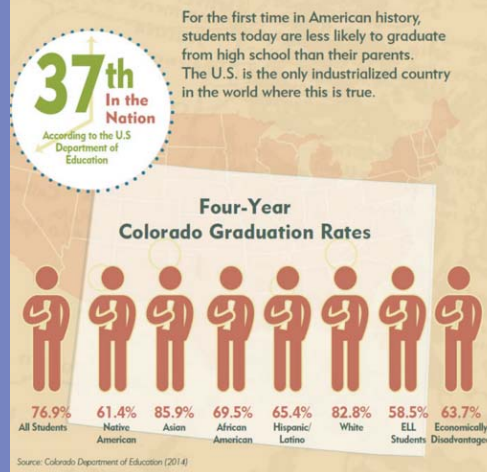
Income and ethnic gaps in student performance are alarming. Colorado is in poor standing compared to the other states.

| GAP | 4th Grade Math | 4th Grade Reading | 8th Grade Math | 8th Grade Reading |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Low Income/ Non-Low Income | 13th LARGEST GAP | 10th LARGEST GAP | 6th LARGEST GAP | 6th LARGEST GAP |
| African American/ White | 8th LARGEST GAP | 3rd LARGEST GAP | 4th LARGEST GAP | 2nd LARGEST GAP |
| Hispanic or Latino/ White | 9th LARGEST GAP | 6th LARGEST GAP | 9th LARGEST GAP | 10th LARGEST GAP |

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (2013)

Colorado High School Graduation Rates

Only 76.9% of Colorado students graduated from high school in four years in 2012-2013.



<http://www.coloradosucceeds.org/whats-at-stake/the-facts/achievement-gap/>

<http://www.coloradosucceeds.org/whats-at-stake/the-facts/college-career-readiness/>

CSI Board of Directors—Resolution 1549 Concerning Closing the Achievement Gap:

[http://www.boarddocs.com/co/csi/Board.nsf/files/A3Z3TC7E8EC5/\\$file/Agenda%20Item%20VIII.e.%20CSI%20Achievement%20Gap%20-RESOLUTION%201549.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/co/csi/Board.nsf/files/A3Z3TC7E8EC5/$file/Agenda%20Item%20VIII.e.%20CSI%20Achievement%20Gap%20-RESOLUTION%201549.pdf)

CDE State of Charter Schools Report (2013): <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/stateofcharterschoolsreport>

Colorado Department of Education—Rural Education Resources

Rural School Fact Sheet: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/ruraleducationcouncilfactsheet>

A Rural Needs Study (2011): <http://www.cde.state.co.us/ruraledcouncil/ruralneedsstudy>

Rural Education Council: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/ruraledcouncil>

Colorado Education Commissioner Robert Hammond established the Rural Education Council to oversee, support, conduct research and advocate for the needs, concerns and particular problems of rural education districts.

Colorado Department of Education—Postsecondary Readiness Resources: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary>

Career and College Ready Council: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/careerandcollegereadycouncil>

The Career and College Readiness Council will assist the Colorado Department of Education in outlining how department staff can best support districts and schools in the related areas of professional competencies, adult education, postsecondary and workforce readiness, graduation guidelines, and their related programs.

Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/DropoutPrevention/>

Dropout Prevention and Student Re-Engagement is dedicated to strengthening, coordinating and aligning resources to reduce the Colorado dropout rate and ensure graduation and school completion and will advance efforts across the state to support planning and implementation of effective practices at the local level.

Colorado Succeeds—Demographics and the Achievement Gap: <http://www.coloradosucceeds.org/whats-at-stake/the-facts/achievement-gap/>

Colorado Succeeds—College & Career Readiness: <http://www.coloradosucceeds.org/whats-at-stake/the-facts/college-career-readiness/>

CSI staff is happy to supply applicants with additional information, clarification, and direction toward resources up until the application is submitted to CSI.

Please contact Ryan Marks at (303) 866-2572 or ryanmarks@csi.state.co.us.