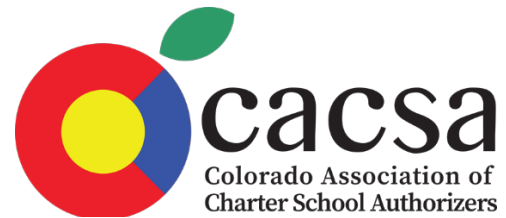


April 27, 2020



## Needs inventory data on charter schools in Colorado shows some charter schools coping better than others

The Schools of Choice (SOC) unit at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) recently released data from the district, BOCES, approved facility schools, and charter school needs inventory related to the COVID-19 emergency. The survey was conducted by the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) and CDE and was open from March 27<sup>th</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup>. The survey included almost all of Colorado's charter schools. Because the respondents included networks reporting for multiple schools, 250 charter schools were represented by 178 survey responses.

CACSA was able to review the survey data with the SOC unit. The following analysis focuses on results from the survey that may be helpful to authorizers following-up with their schools. The findings highlight the importance of listening to each school about the specific challenges they face. Examining each school's needs can help authorizers customize their support in order to become better partners during this challenging time.

In general, the charter school responses were similar to responses from districts and BOCES. The attached deck from the SOC unit at CDE provides an analysis of charter schools that parallels the analysis that CEI released for district-operated schools. You can read the report from CEI for district-operated schools [here](#), and view a summary on CDE's website [here](#).

When the analysis explores the numbers of schools reporting particular challenges, despite averages that reflect a relatively high degrees of success, a substantial number of charter schools are facing more dramatic challenges. Authorizers will want to explore these issues and work with the schools they oversee to address local challenges.

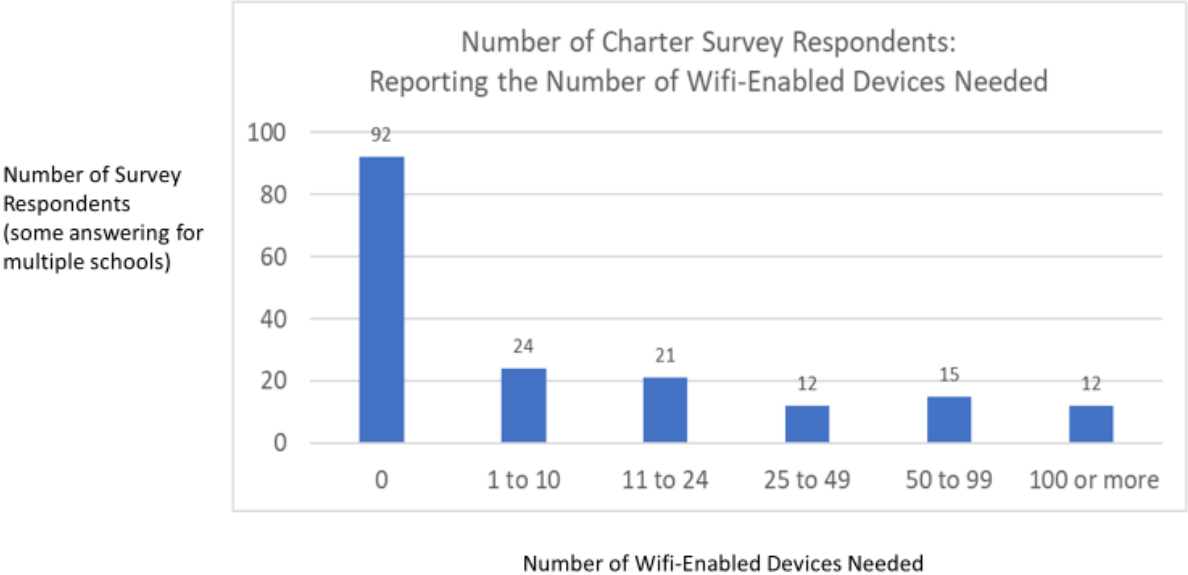
On average, charter schools ranking the four most urgent educational supports listed the following:

- Student emotional support (49.1%);
- Family Engagement practices (40.5%);
- On-line instructional support for teachers (40.5%); and
- Support for HR practices (hiring) for next year (29.4%).

Charter schools reported that 4,360 students needed Wi-Fi enabled devices and that 5,316 students lacked internet access. These totals reflect roughly similar proportions of students as reported for traditional public schools if we compare them on a per-student basis. However, not all schools have the same challenge with these issues. And the presence of outliers indicates that some schools need much more help with devices and access.

Figure 1. presents the number of charter schools that reported a number of students needing a Wi-Fi enabled device combined within ranges. At both extremes, 92 respondents reported zero students needed devices, while 12 respondents reported that 100 or more students needed them. Fifteen respondents reported that between 50 and 99 students needed devices. It is worth noting that this includes totals for respondents reporting on a network of multiple schools.

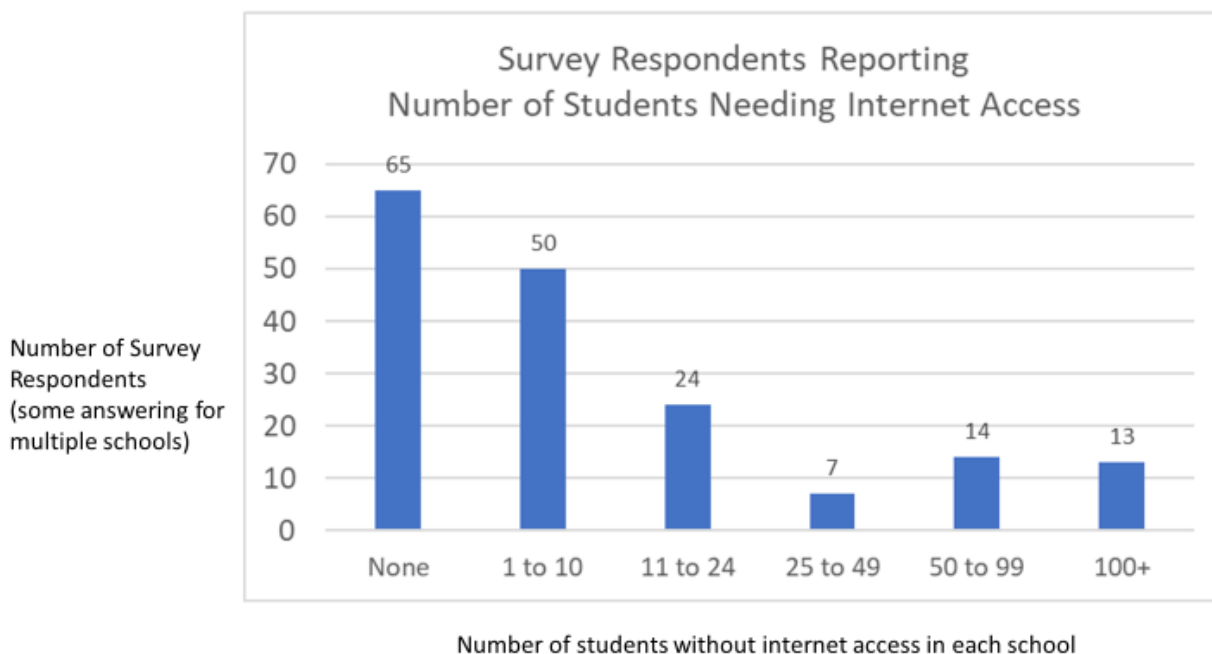
**Figure 1. Number of Respondents Reporting Numbers of Students Needing Devices**



Source: CEI/CDE Needs Assessment Survey

There was a similar distribution of schools reporting the number of families that lacked access to the internet. Figure 2. presents the number of survey respondents needing internet access within ranges. Sixty-five survey respondents reported having no families with problems with internet access. Thirteen respondents had more than 100 families without internet access, and another 14 respondents reported between 50 and 99 families without access.

**Figure 2. Schools reporting students with challenges with internet access**



Source: CEI/CDE Needs Assessment Survey

The data from Figures 1 and 2 indicate the importance of contacting all charter schools and working with individual schools on the challenges they face. In these circumstances, average or total numbers of respondents reporting a problem mask important challenges that individual schools face. This also helps authorizers and others understand that even when many schools report that something is not a problem for them, there are likely to be a significant number of schools still struggling with that same problem.

There were also differences in how well schools felt prepared to serve various student populations. The charter schools and district-operated schools show similar patterns in the sense that the schools feel prepared for different populations. For example, when rating preparedness on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = least prepared, and 5 = most prepared, the district answers indicated that serving students with special needs averaged 2.5, while charters rated themselves as a 3.2 on this measure.

This same data allows us to identify the number of survey respondents that feel the least prepared for these same populations. Figure 3. presents the number of survey respondents that used a 1 or 2 to indicate their relative sense of their preparedness to serve each population. These schools report that they feel less prepared to serve this population than other populations during distance learning, and many respondents indicating a 1 or 2 are likely to feel unprepared to serve these populations well during the crisis.

**Figure 3. Charter Respondents Reporting a “1” or “2” on questions about their preparedness to serve student populations, from a scale of 1-5, with 1 = least prepared.**

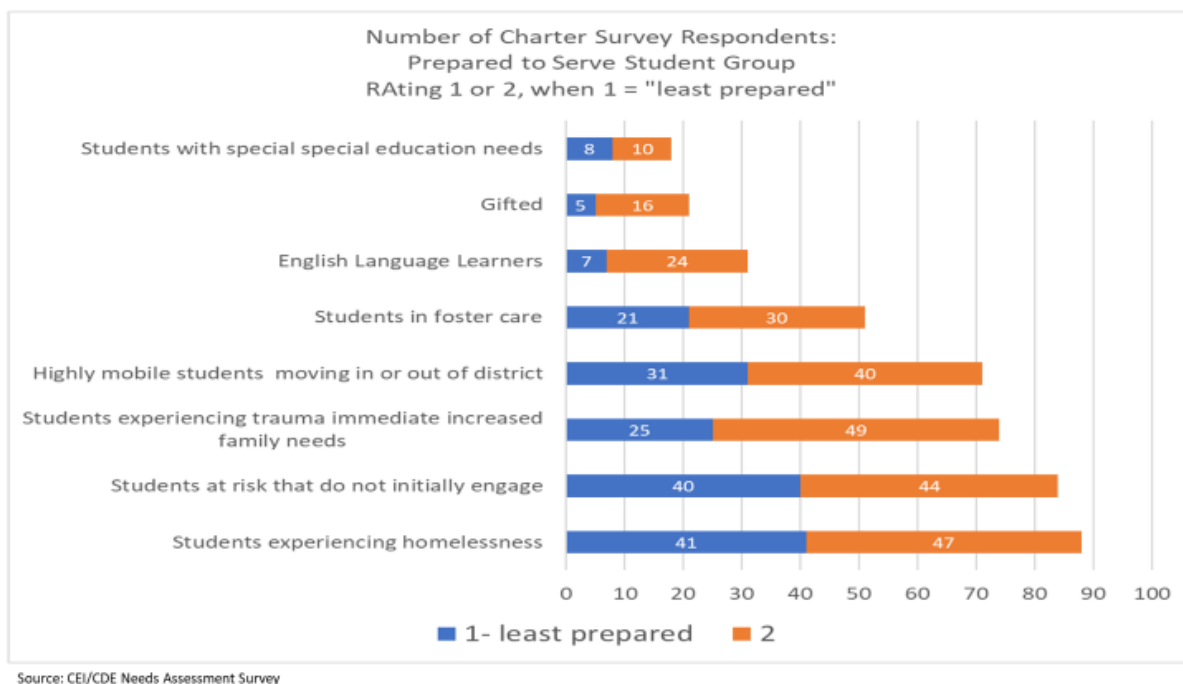


Figure 3 shows that 88 respondents felt the least prepared to serve students experiencing homelessness, 84 were least prepared for at-risk students that did not initially engage, 74 were the least prepared to serve students experiencing trauma from immediate increased family needs, and 71 respondents were challenged by highly mobile students.

The numbers of schools reporting challenges serving with students with special education needs, English Learners, and Gifted students, were lower than for the populations of homeless, unengaged, those experiencing trauma, and the highly mobile. Eighteen respondents report feeling the least prepared for serving students with disabilities, 21 the least prepared for gifted students, and 31 feeling the least prepared to serve English language learners.

The answers in Figure 3 reinforce the importance of differentiating among charter schools and the need for authorizers to work with the schools they oversee to determine if they are facing unique challenges. Charter schools may need assistance with any of the above challenges or others that were not included in the survey. This data should not be confused with information used to hold charter schools accountable. Colorado authorizers report regular communication with the schools they oversee. The above analysis should serve as a reminder to continue to reach out and to talk candidly with school leaders to identify their needs.