

# School Finance in Colorado

*Bagels with the Board:  
University of Colorado*

November 20, 2019

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Colorado School Finance Project

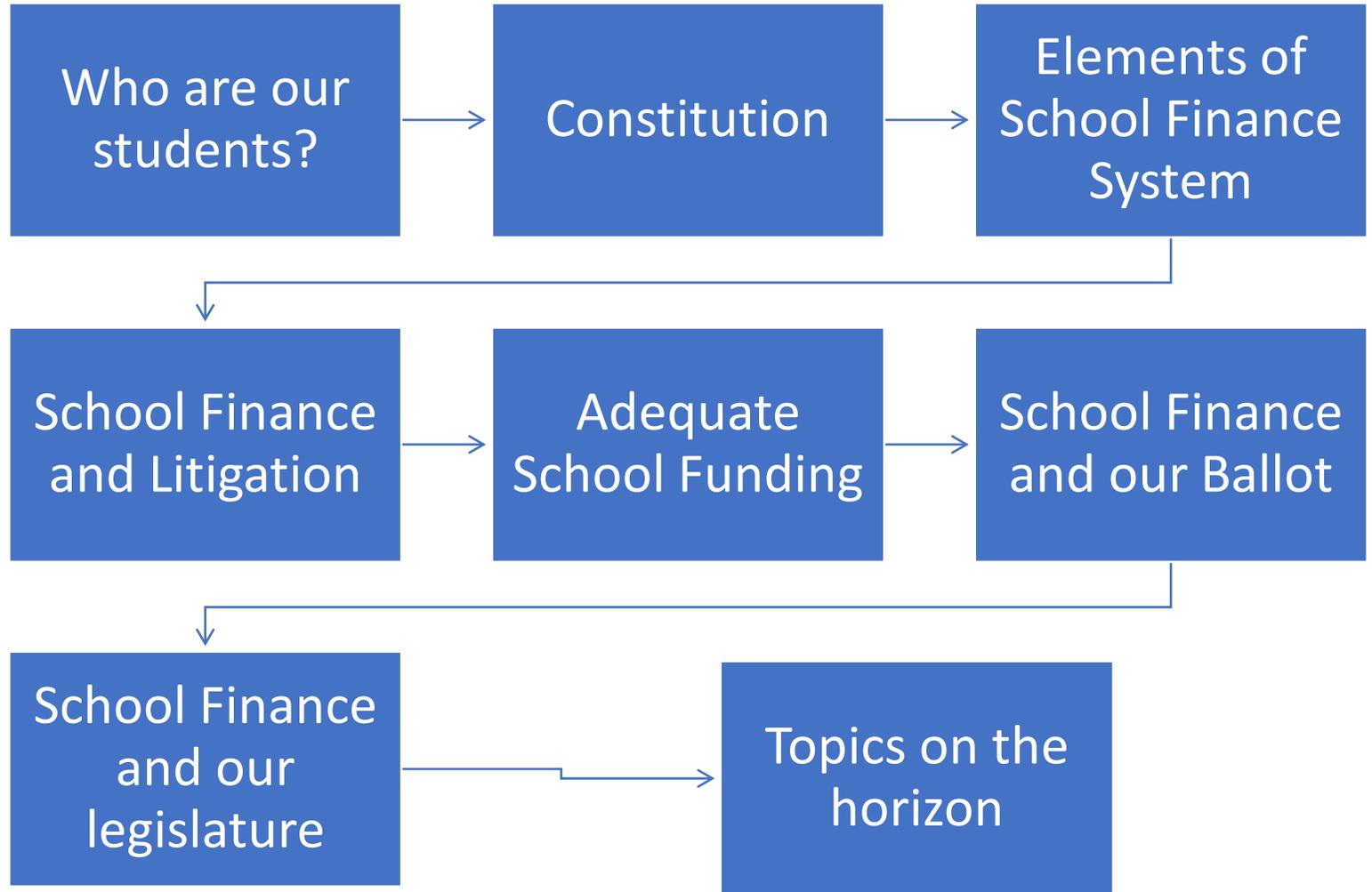
# Colorado School Finance Project (CSFP)

*Who are we?  
What do we do?*

- Non-profit, non-partisan
- Supported by school district contributions
- School finance analysis for local and state policy makers since 1995.

*Mission: To compile, collect and distribute research-based, non-partisan information and data on topics related to school finance for state and local policymakers.*

# Today's Goals





## 2018-19: Over 910,000 students

- 1997 – 2015: average yearly increase about 10,000 students
- 2016 – 2017: average increase about 5,000 students annually
- Demographers predict recent trend to continue

What are students' characteristics?

What services might they need?

Where do they live?

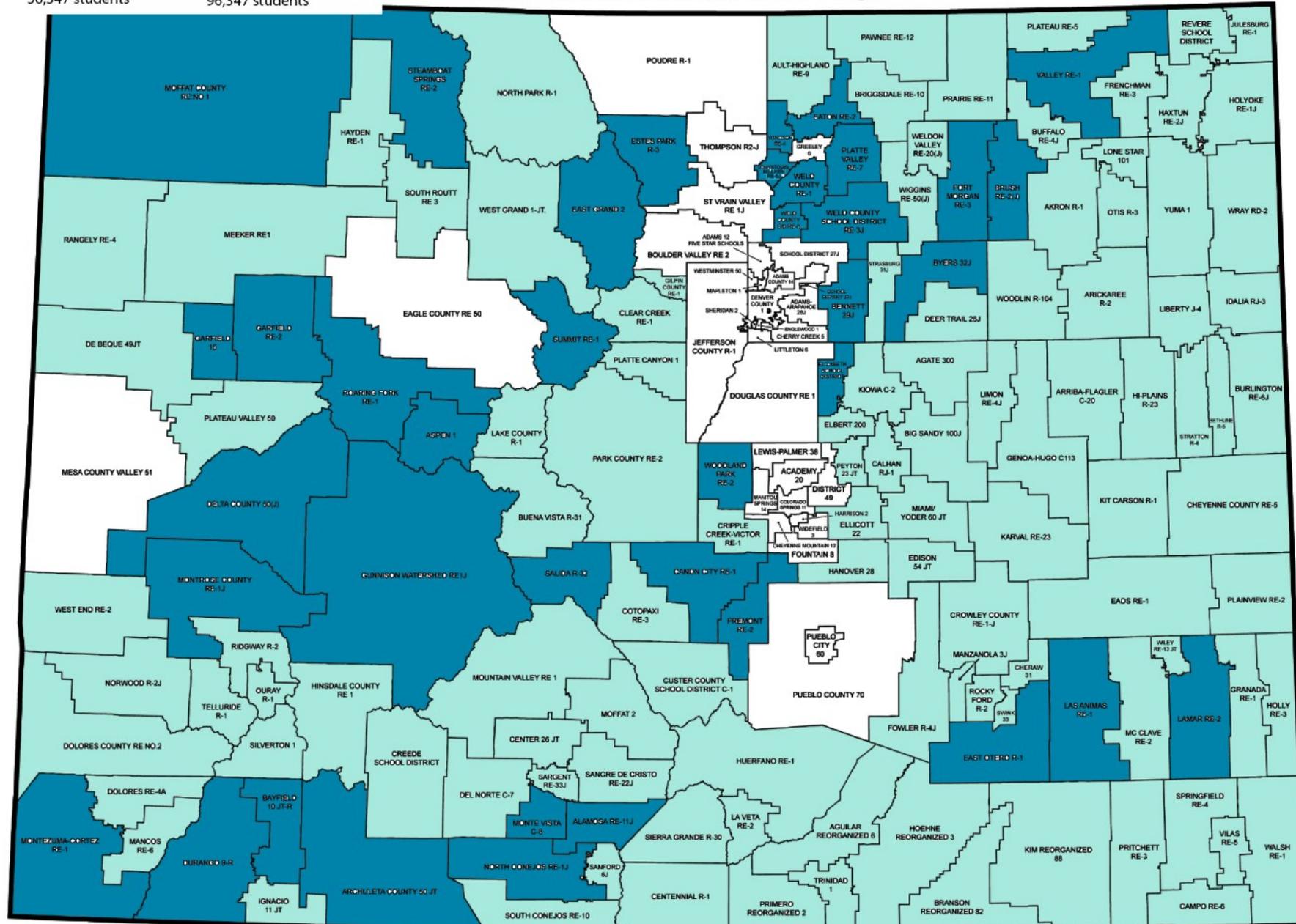
# Colorado School Finance Project

## School Districts: Small Rural - Rural - Large

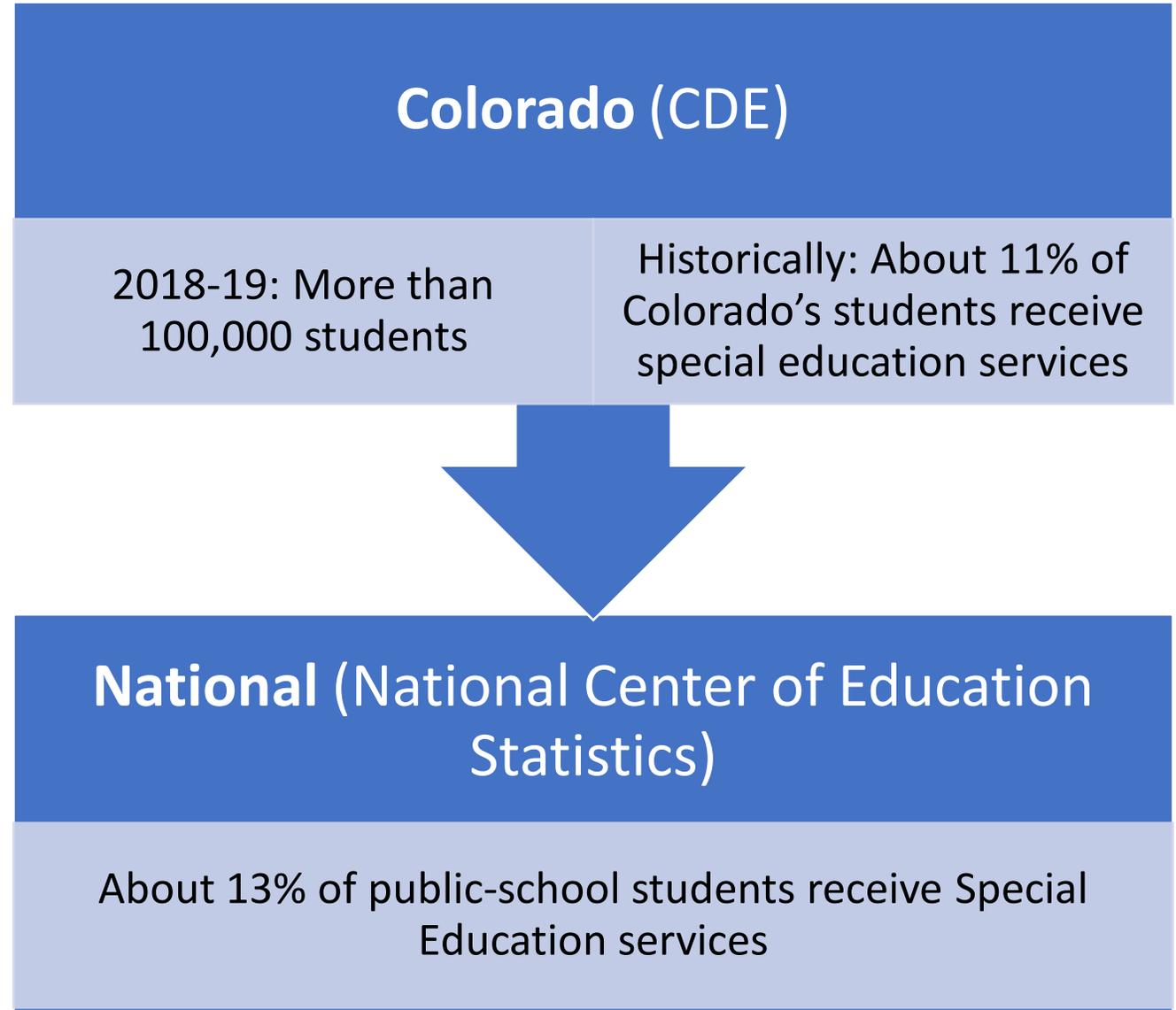
Small Rural: K-12 Enrollment < 1000  
36,347 students

Rural: K-12 enrollment between 1001 and 6,500  
96,347 students

Large: K-12 Enrollment over 6,501  
741,095 students



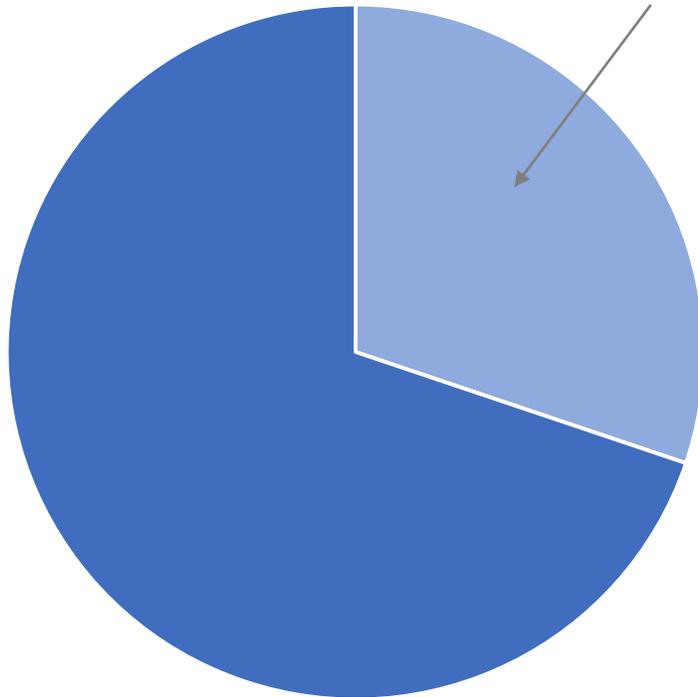
# Special Education Students Receiving Services



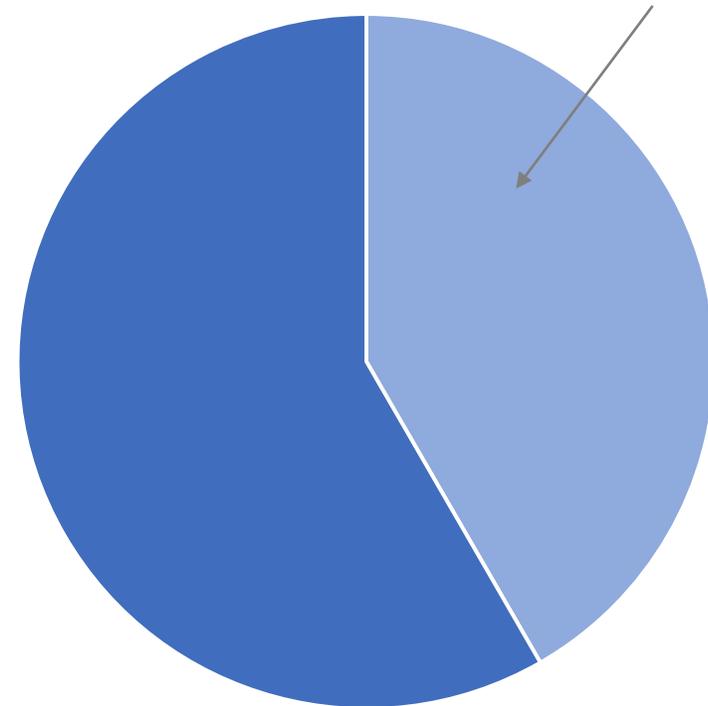
Between 2003-04 and 2018-19:

- Colorado added 152,000 students total
- Students qualifying for Free/Reduced Lunch increased about 150,000 students.

**2003-04:** 30% of students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch

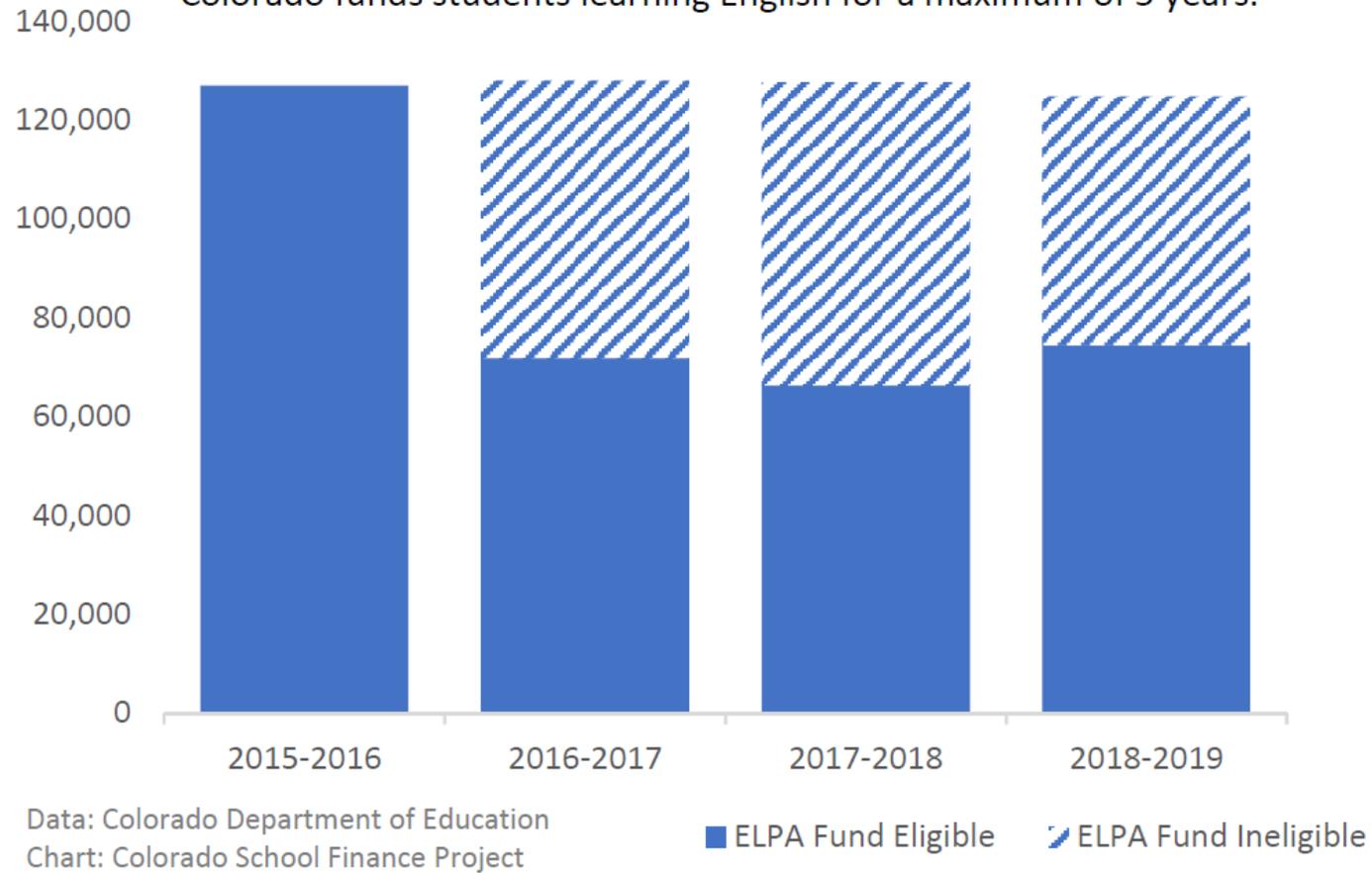


**2018-19:** 41% of students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch

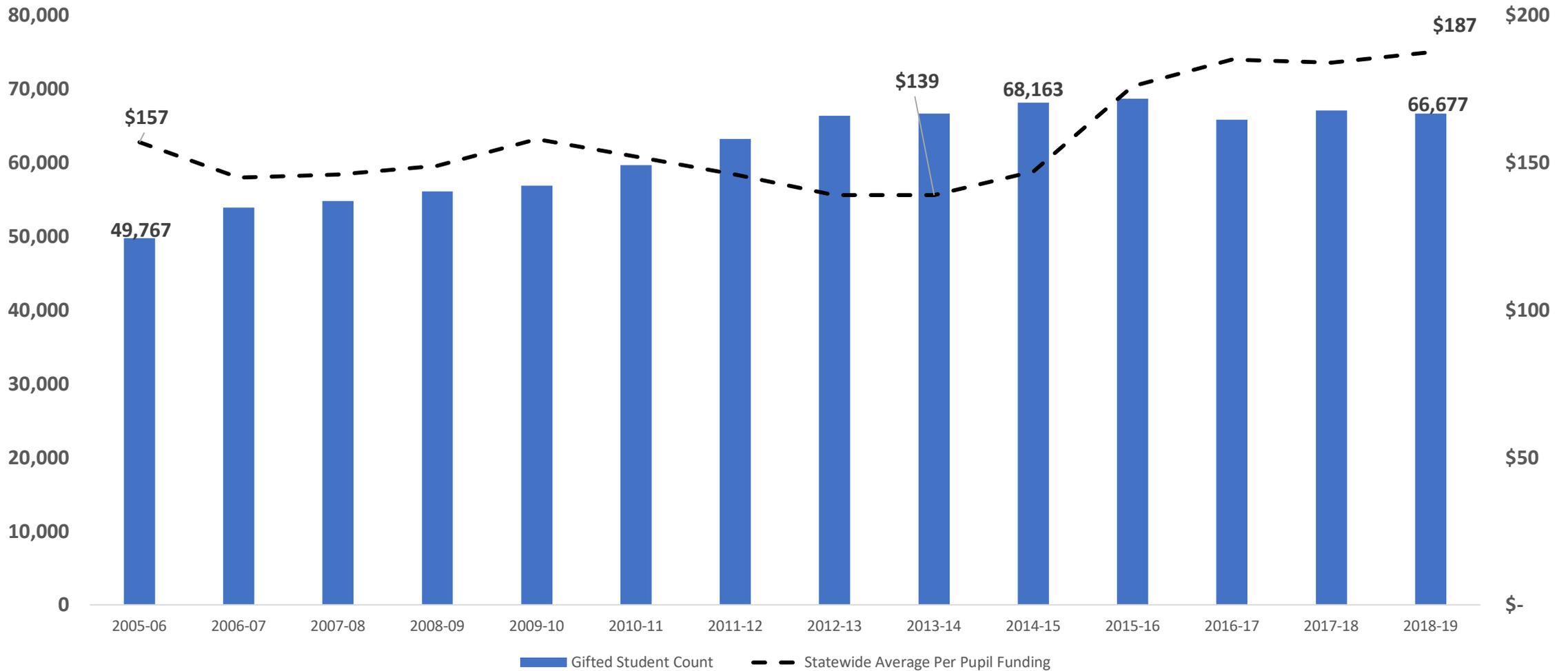


## Students Learning English: Eligible / Ineligible for ELPA Funding

Districts serve all students learning English.  
Colorado funds students learning English for a maximum of 5 years.



# Colorado Gifted Student Count and Average Per GT Pupil Amount



A black circle with a white border containing the text "Colorado Constitution" in white.

## Colorado Constitution

### Statehood – education clause:

1. Local control

2. Curriculum

3. Hiring and salary schedules

4. Graduation requirements

5. District organization of schools

6. Local taxing authority



## Results

State board is elected, they hire state's education commissioner

178 districts currently – reduced over time

District size range from less than 50 to over 90,000 students

Large state with vast differences in demographics, wealth, and need

**What are the  
Elements in  
School  
Finance?**

Base Funding – what does the base represent?

What are adjustments or weights for students?

What are adjustments or weights for school districts?

What isn't included in the formula currently?

What might be included in a formula?

**Snapshot of  
school  
finance  
litigation in  
Colorado**

Lujan – have large inequities,  
taxpayer and student

Girardino – BEST

Lobato – Adequate school  
funding

Mesa County – addressed part  
of the lack of local tax base

Dwyer – enabled the legislature  
to cut funding – budget  
stabilization factor

# What does Adequate School funding look like in Colorado?

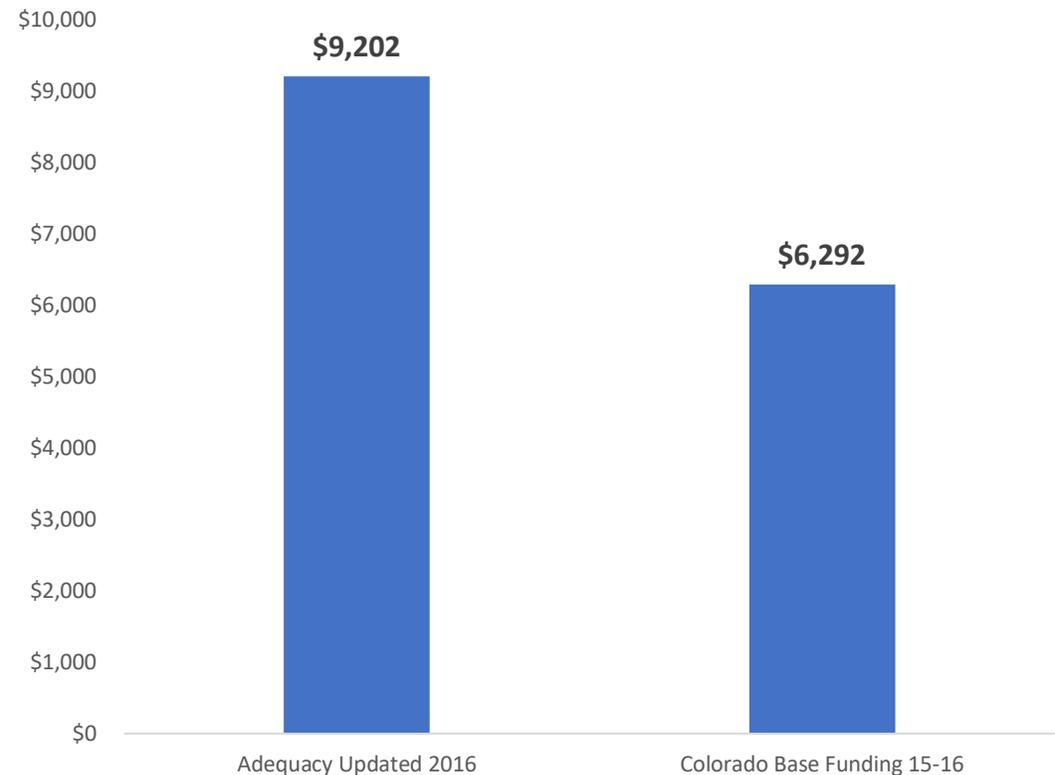
Based upon researched based analysis

# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## *Every Child: Basic funding*

- Colorado's base funding would have to increase by almost \$3,000 to meet the needs of a student with no special needs in a district with no special characteristics.

## Funding for Every Student

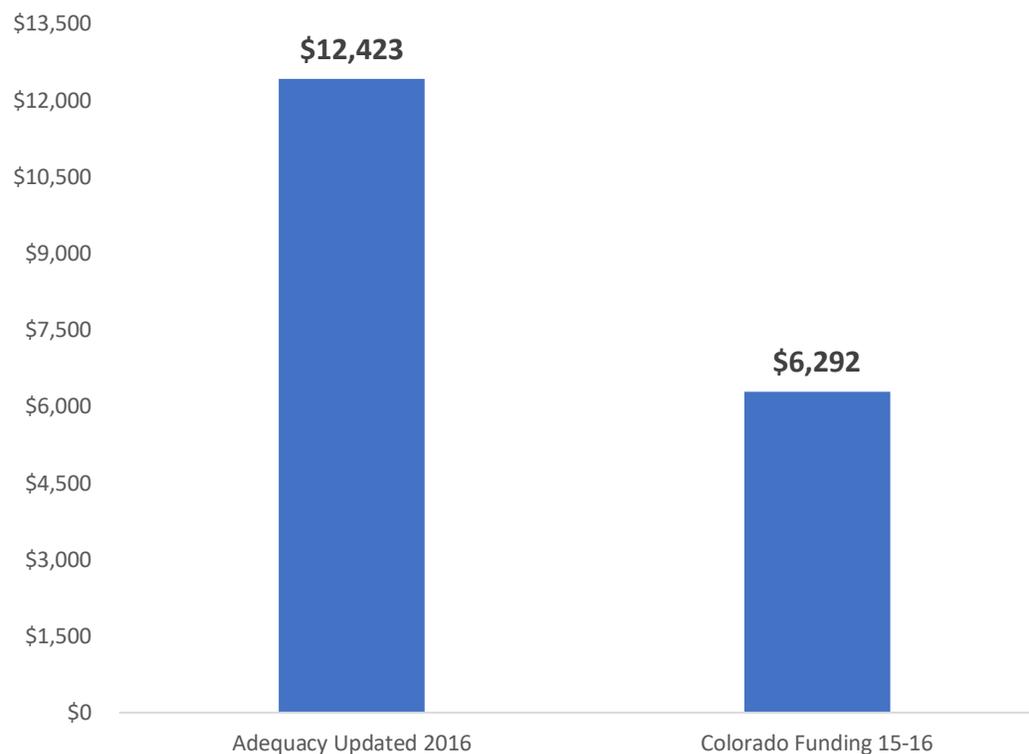


# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## *Every Child: At-risk funding*

- The study found that an additional **35%** is needed to ensure students eligible for free lunch (at-risk proxy) meet standards.
- Currently, *Colorado provides **12% per at-risk pupil on a lower base.***

Funding for At-Risk Students



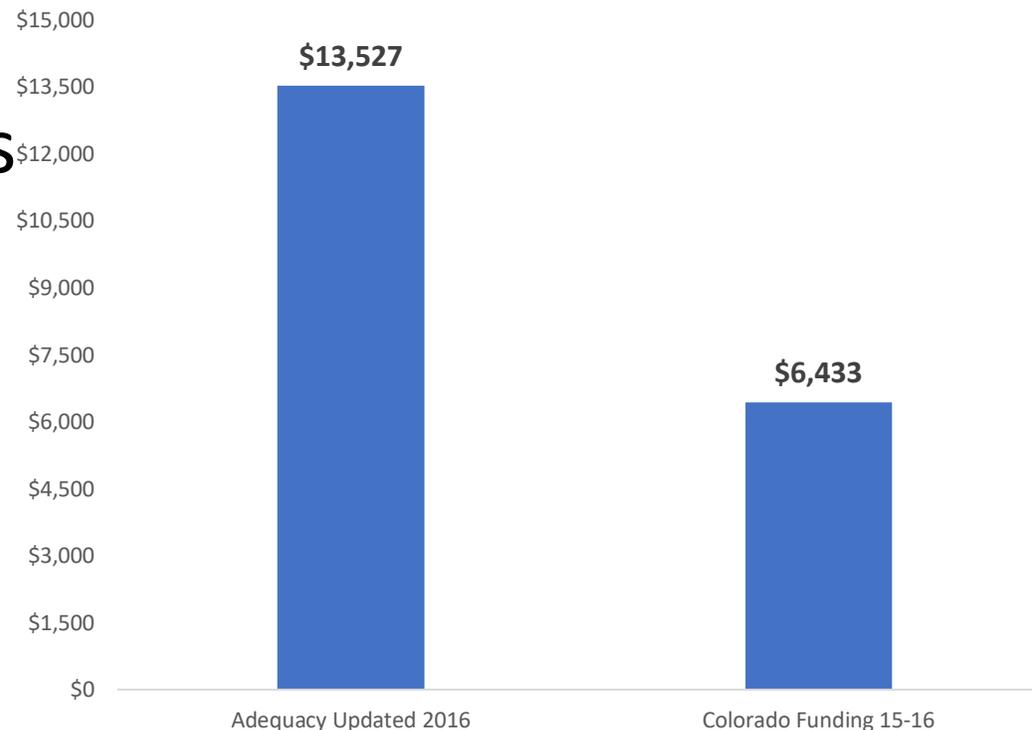
# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## Every Child: ELL funding

- The study found that an additional **47%** is necessary to ensure students who are learning English can meet standards.

- Colorado provides less than **\$200 per ELL pupil on top of a lower base.***

Funding for ELL students

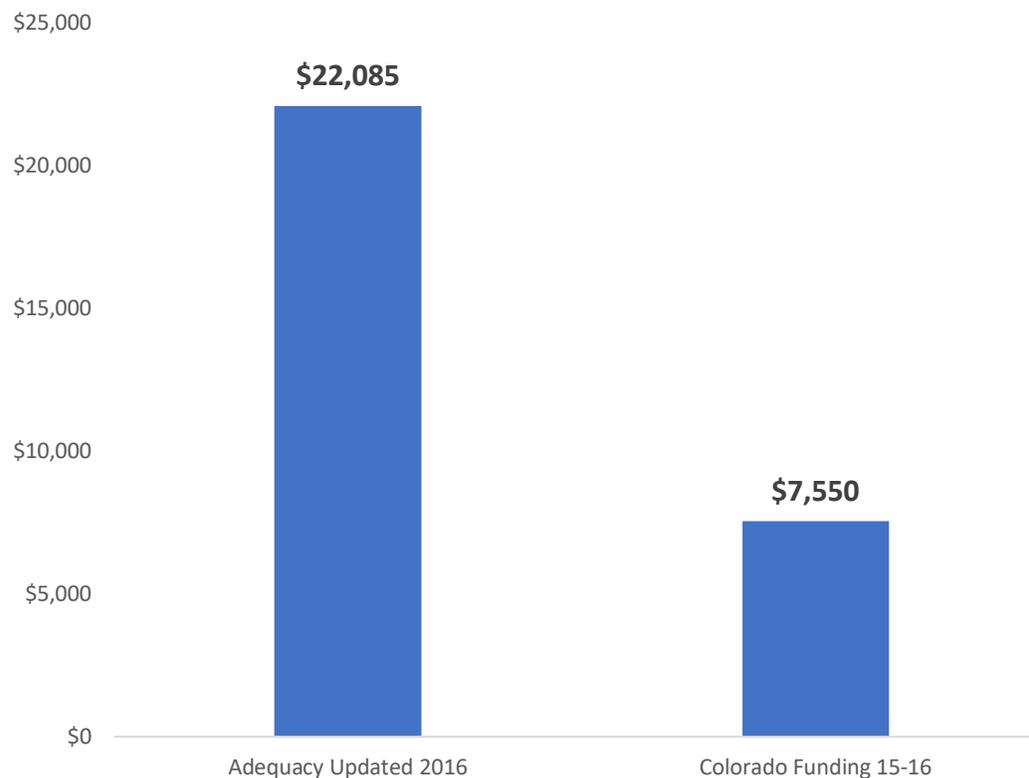


# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## *Every Child: Rural funding*

- The study found that an additional **140%** is needed to ensure that students without special needs in small rural districts (200-500 students) can meet standards.
- Colorado's school finance formula doesn't come close.*

Funding for Rural Students

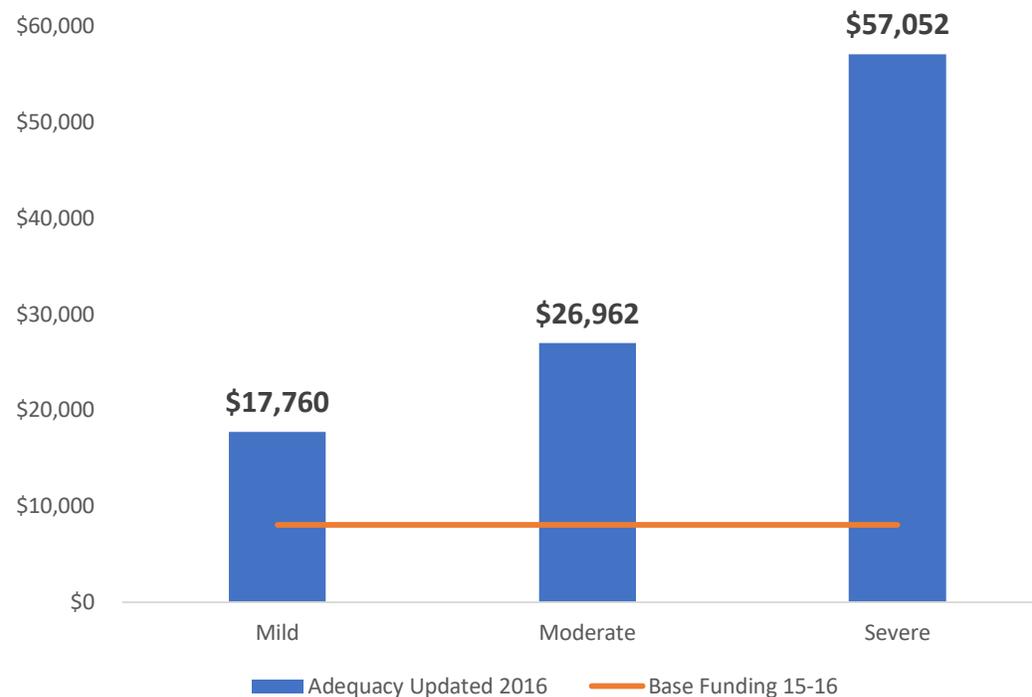


# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## Every Child: Special Education funding

- The study found that an additional **73% -700%** is necessary to meet the needs of special ed students, depending on severity of disabilities.
- Colorado caps total special ed funding. In 2015, the average per student was **\$1,800** or about **30%**.*

## Funding Students with Special Needs



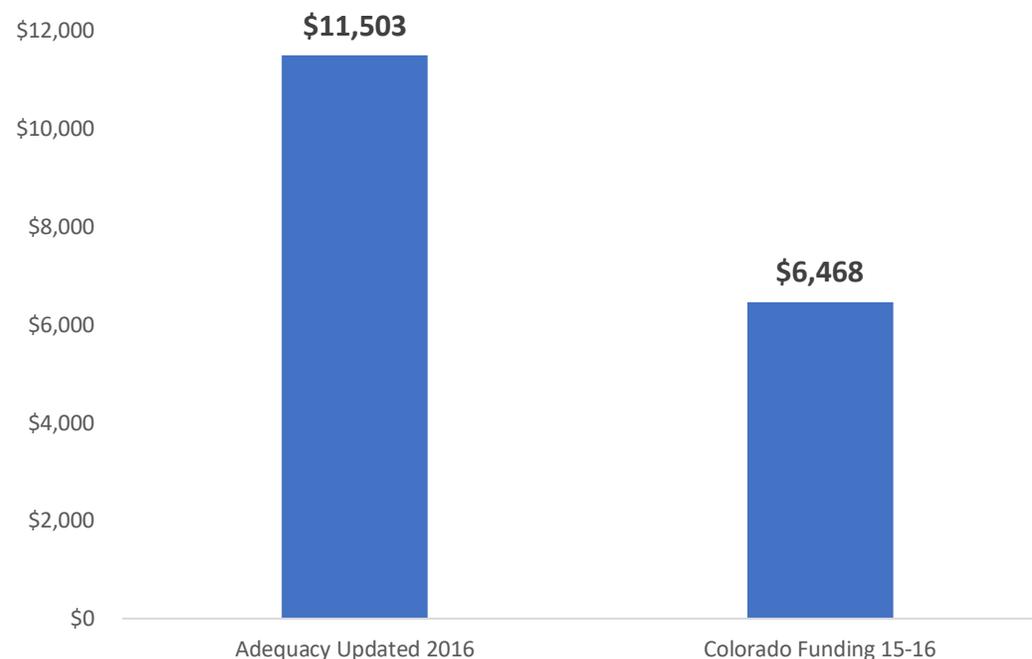
# Adequate funding for public schools in Colorado

## *Every Child: Gifted and Talented funding*

- The study found that meeting the needs of students identified as Gifted and Talented require an additional **25%** in funding.

- Colorado provides about **\$176 per identified pupil on top of the inadequate base.***

## Funding for Gifted and Talented Students



**What has  
happened at  
our ballot  
box?**

Amendment 23

REF C

Prop 103

Amendment 66

Marijuana Tax

Amendment 73

Prop CC

# What has happened legislatively?

## 3 Interim Committees on School Finance

- Met for last 3 years
- Currently discussing legislation

BEST - facilities

Budget Stabilization Factor – cut funding

Interim committee on Gallagher

Interim committee on General Fund pressures

HB 18-1232 – superintendent's formula and basis for A73

Prop CC

Decade of Cuts  
to K-12  
Education –  
Links to  
Additional  
Information on  
[www.cosfp.org](http://www.cosfp.org)



Over \$8.1B: 2009-10 to 2019-20



[Decade of  
Cuts to K-12  
Education  
spreadsheet](#)



[Budget  
Stabilization  
Factor  
\(Negative  
Factor\)](#)



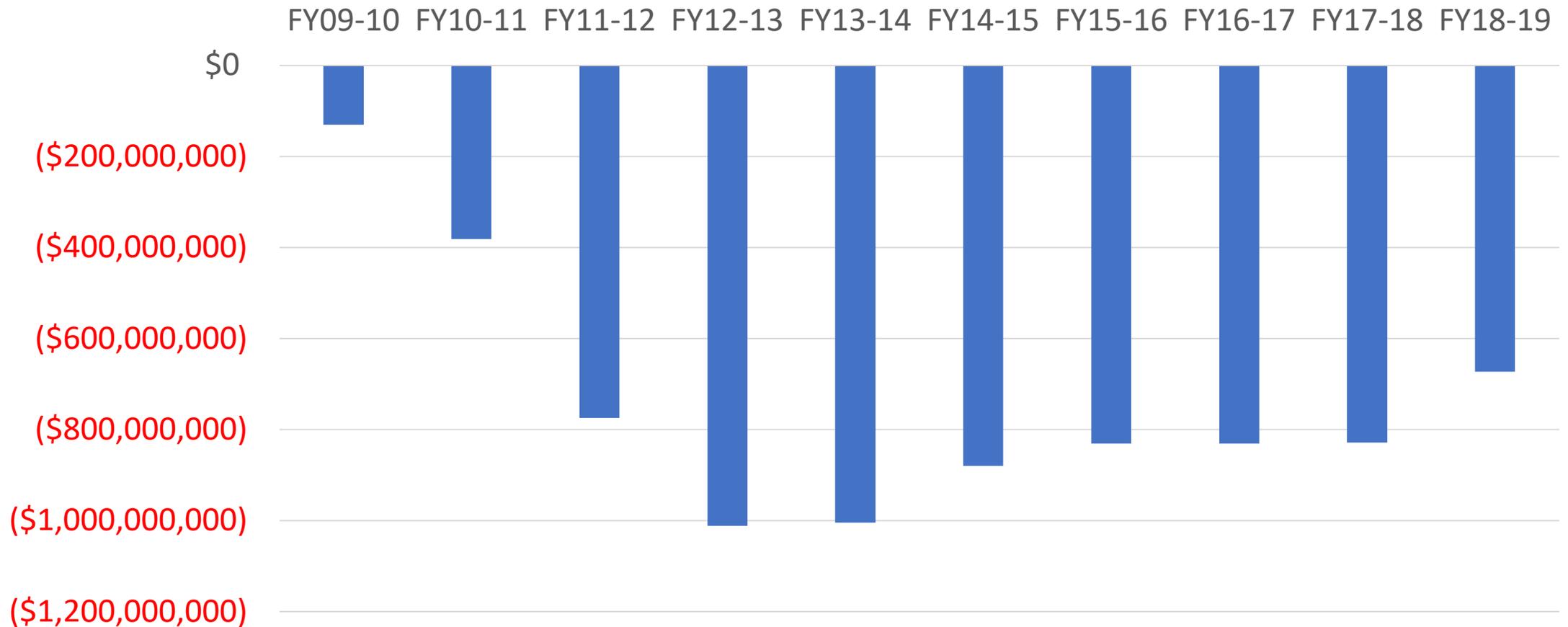
[District  
Budget Cut  
Discussions](#)



[CSFP School  
Finance &  
Education  
Reform  
Timeline](#)

# Decade of Cuts to PK-12 Education Budget Stabilization Factor

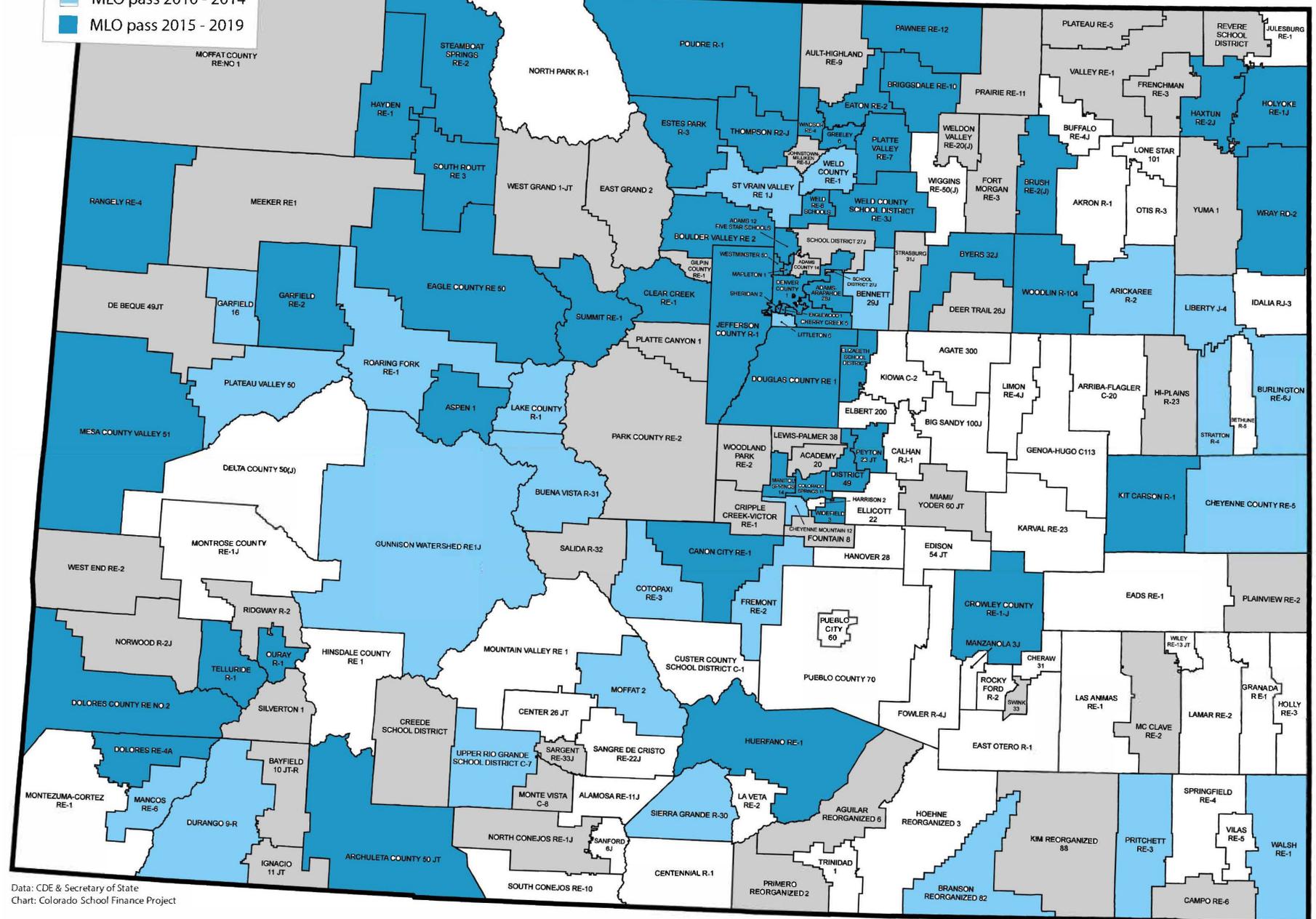
Proportionately reduces total funding to each school district - ongoing



# Colorado School Finance Project

## Most Recent Mill Levy Override (MLO) Passed by Voters in Colorado School Districts - November 2019

- No MLO
- MLO pass 1988 - 2009
- MLO pass 2010 - 2014
- MLO pass 2015 - 2019



Data: CDE & Secretary of State  
 Chart: Colorado School Finance Project

**Missing  
pieces in  
Legislative  
Discussions**

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What does “base” funding represent?
2. What does it cost to educate a student?
3. What does it cost to educate students of need?
4. What does it cost to be rural?
5. What are the “opportunity costs” not recognized?

# Looking Ahead

Budget Forecast –  
12/20/2019

Interim Committee on  
School Finance

Uniform Mill Levy -  
legislation

Gallagher - legislation

2020 ballot-  
revenue + ?

Questions:  
Now & Later

## Tracie Rainey

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## Stay connected:

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- Colorado School Finance Project - Facebook