

Vision: Every Colorado student has access to an adequate & equitable public school opportunity.

Consolidation of District Services

2017: Colorado has 178 school districts and the Charter School Institute, serving over 900,000 students in 63 counties. School districts range in physical size from 4 square miles to 4,761 square miles.

The topic of consolidation / de-consolidation of school districts has been discussed in the Colorado legislature many times. The passage of HB92-1003, required a majority of voters in each district being combined or deconstructed to pass a ballot question to combine school districts or deconstruct their school district.

1. [1992: House Bill 1003](#) – Concerning changes to the organization of School Districts. Defines the process school districts must take to combine two or more districts (or parts of districts) into one district and to deconstruct one district into two or more. Some of the processes include:
 - a. conducting elections (allowing for the voting of all eligible voters in all affected school districts), activation of school district organization planning process, duties of planning committee and school districts, meetings, hearings, approval by commissioner, status of old school district assets, existing bonded indebtedness, election to assume existing bonded indebtedness, authorization to assume new bonded indebtedness, etc.
2. [1995: School Finance Interim Committee on School District Size, Boundary, and Organizational Issues](#)
3. [1996: House Bill 1012](#) – Simplifies the organization planning process of HB92-1003
4. [2002: CDE History of Colorado School District Organization](#)
5. [2003: CDE Manual of Procedures for School Organization Act of 1992](#)

CSFP's Legislative and school district actions:

[History of Colorado School District Consolidation & Deconsolidation from 1886 - 2017](#)

June 2009: The Colorado School Finance Project commissioned a [study to Explore School District Consolidation by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates](#). Findings of the 2009 study included:

1. School districts and the education services they provide are complex
 - a. A school is often the community center In small or rural communities.
 - b. Often reflects geographic (rivers, mountain ranges) and past political boundaries – difficult to change
2. Academic Quality topics
 - a. Larger districts: quality of opportunities larger; more opportunity for teacher collaboration
 - b. Smaller districts: some difficulty attracting quality teachers (math, science, foreign language), spend most of their time teaching things students are tested on – as a result perform well on tests – “Our kids do fine on state tests; why would you close us?”
3. In consolidation studies across the U.S. – difficult to quantify a cost savings/increase; increased/decreased student performance – items that may increase: transportation costs, modify existing school buildings for increased student count.

4. State can encourage consolidation models
 - a. Encourage districts to combine with incentives, not threats – hold harmless for period of time.
 - b. Perform (and pay for) a study before trying to combine districts – Can districts save money? Impact on communities? Impact of two different PPRs on new districts? Athletic teams from 2 different areas? Bonded indebtedness? Impact on parent and community involvement when districts are merged?

By the numbers: Most school districts are in 1 county, some are in 2 to 3 counties. County size range: 149 – 4,772 square miles and 80 to 91,132 PK-12 students. (2009 findings)

1. 20 counties have 1 district ranging in size from 80 to 91,132 PK-12 students
2. Arapahoe County: 7 school districts, 119,630 PK-12 students, 803 sq. mi.
3. Adams County: 7 districts, 83,921 PK-12 students (range from 972 to 38,818 students), 1,191 sq. mi.
4. El Paso County: 15 school districts, 120,128 PK-12 students (range from 231 to 27,911 students), 2,126 sq. mi.
5. Weld County: 12 school districts, 42,872 PK-12 students (range from 77 to 21,950 students), 3,992 sq. mi.