

The Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) is committed to fostering high-quality charter schools. We understand charter schools and advocate for their success. We offer support, flexibility, and transparent accountability to ensure our schools are in the best position possible to serve their students.

CSI provides its schools clear expectations for academic, organizational, and financial performance and allows schools the freedom to choose how best to achieve those expectations.

How are CSI schools held accountable?

The CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS) is used to evaluate and accredit CSI schools annually based on academic, organizational, and financial performance. CARS builds off of the academic expectations in the state’s accountability system by adding additional academic indicators and including measures of financial and organizational performance. This evaluation:

- 1) Adds to the body of evidence that is used to make authorization decisions;
- 2) Determines the school accreditation rating that is primarily used to inform authorization pathways; &
- 3) Determines the level of support/intervention to provide to the school.

What does CSI use to determine school performance?

The CSI Performance Framework provides the basis for the CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS). The Performance Framework explicitly defines the measures by which CSI holds schools accountable with regards to academic, organizational, and financial performance. These are the measures in the CSI Performance Framework:

Academic	Financial	Organizational
⇒ Achievement	⇒ Near Term	⇒ Education Program
⇒ Growth	⇒ Sustainability	⇒ Diversity, Equity of Access, & Inclusion
⇒ Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness		⇒ Governance and Financial Management
		⇒ School Operations & Environment

To determine school accreditation ratings, CSI establishes a base rating based on academics and, if the school has demonstrated financial compliance and organizational compliance, the school keeps their base rating. If not, the base rating is lowered. Below are the accreditation ratings available to CSI schools (from lowest to highest):



What is the CSI Performance Framework?

The CSI Performance Framework provides the basis for the CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS). The Performance Framework explicitly defines the measures by which CSI holds schools accountable to establish expectations, guide practice, assess progress, and inform decision making. In each of the three areas of performance—academic, financial, and organizational—the frameworks ask a fundamental question: **how did the school perform last year?** The following provide the complete Academic, Financial, and Organizational Performance Frameworks:

Academic Performance Framework

1. Academic Achievement

- a. How are students achieving on state assessments?
- b. How are students achieving on state assessments over time?
- c. How are students achieving on state assessments in comparison to other schools in their geographic home district or schools that students might otherwise attend?
- d. Have students demonstrated readiness for the next grade level/course and, ultimately, are they on track for college and careers?
- e. How are students achieving in comparison to similar schools statewide?

2. Academic Growth

- a. Are students making sufficient growth on state assessments?
- b. Are students making sufficient growth on state assessments over time?
- c. How are students growing on state assessments in comparison to other schools in their geographic home district or schools that students might otherwise attend?
- d. How is student growth distributed across growth levels?
- e. How are students growing in comparison to similar schools statewide?

3. Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

- a. How are students achieving on state assessments for postsecondary readiness?
- b. Are students graduating high school?
- c. Are students dropping out of high school?
- d. Are high school students adequately prepared for postsecondary academic success?
- e. What is the school's post-completion success rate?

Financial Performance Framework

1. Near Term

- a. Has the school met the statutory TABOR emergency reserve requirement?
- b. What is the school's current ratio?
- c. What is the school's days of cash on hand?
- d. Is the school in default with any financial covenants they have with loan agreements?
- e. What is the school's funded pupil count variance?

2. Sustainability

- a. What is the school's aggregate 3-year total margin?
- b. What is the school's net asset position?
- c. What is the school's debt?
- d. What is the school's cash flow?

Organizational Performance Framework

1. Education Program

- a. Is the school complying with applicable education requirements?

2. Diversity, Equity of Access, and Inclusion

- a. Is the school protecting the rights of all students?

3. Governance and Financial Management

- a. Is the school complying with governance requirements?
- b. Is the school satisfying financial reporting and compliance requirements?

4. School Operations and Environment

- a. Is the school complying with health and safety requirements?
- b. Is the school complying with facilities and transportation requirements?
- c. Is the school complying with employee credentialing and background check requirements?

5. Additional Obligations

- a. Is the school complying with all other obligations?

Tiered Supports

All schools within the Colorado Charter School Institute portfolio have access to academic, financial, and organizational tiered supports and interventions.

Standard Supports and Interventions

Regardless of performance, all schools receive support, technical assistance and access to resources from CSI staff.



Academic

- ◆ Interim assessment analysis
- ◆ Data interpretation assistance
- ◆ CSI Annual Review of Schools (CARS) Report Review
- ◆ Target setting assistance



Financial

- ◆ Financial Transparency Act review
- ◆ Quarterly report review
- ◆ Webinar trainings
- ◆ Annual audit review



Organizational

- ◆ Resource documents
- ◆ Trainings
- ◆ Submission review and feedback

Tiered Supports and Interventions

Schools that are lower performing across one or more areas have access to, and are many times required to, receive additional supports or interventions.



Academic

Lower performance on one or more measures within the Academic Performance Framework could include:

- ◆ Interim analysis submission and review
- ◆ Increased UIP support
- ◆ Earlier UIP deadline



Financial

Risk in near-term indicators or a negative unassigned fund balance could include:

- ◆ Monthly financial statement submissions
- ◆ Check-ins with CSI
- ◆ Attendance at a CSI Board Finance Committee meeting



Organizational

Noncompliance could include:

- ◆ CSI review of policies and procedures
- ◆ Attendance at a CSI Board Meeting
- ◆ Mandatory trainings
- ◆ Site visits from CSI staff and board members



CARS Report Financial Performance Metrics

This page covers all financial metrics and cut points available in the CARS report. In your CARS report, Does Not Meet Value = Red, Approaching Value = Yellow, Meets Value = Green, and Exceeds Value = Blue.

Fund Type: Governmental

Financial Indicator	Does Not Meet Value	Approaching Value	Meets Value	Exceeds Value	Measure Notes
Operating Margin	Less Than or Equal to -3%	Between -2.9% and -0.1%	Between 0% and 2.9%	Greater Than or Equal to 3%	Demonstrates whether a school spent more than they brought in during a fiscal year.
Months of Cash on Hand	Less than or equal to 1	Between 1.1 and 1.9	Between 2 and 2.9	Greater than or equal to 3	Critical to ensure liquid assets are sufficient to meet current obligations. Schools with less than 2 months of cash on hand may have difficulty making facility and payroll expenses if/when receipts are delayed or less than expected.
Months of Unassigned Fund Balance on Hand	Less than or equal to 0.6	Between 0.7 and 0.9	Between 1 and 1.4	1.5	Unassigned fund balance ensures that the school can weather unexpected expenses or decreased revenues with little to no operational impact. The higher the fund balance, the more insulated the operations (teacher pay, rent, instructional supplies) are from unexpected negative events.
Positive Unassigned Fund Balance (TABOR)	NO	N/A	YES	N/A	Unassigned fund balance is equal to total fund balance less restrictions imposed by state law, board policy, lenders, authorizers, or assigned for specific use by staff. If this indicator is negative, it signals that the school does not have an adequate fund balance to comply with law, policy, or other regulations.

Financial Performance

Fund Type: Proprietary

Financial Indicator	Does Not Meet Value	Approaching Value	Meets Value	Exceeds Value	Measure Notes
Current Ratio (CURRENT ASSETS / CURRENT LIABILITIES)	0	Between 0.1 and 0.9	1	1.5	Demonstrates whether current assets (cash on hand, liquid investments, receivables) are sufficient to cover current liabilities (disbursements due within the fiscal year). This is an important indicator of financial health. If assets are less than liabilities, the school is at risk for being unable to meet current obligations such as rent and payroll.
Debt to Asset Ratio (TOTAL DEBT / TOTAL ASSETS)	greater than or equal to 2	between 1.5 and 1	Between 0.5 and 0.9	Less than 0.5	Demonstrates whether a school's debt is higher than the school's assets. If a school has a debt to asset ratio of 1, then the school has the same amount of debt as they do assets. If a school has a debt to asset ratio of 0.5, then the school's debt is 50% (or half) of the school's assets. A debt to asset ratio of 2 signals that the school's debt is twice as high as the value of their assets. This signals a weak financial position because the school owes significantly more than it owns, and likely has high debt service requirements, or a balloon payment in the future.
Change in Net Position	less than 0	N/A	0	greater than 0	Demonstrates whether a school's net position (assets less liabilities) increased or decreased. A decrease in net position is an indicator that liabilities increased faster than assets, signaling a potential weakening in the school's financial position.

Financial Performance

Fund Type: Government-wide

Financial Indicator	Does Not Meet Value	Approaching Value	Meets Value	Exceeds Value	Measure Notes
Default	YES	N/A	NO	N/A	This indicator represents whether a school has defaulted on any of its financial covenants – particularly with lenders. Default usually occurs when a school does not make minimum payments on debt. This is a strong indicator of financial risk.
Funded Pupil Count (FPC) Current-Year Variance (CURRENT YEAR BUDGETED FPC – CURRENT YEAR ACTUAL FPC)	Less than or equal to (10%)	Between (9.9%) and (5%)	between (4.9%) and 4.9%	Greater than or equal to 5%	This indicator measures the accuracy of funded pupil count projections which correlates directly to the accuracy of revenue projections. A variance of +/- 4.9% is expected. Negative variances of more than 5% signal potential financial distress and the need for financial monitoring and interventions.
Change in FPC from Prior-Year (CURRENT YEAR ACTUAL FPC – PRIOR YEAR ACTUAL FPC)	(5%)	Between (5%) and (3%)	Between (3%) and 5%	5%	This indicator measures the variance of enrollment from year to year. A variance of -3% or +5% is expected due to immaterial variances in population. Negative variances of more than 3% signal a potential shift in demand for the school and a higher likelihood that fixed costs will begin to take up an unsustainable and growing portion of the revenue, leading to instability in facilities and/or administration.