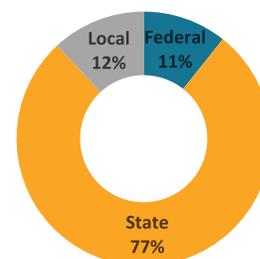


COLORADO

AUTHORIZER TYPE(S)	Local Education Agency Independent Charter Board
LEGAL STATUS OF CHARTER SCHOOLS	Part of a Local Education Agency
LINKAGE TO A TRADITIONAL DISTRICT	Total Link (LEA Authorizer)
STATE SPECIAL ED FUNDING FORMULA	Census-based distribution—Fixed per-pupil dollar amount allocated per state average rates of disabilities.
% OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	10.53% (all public schools) 6.75% (charter schools)

COLORADO Revenue Sources, FY 2014



FY 2014	Spending Per Pupil
COLORADO	\$8,985
US	\$11,009

*Sources on last page; click [here](#) for definitions

Charter School Funding

Charter school funding differs depending on whether the charter is authorized by a district or the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI). District-authorized charters receive 100% of the per-pupil revenue, less an amount for administrative costs (based on actual district spending), capped at 5%. CSI-authorized charters receive 100% of the per-pupil revenue, less an amount for administrative costs (up to 3% for CSI and 1% for the state department of education).

Charters authorized by the Charter School Institute (CSI)

The Public School Finance Act of Colorado sets out a formula used to determine state and local funding amounts for the state's 178 school districts and the Charter School Institute. Total Program is a term used to describe the total amount of money each school district receives under the School Finance Act.

For CSI-authorized charters, the per-pupil revenue amount is the same as the district in which the school is geographically located.

Total Program

Total Program Funding is based on a per-pupil formula that provides a base per-pupil amount plus additional money to recognize district-by-district variances in: (a) cost of living, (b) personnel costs, and (c) size. The base funding amount for 2015-16 was \$6,292.39 per pupil. The Total Program amount also includes additional funding for at-risk pupils, measured as number of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL). For each at-risk pupil, a district receives additional funding equal to at least 12%, but no more than 30%, of its Total Program Per-pupil Funding depending on its concentration of at-risk students relative to the state average of 37.2%.

For budget year 2015-16, minimum Total Program funding was \$7,875.42 per traditional pupil and \$7,588 per online pupil.

The local share of total program funding depends on property and vehicle registration tax revenues. CSI-authorized charter schools do not receive any local funds or mill levy funds. However, CSI-authorized schools can be included in local bond issues if the district wants to include them.

- Statewide across all school districts, property taxes are projected to provide \$2,310.72 per pupil, or about 31.68% of Total Program funding.
- Statewide across all school districts, vehicle registration taxes are projected to provide \$174.98 per pupil, or about 2.4% of Total Program funding.

(cont. on following page)

Charter School Funding

Categorical Programs

In addition to Total Program funding, Colorado school districts may receive state funding for "categorical" programs. The six primary categorical program areas which regularly receive state funding are:

1. Special education

State funding of special education programs for children with disabilities was \$165.2 million for budget year 2015-16.

- \$500,000 for costs incurred for children with disabilities who live in eligible facilities within their boundaries who are wards of the state or legally emancipated.
- \$4 million for reimbursement of high costs incurred in providing special education services in the preceding school year. High costs are defined as the costs incurred by an administrative unit above a threshold amount of \$25,000
- \$2.5 million for screening and evaluation of children from birth through two years of age
- The remaining amount is distributed as follows:
 - * \$1,250 for each child reported on December 1 of the previous year.
 - * Up to an additional \$6,000 for each child reported on its previous December 1 count. The amount is prorated based on the amount of the remaining appropriations.

2. English language proficiency education: For English language learners for up to five years

3. Small attendance centers: For schools with less 200 pupils enrolled and located 20 or more miles from any similar school (e.g., elementary) within the same school district

4. Transportation: Each district is eligible to receive a \$0.3787 (37.87 cents) per-mile-traveled on a reimbursement basis for the twelve-month period ending each June 30. Further, each district may receive funding equal to 33.87% of its total costs remaining after the per-mile-traveled reimbursement (the "excess costs" reimbursement).

5. Vocational education: For State Board-approved programs, this funding is available to a school district if its CTE program costs exceed 70% of the per-pupil funding otherwise available. The state will cover up to 80% of the first \$1,250 of these "excess" costs, and 50% of any excess costs over \$1,250.

6. Gifted and Talented Education

Charters authorized by a district

District-authorized charter schools are funded based on the October 1 pupil count reported to their school district. Charter schools receive 100% of the per pupil revenue for each pupil enrolled in the charter school. Colorado school districts are not required by law to share mill levy funds with district-authorized charters.

District-authorized charters are eligible for at-risk and supplemental at-risk funding if they serve a disproportionate share of at-risk students relative to other district schools.

The district may charge the charter school for central administrative overhead costs for services provided to the charter school. A charter school may choose to purchase services such as special education or business services (payroll, purchasing, risk management, Student Information Services, transportation, food service, etc.) from their authorizer or a third party.

Capital Facilities Funding: A charter school that has capital construction needs may seek funding by requesting the district Board of Education to: 1) Include the charter school's capital construction needs in the district's ballot question for approval of bonded indebtedness; or 2) submit a special mill levy ballot question to the voters of the district, upon request of the charter school. The special mill levy for Charter Schools shall not exceed 1 mill in any year or exceed 10 years in duration for a single ballot question, but multiple ballot questions may be submitted. As of FY2015-16, no charter schools used this mill levy.

Capital Construction Funding: In FY2015-16, \$22 million is to be distributed to charter schools for capital construction based on a per pupil share for all pupils enrolled in a "qualified charter school" that is not operating in a school district facility and half of the per pupil share for "qualified charter schools" operating in a school district facility which has capital construction costs. No funding is provided to qualified charter schools operating in a school district facility that does not have capital construction costs. Funding is distributed monthly.

State Special Education Funding

State special education funds flow to the LEA, and the school district is legally responsible for students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools. State funding of special education programs for children with disabilities was \$165.2 million for budget year 2015-16.

The state provides the following in special education funding:

- \$500,000 for costs incurred for children with disabilities who live in eligible facilities within their boundaries who are wards of the state or legally emancipated.
- \$4 million for reimbursement of high costs incurred in providing special education services in the preceding school year. High costs are defined as the costs incurred by an administrative unit above a threshold amount of \$25,000
- \$2.5 million for screening and evaluation of children from birth through two years of age
- The remaining amount is distributed as follows:
 - * \$1,250 for each child reported on December 1 of the previous year.
 - * Up to an additional \$6,000 for each child reported on its previous December 1 count. The amount is prorated based on the amount of the remaining appropriations.

Local Special Education Funding/Services

Colorado developed an insurance model in which most charter schools pay their districts a set amount for every student, as insurance to provide special education and related services to charter students with IEPs.

	Liability and service provision	Payment
Insurance Models		
Minimal	LEA assumes liability but provides no services beyond oversight and proce-	The charter school pays a standard per pupil special education fee (often rolled into the authorizer fee).
Standard	LEA assumes liability and provides some or all services in addition to oversight and procedural support.	The charter school pays a fee based on total student enrollment, and that fee varies by authorizer (\$150 to \$1100 per student enrolled). The fee is often determined by the authorizer’s calculation of its total special education costs for the year, which is then divided by the total number of students in the district.
Modified	LEA assumes liability and provides some services.	The charter school pays a fixed per student fee set by the district; depending on actual costs, it may receive a refund or be
Split	LEA assumes liability and a third party (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) provides all services except for oversight and procedural support	The charter school pays two flat fees: one to the district and the other to the third party (usually as a percent of the total per pupil revenue)
Fee for Service	Negotiable	Negotiable

The Charter School Institute only offers the minimal insurance model to the schools it authorizes.

Federal IDEA Part B Funding

Part B funds are distributed to LEAs, based on a base allocation amount plus a relative-enrollment component and a children living in poverty component. According to a 2015 study of special education in Colorado charter schools, it remains unclear whether LEAs share federal IDEA funds with their charters or use them to offset the cost of providing special education services at their charter schools.

High-Cost Funds

High-Cost Allocation Fund: The state also has a limited “High-Cost Allocation” fund, sometimes referred to as a “risk pool” for students who have extremely high needs and require costly services, which is distributed, student-by-student, each year.

Colorado appropriated two million dollars under the Exceptional Children’s Educational Act for students in high cost out of district placements or programs (for the 2011-12 school year, paid out in June 2013). The Fiscal Advisory Committee set the threshold for reimbursement at \$40,000 per student for high cost out of district placements and at \$25,000 per student for in district high cost placements.

Number of Applications Funded 2013:

- The \$2 million appropriated for out of district high cost students funded 40 (36%) of the 110 students
- The \$2 million appropriated for in district high cost students funded 72 (12%) of the 618 students

Medicaid

Medicaid School Health Services: Some IEP services are reimbursable through Medicaid. According to the Colorado League of Charter Schools’ 2015 study of special education in Colorado charter schools, LEAs that participate in the Medicaid program are not consistently transparent with their charter schools about whether reimbursements for services provided at charter public schools are available.

References / Resources

Reference sites

Colorado Department of Education

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/>

Colorado League of Charter Schools

<http://coloradoleague.org/>

Funding links

Colorado League of Charter Schools: Landscape Study of Special Education Delivery in Colorado Charter Public Schools October 2015
(available to League members only)

<http://coloradoleague.org/?page=AdvocacyResources>

Understanding Colorado School Finance And Categorical Program Funding July 2015

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/fy2015-16brochure>

CDE Colorado Charter Schools Frequently Asked Questions

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/faq>

CDE Special Education Finance and Operations

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdespedfin>

Pulling Back the Curtain: How Colorado’s Transparency Law Sheds New Light on School Funding

<http://americasucceeds.org/downloads/curtain.pdf>

[CDE State and Federal Grants Allocations](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefisgrant/allocations)

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefisgrant/allocations>

Special Education Fiscal Advisory Committee Report 2013

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdespedfin/sefac-0>

High-cost links

Understanding Colorado School Finance and Categorical Program Funding July 2015

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/fy2015-16brochure>

Medicaid links

Colorado Medicaid School Health Services: Parent’s Guide

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/healthandwellness/download/medicaid/parent%20brochure%2003%202013.pdf>

Colorado Medicaid School Health Services: Annual report spreadsheet

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/2013-14schoolhealthservicesprogramannulareporttocdespreadsheet>

Sources for data on first page of report

Percentage of students with disabilities: U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for the 2013-14 school year. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2013-14.html>

Federal, state, and local revenue sources & spending per pupil: United States Census Bureau, Annual Survey of School System Finances.

Available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/school-finances.html>