COLORADO
Department of Education

S.B. 23-219 Facility Schools Work Group Annual Report

Submitted to:
Joint Budget Committee
House Education Committee
Senate Education Committee
State Board of Education

By:
Office of Facility Schools

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Office of Facility Schools
201 E. Colfax Ave.
4th Floor
Denver, CO 80203

facility _schools@cde.state.co.us

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Historical Background 4

Membership, Meetings, and Resources 7

- Legislation Required Representation
- Facility School Work Group Meetings and Resources
- 2025-26 Stakeholder Groups for Facility School Work Group

Implementation Progress to Date 11

- Funding
- Capacity
- Continuum
- External Evaluation

Data and Feedback on Implementation Progress 16

- Impact in Key Areas
- Examples of Positive Change
- Observations of Continues Challenges

Work Continues 22

- Funding
- Capacity
- Continuum
- External Evaluation
- Essential Actions

Acknowledgements 25

Appendices 26

- Appendix A: Baseline Funding
- Appendix B: Tuition Cost Model
- Appendix C: Shared Operational Services
- Appendix D: Technical Assistance Center
- Appendix E: Specialized Day Schools
- Appendix F: Interagency Resource Guide
- Appendix G: Accountability and Accreditation
- Appendix H: External Evaluation

Executive Summary

In 2008, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill (H.B.) 08-1204, which established a Facility School Unit under the Colorado Department of Education as well as a Facility School Board. The Unit and Board were designed to work together to oversee and provide guidance to the state's system of Facility Schools. Facility Schools provide educational services outside of the traditional classroom to students with physical, behavioral, mental health, or special education needs. Facility Schools are found primarily on the Front Range and can operate as day or residential treatment facilities, specialized day schools, or in a hospital setting. Historically, Facility Schools have served thousands of students each year across the state. They have provided critical educational and treatment services for students with high needs. In 2010, fifty-six Facility Schools were operating throughout the state, however, by 2022 that number had dropped to just thirty. The closing of over twenty Facility Schools during that time was not the result of a decrease in the number of students who would have benefited from the services and support provided by those schools, but instead was the lack of state operational funding necessary for the staffing and curriculum support required for the identified high need student population.

The closing of these schools led to a decrease in available placement options for students and limited access for students outside the Denver Metro area. This loss of approved Facility School capacity created significant barriers to academic success for many students and decreased educational opportunities for many of the state's most vulnerable students. This loss was acutely felt within the educational landscape of Colorado and as a result, during the 2021 legislative session, Senate Bill (S.B.) 21-274 established a Facility School Model Work Group that was tasked with developing recommendations to help foster a sustainable Facility School model to better serve the state's most high need students. The bill identified funding, capacity, and the continuum of student services as areas of focus for the group and called on the members to address the educational, physical, behavioral, and mental health needs of children and youth who need advanced services. The Work Group began work in the fall of 2021 and developed a set of recommendations grounded in the three focus areas which were presented to the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) at the end of 2022 in their S.B.21-274 Facility Schools Work Group Final Report. Recommendations addressed specific items to help tackle system level challenges.

Funding Recommendations
- Baseline Funding
- Tuition Costs
- Medicaid Reimbursements
- Shared Operational Services

Capacity Recommendations
- Technical Assistance Center

Continuum Recommendations
- Specialized Day School
- Interagency Resource Guide
- Accountability and Accreditation

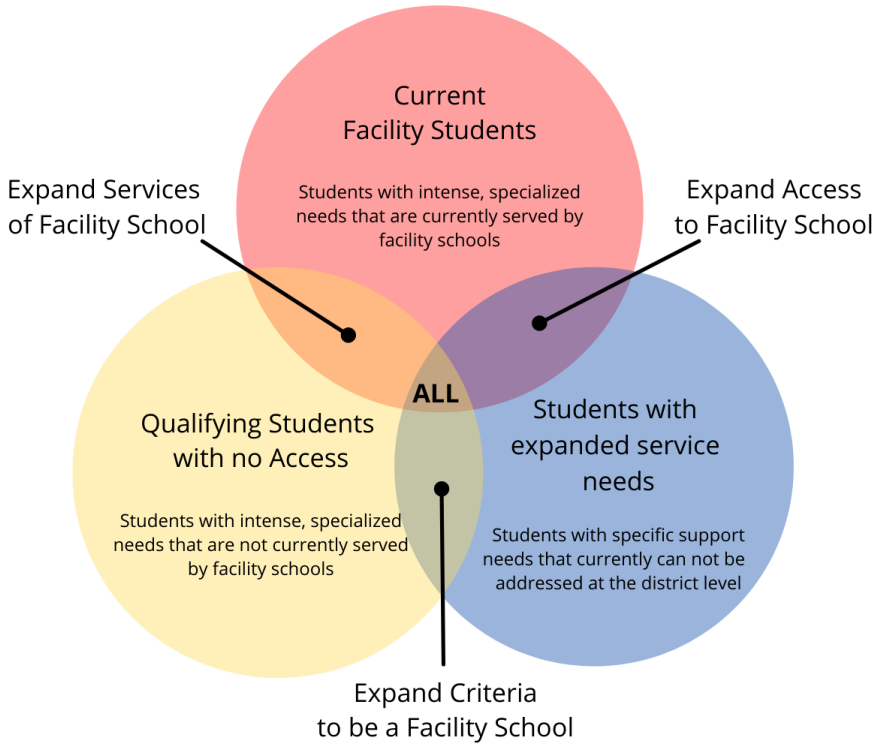
In April of 2023, the Colorado General Assembly passed S.B. 23-219, which contained the recommendations put forth by the Facility School Model Work Group. The bill was signed into law in April of 2023 and re-established a Facility School Work Group with a modified membership and the shifted focus of tracking implementation of the new legislation and providing feedback and additional recommendations concerning the work. The bill mandated an annual report, submitted to the JBC each November to provide information on progress of each recommendation and bill requirement. The first annual report, 2023 S.B. 23-219 Annual Report, was submitted in October of 2023 and provided updates along with data that had been collected from Facility Schools across the state. Since then, the Work Group has continued to track implementation of the recommendations as well as collect data to help determine whether the work has had the desired and intended impact on the system. This annual report represents the culmination of that work and provides not only a historical look at the changes that have occurred but a road map for how this work will be maintained moving forward.

Historical Background

During the 2021 legislative session, Senate Bill (S.B.) 21-274 established a Facility School Model Work Group to "*develop and implement a sustainable model with the capacity to meet the educational needs of children and youth in or at risk of out-of-home placement and children and youth who are at risk of educational failure due to challenging behavior, mental or behavioral health needs or disabilities, regardless of the child's or youth's eligibility for special education services.*" The bill also identified funding, capacity, and the continuum of student services as areas of focus for the Work Group. Providing sustainable funding would ideally support a high-quality education, developing a comprehensive continuum of services would help ensure that all student needs could be met, and expanding capacity would help keep the students of Colorado close to their families and communities and minimize costs to the districts. Funding, capacity, and the continuum of services are interconnected and support each other to provide a more cohesive facility school system that benefits everyone, specifically children and their families/guardians.

In October of 2021, the Facility School Model Work Group began the work that would ultimately lead to numerous recommendations making the system of Facility Schools what it is today. The group began by defining what they felt success would mean. Members were looking to find long-term solutions, not quick fixes, they hoped to address rates and rate-setting processes, they sought to create statewide sustainable options that would provide services without limitations, resources that were more accessible for all students, and increase placement capacity. Additionally, the group hoped to enable improvements to residential and educational programs, simplify processes to minimize red tape for schools and help the system be more self-sustainable so that facilities could continue to provide quality programming. The Work Group utilized these measures of success to develop recommendations that would help transform the Facility School system by focusing on three distinct populations of students and three interconnected approaches that would help to enhance the Colorado Facility School system (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Facility School System Model



After almost a year of meetings, research, focus groups, surveys, and data collection, the S.B. 21-274 Model Work Group developed a set of recommendations that comprised the final report that was shared with the Joint Budget Committee. The recommendations focused on the three areas originally mentioned in the bill: Funding, Capacity, and Continuum. Recommendations from the final report are listed below.

- Funding Recommendations A: *The S.B. 21-274 Facility School Model Work Group recommends a Facility Baseline Quality Funding model as a foundational and fundamental recommendation. The baseline funding model creates a minimum funding level for each facility school to help establish an adequate and reliable revenue stream. The baseline funding level should be designed in accordance with the minimum required set of student facing staff and resources. The desired result will be to close the fiscal shortfall between current expenses and revenues by establishing a minimum revenue threshold in order for the State to meet its legal obligation to provide educational services to at-risk students including students with disabilities.*
- Funding Recommendations B: *The S.B. 21-274 Facility School Model Work Group recommends that funding be provided to identify and develop a set of Shared Operational Services across interested Facility Schools. This shared services model could be funded through a 2-year grant. The grant would pay for additional administrative capacity to conduct a landscape analysis,*

identify eligible services, and develop mechanisms to realize economies of scale for non-student-facing staff, services, and/or resources. The desired result will be to close the fiscal shortfall between current expenses and revenues by reducing operational expenses and improving efficiencies.

- Capacity Recommendation A: *The S.B. 21-274 Facility Schools Model Work Group recommends that the Colorado Department of Education develop a technical assistance center for the provision of training and professional development to support districts. This center would provide specific support needs to maintain students in their home district. Rural school districts who currently do not have access to Facility Schools should receive priority assistance. The desired result will be to increase the capacity of the state to serve students with specific support needs that cannot currently be addressed at the district level.*
- Continuum Recommendation A: *The S.B. 21-274 Facility School Model Work Group recommends that the Colorado Department of Education reinforce existing standards for Facility Schools while expanding the definition of Facility Schools to address the disparity between student needs and the existing continuum of services within the State of Colorado. This will allow the Colorado Department of Education to approve new or existing organizations serving various student populations to provide direct specialized services as a part of the State's continuum of educational services. The desired outcome will be to increase the capacity of the State to provide a full continuum of services for students with specific support needs, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).*
- Continuum Recommendation B: *The S.B. 21-274 Facility School Model Work Group recommends that the Office of Facility Schools collaborate with other State level entities to promote revisions, clarification or additional support for the approval process in accordance with current or future legislation. This would include while not being limited to the Departments' collaborating on written guidance that becomes publicly available with step by step instructions for how to become an approved Facility School. The desired outcome will be to make the process of becoming an approved Facility School more efficient while updating and aligning requirements to address current student needs.*

Additionally, the Work Group proposed an implementation monitoring recommendation which stated:

> *"Facility Schools Model Work Group recommends providing funding to establish and maintain a representative work group to monitor the implementation of the new Facility Schools model. During the full period of implementation, this work group would meet periodically to assess progress and advise the JBC (or other entity) on progress or changes to consider with regard to preserving the intent of the recommendations. S.B. 21-274 provides a timeline for implementation of recommendations that begins July 1, 2023 and extends through June of 2027. This representative work group would be established, start to convene, and be tasked with its purpose and responsibilities no later than October 2023."*

In April of 2023, the Colorado General Assembly passed S.B. 23-219, which contained the recommendations put forth by the Facility School Model Work Group. The bill was signed into law the same month. An updated S.B. 23-219 Facility School Work Group was established in May of 2023 and work immediately began on implementation of the funding, capacity, and continuum recommendations. Since then, extensive work and monitoring has taken place across the state which has resulted in the following changes to the Facility School System:

Funding Changes- Combined these changes have resulted in increases in staff salaries, the number of staff employed, and the retention rates of staff across Facility Schools. Further, the funding changes have enabled Facility Schools to incorporate critical maintenance and improvement costs into their yearly budgeting. These staffing and maintenance changes have enabled existing Facility Schools to stay open and grow while simultaneously providing a means for new Facility Schools to open.

- The *Baseline Funding Model* has helped ensure that funding levels are sufficient to ensure Facility Schools can not only stay open but expand as needs change.
- The new *Tuition Cost Plan and Rates* have further ensured that Facility Schools are financially supported to provide the necessary services for the students they educate.
- New *Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance* information was compiled to help Facility Schools request and receive important Medicaid funding when applicable.
- The *Shared Operational Services* program has enabled Facility Schools to harness bundled purchasing power for material and services cost savings.

Capacity Changes- These changes have resulted in multiple support mechanisms for Facility Schools and traditional school districts across the state, especially those in rural areas. The newly formed Technical Assistance Center brought stakeholders together to strengthen the current work and services related to supporting high need students across the state.

- The *Technical Assistance Center* provides training, shares ideas and insights, as well as explores new resources to enhance the work of educators across Colorado.

Continuum Changes- These changes have resulted in both the expansion of available services for high need students as well as ensuring that entities providing those services are operating at the highest quality possible.

- The new category of *Specialized Day School* provides services for a population of students that did not, until now, have access to much needed services and support.
- The new *Interagency Resource Guide* provides clear guidance to facilities that are working toward licensure or authorization to become an approved school.
- The new *Accountability and Accreditation Standards* will help ensure that schools are held to the highest standards possible.

Combined, these funding, capacity, and continuum changes have greatly enhanced the quality and scope of the Facility School system that works to support many of Colorado's most high need students. The following report documents the specific year over year changes that have occurred since the passage of S.B. 23-219. Additionally, the report addresses how the system as a whole will move forward from here to continue to sustain the important and impactful work that has taken place over the last five years.

Membership, Meetings, and Resources

Legislation Required Representation

S.B. 21-274, and modified by S.B. 23-219, required representation from the following entities within the Work Group:

- School Districts
- Boards of Cooperative Services

- Special Education Directors
- Facility Schools and Facility School Board Members
- The Department of Health Care Policy and Finance
- The Department of Education
- The Department of Human Services, Including the Division of Youth Services
- County Departments of Human or Social Services
- Parents, Guardians, and Legal Custodians of Students with Exceptionally Severe or Specialized Needs
- Therapeutic Facilities for Students with Exceptionally Severe or Specialized Needs That Are Not Approved Facility Schools

Work Group members were appointed through the Office of Facility Schools. Representatives were sought through a variety of stakeholder groups and pathways. The office ensured each member had knowledge of or experience with Facility Schools. A complete list of current Work Group members, the entities they represent, and their roles can be found below (Table 1). All but two members of the SY2024-25 Work Group continued their service into SY2025-26.

Table 1

S.B. 23-219 Facility School Work Group Membership By Name, Representation, and Role

Member	Representation Required by Statute	Role/Position
Sarah Baumgartner	School District	Assistant Director of Special Education- Brighton 27J
Deon Bruce	Facility School	Special Education Director- Cedar Springs Hospitals
Laurie Burney	CO Dept. of Human Services	Div. of Child Welfare- Facility Monitoring
Danny Combs	Specialized Day School Parent/Guardian of Student	Former Executive Director- TACT and Parent
Wendy Dunaway	CO Dept. of Education	Assistant Director- Office of Facility Schools
Mylynda Herrick	Facility School Board Member Parent/Guardian of Student	Parent
Brianna Holmes	CO Dept. of Health Care Policy & Finance	Child and Youth Complex Service and Support Specialist
Sonjia Hunt	Facility School Facility School Board Member	Special Education Director- Hilltop Facility School
Maitri Jensen	CO Dept. of Human Services	Foster Care Liaison- Education

		Specialist
Erin Osterhaus	Division of Youth Services	Director of Education
Steven Ramirez	Facility School Facility School Board Member	CEO- Shiloh Facility School and Board Chair
Robin Singer	CO Dept. of Education	Supervisor- Office of Facility Schools
Judy Stirman	CO Dept. of Education	Director- Office of Facility Schools
Ann Symalla	CO Dept. of Education	Office of Facility Schools
Barb Taylor	Facility School	Special Education Director- Various Facility Schools
Kevin Tracy	Facility School	Chief Officer- Residential & Education Services- Shiloh
Susan Udenberg	Boards of Cooperative Services	Executive Director and SPED Director
Callan Ware	School District Special Education Director	Director of Special Education- Englewood Schools
Laura Writebol	County Depts.- Human Services	Education Liaison - Denver County DHS

Facility School Work Group Meetings and Resources

Facility School Work Group meetings occur approximately once a month or every other month, and are typically held virtually. Meetings are open to the public and include a scheduled time for public comment; however, only Work Group members actively participate in decision making during meetings. Meeting dates and times, agendas, meeting notes, and Zoom links are available to the public through the Facility School Work Group page on the Colorado Department of Education website. Work Group members have access, through a shared Google folder, to an archive of resources, reports, PowerPoint presentations, and past meeting notes.

2025-2026 Stakeholder Groups of the Facility School Work Group

Consultation with stakeholder groups were required to address some specific items outlined in S.B. 23-219. The Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group was established in the summer of 2023 to "*analyze and recommend changes to the methods used for calculating tuition costs for approved facility schools.*"

Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group Formation and Work

The stakeholder group was assembled by the Office of Facility Schools and includes S.B. 23-219 Work Group members, Facility School Board members, school district staff, Charter School Institute

representatives, and Facility School staff. A complete list of stakeholder group members, representation, and their roles can be found below (Table 2). The stakeholder group met to review the annual financial report and tuition cost category rubric.

Table 2

S.B. 23-219 Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group Membership By Name, Representation, and Role

Member	Representation	Role/Position
Wendy Dunaway	Office of Facility Schools	Assistant Director
Annie Haskins	Office of Facility Schools	SPED/IEP System Administrator
Sonjia Hunt	Hilltop Facility School Facility School Board Member Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Special Education Director
Corey Kala	Lardon Facility School	Chief Financial Officer
Lori Kochevar	Office of Facility Schools	Lead- Tuition Cost- Committee Lead
Robin Singer	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Supervisor- Committee Lead
Judy Stirman	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Director
Ann Symalla	Office of Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Monitoring Specialist
Barb Taylor	Multiple Facility Schools Facility School Work Group Member	Facility School Special Education Director
Callan Ware	Englewood School District Facility School Work Group Member	SPED Director
Jewell Weber	Joshua School Facility School	Chief Financial Officer

Implementation Progress to Date

Since the passage of S.B. 23-219, all implementation requirements in each of the three focus areas have been completed. With regards to funding, a Baseline Funding Model and Tuition Cost Calculation Method were implemented along with an annual financial reporting process to help monitor funding to help ensure that sufficient funding for organizations is maintained. Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance was developed and shared out with schools, concurrent to development of Shared Operational Services to help reduce organizational costs. With regards to capacity, The Technical Assistance Center became operational and provides services, programs, data, and outreach to schools, districts, and organizations across the state. Finally, with regards to continuum, multiple Specialized Day Schools have been approved and are operating to expand opportunities for students across Colorado. Simultaneously, the Interagency Resource Guide was developed and shared out and a full accreditation process and framework is currently being finalized to help ensure all students receive services and supports that meet their needs.

Funding

A. Baseline Funding
   a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 creates a new baseline funding model for approved schools. The bill requires reporting on the new baseline funding model for approved schools.
   b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, the Work Group collected historical data, including monthly enrollment data and additional administrative and operational data, that could be used in the analysis of the remodel of baseline funding and updated methods for tracking monthly enrollment.
   c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, the first full year of implementation of the new baseline funding model was completed. Feedback from facility schools and the Work Group was collected to help develop revisions and refinements to the formula.
   d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, revisions and refinements were made to the Baseline Funding formula, based on feedback collected from Facility Schools and Work Group members following the first full year of implementation. Additionally, feedback was gathered regarding data collection to help collect more meaningful and accurate data for tracking and evaluation purposes in the future. An inflationary factor was applied to the formula to align funding with state rates. Enrollment data continued to be utilized to verify enrollment at each school for state revenue amounts.
   e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- CDE reviewed enrollment and staff data that has been collected over the last year to ensure accuracy for budgeting purposes. Updates to the Baseline Funding formula, including the inflationary factor incorporated last year, were reviewed with the Work Group. Due to current state budgetary shortfalls CDE and the Work Group explored possible adjustments that could be made in the future to help ensure sustainability of the funding model including but not limited to prioritizing funding needs for existing sites before adding new schools and/or programs to the

overall system. The group identified several key questions for discussion with regards to Baseline Funding including:

- Where should resources be focused if funding remains flat (should certain school types, sizes, and/or locations be prioritized).
- Should CDE maintain fewer sites with full funding or increase the number of sites but cut overall funding to each (should funding be prioritized over continuum and capacity or vice versa).
- Should adjustments to the funding formula be made in an effort to maximize funding, continuum, and capacity simultaneously.

For a full review of the Baseline Funding model see Appendix A.

B. Tuition Costs
   a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 requires the Office of Facility Schools to provide recommendations to change the method used for calculating costs for approved Facility Schools as described in section 22-2-405(5) and identify next steps.
   b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, the Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group began reviewing options for an updated method for calculating tuition costs as well as rule changes.
   c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, the State Board of Education approved a new tuition cost plan and rates. Changes included the creation of three category rates. The new rates took effect for SY2024-25. The Facility Schools Expenses Workbook was also updated.
   d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, the new tuition cost system was implemented. Additionally, Facility Schools received training for end of year financial reporting and submitted reports to CDE Office of Facility Schools ahead of the October 31 deadline. A guidance document was also created to provide information to Facility Schools and school districts.
   e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- Refinements to the process were made to determine tuition cost rates for new schools. Instructions and training for end of year reporting were adjusted to provide more information regarding special education costs. CDE also evaluated the review process to help ensure that each school's category met the criteria listed within the tuition rate rubric. To review the most recent version of the tuition rate calculation see Appendix B.

C. Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance
   a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 requires the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance to recommend a plan to provide guidance to approved schools on the eligibility standards required to request and receive Medicaid reimbursement funding for therapeutic services to the maximum extent feasible.
   b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- As of the 2023 Annual Report to the Joint Budget Committee, the Facility School Work Group was waiting on the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF) to share plans on the development of the Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance.
   c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, draft guidance was developed by HCPF.

d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, the Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance was finalized by HCPF. HCPF also shared information with the Work Group regarding the school health services program.

e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- No new information has been provided by HCPF since the 2025 Annual Report. For more information visit their website at https://hcpf.colorado.gov/

D. Shared Operational Services

a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 creates the shared operational services grant program to award a grant to eligible applicants to contract for two years with an organization that coordinates shared operational services.

b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, the operational services grant recipient was determined and was awaiting approval by the state board.

c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, the State Board of Education approved Colorado Association of Families and Children's Agencies (CAFCA) as the grantee at their regular board meeting in October 2023. Funds were distributed, Dave Sevick was named Director of Development and Member Services, and an Advisory Council was seated. A needs assessment was started and a shared purchasing process was piloted.

d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, a needs assessment to inform a direction for shared operational services was finalized. Based on the assessment, a sustainability plan was developed along with an “End of Year” financial summary to highlight Facility Schools realized cost savings.

e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- Financial data collected from participating Facility Schools continued to demonstrate that shared services helps organizations realize cost savings. To help expand the benefits of shared services, CAFCA continued outreach to all Facility Schools to increase participation. Additionally, they continued to explore operational needs that exist and arise within the Facility School system to identify more options for shared services in the future. For the newest information on the Shared Operational Services (SOS) Program from CAFCA see Appendix C.

Capacity

A. Technical Assistance Center (TAC)

a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 creates the technical assistance center in the Office of Facility Schools to provide technical assistance support to school districts and related administrative units, with a priority to serve rural and remote school districts and related administrative units. Beginning in the 2023-24 budget year, the center is required to assess the needs of school districts and related administrative units.

b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, a job description for the TAC coordinator was being developed and the Office of Facility Schools was informally collecting data to help assess potential needs of school districts and related administrative units.

c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, the position for the TAC was filled and the new coordinator started on July 1, 2024. The coordinator began to connect and conduct outreach with internal and external stakeholders, collect data to

help steer future work, build out a resource hub, and attend relevant conferences and meetings.

d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, a TAC website was created. The TAC coordinator facilitated multiple meetings with stakeholders to collect feedback and insight to guide the work, additional data collection was also conducted to help better understand statewide needs and how to address them. A resource "HUB", centralized support network that connects rural schools and districts with expert coaching, training, and resources, was established for rural districts to provide support and coaching opportunities.

e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*-The TAC continued to serve as a statewide resource for rural districts by providing training, consultation, coaching, and resource navigation. During SY2025-26, the TAC supported more than 400 participants through professional learning opportunities, responded to 33 district requests for assistance, and strengthened partnerships across the Colorado Department of Education and external organizations. Through the TAC HUB, professional behavior coaches supported 3 rural districts through in-person coaching, professional development, and consultation. Through these efforts, the TAC increased access to specialized support and helped build capacity within rural schools and districts throughout Colorado. For more information regarding programs and services provided during SY2025-26 see Appendix D

Continuum of Services

A. Specialized Day Schools

a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 creates the specialized day school as a type of approved school. The facility school board shall promulgate rules for a facility to become authorized to operate as a specialized day school.

b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, the Facility Schools Board began updating rules, 1 CCR 304-1, Rules for Administration of the Facility Schools Act, to include a process to authorize Specialized Day Schools.

c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, rules were approved by the Facility School Board. Teaching the Autism Community Trades (TACT) and Austin Centers for Exceptional Students (ACES) both progressed through the pilot authorization process and were approved as Specialized Day Schools and additional sites expressed interest in becoming authorized and approved Specialized Day Schools.

d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, additional refinements to the overall process and guidance were made. Changes were formally reviewed and approved in the fall of 2025. As of the 2025 report, there were four Specialized Day Schools approved as Facility Schools.

e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- Since the last annual report, an additional four new Specialized Day Schools were approved and one organization transitioned from a Day Treatment Facility to a Specialized Day School. As of the summer of 2026, a total of nine new Specialized Day Schools have been approved. CDE has continued to update the overall process and available guidance to help streamline the approval process. Facility School rules are being revisited and revised to help provide clarity regarding Specialized Day School application process and operations. For specifics on the current process of becoming a Specialized Day School see Appendix E

B. Interagency Resource Guide
    a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 requires the CDE, Department of Human Services (CDHS), HCPF, and the Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to collaborate and create an interagency resource guide to provide assistance to facilities that are pursuing licensing or authorization to operate as an approved school. The bill requires the state agencies to identify and recommend legislation and changes to each department's respective rules and administrative processes to facilitate licensing, authorization, and approval processes for facilities seeking to operate as approved schools.
    b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, a draft Interagency Resource Guide was written and reviewed by stakeholders including the SB23-219 Work Group Members.
    c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, a finalized version of the guide was posted on the CDE website.
    d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, no adjustments and/or revisions were necessary in the Interagency Resource Guide. The guide was reviewed again in the fall of 2025 for any needed updates.
    e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- CDE continues to work with CDHS on updates to the resource guide based on rules changes for Day Treatment Centers and Facility Schools. A new updated version of the guide is expected in early 2027. To review the latest version of the Interagency Resource Guide see Appendix F.

C. Accountability and Accreditation
    a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 requires the Facility Schools Board to adopt accountability and accreditation measures for approved schools.
    b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- The Facility Schools Board planned to update 1 CCR 304-1, Rules for Administration of the Facility Schools Act, to include the process to accredit approved facility schools and the components of the accreditation outcome reports.
    c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2024 Annual Report, the Facility School Board adopted revisions to 1 CCR 304-1 rules to include the process to accredit approved facility schools and complete outcome reports. The Office of Facility Schools worked on accreditation standards, measures, data collection and process.
    d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, a draft accreditation report was drafted by the Office of Facility Schools in collaboration with the Facility Schools Board. The report, which was finalized internally by CDE, included an accreditation framework, assurances, a performance summary, and accreditation criteria.
    e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- Work is continuing on the accreditation framework. The framework will include assurances, a performance summary, a school improvement plan, accreditation criteria, and an annual report. The first accreditation report will be approved by the Colorado State Board of Education in December of 2026. The site visit process will be finalized and piloted in the fall of 2026 and the spring of 2027. Full implementation of the accreditation process will take place for SY2027-28. For further information on the accreditation process see Appendix G.

External Evaluation

A. Third-Party Evaluation

a. *Bill Requirements*- S.B. 23-219 requires the Office of Facility Schools to contract with a qualified third-party evaluator to evaluate and report whether the work group recommendations resulted in more effective services and better access to those services for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs.

b. *2023 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2023 Annual Report, the Office of Facility Schools had begun to collect data to be utilized by evaluators to assess implementation of the work group recommendations and associated outcomes.

c. *2024 Annual Report Recap*- As of the submission of the 2024 Annual Report, the Office of Facility Schools was collecting data for use by the evaluator. During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly extended the deadline for a third-party evaluation from September 1, 2025 to September 1, 2026, at the recommendation of the Facility School Work Group.

d. *2025 Annual Report Recap*- Ahead of the 2025 Annual Report, the Office of Facility Schools developed a Statement of Work with input from the Work Group. The University of North Colorado was selected and contracted to conduct the evaluation. Through legislative action, the deadline for the evaluation was pushed back to be conducted during SY2025-26, with a final report due in September 2026.

e. *2026 Annual Report Progress to Date*- The University of North Colorado conducted the evaluation process. The work took place in three phases: 1) review of existing data, determination of additional data needs, and development of data collection tools; 2) further data collection and analysis; and 3) drafting of the final report. For a review of the external evaluation final report, see Appendix H.

Data and Feedback on Implementation Progress

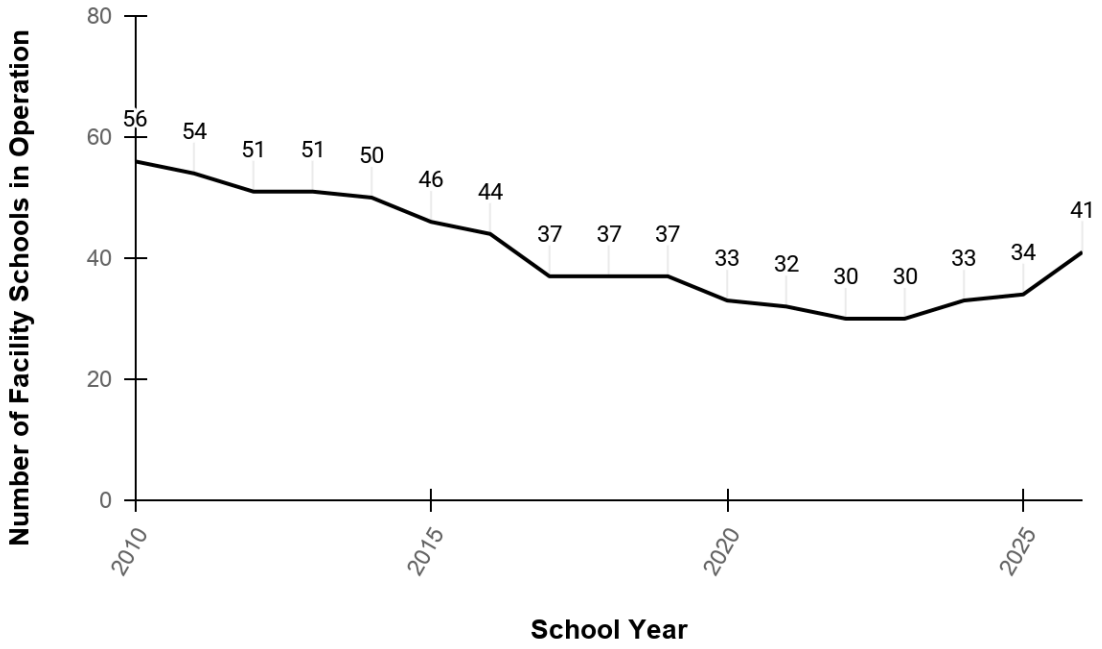
Impact in Key Areas

As part of the implementation process, the Facility School Work Group has collected data in key areas to help better understand the impact of the work. Data collection and analysis continues in a number of areas. Data collected continues to illustrate positive change in response to the passage of S.B. 23-219. The following information demonstrates how implementation continues to enhance the capacity and continuum of services of facility schools.

- *Facility Schools have increased in number.* Between 2010 and 2022, the number of active Facility Schools across Colorado dropped from 56 to 30. SY2023-24, marked the first time since before 2010 that the number of Facility Schools increased, with three new Facility Schools approved during the school year. SY2024-25 saw further growth in the system with four new Specialized Day Schools and two new day treatment programs being approved, however two existing Facility Schools did close during the same time frame. During SY2025-26 one hospital facility did close its doors, however a combined total of seven Day Treatment Facilities and Specialized Day Schools opened to bring the total number of facilities within the continuum to forty-one as of the submission of this report (Figure 2). This recent increase in the number and types of schools and

programs has helped to increase capacity across the state and provide more available seats to students in need of placement.

Figure 2
Number of Facility School Operating In Colorado By Year



- *Enrollment has increased in recent years.* Historically, "Count Day" for Facility Schools has been conducted on December 1st of each year and no other enrollment counts have been conducted. The last three "Count Days" have shown that enrollment across the Facility School system has increased in recent years. In SY2023-24 796 students were reported, in SY2024-25 813 were reported, and in SY2025-26 3,185 students were reported (Table 3). Further analysis that looked at the number of non-duplicated students served by Facility Schools during the month of December each year also found an increase and demonstrated that far more students are served than are historically reported on "Count Days." All three years saw unique student numbers for the month of December, but in each case the total for the month was over one thousand. A review of unique students across the full school year further demonstrated that "Count Days" only represent a fraction of the total number of students Facility Schools across the state serve in a given year. Data continue to show that capacity of Facility Schools is fluid and in order to have the most accurate enrollment counts more than a single day of data is needed. Additionally, each year many students have been found to attend more than one Facility School during the course of the year, highlighting the importance of continued expansion of service options.

Table 3
SY2023-24 Enrollment Count By Time Frame

Enrollment Counts			
Time Frame	**SY23-24 Enrollment Count**	**SY24-25 Enrollment Count**	**SY25-26 Enrollment Count**
"Count Day" Dec 1st	796	813	931
"Month of December" Dec 1st-31st	1016	1032	1001
"School Year" Sept 1st- Apr 30th	>2,800	3111	3286
10% of students were served by more than one school during SY23-24. *9.6% of students were served by more than one school during SY24-25.* *9.1% of students were served by more than one school during SY25-26.*			

- *Staff numbers and salaries have increased.* Since SY2021-22, staff counts have increased across the board. As of SY2023-24, Facility Schools' staff counts, paraprofessional counts, and hospital staff counts had all increased (4%, 17%, and 33% respectively). Numbers for Facility School staff and paraprofessionals have continued to increase reaching a peak of 30% and 41% respectively in SY2025-26. Hospital staff numbers have remained stable during the same time period. (Table 4) Teacher's salaries have risen by over 30% since the implementation of the new Baseline Funding and Tuition Cost Calculations. Teacher salaries overall saw a small dip between SY2025-25 and SY2025-26. This dip was the result of flat funding appropriations combined with turnover of some staff at higher pay levels. Increases in the number of staff can increase the capacity of a given facility school. Additionally, increases in staff numbers could allow facility schools to provide additional services, thus impacting the educational services continuum. Increases in salaries could also help retain staff year to year which could positively impact both capacity and the continuum of services.

Table 4
Percent Change in Staff Number and Salaries

Staff Number Over Time			
Staff Type	**Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY23-24***	**Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY24-25**	**Percentage Increase from SY21-22 to SY25-26**
Facility School Staff	4%	19%	30%
Paraprofessionals	17%	20%	41%
Hospital Staff	33%	33%	33%
Teacher salaries have increased 31% between SY21-22 and SY23-24, increased 36% between SY21-22 and SY24-25, and increased 35% between SY21-22 and SY24-25.			

- *Staff retention has increased.* Across all staff types retention has shown a steady increase since SY2021-22. When comparing across all staff types, retention has gone from a low of 33%

year-over-year to a high of 64% between SY2024-25 to SY2025-26. Retention of Day Treatment Facility Staff and paraprofessionals have since overall percent increases of 35% and 34% respectively since SY2021-22. While teacher retention has been more modest over the same time frame, it has still climbed by 27% in the past four years. (Table 5) As mentioned above, an increase in staff retention could help to positively impact both capacity and the continuum of services of Facility Schools across Colorado.

Table 5

Percent Change in Staff Retention Pre- and Post-Implementation

Staff Retention Over Time					
Staff Type	**SY21-22 to SY22-23****	**SY22-23 to SY23-24****	**SY23-24 to SY24-25**	**SY24-25 to SY25-26**	**% Point Increase in Retention Rate**
All Facility School Staff	33%	55%	55%	64%	31%
Teachers	42%	60%	63%	69%	27%
Paraprofessionals	22%	40%	47%	56%	34%
Day Treatment Facility Staff	30%	54%	57%	65%	35%

***Percentage Increases in Retention from SY21-22 to SY22-23 and SY21-22 to SY23-24 and SY21-22 to SY24-25 have been updated since the 2025 Annual Report. Changes with regards to job descriptions, state reporting of staff member's legal vs preferred names and reporting duplications as a result of individuals holding multiple licenses led to tracking anomalies that required updates following submission of last year's report.*

- *Technical Assistance Center has begun work.* During SY2025-26, the TAC has directly supported twenty-five school districts/BOCES organizations. Support included connecting district and program staff to targeted training and resources available across the state. TAC has also created a resource "HUB" which is designed to support districts through direct training, coaching and professional development. TAC held thirty-three training sessions over the past year. TAC's focus on supporting rural districts has continued through partnerships with ten Facility Schools in areas around the state. In the upcoming year, TAC has twenty-one specific rural trainings planned, and will continue to offer HUB coaching in addition to offering virtual consultations. TAC also has plans to present at a minimum of two statewide conferences during the year.

Evidence of Positive Change

In addition to data collection, the Work Group has been collecting feedback and input from individuals 'on the ground' to help highlight improvements that have occurred since implementation began.

2024 Annual Report Recap- Numerous areas of improvement were highlighted by Work Group members in the 2024 Annual Report. Major areas covered included baseline funding, salaries, staff retention, and tuition costs. The following are major takeaways from those discussions.

- The Baseline Funding Model has created more stable funding for facility schools which helps with budgeting and enables schools to keep up with critical maintenance and improvement costs.
- The Baseline Funding Model has also provided schools with the opportunity to provide more competitive salaries for paraprofessionals, training specialists, and teachers, which has helped to improve year to year retention rates of staff.

- Standardizing tuition costs has made budgeting easier, financial tracking more accurate, and the entire process more transparent.

2025 Annual Report Recap- In the 2025 Annual Report, several areas of positive change were highlighted by Facility School Education Directors. During the August 8, 2025 Facility School Education Director's meeting, attendees discussed changes that they had experienced in their schools since implementation of S.B. 23-219. Topics discussed included overall funding, staffing, and tuition. The following are paraphrased comments from the meeting.

- The advent of Shared Operational Services has helped to distribute the cost of purchasing office supplies and has made it possible to access interpreter/translation services for Facility Schools.
- Increased funding has enabled Facility Schools to provide more competitive salaries, which has increased staff retention.
- New funding streams have allowed Facility Schools to fix and/or replace property that has been damaged or destroyed and it has enabled schools to address infrastructure needs such as roofing, carpeting, and furniture.
- Increased funding has provided classroom budgets an opportunity to expand programming such as an afterschool reading program which has helped to increase community engagement.
- Standardized tuition cost rates have provided a more stable funding stream for Facility Schools.

2026 Annual Report Feedback- During the June 2026 Work Group meeting, members discussed positive change that they had seen in their schools over the past year. Throughout the year participants from TAC training sessions provided feedback regarding their experiences. Many "bright spots" from both groups echoed topics that have been highlighted in previous years demonstrating that positive change continues through the work. The following are points highlighted during the meeting and in feedback surveys.

- The number of schools within the system continues to grow which ultimately provides more opportunities to support students across the state.
- There is increased awareness statewide amongst a variety of stakeholders regarding Facility Schools and their mission.
- The passage of the PERA bill in 2026 promises to have a positive impact on staff recruitment and retention.
- Cost savings continue to be realized by organizations that are participating in the Shared Services now offered through CAFCA.
- More predictable and adequate funding has enabled Facility Schools to make improvements to their programs, conduct needed maintenance, and recruit and retain more staff.
- Participants of TAC training sessions felt they gained valuable insight and knowledge largely due to practical examples, interactive discussions, and opportunities to apply concepts to real-world situations.
- Resources, coaching support, and frameworks provide meaningful, on-demand support, and ongoing professional development that help participants build a better understanding of the needs of the students being served.

Observations of Continued Challenges

Although the Work Group was able to see all S.B. 23-219 recommendations implemented, a major priority for the group was to identify areas of continued challenges and look for complications that have arisen and/or were not initially targeted by the bill. The Work Group collected feedback regarding struggles and areas that require additional support throughout the work to help ensure that as their tenure comes to a close mechanisms are in place to continue to address concerns and changes to the system.

2024 Annual Report Recap- In the 2024 Annual Report, Work Group members identified several challenges that they felt required continued attention. Major topics highlighted included a continued focus on staffing needs, support to address the ever growing needs of the student population, capacity in rural areas of the state, and additional facility funding needs. The following are major takeaways from the discussions.

- Staffing vacancies continue to persist in large part due to the severe needs of the student population. While higher salary levels as a result of changes in the Baseline Funding Model have helped the problem, complicated pathways for licensure and a lack of resiliency training continue to limit the number of positions that can be filled across the state.
- The capacity of facility schools in rural areas of Colorado continues to be an issue due in part to complications such as transportation and a lack of available cost sharing.
- Numerous improvements have been made that make facility school funding more sustainable, however, more funding for start-up costs will be necessary to ensure the facility school system can continue to grow.

2025 Annual Report Recap- Based on feedback from Facility School Education Directors during the August 8, 2025 Facility School Education Director's meeting a couple of continued challenges were identified and highlighted in the 2025 Annual Report. Topics discussed primarily focused on continued staffing challenges. The following are paraphrased comments from the meeting.

- Although funding increases have enabled Facility Schools to offer more competitive salaries for staff, retention continues to be a challenge due in large part to the severity of needs of the overall student population.
- There is an overall shortage, statewide, of qualified special education teachers. This makes finding acceptable applicants for vacancies difficult.

2026 Annual Report Feedback- At the June 2026 Facility School Work Group meeting, members discussed their views on areas that would likely continue to present challenges for Facility Schools into the future and what was currently in place to help address these concerns. The following are takeaways from the meeting.

- Staffing shortages and retention will likely continue, however financial adjustments like the passage of PERA for Facility Schools and support/training mechanisms provided through partnerships with TAC will likely help Facility Schools maintain highly qualified staff in the future.
- Acuity behavioral/educational needs of today's youth shows no signs of decreasing in the future, however the expansion of the number and range of Facility Schools in concert with discussion groups, training sessions, and HUB coaching through TAC will help the system to collectively address growing needs.

- Operational costs and purchasing demands still remain a heavy lift for many Facility Schools, however the advent of Shared Services has helped many Facility Schools realize large savings in specific areas. Increased recruitment of more Facility Schools into the program will help to maximize cost savings and expansion of services offered through the program will further support organizations across the state.
- Due to Colorado's large size and sprawling population, geographic access to individualized support will always be an issue for students, however, TAC's targeted work with rural districts has enabled several to implement new programs and support to address the specific needs of the students they serve.
- State budget shortfalls can limit funding and can lead to less predictable budgeting from year to year. Adjustments to Facility School rules and new school approval process will help to ensure that sustainability of existing programs is prioritized to help minimize potential upheaval and closings across the system.

Work Continues

Expansive and impactful change and growth has taken place across the Facility School system since the passage of S.B. 23-219. The work conducted to date has helped create a more sustainable system through funding, capacity, and continuum changes. While the initial work of this bill focused on the implementation of change, follow-up work focused on ensuring that the work would continue in the absence of the direct monitoring function of the Work Group. The work done to date has created a system of standard policies, practices, and processes, along with a set of checks and balances that will help maintain and continue to enhance the system. A full review of "Next Steps" from the three previous annual reports can be accessed in the 2023 Annual Report, the 2024 Annual Report, and the 2025 Annual Report.

Funding

A. Baseline Funding- The Baseline Funding Model and all components have provided far more stable and realistic funding for existing Facility School since the passage of S.B. 23-219. Funding adjustments have enabled organizations to recruit and retain more staff, and budget for critical maintenance and improvement costs. Continued review and monitoring of financial information by CDE will be critical in the future to ensure that the model continues to provide the necessary funding to help keep these vital organizations open for the students across the state that need the services and support they provide. Future adjustments to the model may be required to help address potential issues such as inflation, however, systemic reporting processes now in place will enable CDE to annually assess the Baseline Funding Model and plan for changes as needed in the future. The Work Group identified a set of key questions that should be discussed when considering adjustments to the Baseline Funding Model in the future. Questions included:
    a. Where should resources be focused if funding remains flat?
    b. Should CDE maintain fewer sites with full funding or increase the number of sites but cut overall funding to each?
    c. Should adjustments to the funding formula be made in an effort to maximize funding, continuum, and capacity simultaneously?

B. Tuition Costs- In much the same way that the Baseline Funding Model helped create more stable and realistic funding for existing Facility Schools, changes to the Tuition Cost calculations helped ensure these organizations are viable into the future. The student populations of these schools and programs present with extremely high needs that require individualized plans implemented by highly skilled and trained personnel. Adjustments to the Tuition Cost calculations will likely also be needed in the future, however CDE will be able to monitor the cost/needs balance of the statewide Facility Schools student population and suggest changes as necessary. The Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group will continue to be available for consultation as needed.
C. Medicaid Reimbursement Guidance- Although the details and regulations that govern Medicaid Reimbursement are ultimately out of the hands of the CDE and Facility Schools, both can continue to monitor available options with the aid of HCPF. Medical costs have continued to rise, and current projections do not indicate that trend reversing in the near term. This raises questions about the long-term alignment between those costs and existing reimbursement allowances, which Facility Schools, CDE, and the state may want to examine further.
D. Shared Operational Services- The implementation of Shared Operational Services through CAFCA has enabled participating organizations to realize meaningful savings. In conjunction with the increase in funding through the Baseline Funding Model and Tuition Cost calculations, these savings create further financial stability for existing Facility Schools. Mechanisms are in place to enable CAFCA and CDE to evaluate the costs and benefits of these shared services and determine where and how further savings can be realized for schools and programs across the state.

Capacity

A. Technical Assistance Center (TAC)- The creation of TAC and the CDE Coordinator position within the Office of Facility School's team has helped to significantly expand the capacity of the system. Before now, due to Colorado's expansive geography, students across the state in need of specialized educational services , especially those in more rural areas, would often have to travel hours from home to access the services and support required. However, the specialized training, consultation, and technical assistance that TAC now provides has helped to bring many of those services and support to students where they live. Despite ongoing limited availability of physical Facility Schools in rural areas, with the help of TAC, many rural districts have developed methods of meeting the needs of students with significant behavioral and social-emotional needs through the development of their own Affective Needs programs, Significant Support Needs (SSN) classrooms, and other specialized services within their communities. Through the TAC HUB coaching model, trained Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) provide on-site support by visiting schools, observing classrooms, collaborating directly with educator teams, and offering follow-up consultation and professional learning. This ongoing partnership is designed to build local capacity, promote sustainable practices, and help students remain successfully supported within their home schools and communities. Additionally, districts have accessed virtual consultation services through external partners and the Q&A with BCBA training sessions, which provide educator teams with individualized coaching and guidance from experienced BCBAs. These consultations help teams develop new skills, implement effective strategies, and receive ongoing support as they strengthen their ability to meet students' needs in rural settings. Through these initiatives, the TAC aims to further strengthen rural districts' ability to meet the diverse needs of students and staff while fostering sustainable systems of support. In the coming

year TAC will continue to build capacity in areas identified by districts as high-need, including behavior support, autism services, inclusive practices, mental health, and systems-level implementation. Additionally, TAC will work to expand access to specialized training, consultation, and technical assistance for rural districts across Colorado. Key priorities include increasing awareness of TAC services through targeted outreach, increase participation in HUB Coaching, strengthening partnerships within the CDE and with external organizations, and expanding opportunities for rural districts to engage in coaching, consultation, and collaborative learning networks through virtual consultation and training opportunities and support the implementation of the Unstuck and On Target workgroup.

Continuum of Services

A. Specialized Day Schools- The creation of Specialized Day Schools as part of the Facility School continuum has provided classroom space for an until now underserved population of students in Colorado. Over the last year, numerous new schools have opened and provide support and services that were not available previously. By expanding the types of facilities available for students it not only increases the overall number of seats available across the state but opens the door to address the growing needs of the population. The new approval process now in place will help to ensure that new schools are providing the highest quality support.
B. Interagency Resource Guide- The approval process to become an authorized Facility School has historically been an extremely complicated process. The development of the new Interagency Resource Guide has provided a much more streamlined and straightforward process that has enabled more organizations to complete the process. Additionally, the new process ensures that Facility Schools that are added to the continuum are established properly and have all required components for authorization.
C. Accountability and Accreditation- New accountability and accreditation requirements will be finalized soon and implemented for SY2027-28. The additional reporting and monitoring process will help to ensure high quality support and educational services are available for Colorado students. The proposed performance summaries and improvement plans will enable Facility Schools to continuously adapt their approach and focus as the needs of the population they serve changes over time. Developing a system that simultaneously creates quality standards while providing room and direction for growth has long-term benefits for the Facility School system as a whole.

External Evaluation

A. Third-Party Evaluation- The full third-party evaluation was completed during SY2025-26. The comprehensive review compiled and analyzed data from a variety of sources to objectively evaluate the implementation of all components of S.B. 23-219. The external evaluation was critical to ensure that legislation had the intended impact on the Facility School system.

Essential Actions

While the passage of S.B. 23-219 has resulted in the development and implementation of numerous beneficial opportunities and resources, utilization of these improvements by existing schools has remained limited. Outreach by CDE, CAFCA, and TAC have all helped to grow participation since new programs began and resources were developed, but it will be vital for widespread communication to

continue regarding all available support for the Facility School System. Communication and outreach need not be limited to these three entities. Former Facility School Work Group members, Facility School Board of Education members, and participating Facility Schools are also positioned to share information about the work that resulted from S.B. 23-219. Increased participation will continue to help Facility School realize cost savings, develop a support network, and more effectively address the needs of the students they serve.

Acknowledgements

The S.B. 23-219 Facility School Work Group would like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous individuals whose hard work and dedication made the Facility School system change possible. In 2020, before this work began, almost all existing Facility Schools were operating in the red and many were in real danger of closing their doors. Since then, the changes that have been realized as a result of S.B. 21-274 and S.B. 23-219 have provided the means for the Facility School system to not only thrive but grow. Enhancements to both funding and available resources have helped ensure that many of Colorado's most vulnerable students have access to necessary educational services and support.

The Work Group would like to thank members of the Joint Budget Committee and their staff for carrying both bills as well as all members of the Colorado General Assembly for passing both bills to enable this work to take place. Additionally, the Work Group would like to thank the collective staff of the Colorado Department of Education Office of Facility Schools who were instrumental in identifying the problems addressed by this work, bringing the problems to the attention of state lawmakers, and then playing a key role in both the development and implementation of the changes and enhancements that have been made to the Facility School system over the past 5 years. Finally, the Work Group would like to thank the staff of external partners, Equinox Consultancy LLC and Dillinger Research and Applied Data for the support they have provided to this work from the beginning.

Appendix A: Baseline Funding

Baseline Funding Model Review

Core Philosophy: Capacity vs. Attendance

Historically, facility schools were funded based on the number of students present each day (Average Daily Attendance). The new model adopted in SY24-25 shifted this focus to **Projected Annual Enrollment (Capacity)**. By funding based on the number of "seats" a school intends to provide, the state ensures that fixed costs, like teacher salaries and facility administration, remain covered even if enrollment dips temporarily.

Key Components of the Construction

The baseline formula is constructed using three primary cost categories:

1. Core Leadership & Base Staffing

Every facility school, regardless of size, is funded for a baseline set of positions deemed necessary to meet minimum educational and clinical requirements. These roles are funded at set annual salary benchmarks[1]:

- *Administrative Leadership:* Includes a Facility Executive Director/CEO (50% FTE per corporation at $71,042) and a full-time Special Education Director ($145,651).
- *Clinical & Educational Leads:* Clinical leads (1 per 25 students at $114,251) and Educational Leads (1 per 40 students at $114,251).
- *Instructional Staff (Ratios up to 1:8):* Includes Licensed Special Education Teachers ($73,595) and In-Class Staff/Paraprofessionals ($43,308).
- *Therapeutic Support:* Licensed Therapists including Special Services Providers (1 per 16 students at $91,182).

2. Scaling for Growth: The $pp Addition (Above 16 Students)

For schools with a capacity exceeding 16 students, the model also allocates funding on a Per-Pupil ($pp) amount for each additional student. To realize economies of scale, this $pp amount is applied on a sliding scale:

- *Students 17–32:* $30,483 per pupil.
- *Students 33–44:* $25,136 per pupil.
- *Students 45+*: $14,441 per pupil.

3. Non-Personnel Operational Costs

After personnel and scale-up costs are established, a flat Non-personnel Cost is added for classroom items, technology, curriculum, and overhead. This is currently calculated at $1,155.99 per seat (capacity).

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[1] Average salaries were determined by reviewing salaries for the positions across the state (BOCES, school districts, etc.)

The Final Funding Calculation

1. *Total Baseline Calculation:* Core Personnel Costs + Sliding Scale $pp (above 16 students) + Total Non-personnel Costs = Total Baseline Amount.
2. *Apply Revenue Offsets:* The state's obligation is "the gap" between this Total Baseline and other revenue sources. Offsets include Base Tuition (the first $55 of daily tuition per student) or Base Medical Reimbursement for Hospitals ($75/day per student).
3. *Baseline Appropriation:* The state provides a Baseline Appropriation, ensuring the school reaches its minimum funding threshold. This is typically paid out in 12 equal monthly installments.

Annual Appropriation for Facility Schools

School Year	*Appropriated Amount*	*Number of Schools*	*Number of Students*
2023-2024	$26,648,310	31	866
2024-2025	$30,313,266	35	1000
2025-2026	$33,343,020	39	1125
2026-2027	$33,343,000	42	1105

**Funding remained flat between 2025-2026 and 2026-2027, as a result schools revenue amounts were pro-rated. While the number of Facility Schools grew over the same time period, the number of students enrolled declined slightly to help address and compensate for the reduction in state funding.*

Appendix B: Tuition Cost Calculation

Office of Facility Schools Tuition Cost Rate System
Updated Guidance for SY2026-27

History

State law has required school districts to pay tuition-related costs to facility schools since 1983. H.B. (House Bill) 08-1204 From 1983 to 2019, facility schools itemized certain costs and expenses associated with special education services and submitted them to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for approval through a manual process. Once established, tuition rates required approval from the Colorado State Board of Education (SBE), and facility schools used the SBE-approved rates to bill school districts for services. With the exception of transitioning to electronic submission of tuition cost data beginning in 2020, this reporting process remained largely unchanged for more than 40 years.

In 2023, the Colorado Legislature enacted S.B. 23-219, directing CDE's Office of Facility Schools to convene stakeholders and a workgroup "to analyze and recommend changes to the methods used for calculating tuition costs for approved facility schools." The workgroup convened in July 2023 to review the existing process and develop recommendations. CDE presented these recommendations to the State Board of Education in early 2024, and the Board subsequently amended the ECEA rules to implement the changes. The new system was implemented during the 2024-25 school year.

The following information summarizes the updated system for calculating facility school tuition costs.

Overview of the New System and Its Development

The workgroup and stakeholders reviewed the strengths and limitations of the previous tuition cost process and recommended a new tiered system. Under this approach, CDE established categories of facility schools and assigned a tuition cost rate to each category based on student needs and the educational programming provided. Rates are derived from actual special education costs, including staff salaries, benefits, and related expenses such as professional development, assessments, and specialized equipment. Additional education costs, individualized add-on costs, and day treatment fees (as defined below) are not included in the tuition rate.

Tuition cost rates are effective from August 1 through July 31. CDE has established three categories of facility schools, each with a corresponding rate based on prior

tuition cost data. The ECEA rules continue to require facility schools to submit annual actual-cost data to inform rate-setting, and the CDE may adjust rates as appropriate.

Newly approved facility schools are assigned a temporary or provisional tuition category for their first year. During this period, CDE monitors programming to ensure alignment with the assigned category and confirms the final designation after the first year.

New Terminology

Tuition Cost Rate: The tuition cost rate covers the additional costs of providing special education services in a facility school beyond those provided in general education. It includes salaries and benefits for instructional and support staff, as well as expenses for equipment, supplies, purchased services, professional development (including travel), transportation, and other related costs (e.g., student outings and admission fees).

Additional Education Costs: These are expenses not included in the tuition cost rate but necessary for general school operations. Examples include administrative and business services, facility-related costs (e.g., occupancy and maintenance), janitorial services, and non-instructional equipment and supplies. The ECEA rules refer to these as “indirect costs.” CDE annually determines the percentage of a facility school’s baseline funding allocated to these costs, capped at 15 percent of the assigned tuition cost rate.

Individualized Add-on Costs: These are additional special education supports and services based on individual student needs. Costs are negotiated and agreed upon between the facility school and the school district.

Day Treatment Fee: Treatment program costs are not included in the tuition cost rate and are determined on an individual student basis between the facility school and the placing school district.

Tiered Tuition Cost Rate System

The tuition cost system includes three categories, ranging from Category 1 (students with the lowest level of need) to Category 3 (students with the most intensive needs). Most facility schools are assigned to a single category; however, some may qualify for multiple categories if they offer distinct levels of programming. As categories increase, staffing levels and resource needs increase to support more intensive student needs.

Tuition Cost Rate Category 1

Category 1 facility schools serve students whose primary needs relate to serious emotional disabilities, as well as behavioral and mental health challenges. These students may have experienced trauma and may present with offense-specific behaviors, substance use issues, or criminogenic factors. Programming may include mental health services such as individual, group, and family therapy.

Some students may require individualized add-on services, such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, or dedicated adult support. These services are determined by the students' IEP and are not included in the tuition cost rate

The following facility schools are listed in Tuition Cost Rate Category 1 with a tuition cost rate of $**151.00/day.**

- Bansbach Academy - Denver Children's Home
- Community Reach Center
- Hilltop Balanced Rock Community School
- J. Wilkins Opportunity School - Griffith Center
- Joan Farley Academy - Third Way Center
- Joan Farley Academy Lowry - Third Way Center
- Mount Saint Vincent
- North Greeley Academy - Alternative Homes for Youth
- Phoenix Academy - Southern Peaks (day treatment)
- Rocky Mountain Leadership School
- Shiloh House-Family Resource Pavilion
- Shiloh House-Littleton Campus
- Shiloh House-Longmont Campus
- Skyline Academy
- Tennyson Center for Children

Tuition Cost Rate Category 2

Category 2 facility schools serve students with one or more disabilities, including serious emotional disability, autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and other behavioral or mental health needs. Many students have a history of trauma. Some students are instructed using the Colorado Academic Standards, while others work toward Extended Evidence Outcomes. Fewer than 80 percent of students require dedicated adult support. Programming may include individual, group, and family therapy; Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA); independent living and transition skills; mental health services; and a lower student-to-staff ratio than Category 1 programs. Some students may require individualized add-on services, such as speech-language therapy, occupational

therapy, or dedicated adult support. These services are determined by the students' IEP and are not included in the tuition cost rate

The following facility schools are listed in tuition cost rate Category 2 with a tuition cost rate of $**220.00/day.**

- Austin Center for Exceptional Students (Exceptional Program)
- Bansbach Academy LIFE - Denver Children's Home
- Phoenix Academy - Southern Peaks (Residential)
- PRN for Families
- Rite of Passage Morrison Home (ROP)
- Shiloh Family Resource Pavilion (ASD classroom)
- TACT Englewood
- TACT Carbondale
- Tennyson Center for Children (ASPEN)

Tuition Cost Rate Category 3

Category 3 facility schools serve students with intensive needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and other disabilities requiring support in functional communication and behavior. Many students have a history of trauma

These programs provide highly intensive services, reflected in low staff-to-student ratios, with 80–100 percent of students requiring dedicated adult support. Most students work toward Extended Evidence Outcomes. Programming may include therapy services, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), independent living and transition skills, and mental health services.

Speech-language and occupational therapy are included in the tuition cost rate for this category. Additional individualized add-on services—such as dedicated adult support, art therapy, music therapy, or equine therapy—are determined through the student's IEP, included in the student's contract, and are not part of the tuition cost rate. For students whose IEPs do not require speech-language or occupational therapy, the associated portion of the daily rate may be adjusted accordingly.

The following facility schools are listed in tuition cost rate Category 3 with a tuition cost rate of $**314.00/day.**

- Austin Center for Exceptional Students (Rising Stars)
- Elevation Ability Services
- Handprints Academy
- Havern Autism Program

- Joshua Early Childhood Center
- Joshua School Boulder
- Joshua School Englewood
- Laradon
- Learning Zone – Real Life Colorado
- Monarch Academy
- Natural Supports
- Roundup Fellowship School
- Serenity Education
- Spectra Centers, Inc.
- Willow Academy

Annual Review of Rate Increase

Tuition cost rate increases are based on CDE's analysis of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and projected state budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. The CPI is typically established in January. In April, CDE's Chief Financial Officer uses the CPI and budget projections to determine proposed rate adjustments. Final decisions are made in May following passage of the state's long bill. The State Board of Education then annually reviews and formally approves tuition cost rates in June or July.

Tuition Cost Rate Review Process

Tuition cost rates are reviewed annually and may be adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Final rates are approved by the State Board of Education.

Categorization Process

Facility schools may apply to the Office of Facility Schools for reconsideration of their tuition cost category. Determinations are based on the Tuition Cost Category Rubric. Significant program changes may initiate a review and potential recategorization.

New Facility School Process

Newly approved facility schools are assigned a temporary or provisional tuition category for their first year. During this period, CDE monitors programming to ensure alignment with the assigned category and confirms the final designation after the first year.

Contact

For further information, please contact:

Lori Kochevar, Data Systems Manager
Kochevar_l@cde.state.co.us
720-557-0618

Tuition Cost Category Rubric

Criteria	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
Students	Some students have an IEP	Most students have an IEP	All students have an IEP
Focus of program	The primary challenges of students are emotional, behavioral, mental health, or medical	Many students may have more than one disability, including autism spectrum disorders and/or cognitive impairments	Most of the students have more than one disability, including autism spectrum disorders and/or cognitive impairments, and/or use AAC devices
Special Services	Speech/OT are provided by contracted therapists or school district personnel	Speech/OT may be provided by contracted therapists or school district personnel or may be provided by agency	Speech/OT are provided by agency-paid therapists or agency-paid contracted therapists
Dedicated adult support	Very few students require dedicated adult support	Less than 80% of students required dedicated adult support	80-100% of students require dedicated adult support
Student to classroom staff ratio	Student to classroom staff ratios are equal or greater than 8 students to 1 adult	Student to classroom staff ratios are 6 students to 1 adult.	Student to classroom staff ratios are typically less than 6 students to one adult.
Day treatment residential only (does not include specialized day schools)	The program offers individual and family therapy, affective education, and trauma-informed care	The program may offer individual, group therapy, and affective education trauma-informed care	The program offers a therapeutic milieu, affective education, and trauma-informed care
Standards/Instructional Support	All students utilize the Colorado academic standards. All students in grades 3-11 take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), PSAT, and SAT	Students utilize either the CO State Standards or the Extended Evidence Outcomes. In grades 3-11, take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success, PSAT and SAT or the Colorado Alternate Assessment (CoALT)	The majority of students utilize the Extended Evidence Outcomes; most students take the Colorado Alternative State Assessment (CoALT)

Tuition Cost Breakdown:

This information must be included on the front page of the agreement between facility schools and school districts.

	Tuition Cost Breakdown	
Student Name:		**Notes:**
DOB:		
School District:		
Tuition Cost Category:		
Tuition Cost Rate:		
Additional Education Costs:		
Individualized Add-On Costs:		
Day Treatment Costs:		
Total Cost:		
The facility school will provide:		
Service	*Cost*	Notes
Speech Language Therapy		
Occupational Therapy		
BCBA		
Additional Adult Support		
Other _____		
Total for all facility provided services:		
The school district will provide:		
Service	*Cost*	Notes
Speech Language Therapy		
Occupational Therapy		
Transportation		
Translation Services		
Other _____		
Total for all district provided services:		

Sample Wording for Agreements between Facility Schools and School Districts

This contract is between **(School District of Jurisdiction)**, hereafter referred to as hereafter referred to as the District

AND

(Provider District/Facility) hereafter referred to as Provider to **(Student Name, DOB)** who resides at **(Address of student)** and attends school at **(Name and address of facility).**

(School district of jurisdiction) is responsible under state and federal law for providing Special Education and related services to all identified children with disabilities who are residents of the District. Colorado Revised Statutes 22-20-107.5 (1981 cum. supp) defines residence to be within the district based on the residence of the child's parent/guardian. See the Out of District Manual (OOD Manual) regarding school district jurisdiction rules.

(Parent/Guardian Name and Address)

The District's local board of Education is empowered and charged to enter into agreements as needed with other public schools and/or other providers for the purpose of providing education services to children with disabilities.

The term of this contract is between **(admit date)** and (**end of the school year),** and it is not to exceed the maximum number of school days approved by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Either party may terminate this contract with 30 days' notice upon mutual agreement or when the student is discharged from the program.

THE PROVIDER ASSURES AND PROVIDES:

- The District will be sent prior written request for IEP reviews, annual reviews, and meetings to determine ESY eligibility and transition services.
- Copies of current IEPs and reports/assessments will be sent to the District within 30 days of the IEP date.
- Billings for educational services will be sent to the District monthly based on enrollment and will include the Colorado Department of Education's approved base tuition rate.
- Final billing for contracts covering the regular school year will be mailed prior to **(date)**
- Any amendments to this agreement shall be in writing.
- A policy or policies of comprehensive general liability insurance acceptable to the District is/are in place at the provider's expense. Limits of liability are not

less than (**$150,000)** per person and (**$600,000)** per occurrence. Proof of such insurance will be provided to the District upon request.
- The educational program meets the requirements of all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.
- Policies and procedures are in place regarding procedural safeguards, confidentiality, non-discrimination, and due process, which are in accordance with all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations pertaining to the education of children with disabilities, anti-discrimination, and protection of family privacy rights.
- State and federal reporting information will be provided to the District on request.
- In the event the provider wishes to initiate a change in educational programming or placement, the provider will notify the appropriate agencies and the school district involved.

THE DISTRICT ASSURES AND PROVIDES

- Services will be paid within 30 days of invoice at the rates detailed above.
- **(Name, address, phone, email)** will serve as the District contact person, coordinate all payment processing or information requests regarding the child or this agreement, and assure compliance with all applicable federal and state regulations.
- The District will send copies of current IEPs and assessments to the provider within 30 days of receipt of the request.
- If the District places the students, the District shall provide transportation services or any services as determined by the IEP, including payment, scheduling, and providing proper supervision during the transportation of any student.

Declarations:

- Reevaluation meetings will be scheduled collaboratively by the District and the Provider.
- If a District representative cannot attend, he/she may request the IEP team meeting be rescheduled at a mutually agreeable time or delegate district representation to a member of the IEP team, and the District will abide by the decision.
- A draft copy of the IEP will be sent to the District for agreement.
- This agreement is not transferable, and the responsibilities of the school provider may not be reassigned without prior written consent of the District.
- In the event that the student's whereabouts are unknown for five (5) consecutive days, and the placement has been terminated, the provider will notify the District contact person, and this agreement will be temporarily suspended, including charges for tuition costs.

Agreement Regarding Dispute Resolution

In the event of any dispute or claim arising under or related to this agreement regarding the placement, manner of placement, or any costs accruing to either, the District and the Provider shall use their best efforts to settle such dispute or claim through good faith negotiations with each other. If the dispute or claim cannot be settled, the parties agree that the Commissioner of Education or the Commissioner's designee shall have the authority to review all such disputes and make a final written determination. The parties further agree that any such dispute shall not interfere with the provision of appropriate educational and educationally related services prior to the settlement of the dispute.

Authorized Signatures

School Provider

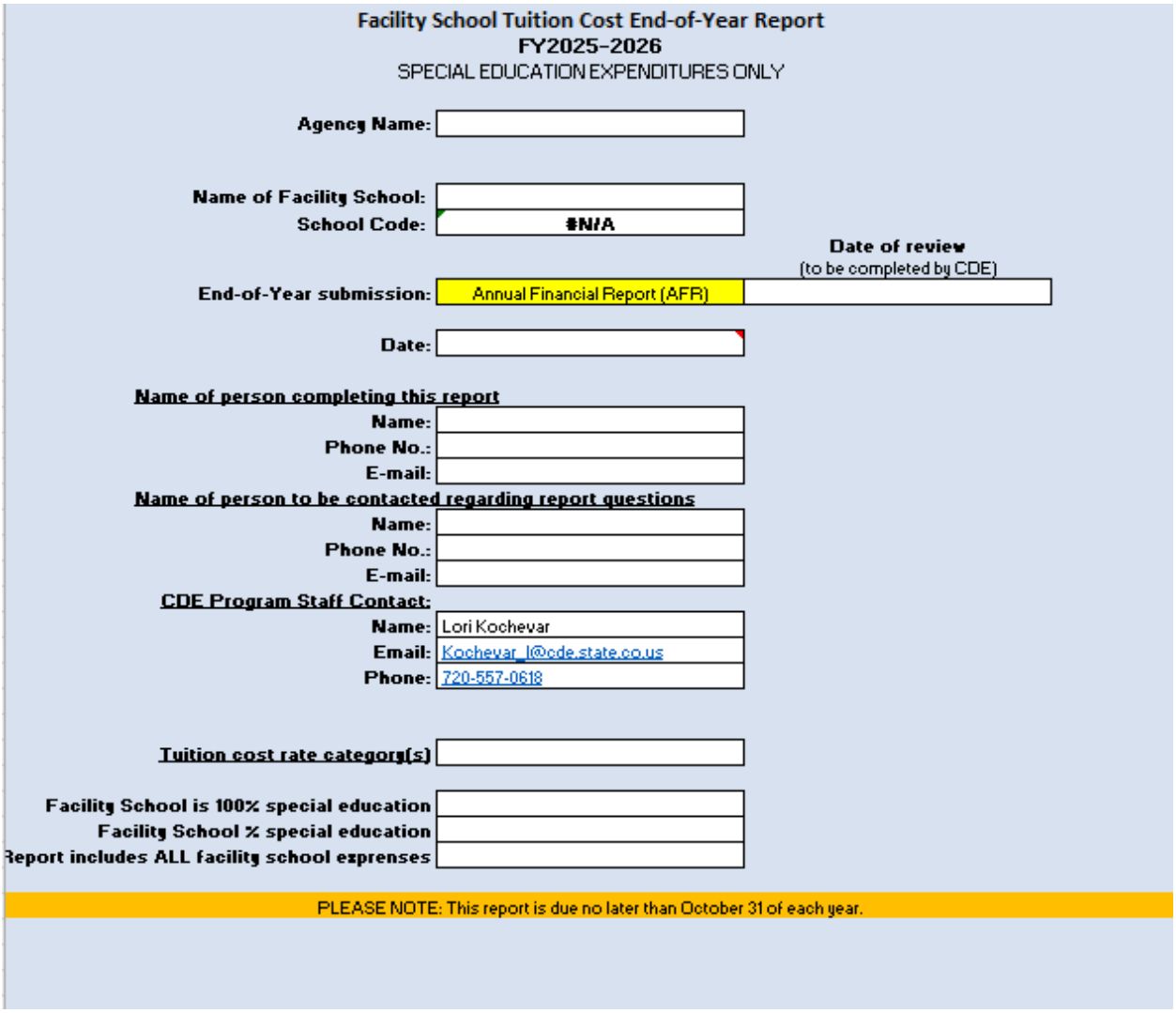
Signature _____ **Title** _____ **Date** _____

District of Jurisdiction

Signature _____ **Title** _____ **Date** _____

Tuition Cost Annual Financial Report

This is a screen shot of the cover page and instructions for the Tuition Cost Annual Financial Report. A fillable document will be sent via secure email in July and will be due on October 31 of each year.



Facility School Tuition Cost End-of-Year Report
FY2025-2026
SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDITURES ONLY

Agency Name:	
Name of Facility School:	
School Code:	#N/A
Date of review (to be completed by CDE)	
End-of-Year submission:	Annual Financial Report (AFR)
Date:	

Name of person completing this report

Name:	
Phone No.:	
E-mail:	

Name of person to be contacted regarding report questions

Name:	
Phone No.:	
E-mail:	

CDE Program Staff Contact:

Name:	Lori Kochevar
Email:	Kochevar_l@cde.state.co.us
Phone:	720-557-0618

Tuition cost rate category(s)	
Facility School is 100% special education	
Facility School % special education	
Report includes ALL facility school exprenses	

PLEASE NOTE: This report is due no later than October 31 of each year.

Cover page			
			Please enter the agency name, school name, school code, date, contact information, enter the tuition cost rate category (or categories); confirm yes or no that the facility school serves 100% special education students, if not 100% please enter the percent of special education students the facility school serves, confirm whether this report includes ALL facility school costs (special education, organization) or not. If your school is not 100% special education your report **SHOULD NOT** include all education costs. **The expenditures reported in this report are special education only**.
Expenses sheet			
			2 categories with associated expenses and codes, Instructional/Support and Administrative/Business/Operational - Chose from the drop-down menu for each and add descriptions and notes as needed - Be specific that the instructional/support expenses are for special education only - If your site serves 100% special education students please note that in the description column for clarity in amounts reported - you may also use the Narrative tab for additional information and explanation if necessary.
Summary sheet			
			Ensure all info from expenses sheet totals in the summary appropriately. Information entered in the Expenses tab will transfer to the summary tab - no data entry needed on this sheet.
Narrative sheet			
			Please provide any additional explanation necessary for expenses - especially those under the Administrative/Business/Operational category in relation to the #/% special education population and additional costs charged to school districts in contracts.
Accounting Codes Guidance			
0100	Salaries	Instructional and Administrative	**INSTRUCTIONAL** - Amounts paid for personal services to both permanent and temporary school employees, including personnel substituting for those in permanent positions. Includes all Special Education Teachers, Speech-Language Pathologists, Para professionals, Library, School Nurse, OT, PT, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, Education Directors, Education Coordinators, BCBA's, IEP Coordinators, other school specific instructional/support staff. **ADMINISTRATIVE** - Amounts paid for personal services to both permanent and temporary facility employees. Includes K-12 Teachers not licensed in special education, personnel substitutes in these positions, school registrar, CEO, CFO, Office secretary, etc. ***Enter a pro-rated salary amounts for those staff shared across sites.
0200	Employee Benefits	Instructional and Administrative	Amounts paid by the facility on behalf of employees; generally, these amounts are not included in the salary, but are in addition to that amount Such payments are fringe benefit payments and, while not paid directly to employees, never-the-less, are part of the cost of personal services ***Enter a pro-rated benefit amounts for those staff shared across sites.
0300	Purchased Professional Services	Instructional	Educational services which by their nature can be performed only by persons or firms with specialized skills and knowledge While a product may or may not result from the transaction, the primary reason for the purchase is the service provided. Included are the services of teachers, OT/PT, BCBA, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, audiologists, and other positions with direct

Appendix C: Shared Operational Services

An Innovative, New Program Designed to Save Time & Money for CAFCA Member Agencies

Helps your budgets go further!

Introducing the SOS Program!



CAFCA is excited to launch the Shared Operational Services (SOS) program, created through our partnership with the National Back Office Cooperative (NBOC) and their Workplace Essentials Program with Staples Business Advantage®!

By leveraging the spending of CAFCA member agencies and Colorado facility schools, in combination with over 100 participating non-profits, this FREE program is built to help your budget go further, streamline your purchases and drive savings on a wide variety of items necessary to support the needs of your organization.



How Does it Work?

NBOC has developed a series of meticulously designed programs with their vendors, including **Staples** and **Amazon**. These programs utilize the basic premise of volume discounts, where the sheer volume of purchases NBOC funnels through these buying programs allows them to offer some remarkable deals to their clients and to our member agencies. And that premise is simple: the higher the volume, the bigger the discounts. And the more companies that participate, the bigger that savings will be for virtually every area of your school or organization!

The Benefits & Advantages

Highly Competitive Value. Supply purchasing experts negotiate ongoing oversight for consistent low pricing year over year.

Eliminate the need to spend hours looking for the best pricing on items. In addition to a NBOC Core List of the most popular items purchased by NBOC participants, Staples Business Advantage® offers competitive pricing on all items found on www.staplesadvantage.com

Simplified Purchasing & Billing. Increase efficiencies for accounting and other staff with the ability to source many different types of product verticals through one supplier.

Quality Support At Any Time. Especially during critical times, access multiple levels of experts, including contacting NBOC, Staples Business Advantage® account managers, or multiple product specialists.

Purchase Process Setup to Manage Your Programs and Grants. Unlimited users can easily set up and manage spend controls, order approvals, accounting tools, cost centers, and more.

Fast, Free Next-Day Delivery.* Order by 3 PM for delivery the next business day.

A Strong Commitment to Supplier Diversity. This program has tools to search and track purchasing from diverse suppliers at competitive prices.

It's FREE!!! PLUS, participation gives you Increased purchasing power, Lower annual consumable cost, Improved quality, Stronger contractual agreements and Improved vendor acquisition. **AND THERE IS NO COST TO PARTICIPATE!!!**

**on in-stock products*



15-20% OR MORE! Average Overall Annual Savings

To sign up, go to www.voiceforcokids.org/sos

Email us with questions at dave@voiceforcokids.org

Membership is FREE!!!!



SOS offers reduced costs on the purchase of services in these categories:

HRIS/Payroll ■ Food Consumables
Business Systems ■ Finance & Accounting
Managed IT Services

And SOS will soon be expanding offerings that will include:

Medical Billing Systems
Language Translation Services
(professionally trained, medically qualified, approved for IEP meetings and beyond)

Janitorial Supplies

GBAC* certified experts in contamination control and prevention of infectious disease ■ Trash receptacles, liners, ice melt, matting and floor maintenance items ■ Touchless dispensers, soap, towels and tissue

Business Essentials / Classroom

Everyday basics like ink, toner and paper ■ Pens, notepads, filing, desk accessories ■ Eco-conscious and MWBE products to meet your goals

Breakroom

Coffee brewers, installation and maintenance ■ Beverages, snacks and cutlery ■ Tables, chairs, mobile carts, microwaves, bulletin boards

Promotional Products

Brand immersion specialists help build your brand ■ Choose from our wide selection of promotional products, from uniforms and apparel to water bottles, pens, and more ■ Incentive and recognition programs

Technology

Strategic relationships and industry-leading brands ■ Complete selection of products includes mice, keyboards, printers, shredders, privacy screens and more ■ Customized leasing programs and subscriptions

Print and Marketing

Print partner for identity, marketing collateral, business cards, signage, labels, and forms ■ Design and pre-media services ■ Online quick print for delivery or store pick up

Furniture

Quality commercial-grade seating, desks, tables, and storage from over 450 manufacturers ■ Quick ship products deliver in 2–7 biz days*

...and SO Much More!!!



These are things you're going to buy anyway. Why not buy them through a program that benefits your school and saves you money?

Find out more at voiceforcokids.org/sos

*on in-stock products

Thanks to our partners in this program.

nbc National Back Office Cooperative

Staples Business Advantage

Appendix D: Technical Assistance Center

Technical Assistance Center

Visit the TAC website: https://ed.cde.state.co.us/facilityschools/technical-assistance-center

Expanding Access to Training and Technical Assistance

During the 2025–2026 year, the Rural Technical Assistance Center continued to increase access to specialized training, consultation, and technical assistance for rural Colorado school districts. Between July 2025 and June 4, 2026, a total of **414 educators and professionals participated in BCBA-led training sessions and various rural-focused training opportunities**.

Training and consultation opportunities were provided through partnerships with a variety of state and community organizations, including:

- Firefly Autism
- Rural School district staff
- Colorado Department of Education Office of School Safety
- Facility Schools Office
- CDE partners

Topics included:

- Trauma-informed practices
- Student behavior and behavioral interventions
- Inclusion and inclusive practices
- Facility School 101 (FS 101)
- Autism supports and telehealth consultation
- Rural-specific implementation challenges and solutions

Q&A with BCBA- Training and Problem-Solving Support

The Rural TAC continued its partnership with Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) to provide consultation, training, and problem-solving support to districts. Services included:

- Virtual question-and-answer sessions
- Needs-based training opportunities
- Individualized problem-solving consultations
- Ongoing outreach and resource sharing

Feedback and survey data were utilized to identify emerging topics and support needs among rural educators.

HUB Coaching and Intensive District Support

Interest in HUB Coaching continued to grow throughout the year. **Nine rural districts requested HUB Coaching support**, with **four districts actively participating** in coaching services:

- Meeker School District
- Colorado Springs School District 11 (RE-1)
- Cañon City Schools
- Boulder County School District

Districts not participating in HUB Coaching accessed alternative supports, including:

- Autism telehealth consultation services
- Placement planning assistance
- Training and capacity-building opportunities
- Targeted technical assistance based on district needs

Firefly Autism Telehealth Consultation

Beginning in March 2026, through a partnership with Firefly Autism, rural districts were connected with virtual consultation and targeted training services. Participating districts included:

- Fort Morgan School District
- RE-1 School District
- Ridgway School District
- Gunnison Watershed School District

These consultations increased access to specialized expertise for districts that may otherwise face barriers related to geography and staffing.

Unstuck and On Target Workgroup

The TAC launched and supported the development of an **Unstuck and On Target Workgroup**, creating opportunities for districts to collaborate around executive functioning supports and implementation practices. **Four separate districts within the NE BOCES participated in this workgroup in the summer of 2026**, **supporting 10 teaching staff.**

Responsive Technical Assistance

As of June 4, 2026, the TAC responded to **33 direct inquiries from rural districts** seeking support in areas such as:

- Behavioral and mental health supports
- HUB Coaching
- Facility School services and referrals
- Training recommendations
- Student-specific consultation
- Program navigation and resource connections

The TAC also provided assistance related to:

- Facility School directory navigation
- Connections to Facility School Office staff
- Coaching and consultation regarding student needs
- Program referral guidance and support

Outreach and Awareness Efforts

The TAC engaged in extensive statewide outreach to increase awareness of available services and support. Presentations and informational sessions reached approximately **255 educational leaders and stakeholders**, including:

- Colorado Special Education Directors Meetings (Fall 2024 and Fall 2025) – approximately 30 participants
- Central SPED Directors Meeting – approximately 10 participants
- Colorado Rural Schools Alliance Conference – approximately 100 participants
- Southeast BOCES Meeting – approximately 15 participants
- State Directors Leadership Team (SDLT) – approximately 100 participants

Outreach efforts focused on:

- Introduction to TAC services
- HUB Coaching opportunities
- Specialized consultation resources
- Rural systems support and collaboration

Collaboration and Partnership Development

To strengthen coordination, increase awareness of available support, and build connections across systems, the TAC actively engaged with both internal Colorado Department of Education (CDE) teams and external partner organizations throughout the year.

Internal collaboration included participation and relationship-building with:

- CDE ALL Team- including the ASD team, Mental Health, and Early Education
- Mental Health Advisory Team
- Landscape of Wellbeing Team (Social Emotional Wellness Team)
- School Safety Advisory Board
- CDE Autism CAMP Cohort 4 rural participant network
- CDE Family, School and Community Partnership team

The TAC also developed and maintained partnerships with external stakeholders, including regional and district leadership groups, the Northeast Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), community organizations, and subject matter experts to expand resources and opportunities available to rural districts.

These connections increased awareness of TAC services, facilitated cross-department collaboration, strengthened referral pathways, and helped ensure that rural districts were connected to relevant resources, initiatives, training opportunities, and technical assistance across Colorado.

Impact Summary

During the 2025–2026 reporting period, the TAC:

- Served **414 participants** through training and professional learning opportunities.
- Responded to **33 direct requests for support** from rural districts.
- Supported **9 districts interested in HUB Coaching**, with **4 districts actively engaged** in coaching services.
- Facilitated autism telehealth consultation services for multiple rural districts.
- Reached approximately **255 educational leaders and stakeholders** through statewide outreach and presentations.
- Strengthened partnerships across state agencies, BOCES, districts, and community organizations to expand access to specialized support for rural schools.

Appendix E: Specialized Day Schools

Application to become an Approved Facility School

Approval Requirement Checklist
Letter of intent - includes overview of the organization, intended school program, leadership structure - may include items noted below 1-3
A. CDHS/CDPHE license or CDE authorization
B. School District Acknowledgement of organization within its boundaries
C. Letter of Support of Organization Board (must include members not on staff of organization)
D. Budget Projection (Revenue and expenses)
E. School Schedule (daily) & Calendar (school year)
F. Educational Personnel List including SPED Director job description Include list of staff, position/title, license #
G. Description of educational program including curriculum resources. Also include Multilingual criteria and support for applicable students
H. Verification of Technology Systems – Organization has technology systems to support state assessments, diagnostic assessments, Student Information System, IEP system, etc.
I. Educational Policies & Procedures - must include a school safety plan
In addition, school description (see below 1-3) - it may be included in the Letter of Intent
1. History/background of the organization and school - includes mission of the facility
2. Administrative/leadership structure description - include names roles for agency and school leadership, type of board (advisory, governing)
3. Demographic data of students to be served - ages, grades, specific needs/disabilities, number of students and staff, etc.

Specialized day school application requirements checklist

REQUIREMENTS
1. Letter of intent
2. Signed assurances page
3. Inspections – a. Zoning b. ADA compliance c. Fire includes “E” occupancy d. Health (school)
4. County DHS and Law Enforcement notification – verify communication with each
5. Criminal background checks – process, system, timing and proof completed for all staff
6. Liability insurance – recommended minimum $1 million
7. Education staff with CDE license – Personnel list with names, title/position, license #
8. School district awareness notice – verify communication sent to school district
9. Governing/Advisory board approval – communication supporting the application
10. School safety plan
11. Policies and procedures – must include a. Reporting requirements – process, timing, person responsible, etc. b. Restraints – model, training, reporting practices, etc. c. Required staff trainings – please list training required by the organization, human services, etc.
12. Budget overview – Revenue and expenses
13. Description of student population to be served
***If day treatment transitioning
1. Documentation of good standing with CDHS and day treatment license
2. Narrative for rationale for transition to specialized day school
3. Three years of ‘placer’ data – include list of placing agencies and student counts for each for the past three years

Appendix F: Interagency Resource Guide

Process to Become an Approved Facility School
Provider Resource Guide

Updated 8/1/24

Created in collaboration between Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance(HCPF)

- ☐ Local Inspections/Approvals
- ☐ CHDS License
- ☐ CDE Facility School Approval
- ☐ HCPF Enrollment
- ☐ Regional Accountable Entity (RAE) Contract

LOCAL - *CDHS cannot issue any type of license without local zoning approval, fire inspection, and health department inspection and approval, prior to submitting an application.*

Contact your local municipality to find the Building, Planning and Zoning Department and local fire and health departments for your facilities location.

1. Contact and obtain written documentation of zoning approval from the county in which the facility exists and its specific facility type and the population to be served. This approval should also address any limitations in characteristics of youth that may attend the program as well as any limitations on capacity for the facility.
2. The facility will need to have an inspection and approval from the local fire department and from the local health department prior to the issuance of a license.
3. To find your local health department go to: https://cdphe.colorado.gov/public-information/find-your-local-public-health-agency
4. Initial inspections for the fire and health department must be completed and approved prior to approval of the license. Typically if they are over 6-9 months old, we ask for another inspection. This process can be going on in conjunction with the CDHS licensing process.

Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Provider Services Unit (PSU)

In order to become an Approved Facility School through CDE, providers must have one of the following licenses:

1. Day Treatment License issued by CDHS - A Day Treatment Facility License is required for any school setting NOT physically within a residential setting or that provides services for youth from the community who are NOT enrolled in their residential program.

   - OR -

2. Residential Child Care Facility (RCCF) License issued by CDHS - For Residential Child Care Facility (RCCF, QRTP, PRTF) licenses.

   https://cofamilyfirst.org/provider-services/child-placement-agencies/

   - OR -

3. Hospital License issued by CDPHE - For Hospital licenses, please see this resource page.

Steps to get a Day Treatment License

- ☐ Email - cdhs_dcw-facilitylicenseapps@state.co.us to request information about becoming a Day Treatment Facility.
- ☐ An application will be sent to you including an addendum and current fee sheet
- ☐ Complete the application and respective addendums and include a check for the application fee and submit it to-
  Colorado Department of Human Services, Provider Services Unit, 2nd Floor, 1575 Sherman Street, Denver CO 80203.
- ☐ A licensing specialist will contact you and set up a review appointment.
- ☐ The licensing review will include, but is not limited to, written policies and procedures, staff qualifications and files, forms used for admission to the facility, facility site review, and other documents demonstrating compliance with the rules and regulations.
- ☐ The licensing specialist will complete a report of inspection which will include a list of the rules and regulations the facility will need to demonstrate compliance with before a license can be issued, a description of type of license, capacity and ages the facility will be approved for and any conditions of the license.
- ☐ Upon verification of full compliance the licensing specialist will approve the application and a license will be sent to the provider.
- ☐ Once a license has been approved, the facility will be required to submit an annual continuation notice and fee to the Department.

Colorado Department of Education (CDE), Office of Facility Schools (OFS)

To request a meeting with OFS staff and review an application packet to become an Approved Facility School, email facility_schools@cde.state.co.us. Additional information may be obtained at https://www.cde.state.co.us/facilityschools.

Submit Letter of intent form - may be submitted prior to completion of above requirements with CDHS or CDPHE (for hospitals), or in conjunction with an application to become authorized by CDE - OFS as a specialized day school.

Must have a current CDHS or CDPHE license (day treatment, RCCF, hospital), or be authorized as a specialized day school (by CDE - OFS)l to submit an application.

Steps to Become an Approved Facility School

- ☐ Site submits completed application packet electronically to the OFS
- ☐ CDE - OFS reviews the application within 30 days of receipt
- ☐ OFS conducts site visit
- ☐ Final documents are sent to the Facility Schools Board for review
- ☐ Site presentation at Facility Schools Board meeting
- ☐ Facility School probationary approval for one year by Facility Schools Board
- ☐ Periodic monitoring of the new site by OFS
- ☐ Full approval after one year by Facility Schools Board

Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF)

To be reimbursed for Medicaid-covered clinical/therapy services provided by licensed Day Treatment Facilities, a provider must enroll with HCPF and contract with Regional Accountable Entities (RAEs). All enrollment requirements can be found at the HCPF enrollment page: https://hcpf.colorado.gov/find-your-provider-type.

Day Treatment providers should enroll as Provider Type 77/389 (BH Group Provider, without prescriber). The following documents should be submitted with your enrollment application:

- ☐ CDHS Day Treatment License
- ☐ CDE Facility School Approval Letter
- ☐ W9 (signed and dated within the last 6 months)
- ☐ Voided business check (no temporary checks or deposit slips) or bank letter (dated within the last 6 months)
- ☐ Malpractice/Liability insurance information must be entered in the application; however, proof of insurance is not a required attachment.

Once a Day Treatment program is enrolled with HCPF, they will receive a Medicaid ID#. Providers must contract with Regional Accountable Entities who are responsible for paying for Behavioral Health Day Treatment services (CPT Code H2012) for Medicaid members. RAE Contacts can be found here: https://hcpf.colorado.gov/accphase2

Appendix G: Accountability and Accreditation

Introduction to Facility Schools Accreditation

Background

Facility schools are educational programs that operate in one of the following settings: a residential childcare facility or day treatment program licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services; a hospital licensed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; or a specialized day school program authorized by the Colorado Department of Education.[2] Since 2008, facility schools have been subject to an approval process administered by the Office of Facility Schools within the Colorado Department of Education, in accordance with state statute[3] and rules established by the Facility Schools Board (1 CCR 304-1). While this approval system has ensured compliance with operational and educational standards, it did not include a formal, performance-based accreditation structure. Senate Bill 23-219, which amends C.R.S. § 22-2-406, requires that beginning December 1, 2026, the Colorado State Board of Education accredit approved facility schools based on their implementation of accountability measures and demonstrated student outcomes.

Facility Schools Accreditation

Accreditation for Colorado facility schools is the formal recognition granted by the Colorado State Board of Education that an approved facility school meets the educational quality criteria and requirements established by the Colorado Facility Schools Board and by Colorado state statutes[4] and rules.[5] The accreditation process for approved facility schools includes reviewing the schools' performance across three indicators defined by state statute: student outcomes, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and student engagement. It also includes review of the schools' standing in four categories: academics, school climate, leadership and talent, and operations.

Purpose of Accreditation

Accreditation indicates that a facility school reflects high standards for educational quality and operational effectiveness. The accreditation process promotes transparent accountability while also supporting continuous school improvement through self-assessment and ongoing monitoring against established criteria. As a result, accreditation provides confidence to students, families, and community partners that facility schools are delivering meaningful educational programming that supports students' academic progress, fosters their behavioral and social-emotional growth, and prepares them for successful transitions back to local schools or postsecondary opportunities.

Accreditation Vs. Special Education Monitoring

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[2] C.R.S. § 22-2-402

[3] C.R.S. § 22-2-407

[4] C.R.S. §§ 22-2-406, 22-2-407 (2024).

[5] 1 CCR 304-1.

Accreditation is complementary to but distinct from special education monitoring processes for facility schools. While both processes examine the quality of programming provided by the schools, accreditation is focused on criteria developed by the Office of Facility Schools (i.e., academics, school climate, leadership and talent, and operations) as well as the specific accreditation performance indicators defined by state statute. In contrast, special education monitoring addresses issues of compliance with federal and state laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA), as well as quality standards defined by the Colorado Department of Education, which outline key requirements for approved facility schools.

Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria and Accreditation Report

The Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria and Facility Schools Accreditation Report were developed by the Office of Facility Schools in 2026 in consultation with facility school leaders and other stakeholders.

- **Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria:** The Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria outline expectations for facility school performance in four categories: academics, school climate, leadership and talent, and operations.
- **Facility Schools Accreditation Report:** The Facility Schools Accreditation Report provides a summary of the school's performance against the Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria as well as key data points in student outcomes, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and student engagement.

The criteria and accreditation report are used to make accreditation decisions for facility schools.

Overview of Facility School Accreditation

Facility School Accreditation is a multifaceted process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting information on the performance and progress of approved Colorado facility schools. In deciding whether to recommend accreditation, the Colorado Facility Schools Board reviews information included in the Facility Schools Accreditation Report and other relevant sources of evidence. Based on this review, the Colorado Facility Schools Board makes an annual recommendation to the Colorado State Board of Education, which is responsible for making the final accreditation decision for each approved facility school. The major components of Facility School Accreditation that inform the annual accreditation recommendation of the Colorado Facility Schools Board are outlined below.

Note: The Office of Facility Schools does not collect evidence for every component on an annual basis; therefore, the Colorado Facility Schools Board makes its recommendations based on the relevant and available evidence for the current school year.

Major Components of Facility School Accreditation

Component	Summary	Frequency
Assurances Form	The facility school submits a signed assurances form to establish formal certification that the school is operating in compliance with required laws, policies, and performance obligations. The assurances form is provided in Appendix 1. The facility school submits the assurances form no later than 12 p.m. on June 30 (or if June 30 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the signed assurances form is due on the next business day).	Annually
Facility Schools Accreditation School Performance Summary	The facility school completes the Facility Schools Accreditation School Performance Summary to provide information to the Office of Facility Schools about the most recent academic year as it relates to the school's performance in core elements from the four categories of the Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria: academics, school climate, leadership and talent, and operations. The school performance summary also includes information about the school's progress toward improvement plan goals (see below) and progress toward meeting any conditions placed on its accreditation status. The school performance summary template is provided in Appendix 2. The facility school submits the school performance summary no later than 12 p.m. on April 30 (or if April 30 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the school performance summary is due on the next business day). Additionally, performance summaries must be submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Office of Facility Schools. Office of Facility Schools staff reviews and evaluates performance summaries using the Facility Schools Accreditation Performance Rubric (provided in Appendix 4).	Annually
Document Submission	As part of the Facility Schools Accreditation School Performance Summary, each facility school provides the Office of Facility Schools with required documentation aligned to the Facility Schools Accreditation Criteria. This documentation serves as evidence of meeting core criteria (i.e., the criteria that are evaluated on an annual basis in the school performance summary). The facility school submits documentation with the school	Annually

Component	Summary	Frequency
	performance summary no later than 12 p.m. on April 30 (or if April 30 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the documentation is due on the next business day). Documentation must be submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Office of Facility Schools.	
Accreditation Site Visit	The Accreditation Site Visit provides the Office of Facility Schools the opportunity to collect comprehensive information about the school's performance relative to the accreditation criteria. The length and scope of the site visit varies, depending on the school's size, status (i.e., whether the school has accreditation conditions), and/or past performance. The site visit is conducted by a trained team. Following the visit, the team completes a site visit report and submits it to the Office of Facility Schools for review, along with other materials gathered during the site visit. The Office of Facility Schools staff reviews the findings of the report with school leaders and discusses implications of the report for the school's accreditation status and the school improvement plan. Site visits are conducted throughout the school year, but no later than April 15.	Once every four years*
School Improvement Plan	After receiving the Accreditation Site Visit report findings and participating in a follow-up meeting with Office of Facility Schools staff, the facility school develops and submits a school improvement plan designed to guide the school's ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes, strengthen organizational effectiveness, and ensure continuous growth aligned with the school's mission and facility school accreditation expectations. Facility schools report on progress toward school improvement plan goals each year as part of their school performance summary. Additionally, school leadership teams reference their plans on an ongoing basis to ensure the school is on track to meet goals. The school improvement plan template is provided in Appendix 3. The facility school submits the school improvement plan no later than 12 p.m. on July 31 (or if July 31 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the school improvement plan is due on the next business day).	Once every four years, with progress towards goals reported annually.
Facility Schools Accreditation	Each year, the Office of Facility Schools provides the Facility Schools Board with an accreditation report for each approved	Annually

Component	Summary	Frequency
Report	facility for review. The accreditation report includes a brief overview of the school, a description of the school's performance relative to accreditation criteria, and the school's overall accreditation status. The report also includes key data points in student outcomes, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and student engagement. The Facility Schools Board uses these reports to inform the accreditation recommendations they make to the State Board of Education. The Facility Schools Office submits accreditation reports to the Facility School Board no later than 12 p.m. on October 1 (or if October 1 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the accreditation reports are due on the next business day).	

*****A facility school may participate in more frequent site visits if the Office of Facility Schools determines that the school requires more intensive support.

Appendix H: External Evaluation

Colorado S.B. 23-219 Facility Schools Workgroup
Third Party Evaluation

Conducted by:

Dr. Corey D. Pierce
Center for Innovative Educator Preparation at the University of Northern Colorado

Dr. William Merchant
Center for Research and Evaluation in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, University of Northern Colorado

Introduction and Report Overview

This report presents the findings from a third-party evaluation required by Colorado S.B. 23-219. The evaluation examines whether the Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations have contributed to more effective services and improved access for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs. The report focuses on the five primary recommendations developed by the Facility Schools Workgroup: Facility Baseline Quality Funding Model, Shared Operational Services, Technical Assistance Center, Expanded Access and Locations, and improvements to the Application, Licensure, and Approval Process.
The report is organized into the following sections:

- **Executive Summary,** provides a brief overview of the evaluation's major findings and conclusions.
- **Introduction and Legislative Background**, which describes the legislative context for the evaluation, including the relationship between S.B. 21-274, the Facility Schools Workgroup, and S.B. 23-219.
- **Evaluation Purpose and Questions**, which outlines the purpose of the third-party evaluation and identifies the major questions used to assess implementation and early outcomes.
- **Methods and Data Sources**, which summarizes the data used in the evaluation, including administrative records, enrollment trends, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and relevant implementation documents.
- **Findings by Workgroup Recommendation**, which presents findings organized around each of the five Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations:
    - Recommendation 1: Facility Baseline Quality Funding Model
    - Recommendation 2: Shared Operational Services
    - Recommendation 3: Technical Assistance Center
    - Recommendation 4: Expanded Access and Locations
    - Recommendation 5: Application, Licensure, and Approval Process
- **Additional Themes and Findings**, which discusses cross-cutting issues that emerged across the evaluation, including access and geography, enrollment and demand, awareness and utilization of new resources, rural and Front Range differences, and ongoing capacity and staffing constraints.
- **Limitations**, which identifies factors that should be considered when interpreting the findings, including the early stage of implementation and the limited amount of post-implementation data currently available.
- **Recommendations**, which provides considerations for continued implementation, monitoring, and improvement of the facility school system.

Executive Summary

Colorado S.B. 23-219 required a third-party evaluation to determine whether the Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations improved services and access for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs in Colorado. This evaluation focused on five major recommendation areas: funding, shared operational services, technical assistance, expanded access and locations, and application/licensure/approval processes.

Key Findings

- **Early implementation shows signs of system stabilization.**
  - The number of active facility schools declined from 56 in 2010 to 30 in 2022.
  - Following S.B. 23-219 implementation, active facility schools increased to 31 in SY2023–24 and 34 in SY2024–25.
  - Total facility school enrollment increased modestly from 796 students in 2023 to 813 students in 2024.
- **The Facility Baseline Quality Funding Model appears to have improved funding predictability.**
  - The new model was developed using historical enrollment, administrative, and operational data.
  - Full implementation began in 2024, with revisions added in 2025, including an inflationary factor.
  - Stakeholders reported that more predictable funding supported planning, staffing, and limited expansion.
- **Shared Operational Services showed promise but limited reach.**
  - The Shared Operational Services grant was awarded to the Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies (CAFCA).
  - Schools that used the shared purchasing process reported cost savings and faster purchasing.
  - However, many facility school administrators reported limited awareness or use of the system.
  - Broader communication and onboarding are needed for statewide impact.
- **The Technical Assistance Center (TAC) was valued by users but underutilized overall.**
  - Stakeholders who accessed TAC resources described them as useful and high quality.
  - Rural LEA administrators especially viewed TAC supports as aligned with their needs.
  - Many facility school administrators and teachers were unaware of the TAC or did not use its resources.
  - Additional outreach and clarification of TAC's role may improve utilization.
- **Access has improved modestly, but geographic barriers remain.**
  - Facility school placements remain concentrated in Front Range counties.
  - In 2024, six counties accounted for approximately 81% of total enrollment.
  - Rural and geographically distant communities continue to face barriers related to travel, transportation, and limited local placement options.

    - Out-of-state placements declined from 33 students in 2021 to six students in 2024, which may suggest improved in-state access.
- **Enrollment trends suggest continued demand for specialized services.**
    - Growth from 2023 to 2024 was concentrated among elementary and middle school students.
    - Enrollment increased notably among students with autism spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities.
    - Day treatment remained the largest placement type.
    - Specialized day schools appeared as a distinct placement category in 2024.
- **Capacity constraints continue to limit growth.**
    - Facility school administrators reported that many programs remain at or near capacity.
    - Common constraints included staffing, licensing, available beds, classroom space, and service model limitations.
    - LEA administrators noted that available placements do not always match student needs or IEP team recommendations.
- **The Interagency Resource Guide was helpful to users but not widely used.**
    - Respondents who used the guide found it useful for identifying available supports and possible service matches.
    - Many administrators were unaware of the guide or had not incorporated it into placement planning.

Overall Conclusion

The early implementation of S.B. 23-219 has produced important foundational progress. The facility school system shows signs of stabilization, with modest increases in active schools and student enrollment. The new funding model, shared services structure, TAC, and resource guide each appear to provide useful supports. However, the overall impact remains uneven. Awareness and utilization of new resources are limited, and persistent challenges remain related to geography, staffing, capacity, transportation, and service alignment. Because only limited post-implementation data are currently available, findings should be interpreted as preliminary. Future evaluation should continue to monitor enrollment, access, staffing, waitlists, capacity, geographic distribution, and stakeholder use of new supports to determine whether early improvements lead to sustained statewide impact.

Introduction and Legislative Background

Colorado facility schools serve students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs who require highly structured educational settings and intensive supports. These schools are part of the state's continuum of educational services and often support students with complex behavioral, emotional, developmental, medical, or disability-related needs. In 2021, the Colorado General Assembly passed S.B. 21-274, which established the Facility Schools Workgroup. The Workgroup was charged with reviewing Colorado's facility school system and developing recommendations to improve its sustainability, accessibility, and effectiveness. The Workgroup's final report identified five primary recommendations: implementing a Facility Baseline Quality Funding Model, promoting Shared Operational Services, creating a Technical Assistance Center, expanding access and facility school locations, and improving the application, licensure, and approval process.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed S.B. 23-219, which required a third-party evaluation of whether the Workgroup's recommendations resulted in more effective services and improved access for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs. The University of Northern Colorado was selected to conduct this evaluation through a collaboration between the Center for Innovative Educator Preparation at UNC and the Center for Research and Evaluation in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences.

This report presents an early assessment of implementation progress and emerging outcomes related to the five Workgroup recommendations. The evaluation examines available administrative data, implementation records, survey responses, and stakeholder feedback to understand how the recommendations have been carried out and what early effects are evident. Because several major components were recently implemented or remain in development, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary. The report is intended to document progress to date, identify remaining challenges, and support continued improvement of Colorado's facility school system.

Evaluation Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the implementation and early outcomes of the Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations identified in response to S.B. 21-274 and evaluated under S.B. 23-219. The evaluation examined whether the recommendations contributed to more effective services, improved access, and increased system capacity for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs. The evaluation was organized around five primary evaluation inquiries aligned with the Workgroup's major recommendation areas.

Primary Evaluation Inquiries

Evaluation Inquiry 1: Facility Baseline Quality Funding Model
Was a facility baseline quality funding model created, and did it provide a minimum funding level for each facility school and establish an adequate and reliable revenue stream?

This inquiry examined whether the recommended funding model was developed and implemented as intended. It also considered whether the model improved funding predictability, supported basic operational needs, and provided a more stable revenue structure for facility schools.

Evaluation Inquiry 2: Shared Operational Services
Was the shared operational services model promoted, and did it improve the identification of services and achieve economies of scale for non-student-facing expenses?

This inquiry focused on the implementation and use of shared operational services. It examined whether the grant program and shared purchasing structures were created, whether facility schools used them, and whether participating schools experienced cost savings or operational efficiencies.

Evaluation Inquiry 3: Technical Assistance Center
Was a Technical Assistance Center implemented, and did it provide training and professional development to school district personnel enabling them to provide specific support needs for students in their home district?

This inquiry examined the implementation, reach, and perceived usefulness of the Technical Assistance Center (TAC). It considered whether the TAC provided training, resources, consultation, or other support to school districts and administrative units, especially those serving students with intensive needs in local settings.

Evaluation Inquiry 4: Expanded Access and Locations
Were access and locations expanded by broadening the statutory definition of facility schools to enable licensure and approval of new or existing organizations that provide direct specialized services to various student populations, thus addressing existing educational gaps in the state?

This inquiry focused on whether access to facility school services expanded after implementation of the Workgroup recommendations. It considered trends in the number of active

facility schools, student enrollment, geographic distribution, and availability of specialized placements across Colorado.

Evaluation Inquiry 5: Application, Licensure, and Approval Process
Was the application, licensure, and approval process clarified and improved through collaborative revisions, clarification, or additional support for the licensure and approval process?

This inquiry examined whether administrative processes were improved to support facility school approval, licensure, and implementation. It also considered whether changes to the process helped reduce barriers for new or existing providers seeking to serve students with specialized needs.

Additional Guiding Research Questions

In addition to the five primary evaluation inquiries, the evaluation was informed by a broader set of guiding research questions. These questions were used to examine implementation activities, stakeholder experiences, and early indicators of system change.

The guiding questions addressed several major areas:

- **Implementation of grant programs and resources**, including whether the operational services grant program and Interagency Resource Guide were created, what grants were awarded, and what outcomes resulted from those activities.
- **Facility school availability and enrollment**, including whether the number of approved facility school placements stabilized or increased, how enrollment changed after passage of the bill, and whether enrollment changes could be associated with implementation of S.B. 23-219.
- **Access and geographic distribution**, including how the location of facility schools affects student access, whether rural and remote districts experienced different barriers than Front Range districts, and whether reliance on homebound or out-of-state placements decreased.
- **Usefulness and utilization of supports**, including how stakeholders used the Interagency Resource Guide, whether administrative units unable to access facility school placements received sufficient TAC support, and how the TAC supported school districts and administrative units.
- **Workgroup structure and stakeholder participation**, including whether additional responsibilities were created, what outcomes resulted from those responsibilities, whether more parents were added to the Workgroup, and how parents and other stakeholders viewed their role and the implementation process.
- **Broader measures of success**, including whether parents, guardians, advocates, county departments of human services, and other stakeholders perceived the implementation plan as having a positive impact, and what additional measures of success should be considered by the Office, Workgroup, and third-party evaluator.

Together, the primary evaluation inquiries and guiding research questions provided the framework for assessing implementation progress, early outcomes, remaining barriers, and future evaluation needs.

Methods and Data Sources

This evaluation used a mixed-methods design to assess implementation progress and early outcomes associated with the Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations. The evaluation drew on administrative records, program implementation documents, grant and financial reports, enrollment data, survey responses, interviews, focus groups, and stakeholder feedback. These sources were used to examine whether the recommended activities were created and implemented, how they were experienced by users, and what early evidence suggests about access, capacity, and service effectiveness.

Quantitative data were used to examine changes in the facility school system over time. These data included facility school approval records, historical enrollment data, yearly enrollment trends by placement type and demographic group, county-level placement patterns, and school-level enrollment and capacity information where available. The evaluation also considered data related to homebound placements, out-of-state placements, Medicaid funding policies, TAC participation records, and shared operational services grant activity. Qualitative data were used to understand stakeholder experiences and implementation context. Surveys, interviews, focus groups, and open-ended feedback were collected or reviewed from facility school administrators, LEA and administrative unit representatives, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders. These data provided information about awareness, utilization, perceived effectiveness, barriers to access, rural and Front Range differences, and the usefulness of new resources such as the Technical Assistance Center and Interagency Resource Guide.

Document review was also used to verify program creation and implementation activities. This included reviewing Workgroup materials, grant award documentation, PI reports and evaluations, TAC service reports, training records, financial reports, and available documentation related to parent participation and stakeholder engagement. These materials helped establish whether specific required activities occurred and provided context for interpreting early outcomes. Because several components of S.B. 23-219 implementation were still new or developing during the evaluation period, the analysis focused on implementation progress, descriptive trends, and stakeholder perceptions rather than long-term causal effects. Findings were interpreted across multiple data sources when possible to identify consistent patterns, emerging strengths, and areas needing continued monitoring.

Findings by Workgroup Recommendation

<u>Evaluation Inquiry 1</u>: Was a facility baseline quality funding model created, and did it provide a minimum funding level for each facility school and establish an adequate and reliable revenue stream?

The Facility Schools Workgroup began working on a revised baseline funding model in 2023. In this first year, the Workgroup collected historical data on enrollment, administration, and operations to design a remodeled baseline funding model and to update methods for tracking enrollment. The new baseline funding model began its first full year of implementation in 2024. Feedback was gathered after the first year of implementation of the new funding model and additional revisions were made for 2025, including adding an inflationary factor into the formula.

In addition to the new funding model, the Workgroup also commissioned a Tuition Cost Stakeholder Group to review options for updating the methodology for calculating tuition costs as well as any related rule changes that may be necessary. The Workgroup used the information gathered by the Stakeholder group and worked with the State Board of Education to get approval for a new tuition cost plan and rates, including the creation of three category rates and updating the Facility Schools Expenses Workbook. The new tuition cost system first took effect in the 2024-25 school year. Finally, the workgroup worked with the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance (HCPF) to develop a Medicaid Reimbursement Guide. The HCPF finalized the guidance document and shared it with the Workgroup in 2025.

<u>Evaluation Inquiry 2</u>: Was the shared operational services model promoted, and did it improve the identification of services and achieve economies of scale for nonstudent-facing expenses?

S.B. 23-219 created the shared operational services grant program to award funding to eligible applicants to contract for two years with an organization that coordinates shared operational services (SOS). The Facility Schools Workgroup solicited proposals and selected a grant recipient in 2023. The State Board of Education approved the proposal submitted by the Colorado Association of Family and Children's Agencies (CAFCA) and named them the sole grantee. Funds were distributed to CAFCA in 2024, and a shared purchasing process was piloted. CAFCA conducted a needs assessment in 2025 to determine the best direction for the work and the shared purchasing process to be implemented.

Year one focused on building and testing the SOS model. CAFCA formed an advisory committee, conducted a needs assessment reaching nearly all Colorado facility schools, selected the Back Office Cooperative (BOC) as a group-purchasing partner, and piloted the purchasing model with Shiloh House and Third Way Center.

The needs assessment produced a response rate just under 75% and identified transportation, staffing, technology/IT, clinical and para-clinical services, training, and infrastructure maintenance as major needs. Transportation was identified as the most significant area of overspending, with some schools reporting costs far above typical levels. Respondents also described unmet needs for occupational therapy, speech-language services, school psychology, Medicaid support, behavioral services, software, security, and technology upgrades.

The initial pilot produced promising cost and service-delivery outcomes. Third Way Center reported savings of at least 7%, or approximately $2,000, on comparable purchases made through BOC. Shiloh House reported average savings between 5% and 9%. Both schools also received purchased items faster than they had through previous direct-retail purchasing processes. CAFCA characterized the pilot as successful and expected participating schools to realize savings soon after the broader program launched.

The report also documented implementation challenges. Grant funds were not distributed until nearly three months into the operating period, requiring CAFCA to accelerate planning and implementation activities. In addition, the BOC purchasing partnership was not expected to address all identified needs, particularly transportation, specialty staffing, and infrastructure issues. CAFCA therefore began pursuing additional vendors and shared-contractor options to expand the program's service offerings.

Table 1. Utilize the Shared Operations Services Shared Purchasing Process *(Facility School Admin.)* Most facility school administrators reported limited use of the Shared Operational Services purchasing process. About two-thirds used it either not at all (41.7%) or only a little (25.0%). Another 20.8% used it somewhat, while only 12.5% reported using it much or to a great extent. Overall, the results suggest that the purchasing process had a relatively low uptake among respondents.

Table 1. To What Extent Did You Utilize the Shared Operations Services Shared Purchasing Process (Facility School Admin)

Response	Count	Percentage
Not at all	10	41.7%
A little/Very little	6	25%
Somewhat	5	20.8%
Much/Quite a bit	1	4.2%
To a great extent	2	8.3%

Section Summary:

The Shared Operational Services grant was awarded to CAFCA. CAFCA designed a shared purchasing process using Amazon Business Services. Our evaluation of the Shared Operational Services grant showed mixed results. The few facility schools who accessed and used this shared purchasing process saw cost savings, with some describing them as substantial. They reported that these savings resulted in increased funds available for other facility school operational costs. One user described the system as challenging to start, so they went, “back to their old way of doing business”. A vast majority of the facility school administrators who were surveyed for this evaluation did not access or were not aware of the shared purchasing system. Thus, for the facility schools that fully committed and used this system developed by CAFCA, there were substantial cost savings as was the intention of the process overall. However, it appears that greater efforts to get more facility schools to commit to using this shared purchasing system are necessary to see increased cost savings across more facility schools so that they can use a greater percentage of their funds for other operational costs.

<u>Evaluation Inquiry 3</u>: Was a Technical Assistance Center Implemented and did it provide training/professional development to school district personnel enabling them to provide specific support needs for students in their home district?

Technical Assistance Center Workshop Data

To assess the reach and implementation of Technical Assistance Center (TAC) services, workshop participation records maintained by the TAC were reviewed. These records documented the types of professional development activities offered, delivery formats, participant registration and attendance, and the range of topics addressed throughout the evaluation period, providing an overview of the TAC's training and outreach efforts.

Table 2. Overview of TAC Activities and attendance.

Between July 2025 and June 2026, the Technical Assistance Center delivered 34 professional development and consultation activities. Most offerings were virtual and focused on behavior support, trauma-informed practices, facility school services, autism supports, and rural special education. Across activities with complete participation records, 619 individuals registered and 307 attended (49.6% attendance). Participation varied substantially across events, with the largest workshop attracting 124 registrants and 74 attendees. Several smaller, targeted sessions achieved full attendance, demonstrating strong engagement among participants with specialized interests.

Table 2. Overview of TAC Activities and Attendance

Measure	Value
Total activities offered	34
Virtual trainings	29
In-person presentations	1
Consultations	1
Total registrations	619
Total attendees	307
Overall attendance rate	49.60%
Largest training attendance	74
Highest registration	124

Table 3. Summary of Participant Satisfaction Across Technical Assistance Center Training Activities. Participant satisfaction was consistently high across Technical Assistance Center training activities. Nearly all respondents (95.0%) rated the trainings as useful for their work, and 92.5% reported feeling confident in applying what they learned. Among trainings that included additional process questions, all respondents indicated that their questions and concerns were at least partially addressed and that they felt comfortable participating in discussions. Most

participants (88.9%) also reported that the training schedule met their needs, while 95.5% indicated there was sufficient time for discussion, examples, and participant interaction. Collectively, these findings suggest that the Technical Assistance Center's professional learning opportunities were well received and provided practical, applicable support for educators and administrators.

Table 3. Participant Satisfaction Across TAC Activities

Outcome	Responses
Training was useful for participants' work (rating of 4 or 5)	95.00%
Participants reported confidence in applying what they learned (rating of 4 or 5)	92.50%
Participants indicated the training addressed their questions and concerns (Fully or Partially)	100.00%
Participants felt comfortable asking questions during the session (Somewhat or Very Comfortable)	100.00%
Participants reported the training schedule met their needs	88.90%
Participants indicated there was sufficient time for discussion and examples	95.50%

Table 4. Common Qualitative Themes Across TAC Satisfaction Surveys. Across all participant satisfaction surveys, respondents consistently viewed the Technical Assistance Center's professional development activities as valuable, practical, and responsive to their needs. Participants particularly appreciated opportunities to receive expert guidance, discuss real-world challenges, and access resources they could immediately apply in practice. Although respondents requested additional follow-up supports and more advanced training opportunities, overall feedback suggests that the TAC is providing high-quality professional learning experiences that are well received by participating educators.

Table 4. Qualitative Themes Across TAC Satisfaction Surveys

Theme	Representative Participant Comments*
Practical and immediately applicable strategies	"Helpful strategies I can use right away."; "The examples made it easy to understand how to apply the information."
Opportunity to ask questions and receive expert guidance	"Being able to ask specific questions was very helpful."; "The Q&A format addressed situations we are currently experiencing."
High-quality resources and materials	"The resources shared were extremely helpful."; "I appreciated having materials I can refer back to."
Collaboration and discussion	"It was helpful hearing what others are doing."; "The discussion with other participants added valuable perspectives."
Desire for continued learning	"More trainings like this would be helpful."; "I'd like additional sessions with more advanced topics."

Evaluation Survey Data on TAC Utilization

In addition to administrative records, the evaluation team collected survey data from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and facility school administrators to examine awareness, utilization, and perceived value of TAC services. These surveys provide insight into stakeholder experiences with the TAC, including patterns of service use, satisfaction with available supports, and opportunities for continued improvement.

Table 5. To what extent did you utilize the Technical Assistance Center?

As shown in Table 5, utilization of the Technical Assistance Center (TAC) was generally low among both stakeholder groups. Over half of LEA administrators (52.0%) reported not utilizing the TAC at all, compared to 31.8% of facility school administrators. Facility school administrators were more likely to report limited use, with half (50.0%) indicating they utilized the TAC only a little or very little. Few respondents in either group reported utilizing the TAC much or to a great extent, suggesting opportunities to increase awareness and engagement with TAC services.

Table 5. Unitization of the TAC

Response	LEA Admin (n = 25)	Facility School Admin (n = 22)
Not at All	13 (52.0%)	7 (31.8%)
A Little/Very Little	5 (20.0%)	11 (50.0%)
Somewhat	4 (16.0%)	3 (13.6%)
Much/Quite a Bit	2 (8.0%)	1 (4.5%)
To a Great Extent	1 (4.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Table 6. To what extent did you, Facility School Teachers, interact with and benefit from the Technical Assistance Center? As shown in Table 6, most facility school teachers (71.4%) reported not interacting with or benefiting from the Technical Assistance Center. Only 14.3% reported limited interaction, and fewer than 15% indicated benefiting to at least some extent, suggesting relatively low TAC engagement among teachers during the evaluation period.

Table 6. Facility School Teacher Interaction with and Benefit From TAC

Response	Count	Percent
Not at All	15	71.4%
A Little/Very Little	3	14.3%

Somewhat	2	9.5%
Much/Quite a Bit	1	4.8%
To a Great Extent	0	0%

Section Summary:

A limited number of survey and focus group respondents were aware of and accessed the services provided by the TAC. This limited use of the TAC appeared to be due to many of the respondents simply not being aware that TAC was available to them. Some who were aware didn't see a fit for the TAC for their specific needs or felt they did not have a need for support during this time. Some Facility School Administrators felt that the focus of the TAC was to provide services to the LEAs and not them. As a result, they did not make much of an attempt to access or use the TAC and its resources. Those who did know of the TAC and accessed its resources noted that the resources provided by the TAC were of high quality and are aware that the TAC is trying to do more outreach activities. They noted that the focus of the TAC services were originally focused on rural areas, so metro area facility school administrators understood that they were not the focus of the TAC at this time.

LEA administrator survey and focus group data show slightly higher levels of awareness and utilization of the TAC. LEA administrators provided many more specific details regarding how they utilized the TAC resources, including participating in TAC offered trainings and accessing available resources, as well as, reaching out to the TAC to get additional resources and information. The geographical differences between leaders from rural schools and leaders from school districts in the front range, with rural leaders feeling the TAC was targeted to support their work specifically and leaders from the front range understanding that the TAC was designed to support rural schools and actually supported the delivery of services to rural schools in collaboration with the TAC. LEA administrators did note some confusion about whether the TAC was designed to provide program-wide/district-wide support or provide support for specific student situations, feeling it was more the former than the latter. Overall, the LEA administrators appreciated the training offered by the TAC, how the TAC was able to be a conduit to other professionals to help address specific issues, and the resources the TAC made available to everyone. They also specifically called out the efforts of the TAC Coordinator, Allie, for her efforts to develop the TAC and expand the resources they offer.

Few Facility School Teachers were aware of or accessed TAC resources. Those who did noted they appreciated the availability of the TAC staff to respond to calls and emails. They also said that the TAC offered a lot of resources that schools sometimes don't have time to look for. Some Facility School Administrators noted that they shared resources and training materials from the TAC with their teachers. So, it is possible that some teachers who responded to the survey and said they did not utilize TAC resources may have actually used them without knowing their origination.

Overall, while a large percentage of those who were surveyed and who participated in the focus groups were not aware of or didn't access the TAC resources, those who did had very

positive feedback. The focus on supporting rural schools was evident and appreciated; the trainings were focused on needed topics and were of good quality, and the TAC staff was responsive to their needs. They also provide constructive feedback to help the TAC grow and reach more schools to support more students. Many noted the desire to have more in-person training available, noting the added benefit of interacting with their colleagues during these training opportunities. Some also noted they desire to have the TAC expanded to also target front range districts. Finally, some noted the desire to have the TAC provide more advanced trainings since schools and facility schools have likely tried many of the basic approaches before coming to the TAC for support.

<u>Evaluation Inquiry 4</u>: Were access and locations expanded by broadening the statutory definition of facility schools to enable licensure and approval of new or existing organizations that provide direct specialized services to various student populations, thus addressing the existing educational gaps in the state?

Enrollment and Facility School Characteristics

To describe the population served by Colorado facility schools, enrollment data submitted by approved facility schools were reviewed for the 2021–2024 school years. These data summarize the number of approved facility schools, total student enrollment, geographic distribution of schools and students, grade-level enrollment, and primary disability categories, providing an overview of the characteristics of students served and the statewide distribution of facility school services.

Table 7. Number of Active Facility Schools Over Time. The number of active facility schools declined substantially from 56 in 2010 to 30 in 2022, a reduction of 26 schools over 12 years. Following the implementation of SB23-219, the number of active facility schools increased to 31 in SY2023–24 and 34 in SY2024–25. These data indicate that facility school approvals may be stabilizing and beginning to increase after a prolonged period of decline.

Table 7. Number of Active Facility Schools Over Time

Period	Active Facility Schools	Change
2010	56	-
2022 (pre-SB23-219)	30	-26 over 12 years
SY2023-24	31	+1 (first increase since 2010)
SY2024-25	34	+3

Table 8 and Figures 1 & 2. Total Enrollment and by Placement Type, 2021–2024. Total enrollment across facility school placement types remained relatively stable from 2021 through 2023 before increasing to 813 students in 2024. Day treatment enrollment was the largest placement category each year and increased overall from 427 students in 2021 to 492 in 2024. Hospital and residential placements declined over the period, while specialized day schools appeared as a distinct placement category in 2024 with 56 enrolled students. Overall, the data suggest modest growth in total placements, driven primarily by day treatment and the addition of specialized day school placements.

Figure 1. Total Enrollment Over Time

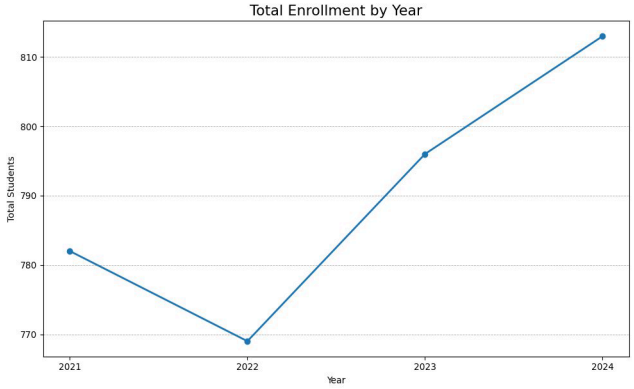


Figure 2. Enrollment Trend by School/Placement Type

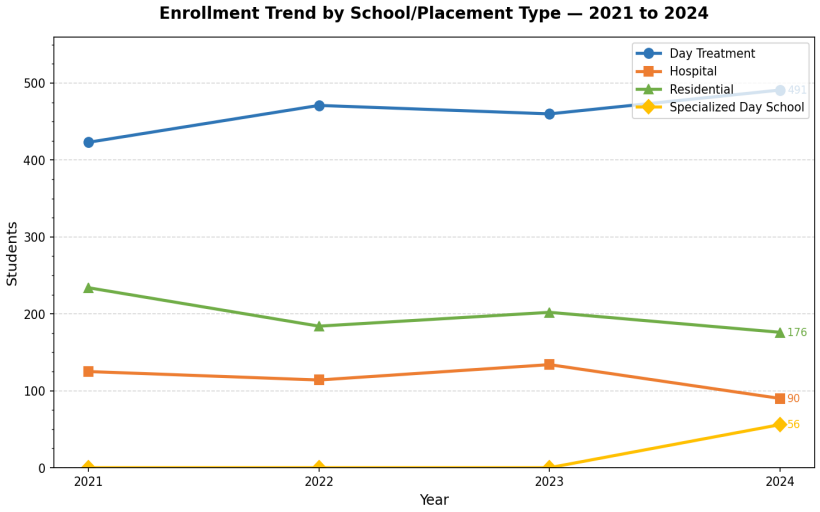


Table 8. Enrollment by Placement Type, 2021–2024

Placement Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Day Treatment	427	471	460	492
Hospital	125	114	134	90
Residential	230	184	202	175
Specialized Day School	-	-	-	56
Total	782	769	796	813

Table 9. Student Enrollment by County Type, 2021–2024. As shown in Table 9, student enrollment in facility schools was concentrated in urban Front Range counties throughout the evaluation period, with urban counties accounting for the majority of placements each year. Within this group, Arapahoe, Adams, Denver, Jefferson, El Paso, and Douglas consistently reported the highest enrollment. In 2024, these six counties accounted for 660 of 813 enrolled students (81%), including Arapahoe (205), Adams (132), Denver (104), Jefferson (92), El Paso (72), and Douglas (55). In contrast, rural plains and mountain/western slope counties generally reported only a few placements annually, and several had no placements in one or more years. Out-of-state placements also declined substantially, from 33 students in 2021 to six in 2024. These findings suggest that while facility school services are concentrated in Colorado's metropolitan areas, students in rural and geographically distant communities may continue to face more limited local access to specialized services. For a list of student enrollment by individual county, see Appendix A.

Table 9. Student Enrollment by County 2021-2024

County Type	2021	2022	2023	2024
Urban (Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, El Paso, Pueblo)	558	579	583	622
Suburban/Front Range (Boulder, Douglas, Larimer, Weld)	124	119	132	106
Rural Plains	16	14	21	20
Mountain/Western Slope	51	45	54	59
Out-of-State	33	12	6	6
Total	**782**	**769**	**796**	**813**

Table 10 and Figure 3. Enrollment by Grade Group, 2021–2024.

Total facility school enrollment increased from 796 students in 2023 to 813 students in 2024, following the passage of SB23-219. This increase was concentrated among elementary and middle school students. Elementary enrollment increased from 172 to 198 students, while middle school enrollment increased from 208 to 220 students. High school enrollment declined from 411 to 390 students but remained the largest grade group. Overall, the post-bill pattern suggests modest enrollment growth, particularly among younger students.

Figure 3. Enrollment by School Level (K-12 Grouped) by Year

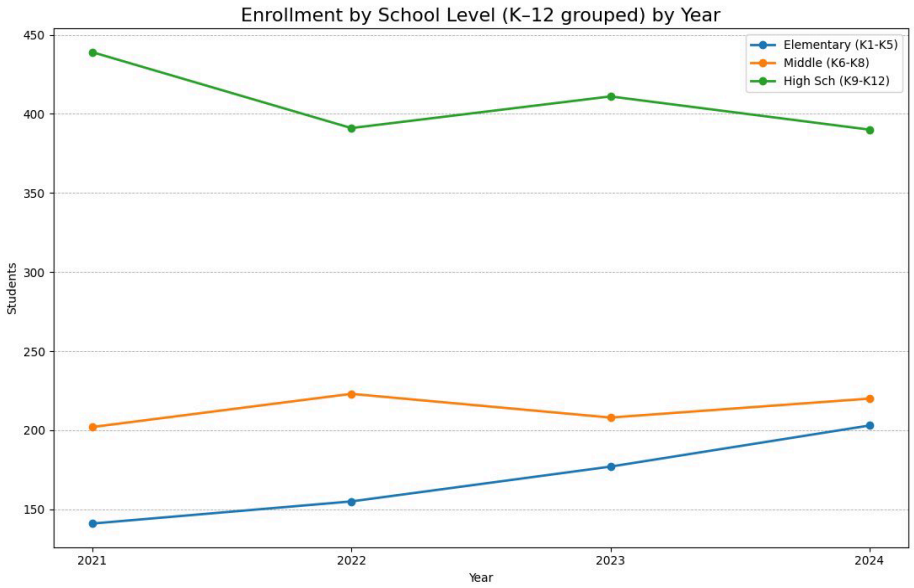


Table 10. Enrollment by Grade Group, 2021–2024

Grade Group	2021	2022	2023	2024
Kindergarten (KG)	6	12	5	5
Elementary (K1-K5)	135	143	172	198
Middle (K6-K8)	202	223	208	220
High School (K9-K12)	439	391	411	390
Total	782	769	796	813

Table 11 and Figure 4. Enrollment by Primary Disability, 2021–2024.

Enrollment patterns varied across disability categories. From 2023 to 2024, the largest increases occurred among students with autism spectrum disorder, rising from 145 to 197 students, and students with multiple disabilities, increasing from 133 to 150 students. Enrollment for students with serious emotional disability remained relatively stable, increasing from 181 to 190 students. In contrast, enrollment among students with no identified disability declined from 136 to 109 students, and hospital placements with undetermined special education status declined from 87 to 50 students. Overall, the 2024 increase in facility school enrollment appears to be driven primarily by students with autism spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities.

Figure 4. Enrollment by Primary Disability by Year

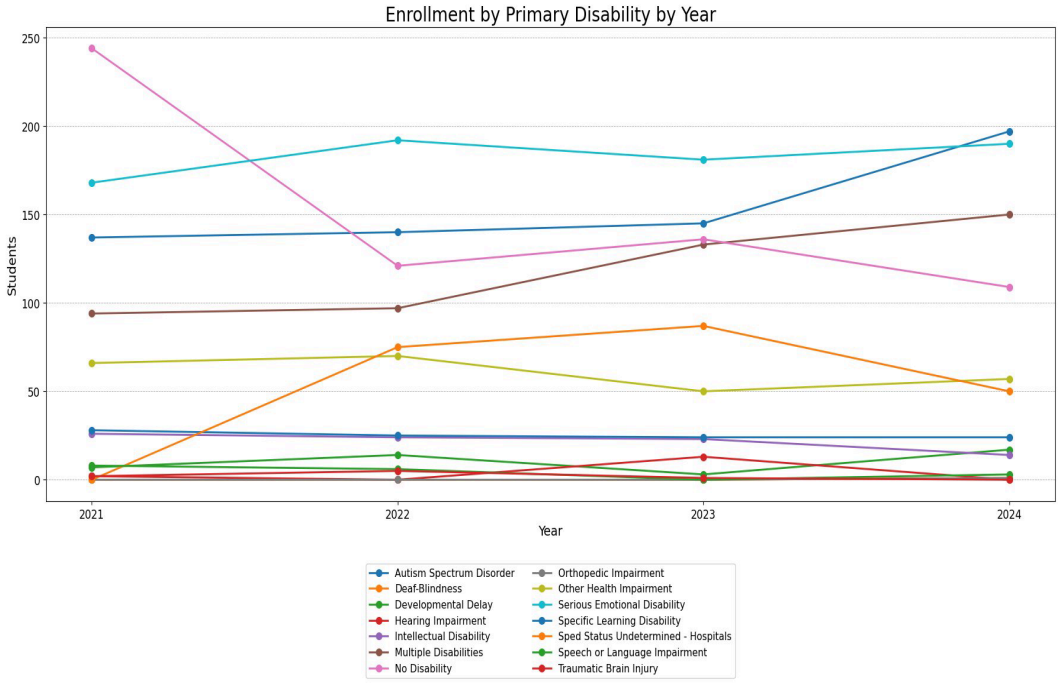


Table 11. Enrollment by Primary Disability, 2021-2024

Primary Disability	2021	2022	2023	2024
Autism Spectrum Disorder	137	140	145	197
Serious Emotional Disability	168	192	181	190
Multiple Disabilities	94	97	133	150

No Disability	244	121	136	109
Sped Status Undetermined – Hospitals	0	75	87	50
Other Health Impairment	66	70	50	57
Specific Learning Disability	28	25	24	24
Intellectual Disability	26	24	23	14
Developmental Delay	7	14	3	17
Hearing Impairment	2	0	13	0
Speech or Language Impairment	8	6	0	3
Traumatic Brain Injury	2	5	1	0
Deaf-Blindness	0	0	0	1
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0	0	1

Facility School Enrollment by School, 2021–2024.

Enrollment varied substantially across individual facility schools, with several schools consistently serving relatively large numbers of students. In 2024, the largest enrollments were reported by Serenity Education & Day Treatment Center (95), Laradon Hall (56), Morgridge Academy at National Jewish Health (53), Phoenix Academy (51), Spectra Centers (50), Tennyson Center for Children (50), and ACES (47). Several schools showed notable growth between 2023 and 2024, including Serenity Education & Day Treatment Center (70 to 95), ACES (newly reported with 47 students), Mount Saint Vincent's Home (19 to 29), Tennyson Center for Children (48 to 50), Spectra Centers (45 to 50), and Phoenix Academy (48 to 51). Other schools experienced declines, including Bansbach Academy, Southgate School, Poplar Way Academy, and J. Wilkins Opportunity School. Overall, the data indicate that the statewide increase in enrollment from 796 students in 2023 to 813 students in 2024 was concentrated in a subset of schools, while enrollment at many individual programs remained stable or declined. A full list of facility schools and their enrollment figures from 2021-2024 is available in Appendix B.

Relationship Between Enrollment Changes and SB23-219.

The available data do not support strong causal conclusions about whether enrollment changes were directly caused by SB23-219. Total enrollment increased modestly from 796

students in 2023 to 813 students in 2024, alongside an increase in active facility schools from 31 to 34. Enrollment growth was concentrated among elementary and middle school students and among students with autism spectrum disorder and multiple disabilities. However, because only one full post-bill year is available and the analysis does not include school-level intake, waitlist, referral, capacity, or comparison data, these changes should be interpreted as preliminary associations rather than evidence that the bill caused enrollment growth.

Implications for Access and Demand.

The trends suggest that demand for facility school services remains substantial and may be growing for some student groups, particularly younger students and students with more intensive support needs. The addition of new or expanding programs may have improved access in some areas, but enrollment remains concentrated in a relatively small number of Front Range schools and counties. School-level intake and capacity data would help determine whether stable or declining enrollment at individual schools reflects lower demand, limited staffing or available seats, changing referral practices, or barriers that prevent students from accessing services.

Survey and Qualitative reports on enrollment

In addition to enrollment data, facility school administrators and LEA administrators were surveyed regarding the overall impact of S.B. 23-219. Survey items examined the extent to which the combined recommendations were perceived to have increased student capacity, expanded access to facility schools, and improved the availability of services within respondents' regions.

Table 12. To what extent did all S.B. 23-219 recommendations combined allow you, Facility School Administrators and LEA Administrators, to increase the number of students served in your facility schools? As shown in Table 13, facility school administrators generally perceived a greater impact of S.B. 23-219 on increasing the number of students served than did LEA administrators. Nearly half of facility school administrators (45.9%) reported that the recommendations increased student capacity much or to a great extent, compared to 15.3% of LEA administrators. Conversely, LEA administrators were more likely to report little or no impact (61.6%) than facility school administrators (25.0%), suggesting differences in how the legislation's effects were experienced across stakeholder groups.

Table 12. Facility School Administrator and LEA Administrator Perception of Combined Recommendations Increasing Number of Students Served

Response	Facility School Admin	LEA Admin
Not at All	4 (16.7%)	10 (38.5%)
A Little/Very Little	2 (8.3%)	6 (23.1%)
Somewhat	9 (37.5%)	6 (23.1%)

Much/Quite a Bit	7 (29.2%)	3 (11.5%)
To a Great Extent	2 (8.3%)	1 (3.8%)

Table 13. To what extent did all S.B. 23-219 recommendations combined allow you to increase the number of facility schools that you have available to serve students. As shown in Table 13, facility school administrators generally perceived a greater increase in the availability of facility schools following implementation of S.B. 23-219 than did LEA administrators. Nearly half of facility school administrators (45.9%) reported that the recommendations increased the number of available facility schools much or to a great extent, compared to 15.4% of LEA administrators. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of LEA administrators (73.0%) reported little or no increase in available facility schools, suggesting that perceived improvements in access varied across stakeholder groups.

Table 13. Administrator Perception of Combined Recommendations to Increase the Number of Facility Schools.

Response	Facility School Admin	LEA Admin
Not at All	5 (20.8%)	16 (61.5%)
A Little/Very Little	0 (0.0%)	3 (11.5%)
Somewhat	8 (33.3%)	3 (11.5%)
Much/Quite a Bit	10 (41.7%)	4 (15.4%)
To a Great Extent	1 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)

Table 14: To what extent did all S.B. 23-219 recommendations combined allow you to increase the number of students served in your facility schools (Facility School Admin). As shown in Table 14, responses were mixed regarding the extent to which S.B. 23-219 increased the number of students served in facility schools. Approximately one-third of facility school administrators (33.3%) reported no increase, while 29.2% reported a moderate increase and 29.2% indicated the recommendations increased the number of students served much or to a great extent. These findings suggest that the perceived impact on student capacity varied across facility schools.

Table 14. Perceptions of Facility School Administrators of the Combined Recommendations Influencing the Number of Students Served in Facility Schools.

Response	Count	Percent
Not at All	8	33.3%
A Little/Very Little	2	8.3%
Somewhat	7	29.2%
Much/Quite a Bit	4	16.7%
To a Great Extent	3	12.5%

Summary survey and qualitative report on enrollment and new/expanded facility schools:

Survey and focus group interviews showed mixed results for the impact of the S.B.23-219 changes on enrollment in facility schools across Colorado. A large portion of facility school administrators reported increases ranging from "some growth" to "they were able to grow" enrollment to a great extent due to the S.B 23-219 changes. A smaller portion of the LEA administrators reported awareness of increased enrollment opportunities in the facility schools that they access. This indicates that the changes that resulted from the S.B. 23-219 Facility Schools Workgroup were positive and created additional seats to serve students in need of such services. Respondents reported the increase in available seats for enrollment were due to two primary factors, funding to build new schools or open more classrooms and the ability to retain and hire new/more teachers and staff. Results also showed that the new baseline funding model made budgeting more predictable and investment in growth possible.

The facility school administrator focus group provided insight into the impact of the bill on enrollment in facility schools. They noted that many facility schools are at capacity and that while the additional supports from the Bill helped expand and improve the services they provided to the students, they were not sufficient to increase the number of students served. They noted, "there are only so many beds at each center for licensing reasons." "You can only have so many students with so many teachers and so many beds." The focus group also highlighted additional factors that impact enrollment, outside of the factors that were considered in this Bill.

In particular, they noted a distinct difference, at times, between the services provided by facility schools and those desired by the school seeking to place students. One facility school administrator noted, "A lot of them are choosing to place their students in day treatment outside of their district, so that makes our numbers decline." Another focus group member stated, "Some districts have worked to create their own separate schools, and some of the larger ones already have them."

Facility school administrators in the focus group believe there are still students and families in their districts who could benefit from their services but are unable to access them . They noted a number of obstacles that, "get put in families' ways, including local AU's, court systems, monetary pay sources, navigating the DHS placement system." They noted that

families, “have to figure out how to navigate this really difficult system to get the care you need anymore.”

A majority of the LEA administrators reported seeing little to no growth in available seats in the facility schools that they access to support their students. While some acknowledged the new schools and expanded classrooms that have been created, they noted barriers that impacted their perspectives on enrollment options. A primary concern was geographical in nature. The LEA administrators reported consistent issues finding placement options closer than one and a half hours from their schools, making the new enrollment options much less accessible and harder for families to consider. There is a clear distinction between the enrollment options for front range/metro area districts as compared to rural and mountain rural districts. The LEA administrators also noted differences between the services offered in facility schools and the type of services desired to provide a FAPE for their students continues to limit the number of enrollment options.

They noted that they can’t afford to pay for a separate school, residential and facility school programming combined, but that is all some of the facility schools offer. One reported, “Even after the changes, we still couldn’t place students in facility schools that we felt offered the services our students needed without offering a bunch of extra services the IEP team did feel were needed. There isn’t a match between need and which services the facility schools offer.” They also noted that in some instances wait times for students on waitlists have decreased; some facility schools still simply deny students enrollment in their schools because the needs of the students are too severe. As a result, they reported starting or exploring the potential to start their own “Sierra School” to better meet the needs of their students and families, “alleviating the need to access facility schools.”

<u>Evaluation Inquiry 5</u>: Was the application, licensure, and approval process clarified and improved through collaborative revisions, clarification, or additional support for the licensure and approval process?

Table 15. To what extent did the recommendations for changes to accreditation and accountability of facility schools allow you to increase capacity for serving students in need of facility school placements?

Table 15. Extent to which recommendations for changes to accreditation and accountability of facility schools increased capacity for serving students.

Response	Facility School Admin	LEA Admin
Not at All	6 (25%)	16 (64%)
A Little/Very Little	3 (12.5%)	3 (12%)
Somewhat	4 (16.7%)	4 (16%)
Much/Quite a Bit	8 (33.3%)	1 (4%)
To a Great Extent	3 (12.5%)	1 (4%)

Facility School Administrators' responses to this inquiry were mixed. While there were instances of opening new schools and building new buildings to accommodate more students in some facility schools, a similar number said their facilities were at capacity and the changes to the application, licensure, and approval process. One facility school administrator reported that the recommendation for changes to accreditation and accountability provided a structured approach to helping them prepare for accreditation. Because these changes are just being put into place, some facility school administrators believe they will lead to more services, improved curriculum, and updated technology in facility schools, allowing them to operate more "on par" with the expectations of the public schools. They also reported that these changes will give consumers more faith in their services and programs.

LEA Administrators had a divided response to this inquiry. While a couple felt that the increase in total number of facility schools that are open and an increase in total seats available for placements were correlated with these changes, a vast majority responded that these changes to accreditation and accountability had little to no impact on the opening of new facility schools or available seats at current facility schools. It's important to note that multiple LEA administrators acknowledged these changes were new and would likely need time for implementation before their full benefit could be determined. Interviews with LEA administrators provided some insight into this perspective. For example, some simply reported that there were no facility schools in their immediate region, and no new schools or available seats were opened. Others took a broader perspective, questioning whether these changes will actually lead to improvements. They questioned whether the changes meant the requirements for accreditation were lowered, meaning more schools/seats could open, but they could provide a lower quality of service for the students. Others questioned the State's ability to oversee all

facility schools and the ability of the State to hold a facility school accountable with no clear mechanism to rescind the approval if programming at a facility school is not adequate.

Additional Themes and Findings

Access and geography

While the Facility Schools Workgroup recommendations beyond the Technical Assistance Center did not explicitly target specific regions within the state to address issues related to facility schools in Colorado, such as local access to facility school placements, data collected during this evaluation provided some context that we believe can be useful as this work continues. The evaluation found that access to facility school placements remain uneven across Colorado. Although the number of active facility schools and overall total enrollment increased after S.B. 23-219, available placements continue to be concentrated in a small number of Front Range counties. In 2024, six counties accounted for 660 of 813 enrolled students, or approximately 81% of all facility school enrollment**.** These counties were Arapahoe (205 students), Adams (132**)**, Denver (104), Jefferson (92), El Paso (72), and Douglas (55).

This concentration suggests that students living near major metropolitan areas likely have greater access to facility school placements than students in rural, mountain, and geographically distant regions. Many counties reported only one or a few placements in 2024, and several had no reported placements. While this may reflect population differences, it also indicates that statewide increases in facility school capacity do not necessarily translate into equally accessible placements across all regions.

The decline in out-of-state placements provides one positive indicator of improved in-state access. Out-of-state placements decreased from 33 students in 2021 to 12 in 2022**,** six in 2023**,** and six in 2024. As a share of total placements, out-of-state placements declined from 4.2% in 2021 to 0.7% in 2024. However, because most of this decline occurred before full implementation of S.B. 23-219, the data suggest that the lower level of out-of-state placement was maintained after the bill rather than clearly caused by the bill.

Stakeholder feedback further supports the finding that geography remains a meaningful access barrier. LEA administrators reported that even when new schools or expanded classrooms were available, placements were sometimes too far away to be practical for students and families. Some administrators described difficulty finding appropriate options within one and a half hours of their schools, making placement availability less useful in practice. Stakeholders also described a clear difference between access in Front Range or metro-area districts and access in rural or mountain-rural districts.

Overall, the results suggest that Colorado has made progress toward stabilizing facility school availability, but geographic access remains uneven. The key issue is not only whether more seats exist statewide, but whether those seats are close enough, appropriate enough, and feasible enough for students and families to use. Future monitoring should therefore examine regional placement availability, travel distance, transportation barriers, waitlists, and service match in addition to statewide enrollment totals.

Enrollment and demand

The evaluation found that total facility school enrollment increased modestly following the passage of S.B. 23-219. Statewide enrollment rose from 796 students in 2023 to 813 students in 2024**,** an increase of 17 students, or approximately 2.1%. This increase occurred alongside

growth in the number of active facility schools, which increased from 31 to 34 during the same general post-bill period. However, because only one full post-bill year of enrollment data is currently available, these changes should be interpreted as early indicators rather than evidence of a causal effect from S.B. 23-219.

Enrollment patterns suggest that demand may be increasing for younger students and students with more intensive support needs. From 2023 to 2024, elementary enrollment increased from 172 to 198 students, while middle school enrollment increased from 208 to 220 students**.** High school enrollment declined from 411 to 390 students, although high school students remained the largest grade group served. These results suggest that the modest overall enrollment increase was driven primarily by growth among elementary and middle school students.

Enrollment also shifted by disability category. The largest increase occurred among students with autism spectrum disorder, which rose from 145 students in 2023 to 197 students in 2024. Enrollment among students with multiple disabilities also increased, from 133 to 150 students. Students with serious emotional disability remained relatively stable, increasing from 181 to 190 students. In contrast, enrollment among students with no identified disability declined from 136 to 109 students, and hospital placements with undetermined special education status declined from 87 to 50 students. These patterns suggest that demand may be increasingly concentrated among students with identified disabilities and complex support needs.

Placement-type data also show where demand is concentrated. Day treatment remained the largest placement category and increased from 460 students in 2023 to 492 students in 2024. Residential placements declined from 202 to 175 students, and hospital placements declined from 134 to 90 students**.** Specialized day schools appeared as a distinct category in 2024, serving 56 students. This suggests that recent enrollment growth may be tied more closely to day treatment and specialized day school options than to residential or hospital-based placements. School-level data show that enrollment growth was not evenly distributed across all facility schools. Several schools showed notable increases between 2023 and 2024, including Serenity Education & Day Treatment Center, which increased from 70 to 95 students, Mount Saint Vincent's Home, which increased from 19 to 29, Spectra Centers, which increased from 45 to 50, Phoenix Academy, which increased from 48 to 51, and Tennyson Center for Children, which increased from 48 to 50. ACES was newly reported in 2024 with 47 students. At the same time, other schools remained stable or declined, indicating that increased demand or expanded capacity was concentrated in a subset of programs.

Stakeholder feedback suggests that demand continues to exceed available or appropriate capacity in some areas. Facility school administrators reported that many programs remain at capacity and that growth is limited by staffing, licensing requirements, available beds, classrooms, and service models. LEA administrators similarly reported that they often saw little to no growth in usable seats and that some available placements did not match the services required by students' IEP teams. Some stakeholders also noted that wait times had decreased in some cases, but that students with the most severe needs may still be denied enrollment because programs cannot meet their level of need.

Overall, the enrollment data suggests modest growth in the facility school system and continued demand for specialized placements, especially for younger students, students with autism spectrum disorder, students with multiple disabilities, and students needing day treatment or specialized day school services. However, enrollment alone does not fully capture demand. Future monitoring should include referral data, waitlists, denied placements, school-level

capacity, staffing levels, and service-match information to better determine whether changes in enrollment reflect increased access, unmet need, or ongoing capacity constraints.

Awareness and utilization

The evaluation found that several S.B. 23-219 implementation activities produced useful supports, but stakeholder awareness and utilization were uneven. Across the Technical Assistance Center, Shared Operational Services, and Interagency Resource Guide, the strongest pattern was that respondents who used the supports often found them helpful, while many others reported limited awareness, limited use, or no use at all.

Awareness and utilization of the Technical Assistance Center were limited across respondent groups. Among LEA administrators, 13 of 25 respondents, or 52%, reported that they did not at all utilize the TAC. Another 20% reported using it only a little or very little. Facility school administrators reported similarly limited use: 31.8% reported no use, and 50% reported using the TAC only a little or very little. Facility school teachers reported the lowest utilization, with 71.4% indicating that they did not interact with or benefit from the TAC at all.

However, utilization data should be interpreted alongside stakeholder feedback. Respondents who were aware of and accessed TAC resources generally described them as high quality and useful. LEA administrators reported using TAC trainings, resources, and direct outreach to obtain additional information or connect with other professionals. Rural administrators especially recognized the TAC as a resource designed to support their needs. This suggests that the TAC is functioning as intended for some users, but its overall reach remains limited.

The Shared Operational Services model showed a similar pattern. The shared purchasing process produced cost savings for some schools that used it, but overall participation was limited. Among facility school administrators, 10 respondents, or 41.7%**,** reported that they had not used the shared purchasing process at all. Another 25% reported using it only a little or very little. Only 3 respondents**,** or 12.5%, reported using it much, quite a bit, or to a great extent. This indicates that the model has demonstrated value for participating schools but has not yet been widely adopted.

Awareness and use of the Interagency Resource Guide were also limited. Among facility school administrators, 37.5% reported that the guide did not improve capacity or services at all, while 45.8% reported that it helped somewhat. Among LEA administrators, 58.3% reported that the guide did not improve capacity or services in their district or region at all, and only 4.2% reported that it helped much or quite a bit. Qualitative feedback indicated that many respondents were unaware of the guide or had not used it, while those who did use it described it as helpful for understanding available supports and identifying possible service matches.

Overall, the results suggest that awareness and utilization are central implementation challenges. The supports created through S.B. 23-219 appear to have value when accessed, but many intended users have not yet incorporated them into regular practice. Continued implementation should prioritize clearer communication, repeated outreach, onboarding support, and role clarification so that facility schools, LEAs, administrative units, teachers, and families understand what resources are available and how to use them. Future monitoring should track not only whether supports exist, but whether they are known, accessed, and used consistently across regions and stakeholder groups.

Rural/Front Range differences

The evaluation found clear differences in how S.B. 23-219 implementation was experienced by rural and Front Range stakeholders. Facility school placements remain heavily concentrated in Front Range counties, while rural, mountain, and geographically distant administrative units reported more persistent barriers related to distance, transportation, and local availability of appropriate placements. In 2024, six mostly Front Range counties accounted for 660 of 813 enrolled students, or approximately 81% of statewide facility school enrollment. These included Arapahoe **(**205**)**, Adams (132), Denver (104), Jefferson (92), El Paso (72), and Douglas (55**)**. In contrast, many rural counties reported only one or a few placements, and several counties reported no facility school placements in one or more years. This pattern suggests that students in or near major population centers have more direct access to facility school services, while students in rural areas may face fewer local options.

Stakeholder feedback reinforced this geographic divide. LEA administrators from rural and mountain-rural areas described difficulty finding placements that were close enough to be practical for students and families. Some reported that available facility schools were more than one and a half hours away, limiting the usefulness of new or expanded seats. These findings suggest that statewide increases in facility school availability may not have the same practical effect in all regions.

The Technical Assistance Center appeared to be one area where rural stakeholders saw a more direct benefit. LEA administrators noted that the TAC was designed in part to support rural schools and described its trainings, resources, and staff support positively. The report also notes that rural leaders viewed the TAC as targeted to their needs, while some Front Range stakeholders understood that the TAC's initial emphasis was more focused on rural districts. At the same time, Front Range districts and facility schools faced different challenges. Because more facility schools and specialized programs are located in metro areas, Front Range stakeholders generally had more nearby options. However, they still reported barriers related to service fit, capacity, staffing, and whether available programs matched the needs identified by students' IEP teams. In other words, Front Range access was stronger geographically, but not always sufficient programmatically.

Overall, the results suggest that rural and Front Range communities face different access problems. Rural areas are more likely to experience barriers related to distance, transportation, and limited local availability, while Front Range areas may have more nearby placements but still face capacity and service-alignment challenges. Future implementation should therefore distinguish between statewide capacity**,** regional availability**,** and usable access for students and families across different parts of Colorado.

Capacity and staffing constraints

The evaluation found that capacity and staffing remain significant constraints on the facility school system, even where S.B. 23-219 implementation appears to have supported improved funding stability, new classrooms, or expanded services. Facility school administrators reported that increased funding helped some programs build new schools, open additional classrooms, and retain or hire teachers and staff. They also indicated that the new baseline funding model made budgeting more predictable and made investment in growth more feasible.

However, these improvements did not consistently translate into increased student enrollment. In one survey item, 33.3% of facility school administrators reported that the combined S.B. 23-219 recommendations did not at all allow them to increase the number of students served, while another 8.3% reported only a little or very little increase. In the same set of responses, 29.2% reported somewhat increased capacity, 16.7% reported much or quite a bit, and 12.5% reported growth to a great extent. These results suggest that some schools experienced meaningful expansion, while others continued to face barriers that limited growth.

LEA administrators reported more limited evidence of expanded usable capacity. When asked whether the combined recommendations increased the number of students served in the facility schools they access, 38.5% reported "not at all," and 23.1% reported "a little/very little." Only 15.3% reported "much/quite a bit" or "to a great extent." Similarly, when asked whether the recommendations increased the number of facility schools available in their area, 61.5% of LEA administrators reported "not at all."

Qualitative findings help explain these mixed results. Facility school administrators noted that many programs remain at capacity and that additional supports improved the quality or stability of services without necessarily increasing the number of students served. Respondents identified licensing limits, bed availability, classroom space, and teacher-to-student staffing requirements as key constraints. As one summary noted, "there are only so many beds at each center for licensing reasons" and "you can only have so many students with so many teachers and so many beds."

The Shared Operational Services needs assessment also identified several capacity-related needs beyond general purchasing. The assessment, which reached nearly all Colorado facility schools and had a response rate just under 75%**,** identified staffing, transportation, technology/IT, clinical and para-clinical services, training, and infrastructure maintenance as major needs. Respondents specifically described unmet needs for occupational therapy, speech-language services, school psychology, Medicaid support, behavioral services, software, security, and technology upgrades.

Overall, the results suggest that S.B. 23-219 may have helped stabilize parts of the facility school system, but capacity remains limited by the interaction of funding, staffing, licensing, physical space, transportation, and service specialization. Future monitoring should distinguish between increases in approved schools, increases in funded capacity, and increases in actual usable seats for students. Additional data on staffing vacancies, waitlists, denied referrals, bed availability, classroom capacity, and service-specific shortages would help determine where capacity constraints are most limiting access.

Limitations

This evaluation should be interpreted as an early assessment of S.B. 23-219 implementation rather than a final determination of long-term impact. Several recommendations were newly implemented or are still developing during the evaluation period, which limited the amount of post-implementation data available. In particular, only limited post-bill enrollment and capacity data were available, making it difficult to draw strong conclusions about causal effects.

The evaluation also relied on available administrative records, survey responses, focus groups, and stakeholder feedback. These sources provided important insight into implementation and user experience, but they may not fully represent all facility schools, administrative units,

families, or students across the state. Some findings, especially those related to awareness, utilization, and perceived effectiveness, are based on respondent perceptions and should be interpreted alongside administrative data.

Finally, several key indicators were not consistently available across data sources, including waitlists, denied referrals, staffing vacancies, program-level capacity, transportation barriers, and time from application to approval. Future evaluation would benefit from more consistent statewide data collection in these areas to better assess access, service match, and long-term system outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, the Facility Schools Workgroup and state partners should continue implementation of S.B. 23-219 with an emphasis on expanding usable access, increasing awareness of available supports, and improving data collection needed to monitor long-term impact.

First, the state should continue supporting and refining the Technical Assistance Center. Stakeholders who accessed TAC resources generally described them as useful and high quality, but overall awareness and utilization remained limited. The TAC should continue prioritizing rural and remote districts while also clarifying its role for Front Range districts, facility school administrators, and teachers. Future TAC efforts should include more direct outreach, clearer communication about available services, additional in-person training opportunities, and more advanced training options for districts and facility schools that have already implemented foundational strategies.

Second, implementation efforts should distinguish between statewide capacity and usable regional access. Although the number of active facility schools increased after S.B. 23-219, placements remain concentrated in Front Range counties, and rural stakeholders continue to report barriers related to distance, transportation, and limited local options. Future planning should focus not only on increasing the number of approved facility schools, but also on whether students and their families can access appropriate services close enough to home for placements to be practical.

Third, the Workgroup should continue efforts to expand the continuum of facility school options. Enrollment trends suggest continued demand for specialized services, especially for younger students, students with autism spectrum disorder, students with multiple disabilities, and students requiring day treatment or specialized day school placements. Future expansion efforts should consider gaps by region, age group, disability category, and service model so that new or expanded programs address documented areas of need and provide a full range of service options to allow the flexibility to meet the services recommended by the IEP teams of more students.

Fourth, the application, licensure, and approval process should be further clarified and documented. The available data show early signs of stabilization in the number of active facility schools, but there is limited direct evidence about how the approval process changed or whether applicants experienced it as clearer or more efficient. The Workgroup should document process revisions, provide clear guidance to prospective providers, track applications and approval timelines, and gather feedback from organizations that complete or consider the approval process.

Fifth, the state should continue addressing capacity and staffing constraints. Facility school administrators reported that growth remains limited by staffing, licensing requirements,

available beds, classroom space, and service-specific shortages. Future supports should include strategies for recruitment and retention, shared access to specialized personnel, infrastructure planning, and targeted support for high-need service areas such as behavioral services, occupational therapy, speech-language services, school psychology, and Medicaid-related support.

Sixth, the state should improve awareness and utilization of newly created resources, including the TAC, Shared Operational Services, and the Interagency Resource Guide. These supports appear useful to stakeholders who use them, but many intended users reported limited awareness or no use. Continued implementation should include repeated communication, onboarding materials, examples of use, and integration of these resources into routine facility school, district, and administrative unit planning processes.

Finally, future evaluation should include more consistent statewide data on waitlists, denied referrals, available seats, staffing vacancies, transportation barriers, homebound placements, out-of-state placements, and application-to-approval timelines**.** These data would allow future reports to better determine whether S.B. 23-219 is improving access, reducing unmet need, and strengthening the long-term capacity of Colorado's facility school system.

Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation found that S.B. 23-219 has supported early progress toward stabilizing and strengthening Colorado's facility school system. The number of active facility schools and total enrollment increased modestly, the new funding model improved predictability, and new supports such as the Technical Assistance Center, Shared Operational Services, and Interagency Resource Guide show promise.

At the same time, the impact of these efforts remains uneven. Geographic access, staffing, capacity, transportation, service alignment, and limited awareness or use of new resources continue to affect whether students can access appropriate placements. Because several implementation activities are still new, these findings should be viewed as preliminary. Continued monitoring, improved data collection, and targeted implementation support will be important to determine whether the early gains from S.B. 23-219 lead to sustained improvements in access, quality, and capacity for students with exceptionally severe and specialized needs.

Appendices

Appendix A

Student Enrollment by County, 2021–2024

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Adams	86	117	118	132
Alamosa	4	1	-	1
Arapahoe	173	162	187	205
Bent	-	-	-	1
Boulder	37	29	29	23
Charter School Institute	-	-	-	1
Cheyenne	-	-	1	-
Clear Creek	1	1	2	4
Colorado BOCS	-	1	6	5
Costilla	1	-	-	-
Custer	-	-	1	-
Delta	4	3	6	3
Denver	127	110	94	104
Douglas	46	46	50	55
Eagle	1	-	1	2
El Paso	71	79	101	72
Elbert	2	3	6	2
Fremont	8	9	9	11
Garfield	4	3	3	1
Gilpin	1	1	1	1
Grand	2	-	-	-
Gunnison	-	-	1	-

Huerfano	1	1	-	-
Jefferson	85	90	77	92
Kit Carson	-	1	-	1
La Plata	-	-	1	1
Larimer	16	19	15	-
Las Animas	1	1	-	-
Lincoln	1	1	1	-
Logan	5	2	5	1
Mesa	11	12	12	-
Moffat	-	-	1	2
Montezuma	-	1	-	-
Montrose	1	1	1	2
Morgan	1	4	4	2
Otero	1	-	1	-
Park	3	4	2	2
Phillips	-	-	-	1
Pikes	-	-	-	1
Pitkin	1	-	-	-
Plateau	-	-	-	1
Platte	-	-	-	2
Poudre	-	-	-	5
Prowers	2	1	2	3
Pueblo	16	21	6	17
Rio Blanco	-	-	-	6
Rio Grande	1	2	-	-
Routt	1	2	2	-

Saguache	1	-	1	-
Sedgwick	-	-	-	1
South	-	-	-	1
Summit	1	1	3	1
Teller	3	3	2	-
Thompson	-	-	-	8
Valley	-	-	-	2
Weld	25	25	38	28
Wiggens	-	-	-	1
Wiley	-	-	-	1
Woodland	-	-	-	1
Yuma	1	-	-	1
Out-of-State	33	12	6	6
Total	782	769	796	813

Appendix B

School-Level Enrollment, 2021–2024

School Name	Address	2021	2022	2023	2024
Austin Centers for Exceptional Students (ACES)	10255 W. 104th Dr., Westminster, CO 80021	-	-	-	47
Balanced Rock Community School (Hilltop)	1105 B Colorado Ave., Grand Junction, CO 81501	5	6	10	7
Bansbach Academy (Denver Children's Home)	1501 Albion St., Denver, CO 80220	43	38	35	27
Community Reach Center	11285 Highline Dr., Northglenn, CO 80233	14	17	19	17
Denver Health Medical Center	723 Delaware St., Pavilion M, Denver, CO 80204	19	8	13	5
Devereux Cleo Wallace	8405 W. 100th Ave., Westminster, CO 80021	21	25	0	-
Elevation Ability Services	14415 E. Smoky Hill Rd., Aurora, CO 80015	10	12	12	13
Handprints Academy	3333 S. Wadsworth Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80227	-	-	-	-
Havern Autism Program	4000 Wadsworth Blvd., Littleton, CO 80123	-	-	-	-
J. Wilkins Opportunity School (Griffith Centers)	17 Farragut Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80909	28	29	25	15

Jefferson Hills – Lakewood	10100 W. Belleview Ave., Littleton, CO 80127	20	17	14	-
Joan Farley Academy (Third Way Center)	50 W. 5th Ave., Denver, CO 80204	40	31	41	33
Joan Farley Academy Lowry (Third Way Center)	9100 E. Lowry Blvd., Denver, CO 80230	31	29	31	26
Joshua Early Childhood Center	5760 E. Otero Ave., Centennial, CO 80112	—	—	12	22
Joshua School – Boulder	7077 Harvest Rd., Boulder, CO 80301	18	19	18	18
Joshua School – Englewood	2303 E. Dartmouth Ave., Englewood, CO 80113	46	49	43	40
Laradon Hall	5100 Lincoln St., Denver, CO 80216	58	51	56	56
Learning Zone (Real Life Colorado)	4000 Wadsworth Blvd., Ste. 010, Littleton	-	-	10	12
Monarch Academy	12201 S. Parker Rd., Parker, CO 80134	-	-	-	-
Morgridge Academy at National Jewish Health	1400 Jackson St., Denver, CO 80206	58	51	59	53
Mount Saint Vincent's Home	4159 Lowell Blvd., Denver, CO 80211	7	20	19	29
North Greeley Academy (Alt. Homes for Youth)	1110 M St., Greeley, CO 80631	9	8	8	8

PRN for Families	11949 W. Colfax Ave., Lakewood, CO 80215	-	-	-	-
Phoenix Academy (Southern Peaks)	700 Four Mile Parkway, Canon City, CO 81212	50	44	48	51
Poplar Way Academy (Highlands Behavioral Health)	8565 Poplar Way, Littleton, CO 80130	22	13	25	10
Rite of Passage Morrison Home	5924 US 285, Morrison, CO 80465	4	4	2	7
Rocky Mountain Leadership School	8810 Highway 103, Idaho Springs, CO 80452	-	-	-	0
Roundup Fellowship School (RiseUP Academy)	2121 E. LaSalle St., Ste. 100, Colo. Springs	22	28	34	33
Serenity Education & Day Treatment Center	3400 S. Fairplay Way, Aurora, CO 80014	66	76	70	95
Shiloh House – Adams	Address not available (temporarily closed)	-	-	-	-
Shiloh House – Family Resource Pavilion	9700 E. Easter Lane, Centennial, CO 80112	6	7	11	6
Shiloh House – Littleton	6400 Coal Mine Ave., Littleton, CO 80123	23	19	12	20
Shiloh House – Longmont	2700 E. Ken Pratt Blvd., Longmont, CO 80504	10	9	9	7

Skyline Academy (Wellpower / MHCD)	3401 Eudora St., Denver, CO 80207	11	13	13	11
Southgate School (Cedar Springs)	2135 Southgate Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80906	50	32	41	24
Spectra Centers, Inc.	7205 W. 120th Ave., Broomfield, CO 80020	43	43	45	50
StarBound Academy	18757 E. Hampden Ave., Ste. 162, Aurora	2	4	0	-
Sunlight Academy (Centennial Peaks)	2255 S. 88th St., Louisville, CO 80027	-	23	13	12
TACT (Teaching Autism Community Trades)	2960 S. Umatilla St., Englewood, CO 80110	-	-	-	9
Tennyson Center for Children	2950 Tennyson St., Denver, CO 80212	33	44	48	50
Turning Point – Waverly	7031 County Road 15, Waverly, CO 80621	7	-	-	-
Valley View Youth Recovery Center	1906 Blake Ave., Glenwood Springs, CO 81601	6	-	-	-
TOTAL		782	769	796	813