

Funded: Colorado Report

A Detailed Look at Colorado's Funding Policies



Colorado

Funding Basics

Formula Type

Colorado has a primarily student-based funding formula. It assigns a cost to the education of a student with no special needs or services, called a base amount. It then accounts for the additional cost of educating specific categories of students in a variety of ways, including through program-specific allocations, by applying multipliers to the base amount to generate supplemental funding for certain students, and by adding supplemental, flat dollar amounts to the base amount for certain students.

The categories of students generating supplemental funding in Colorado are low-income students, some English language learners, and students with disabilities. Services for English language learners, students identified as gifted, students enrolled in career and technical education programs, and students in sparsely populated districts are funded through program-specific allocations.

Base Amount

Colorado has a fixed base funding amount per student. For FY2016, the per-student base amount was \$6,292. This means that an average student with no special needs or disadvantages would be funded at that level.

Expected Local Share

Colorado expects school districts to contribute some revenue to the funding of public schools through the imposition of property taxes, but no specific amount is expected of each district.

There are limitations on the property tax rate than can be imposed in each district. Districts may not raise more than \$27.00 for every \$1,000 in assessed property wealth, or the amount generated by the tax rate in place in the district in 2007, whichever is less, without voter approval. Even with voter approval, a district may only collect revenues exceeding its limit by either \$200,000 or 25% of the total amount of funding calculated by the state to be necessary to educate its students, whichever is greater. (This limit is raised to 30% for small, rural districts.)

Student Characteristics

Grade Level

Colorado does not differentiate funding based on students' grade levels.

English Language Learner

Colorado provides increased funding for English language learners. It does so in three ways: by applying a multiplier of 1.12 to the base per-pupil amount for these students; by including these students in the count of students that generates additional funding for districts serving high concentrations of disadvantaged pupils; and through a program-based allocation.

Colorado applies a multiplier of 1.12 to the base per-pupil amount for disadvantaged students. Similarly, the state provides increased funding to certain districts based on the concentrations of disadvantaged students that they serve. It does so by increasing the multiplier of 1.12 for districts whose populations of low-income students are above the state average, up to a maximum of 1.3. For both of these calculations, the count of disadvantaged students includes both those eligible for free lunch under the National School Lunch Program and non-free-lunch-eligible students whose dominant language is not English. Students who are both ELL and free-lunch-eligible generate this supplemental funding allocation only once.

Student Poverty

Colorado provides increased funding for students from low-income households. It does so by applying a multiplier of 1.12 to the base per-pupil amount for these students.

Students are eligible for this supplemental funding if they qualify for free lunch under the National School Lunch Program.

Special Education

Colorado funds special education using a multiple student weights system, providing different levels of funding for different categories of students. Students are assigned to 2 different categories based on their specific disabilities.

The state provides \$1,250 for each child with one or more disability. A second layer of funding, over and above that allocation, of up to \$6,000 apiece (prorated based on the amount of funding available) is provided for children with specific disabilities that include deaf-blindness, intellectual disabilities, and traumatic brain injury.

Gifted

Colorado provides additional funds for gifted and talented students. It does so through a limited-use grant.

Districts in Colorado receive funding under the Exceptional Children's Educational Act. These funds may be used for salaries of licensed, endorsed teachers who work with gifted and talented students; staff development and training needed by personnel to address the educational needs of these students; and activities, materials, and equipment associated with the education of gifted and talented students. School districts must develop program plans for gifted students and determine what local resources are needed to supplement the state money in order to carry out their plan.

Career and Technical Education

Colorado provides specific funding for career and technical education (CTE) programs. It does so through a program-based allocation.

In FY2015, the state allocated \$24.5 million for CTE programs. If a district's CTE program costs exceed 70% of the per-pupil funding available to that district, the state provides additional state funding to cover 80% of the first \$1,250 of those excess costs, and 50% of the excess costs above \$1,250.



District Poverty

Colorado provides increased funding to certain districts based on the concentrations of students from low-income households that they serve. It does so by increasing the multiplier applied to the base amount for all low-income students (see “Student Poverty”) for districts whose populations of low-income students are above the state average.

Students are counted for the calculation for this supplemental funding amount if they qualify for free lunch under the National School Lunch Program. In districts whose free-lunch eligibility rate exceeds the state average (approximately 37.2% in FY2016), the multiplier of 1.12 that is applied to the base amount for all low-income students is increased in proportion to the amount by which that district’s rate surpasses the state average. The total effective multiplier for low-income students cannot exceed 1.3.

Sparsity and/or Small Size

Colorado provides increased funding for small, remote schools through a supplemental payment, and for small districts by applying a multiplier to the base per-pupil amount that can range from 1.0297 to 2.3858, depending on the district’s enrollment.

Each year a cost estimate is calculated for “small attendance centers,” which are schools with fewer than 200 students that are 20 or more miles from the nearest district school of the same grade level districts, and the state funds approximately 32% of this amount. Small districts are calculated using a “size factor” in the funding formula, which is determined using an enrollment-based calculation and is unique to each school district.

For a complete list of primary sources, please see the appropriate state page at funded.edbuild.org

