



Introduction to CACSA

2019

Mission

This mission of the Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA) is to promote and support best practices in charter school authorizing and to help all Colorado charter school authorizers develop, adopt, and implement practices that improve results for all students.

Vision

The vision of CACSA is that all charter school authorizers will have the tools needed to implement best practices to ensure the charter schools they oversee are of high-quality; effectively serve all students; operate with appropriate autonomy, governance and oversight; and are accountable for academic results, finances, and operations.

About CACSA

CACSA is a Colorado non-profit organization operating as a membership association, dedicated to helping all Colorado authorizers improve their practices.

- CACSA assists authorizers in adopting best practices that align with Colorado's policies and culture of local control.
- CACSA members include the professionals that work directly on the task of authorizing charter schools both within school districts and the Colorado Charter School Institute.
- Current CACSA members oversee about two-thirds of Colorado's charter schools and the organization is open to all authorizers.

Value Statement

CACSA supports authorizers through various strategies, including networking meetings, model materials, personalized support, peer-to-peer connections, and serving as a voice for quality authorizing. With CACSA support, authorizers are better able to:

- Determine the quality and viability of charter applicants;
- Create effective performance management systems that allow them to track the quality, performance, and appropriate operation of charter schools;
- Support equitable access and appropriate services for all students; and
- Make sustainable high-stakes decisions about the charter schools they oversee that are in the best interest of students and their community

CACSA History

1. In 2015, launched as informal network of authorizers supporting each other and discussing what it means to be a “quality charter school authorizer
2. Originally supported by Donnell Kay Foundation and CSI.
3. In 2018, CSI helped CACSA and similar state associations in California and Florida win a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Charter School Program (CSP). CACSA incorporated as a Colorado Non-Profit.
4. In 2019, grant funded the Tri-State Alliance to Improve District-Led Charter Authorizing, which supports a three-year, \$2.6 million project that will support CACSA’s programs through 2021. This project provides about \$250,000 to support work by CACSA in each year of the grant.

Part of Federally-Funded Project: Tri-State Alliance To Improve District-Led Charter Authorizing

A Project of the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), in partnership with:

1. The California Charter Authorizing Professionals (CCAP)
2. The Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA)
3. The Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA)

Tri-State Alliance Overview

Source: Federal Charter Schools Program (CSP)

Recipient: The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) is grant recipient and fiscal agent

Grant Period: Three-Year

Total Funding: \$2,669,053

Primary Partnership: State-Based Authorizing Associations:

- CCAP
- CACSA
- FACSA

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Project Goals

1

Strengthen authorizing in states with district authorizers

2

Improve access, services, and outcomes for students with disabilities and English Learners

3

Engage and provide support to more authorizers in CA, CO, and FL

4

Support states outside the Tri-State Alliance

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CACSA work is informed by eight Organizing Principles

1. Professional community working to improve
2. Support quality authorizing
3. Support state-adopted authorizing standards
4. Invites all Colorado authorizers
5. Merit-based decisions that serve student interests
6. Oriented toward larger school systems and community interests
7. Charters require autonomy and accountability
8. CACSA serves as a voice for quality authorizing

1. Professional community working to improve

All authorizers are invited to join the professional community dedicated to the continual improvement of authorizing practice and charter school performance. The professional community accepts the shared challenge to improve in the practice of authorizing.

2. Support quality authorizing

Members of the association seek to increase capacity for quality authorizing. Support will be provided to continuously improve the charter school sector by sharing lessons, model materials, strong practices, and by defining roles and responsibilities of those involved in authorizing.

3. Support state-adopted authorizing standards

Members will develop, articulate, and document what it means to conduct quality authorizing. These practices are reflected in Colorado Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing as adopted by the State Board of Education.

4. Invites all Colorado authorizers

The effort welcomes all professionals. The Association recognizes people have different attitudes toward charters and come from districts that have different histories and approaches to chartering.

5. Merit-based decisions that serve student interests

It is the belief of the Association that professional authorizing should lead to merit-based decisions that uphold the best interests of students. Ideally, when quality authorizers make such decisions, their actions should prevail during appeals or other challenges.

6. Oriented toward larger school systems and community interests

The Association believes in improving results for all of public education. This includes charter and traditional public schools, as well as students of all backgrounds and characteristics. Authorizing, like the charter sector, should reflect community and student needs.

7. Charters require autonomy and accountability

The Association believes charter schools require both autonomy and accountability – to include outcomes in student performance, operations, governance, and finance.

8. CACSA serves as a voice for quality authorizing

The Association will provide a voice for authorizing professionals to communicate on behalf of these goals.

The CACSA Board of Directors

CACSA is governed by a seven-member board that includes staff from school districts and CSI that are directly engaged in authorizing activity.

- Terry Croy Lewis, Executive Director, Charter School Institute, Chair
- Tom McMillen, Community Superintendent-Charter Schools, Jefferson County Public Schools, Vice Chair
- Andy Franko, iConnect Zone Superintendent, District 49, Treasurer,
- Tom Weston, Charter School Liaison, Academy 20, Colorado Springs School District 11, and Pueblo 60, Secretary
- MacKenzie Khan, Director of Charter Schools, Aurora Public Schools
- Amelia Meunier, Charter School Liaison, Adams 12 School District
- Daniel Winsor, Director of Schools/Choice Programming, Douglas County School District

CACSA Staff

Alex Medler, Ph.D.

State Director (and National Coordinator of the Tri-State Alliance)

Lisa Jarvi, Program Assistant

Authorizer Members

1. Academy 20
2. Adams 12 School District
3. Archuleta School District 50
4. Aurora Public Schools
5. Charter School Institute
6. Denver Public Schools
7. District 11 Colorado Springs
8. District 49
9. Douglas County School District
10. Harrison School District
11. Jefferson County Public Schools
12. Pueblo 60

Resources

1. Website: coauthorizers.org
2. Groupsite Online Community
3. Quarterly Meetings with CDE
4. Model Materials
5. Specialized Workshops

Disclaimer

CACSA does not take positions on the decisions of authorizers. CACSA is an independent non-profit Colorado organization, governed by a board comprised of professional leaders who oversee charter authorizing activity for Colorado authorizers. It is independently governed and operated and not a part of, or affiliated with, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Charter School Institute, the Colorado League of Charter Schools or any other Colorado or national organization.

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