



Courtesy of Montezuma-Cortez High School



# Education in Southwest Colorado

## 2020 Update



A high-quality and effective education system plays a fundamental role in community, societal and economic health.



## INTRODUCTION

*Why do we care about our region's education system?*

At the Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado (Region 9), we promote and coordinate economic development efforts throughout Southwest Colorado. Working towards our mission to improve the region's economic prosperity, we acknowledge the importance of our region's schools, and their impact on the broader economy.

A high-quality and effective education system plays a fundamental role in societal and community health. An educated population leads to innovation, higher levels of productivity, and increased economic growth. Similarly, research indicates that key educational outcomes in a community, like high school completion rates, correlate with levels of poverty. Investments in education at all levels pay off via a more educated workforce, involved citizens, higher business productivity and profits, as well as increased tax revenues.

Since 2005, Region 9 has developed and released reports on our region's education system. Using this updated report with the most recent data, we invite you and all stakeholders in our community to:

- Understand the state of our region's education system.
- Identify how the system has changed over recent years.
- Compare the system's outcomes to statewide trends.

## REPORT OVERVIEW

*What outcomes do we care about when examining our education system?  
What data are included in this report?*

Our region's education system intends to develop skills in students to promote their productive contributions to society and the economy. Like all systems across the state and nation, regional schools represent a complex set of actions and people. Furthermore, schools utilize a multitude of data to understand the state of these components and measure outcomes towards their goals.

This report highlights two key outcomes from our region's education system. These North Star metrics directly relate to the viability and health of the regional economy.

### North Star Metrics

1

**High School Completion**

2

**Educational Attainment Levels**

Additional metrics offer meaningful indicators at significant stages within the education system and provide context to the operations of schools. These Benchmark metrics represent a broad set of qualities in our system.

### Benchmark Metrics

*Student progression through all levels:*

- Early Childhood
- Kindergarten – Grade 12
- Higher Education

*Academic outcomes alongside system and whole-child supports:*

- Safe and Supportive Environments
- Financial Feasibility
- Viable Workforce

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## A. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

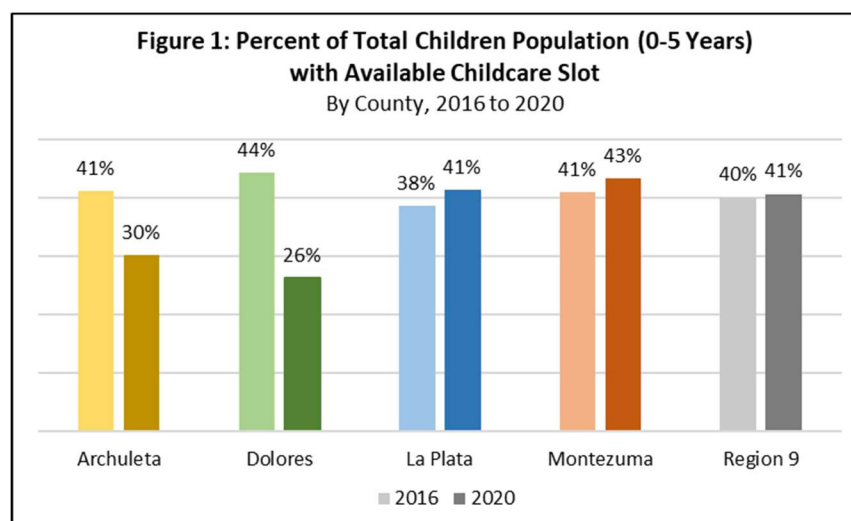
A child's academic, physical, and social-emotional development begins with quality care from birth to age five. Based on long-held and replicated research, we know that students who receive quality care are more likely to succeed later in school and career. These students more often read at grade-level by the end of third grade and graduate from high school.<sup>1</sup>

Investments in early childhood, by leading to a more educated and healthier population, promote a strong and stable economy for our region and state. Parents of young children, by utilizing early childhood care centers, are able to participate in the workforce. To promote the accessibility care and education for all families, schools/centers monitor the availability and affordability of slots.

<b>Benchmark</b>	Available Childcare Slots
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- ? How many licensed childcare slots are available based on the total population of children birth to age five?
- Available childcare slots in the region cover 41% of the total population of children (0-5 years).

As of January 2020, licensed childcare centers in the region had 1,992 slots available to children birth to age five, representing 41% of the total population of children in that age range. The percentage of available slots for total population is comparable to the rate from 2016 (40%). This said, we see shifts at the county-level, notably with decreases in Dolores and Archuleta Counties (Figure 1).



1. Available slots in San Juan County exceed children population.

Source: Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (ECCLPC)

As advised by industry experts, the percentage of available slots for total population should be interpreted with a couple caveats. Often, a single slot can support more than one child if the child attends only morning or afternoon. Furthermore, we can assume that not the entire population of children birth to age five require licensed care (with parent/relative providing in-home care). As a

<sup>1</sup> Colorado Children's Campaign <http://www.coloradokids.org/issues/earlychildhood/>

comparison, the available slots statewide in Colorado cover approximately 38% of the total population (0-5 years).<sup>2</sup>

<b>Benchmark</b>	Childcare Costs
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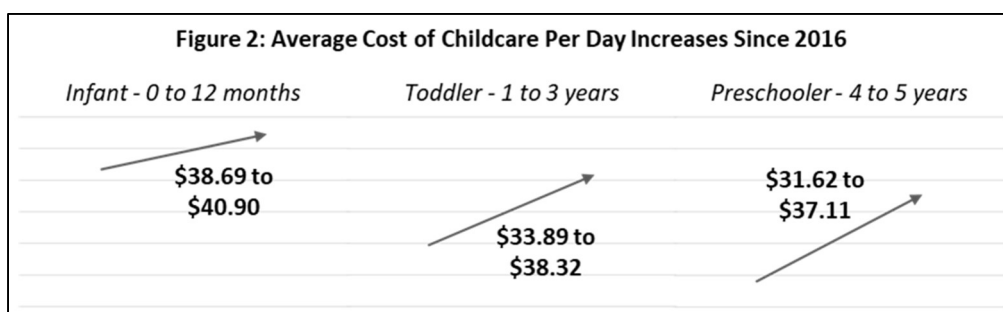


Can families afford childcare when it is available?



Average costs of childcare per day increased from 2016 to 2019.

Childcare costs consume a significant portion of a family's resources. From 2016 to 2019, average childcare center rates for the region increased across all ages (Figure 2). When livable wages are linked to average annual wages by sector in each county in our region, we find that most employment sectors do not provide enough income to meet the basic needs of a family of four, especially when there is only one primary earner in the household.<sup>3</sup> This threatens the affordability of childcare.



Source: ECCLPC

Our state and region maintain a focus on increasing the accessibility of early childhood care. Childcare centers can only increase the available slots if they have the available staff. Recruiting, developing and retaining these professionals is a persistent challenge for the region and state. Wages for teaching staff at early childhood centers are slightly above the region's livable wages.<sup>4</sup> This said, the wage provided to a lead teacher in La Plata or Montezuma County falls below the livable wage for an adult with a preschooler in those counties.

The Early Childhood Council of La Plata County (ECCLPC) works across the region, engaging with childcare centers, local business, educational agencies, and state organizations, to build capacity of programs and, specifically, enhance the early childhood workforce. As coordinated by ECCLPC, and in partnership with the Pueblo Community College (PCC) Early Childhood Program, the Durango High School Early Learning Center offers a progression of courses that supports high school students pursuing careers in early childhood education.

As of January 2020, the state government is exploring legislation to increase funding for early childhood, with the potential to expand tuition-free care to more children.

<sup>2</sup> 2019 Kids Count Report <https://www.coloradokids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-KidsCount-9-4-19-Low-Res.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Livable Wages in Southwest Colorado, 2019 Update, Region 9 [https://www.scan.org/uploads/Livable\\_Wages\\_in\\_Southwest\\_Colorado\\_2019-2.pdf](https://www.scan.org/uploads/Livable_Wages_in_Southwest_Colorado_2019-2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Livable Wages Report, Region 9; see previous link



## B. K-12 COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

Our region has robust systems to provide education to students from Kindergarten through high school graduation (K-12). Building from a strong foundation provided through early childhood care, K-12 schools in the region aim to ensure students are on-track for graduation and prepared for college and career. Working toward those outcomes, these systems encompass an array of components and priorities. The following sections and data offer an overview of the health of K-12 school systems, examining their ability to provide an academic and comprehensive education to all students.

### REGIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

#### Highlights (Fall 2019)

<b>14,180</b> <b>Total Students</b> <i>1% up from Fall 2018</i> <i>10% up from Fall 2014</i>	<b>37%</b> <b>Minority Students</b> <i>7% up from Fall 2009</i> <i>Compare to 47% statewide</i>	<b>42%</b> <b>Students qualified for free/reduced lunch</b> <i>Consistent in region over 10 yrs.</i> <i>Compare to 41% statewide</i>
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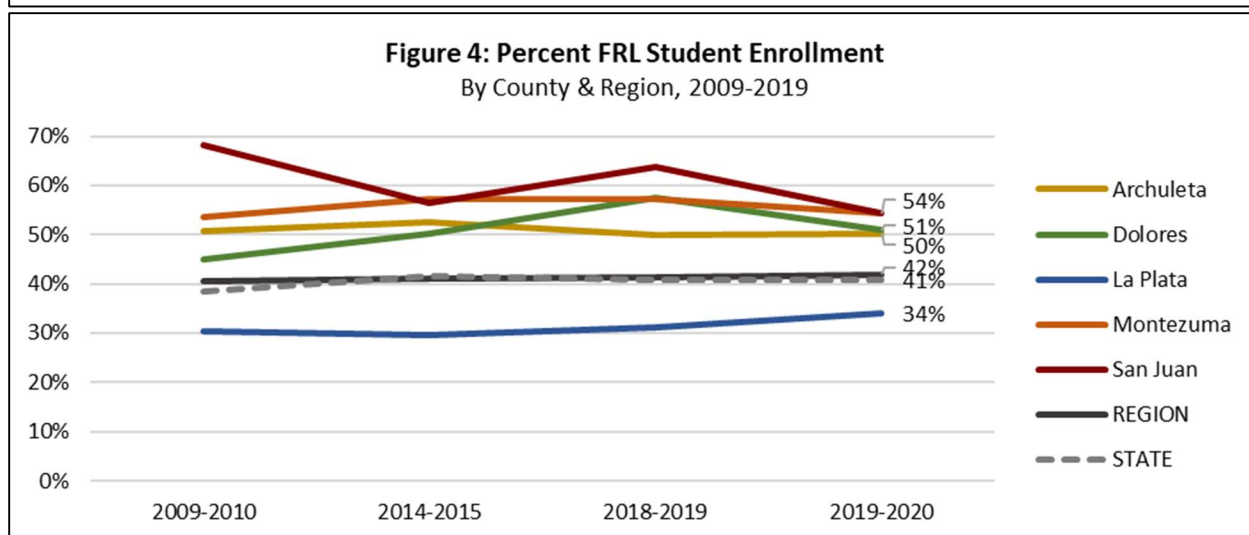
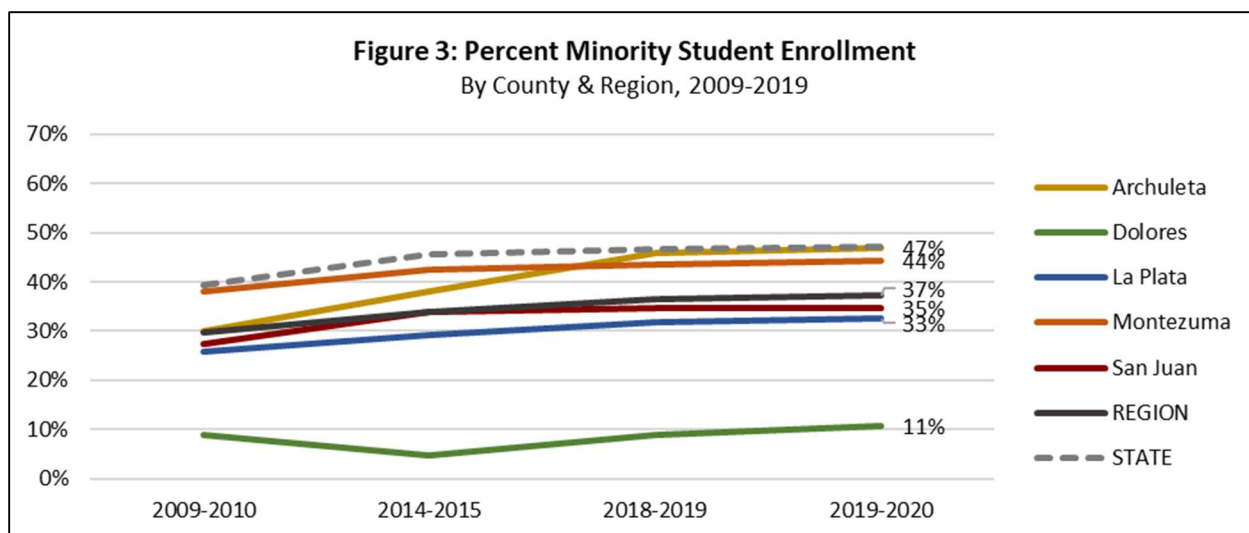
Student enrollment in the region, currently at 14,180 students, increased over the past 10 years, though growth has stagnated in the past year. This trend mimics state-level data. Table 1 displays enrollment data by county, region, and state.

Table 1: Current & Historical Student Enrollment by County (Fall 2019)				
County	Fall 2019 Count	1Yr Change	5Yr Change	10Yr Change
Archuleta	1,742	2%	31%	15%
Dolores	232	-3%	-14%	-20%
La Plata	8,086	1%	13%	16%
Montezuma	3,978	0%	-1%	-1%
San Juan	81	17%	31%	23%
<b>REGION</b>	14,180	1%	10%	10%
<b>STATE</b>	913,223	0%	3%	10%

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

As of the 19-20 school year, the state funds full-day Kindergarten for all students. Previously, districts only received funding that covered half-day programs. As a result of this budget increase, Kindergarten enrollment across the state jumped 24%. This said, schools in the region experienced a much more modest increase of 3%.

Roughly 40% of students in SW Colorado are minority and/or qualify for free/reduced lunch (FRL; a measure of lower socio-economic status). These demographics vary across districts and schools (Figures 3 and 4). When compared to the state, region schools comprise a similar percentage of students with FRL, but 10% less minority students. This said, the percent of minority students in the region increased 7% from 2009 to 2019, while the percent of FRL students has stayed consistent.



Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

### Charter Schools

The Colorado State Legislature approved Colorado's charter school law in 1993. Charter schools are publicly funded, semi-autonomous schools of choice. They operate under a contract between the members of the charter school community and either the local board of education or the state Charter School Institute (CSI).

Of the 14,180 students in the region, 989 (7%) attend one of seven charter schools (Figure 5). Most of the charter schools in Region 9 are authorized by the local school districts. La Plata County has two charter schools authorized by CSI.

Charter schools are a means of expanding choices in Colorado public schools. The charter process provides an avenue for educators, citizens, businesses, communities and parents to direct their innovative efforts to create schools with "high, rigorous standards for pupil performance", with special emphasis on expanded opportunities for low-achieving students. The General Assembly sought "to

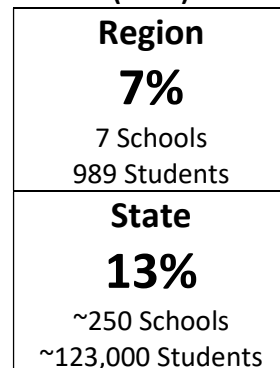
create an atmosphere in Colorado's public schools where research and development of different learning opportunities is actively pursued".

A number of the stated purposes of the Colorado Charter Schools Act have already come to fruition. Specifically, charter schools in Colorado have increased the number of public school choices available for parents, students, and teachers. Fifty charter schools were operating in Colorado on September 1, 1997. By the 2018-2019 school year there were just over 250 charter schools serving 123,000 students (13% of all students). As a point of reference, Denver Public Schools serve 93,000 students.

In 2016, Durango 9R partnered with Animas High School and Mountain Middle School, both CSI charter schools, to pass a \$1.7 million mill levy override that would be shared equally with charter school students. Schools under CSI typically do not receive a portion of mill levy override money. This collaboration made history. To date, Durango is the only community in the State to have a local school district and CSI schools share mill levy override funds.


In 2017, Colorado became the first state in the nation to provide public charter schools equitable access to locally-raised tax revenue – funds which all public school students are entitled to.

**Figure 5:  
Enrollment in  
Charter Schools  
(2019)**



Source: Colorado  
Department of  
Education (CDE)

### ***STUDENT PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS***

 <b>North Star</b>	High School Completion
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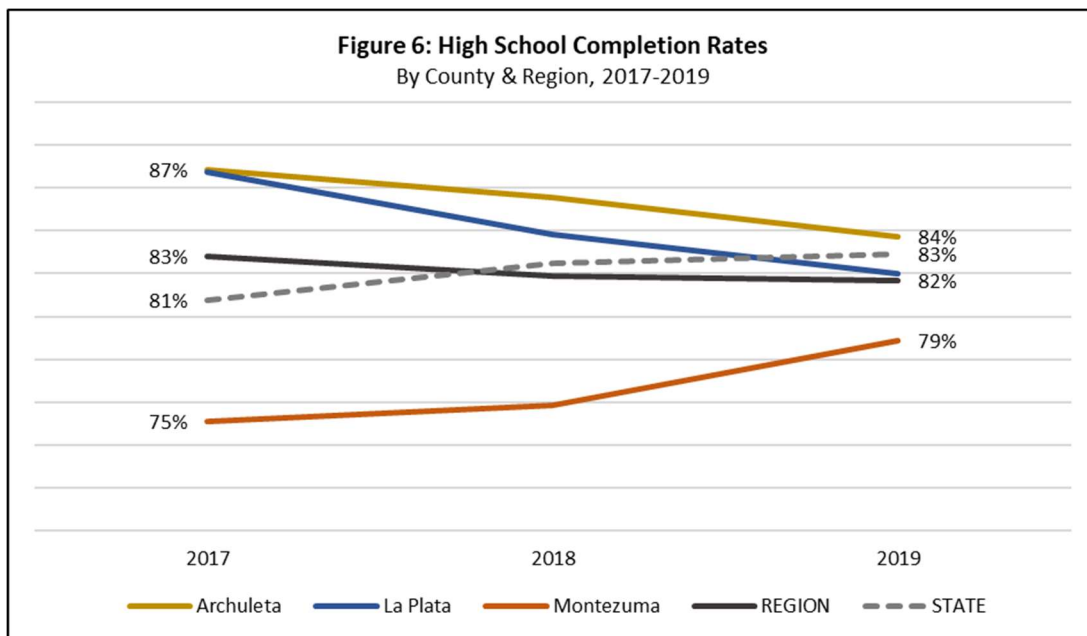
What percentage of students are completing high school?



82% of students in the region complete high school, compared to 83% statewide.

A key goal of the education system is graduating students from high school. This outcome leads to improved quality of life for students into college and career. Furthermore, the regional economy benefits from a high school educated population by having access to a viable and sustainable workforce. District and schools leverage specialized programs (e.g., graduation requirements, online courses, concurrent enrollment, credit recovery, summer school) to help students stay on track towards graduation.





1. See Table 2 for completion rates for Dolores and San Juan Counties.
2. Completion rates include students who graduate 1) with a regular diploma, non-diploma certificate or High School Equivalency Diploma 2) from any type of school (including online and supplemental schools) 3) within four years of their freshman year.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

Students in the region complete high school at similar rates as students across Colorado (82% in Region 9 compared to 83% statewide). As displayed in Figure 6, completion rates vary across counties. Over the past three years, the completion rate has remained steady for the region and state. In Montezuma-County, the rate has increased from 75% to 79%. The completion rates have decreased in Archuleta and La Plata Counties from 87% to 84% and 82%, respectively. Table 2 presents data by district. These data show more variation, while also demonstrating that most districts' completion rates exceed the state.

Table 2: Completion Rates by District, 2017-2019				
Organization Name	County	2017	2018	2019
Archuleta County 50 Jt	Archuleta	87%	86%	84%
Dolores County RE No.2	Dolores	82%	100%	87%
Bayfield 10 Jt-R	La Plata	96%	93%	95%
Durango 9-R	La Plata	86%	84%	88%
Ignacio 11 JT	La Plata	78%	83%	73%
Animas HS	La Plata	89%	92%	94%
Dolores RE-4A	Montezuma	80%	85%	89%
Mancos Re-6	Montezuma	97%	93%	100%
Montezuma-Cortez RE-1	Montezuma	71%	72%	75%
Silverton 1	San Juan	50%	0%	100%
REGION	-	83%	82%	82%
STATE TOTALS	-	81%	83%	83%

1. District data excludes online and supplemental schools.

2. Silverton data impacted by low student counts.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

In addition to graduation rates, districts and schools utilize other metrics to determine progress towards goals, identify areas of strength and improvement, and ensure effective and equitable access to learning for all students.

<b>Benchmark</b>	Accreditation Ratings
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How are districts and schools in the region rated? What data are incorporated into these ratings?



Most schools in the region are rated as Performance, indicating similar outcomes compared to other schools in the state.

As the standard framework for accountability and support, all districts and schools in Colorado receive an accreditation rating from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). By incorporating state assessment performance, graduation rates, and college matriculation, these ratings offer a broad picture of district and school performance. Furthermore, these frameworks disaggregate student performance by key demographics subgroups (i.e., English learners, students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, minority students, and students with disabilities). Accreditation ratings maintain accountability and intend to help the state, districts, and schools prioritize key areas for support and improvement.

Table 3 shows that the majority of districts and schools, as of 2019, received the Performance rating. A third of districts and schools have been identified as Improvement or Priority Improvement. The state provides additional support to districts/schools with lower designations, while also increasing the monitoring of these districts/schools.

**Table 3: Accreditation Ratings for Districts and Schools in Region 9 (2019)**

BY DISTRICT		BY SCHOOL	
Rating	# of Districts	Rating	# of Schools
Distinction	0 (0%)	-	-
Performance	6 (67%)	Performance	29 (64%)
Improvement	2 (22%)	Improvement	10 (22%)
Priority Improvement	1 (11%)	Priority Improvement	6 (13%)
Turnaround	0 (0%)	Turnaround	0 (0%)

1. Ratings for schools charted by the Charter School Institute (i.e., Mountain Middle and Animas High Schools) only included in school data. In addition to CDE's ratings, CSI utilizes an additional accountability framework with its schools. In 2019, Mountain Middle received a rating of Performance with Distinction (a fifth level added by CSI) and Animas High School received a rating of Performance.

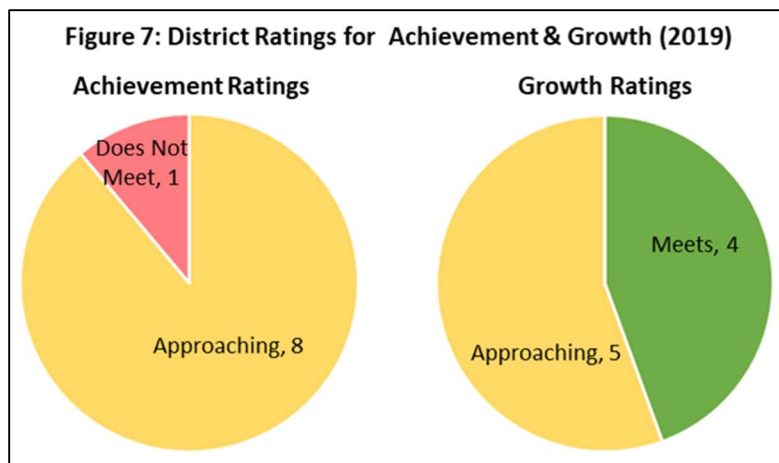
2. Ratings for two schools in Mancos School District not provided due to insufficient data.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

Accreditation ratings distinguish achievement and growth of students on state assessments. Achievement measures student performance at a point in time (i.e., whether the student is at grade-level by the end of the school year). We examine these data in the next section. The growth metrics included in accreditation ratings measure student progress from one year to the next. By utilizing both types of data, we understand the number of students demonstrating proficiency and how students are progressing to proficiency.

When examined by the four rating levels (Figure 7), districts in the region mainly fall into Approaching for achievement. For Growth, nearly half of districts received Meets in 2019.

For additional information on accreditation ratings by district and school, please visit CDE District and School Performance Frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

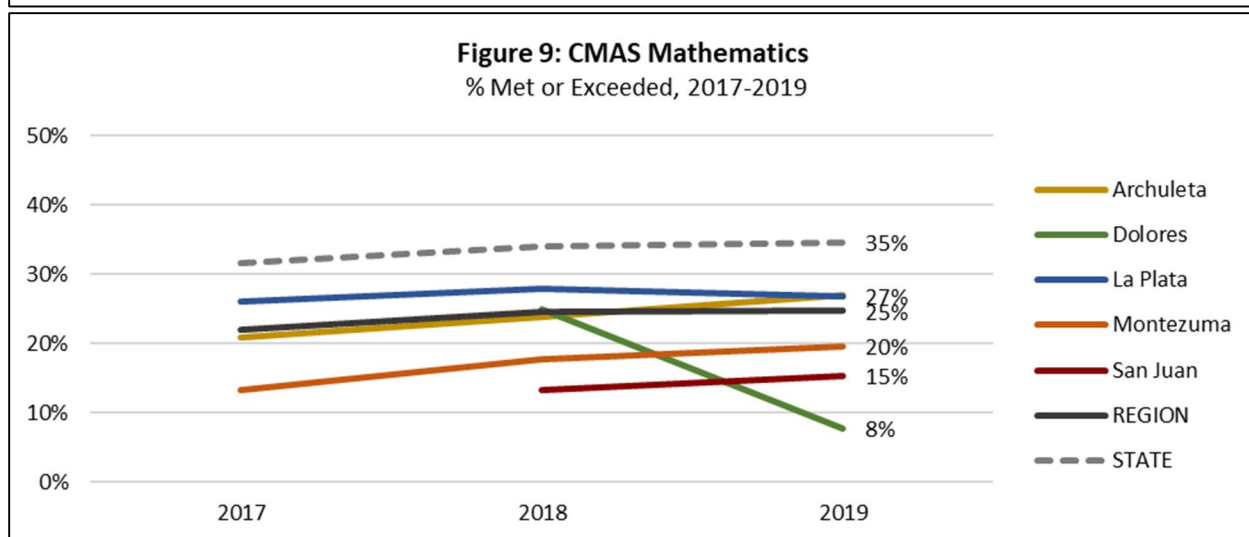
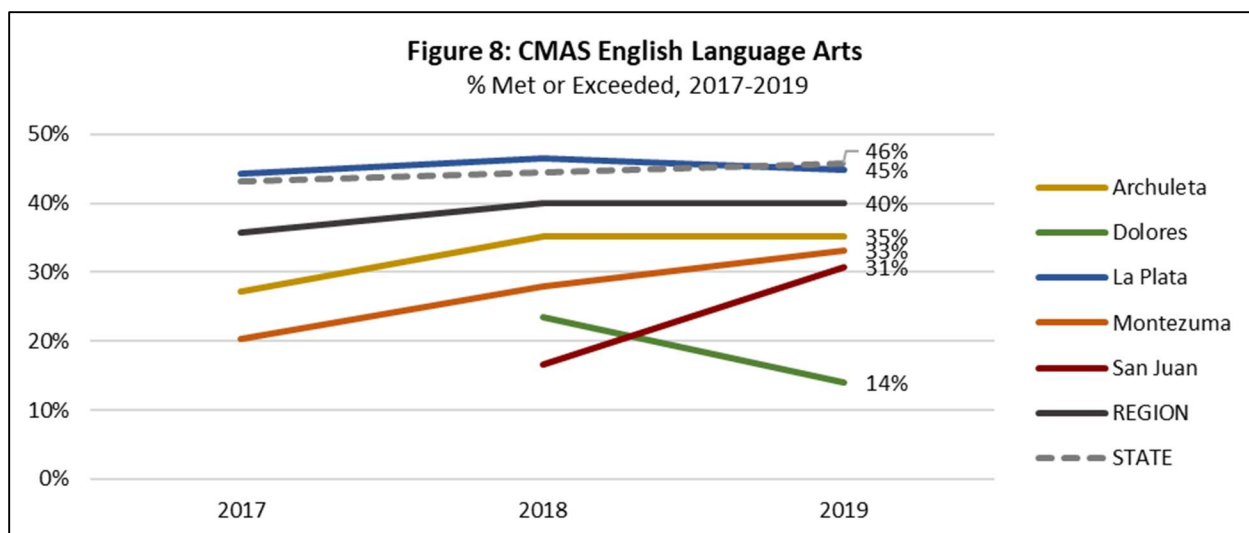


Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

Benchmark	Performance on State Assessments
?	How do students perform on state assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics?
→	Passing rates on the assessments in the region improved in recent years. However, they still fall below the state.

All students in grades 3 through 8 in Colorado public schools take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. These assessments, administered typically in March/April of each school year, intend to measure student proficiency according to Colorado academic standards. As a key purpose, CMAS assessments offer common tools to measure student performance across the state and within a district/school. Because all students within a grade take the same subject test, we can compare results across student populations (school v. district v. state, across demographic subgroups). Achievement and growth metrics, as discussed above, are provided in CMAS results. In this section, we examine an achievement metric, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations (according to the standards) on CMAS.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworks>



1. Due to low participation, no data from Mancos School District is included for Montezuma County.

2. 2017 data for Dolores and San Juan County omitted due to low participation.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

As of Spring 2019, 40% of students in the region met or exceeded expectations in ELA and 25% of students in the region met or exceeded expectations in math (Figures 8 and 9). These rates are consistent to 2018, though slightly higher than 2017. When compared to the state, the percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA and math is lower in the region (40% in region v. 46% statewide for ELA, 25% in region v. 35% statewide for math). In ELA and math, most counties are improving or maintaining their rates, following state trends. Archuleta, Montezuma and San Juan Counties demonstrate notable increases (more than 5%) in ELA and math, while Dolores County's rate decreased from 2018 to 2019. Table 4 provides CMAS performance by district.

**Table 4: Percent Met or Exceeded on CMAS by District/School, 2017-2019**

District/School	English Language Arts			Mathematics		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Archuleta County 50 Jt	27%	35%	35%	21%	24%	27%
Dolores County RE No.2	-	24%	14%	-	25%	8%
Bayfield 10 Jt-R	38%	43%	39%	25%	24%	20%
Durango 9-R	49%	49%	47%	28%	31%	30%
Ignacio 11 JT	21%	25%	22%	10%	11%	9%
Mountain MS	58%	70%	73%	37%	37%	46%
Dolores RE-4A	17%	32%	38%	15%	25%	27%
Mancos Re-6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Montezuma-Cortez RE-1	21%	27%	32%	13%	16%	17%
Silverton 1	-	17%	31%	-	13%	15%
REGION	36%	40%	40%	22%	25%	25%
STATE TOTALS	43%	45%	46%	32%	34%	35%

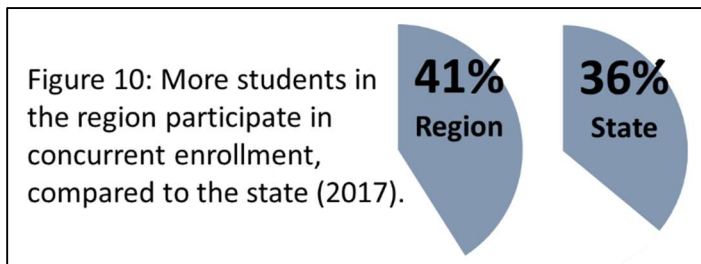
1. Due to low participation, data for Mancos and 2017 data for Dolores County omitted.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

<b>Benchmark</b>	Concurrent Enrollment
?	How are high school students preparing for college and career? Are students taking college-level courses in high school?
→	41% of students in regional high schools participate in concurrent enrollment, exceeding the state (36%).

Within the K-12 education system, a student's path to college and career culminates in high school. To advance student preparedness, high schools in the region offer college-level courses to students. In addition to other programs (e.g., Advanced Placement, Career Technical Education), concurrent enrollment courses expose students to advanced content and provide students college credit. By earning credit in high school, students may save money in college tuition. Furthermore, studies have shown that students that participate in concurrent enrollment while in high school continue to college, and stay in college, at higher rates.<sup>6</sup>

As of 2017, 41% of high school students in the region participated in concurrent enrollment, exceeding the state average (36%) (Figure 10). Since 2017, additional programs have been initiated. Notably, Pueblo Community College (PCC) now maintains three campuses with two in La Plata County (Durango High School and Bayfield School District) and one in Montezuma County.



Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

<sup>6</sup> Annual Report on Concurrent Enrollment, 2017-2018 Academic Year, Colorado Department of Higher Education [https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2018/2018\\_Concurrent\\_Enrollment\\_April\\_2019.pdf](https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2018/2018_Concurrent_Enrollment_April_2019.pdf)

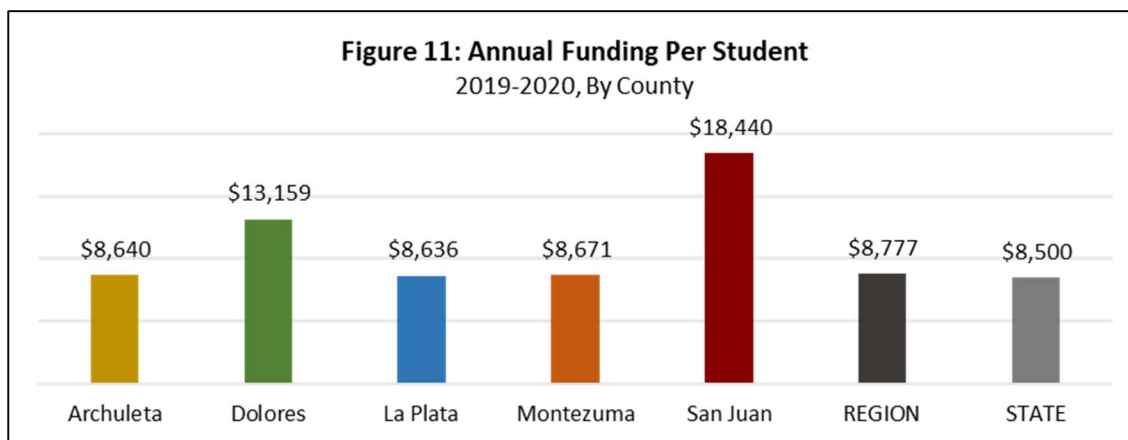
## SYSTEM COMPONENTS & SUPPORTS

<b>Benchmark</b>	School Funding & Spending
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? How much money do districts receive from the state? How do they spend these funds?

→ Regional funding and spending compares to the state, though varies by county.

Colorado public schools primarily receive funding from the state, based on a formula related to student enrollment. Most school districts also receive money via local, state and/or federal grants for special programs. In addition, some school districts are successful in passing new taxes for capital construction or operations, or for mill-levy overrides. As evidenced by Dolores and San Juan Counties in our region, smaller rural school districts receive more funding per student than larger school districts (Figure 11).



1. Averages for region, La Plata, and Montezuma weighted based on student count.

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

To offer insight into how districts spend their money, Table 5 shows key operation expenditures. For these main categories, spending in our region compares to the state.

<b>Table 5: Key Operational Expenditures (2018)</b>	<i>Region</i>	<i>State</i>
Teacher Salaries & Benefits.....	33%	35%
School & District Administration .....	6%	7%
Operations & Maintenance.....	7%	7%
Student Transportation.....	3%	2%
Food Services.....	2%	2%

1. Teacher salaries and benefits include only main teachers and instructional staff working with classroom.

2. CSI school data not included.

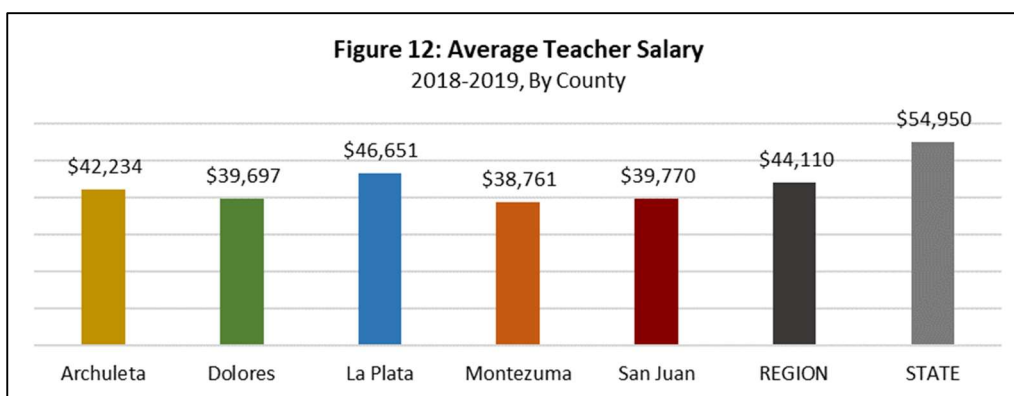
Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)



<b>Benchmark</b>	Teacher Salaries
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- ? How much are teachers paid in our region? Do their salaries compare to the state?
- On average, teachers receive a salary of \$44,110, significantly below the state average.

As of the 2018-19 school year, districts in the region employed 1,011 teachers. In the five counties, the school districts represent either the first or second employer, as measured by number of employees.<sup>7</sup> As demonstrated in Figure 12, the average teacher salary in the region, as of the 2018-19 school year, was \$44,110. Though consistently well below the state average, teacher salaries vary across the counties. When compared to livable wages examined by Region 9, average teacher salaries in all but Dolores County exceed the livable wage for one adult but fall below the livable wage for one adult with a preschooler.<sup>8</sup>



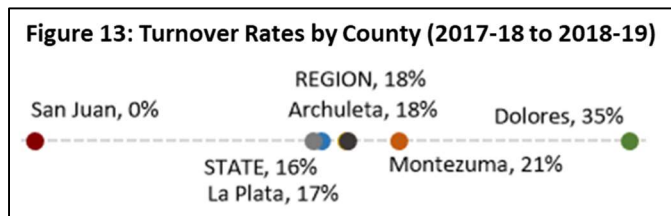
1. Averages for region, La Plata, and Montezuma weighted based on teacher count.  
Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

<b>Benchmark</b>	Teacher Turnover
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- ? How often do teachers leave their positions in local districts?
- The turnover rate in our region (18% for the 2018-19 school year) compares to the state.

As presented in Figure 13, from the 2017-18 to 2018-19 school years, 18% of teachers in our region did not stay in their positions. This rate is comparable to the state and varies across the counties.

Our region, the state of Colorado, and the country continue to encounter a teacher shortage. Often, school and district administrators will report the school year



Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

<sup>7</sup> Economic Snapshot 2019, Region 9 <https://www.scan.org/uploads/Final - Economic Snapshot 2019-4.pdf>

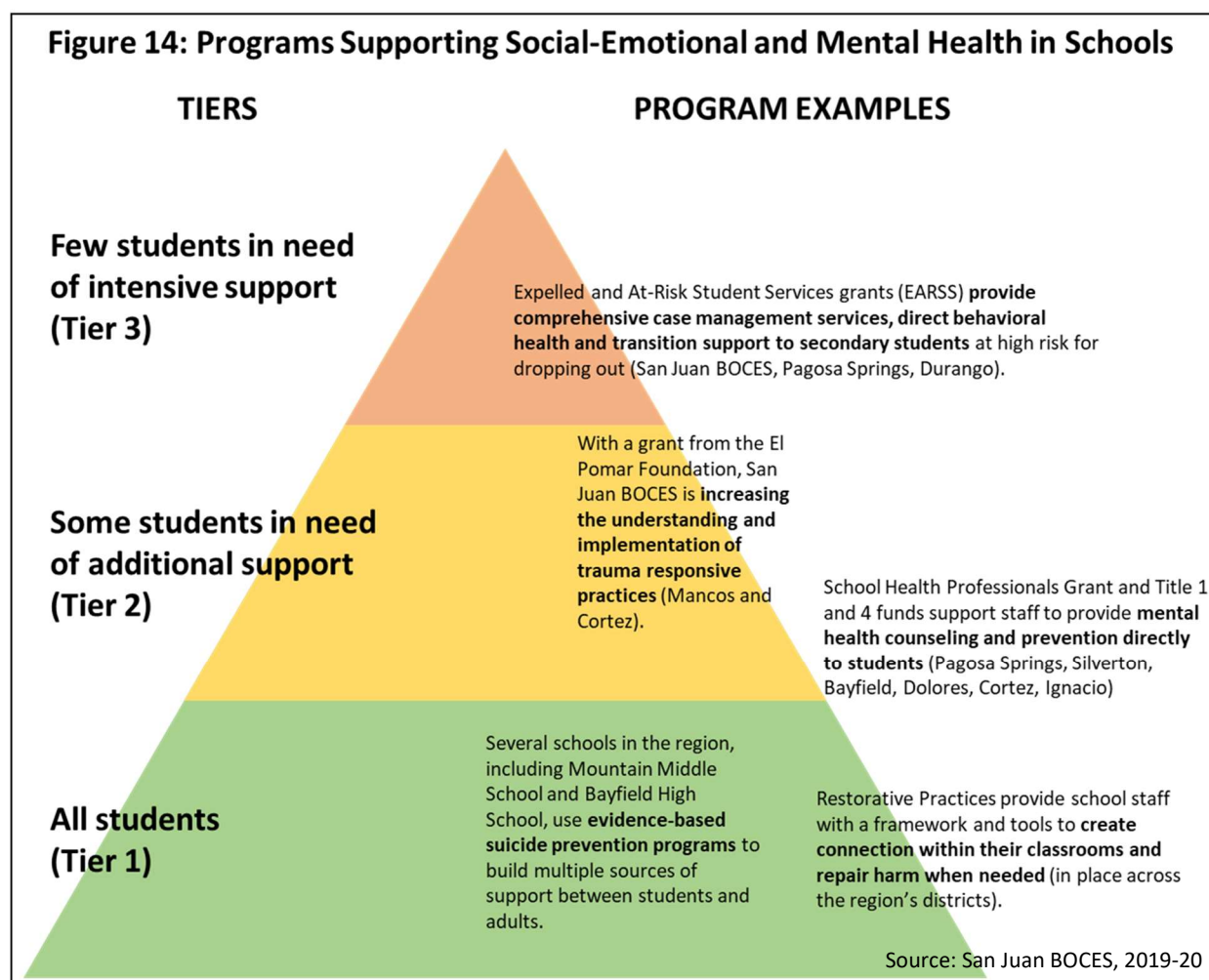
<sup>8</sup> Livable Wages Report, Region 9; see previous link

starting without all teaching positions filled.<sup>9</sup> Exacerbated by our rural geography, local districts and agencies maintain a focus on strategies to retain and recruit teachers. Alternative licensure programs promote new teachers in our region. At times by leveraging new state policies or passing mill levy overrides, districts continually explore methods to increase teacher salaries and/or satisfaction.

<b>Benchmark</b>	Social-Emotional, Mental & Physical Supports
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- ?
- How do schools support the social-emotional, mental, and physical health of students?
- All districts and schools in our region offer support to students with a variety of schoolwide and individualized programs.

K-12 schools increasingly focus on monitoring and developing the social-emotional and mental health of students. Schools utilize a variety of strategies to promote positive student behavior and help students move through challenges. By attenuating to these needs of students alongside their academic development, schools help build well-rounded adults to contribute to society.



<sup>9</sup> Colorado Public Radio <https://www.cpr.org/2017/09/14/colorados-rural-school-districts-are-getting-pinched-in-the-teacher-salary-game/>

All schools in the five counties implement strategies to promote student social-emotional and mental health. In each district, support staff, including counselors, social workers, and school administrators, coordinate these strategies with students and teachers. Schools leverage funds from additional grants to increase the number of staff available. At the foundation of this work, school-wide programs offer learning experiences and screening tools to all students around social-emotional health. Building from this foundation, intervention strategies of different frequency and intensity are used with students in need of additional support. Figure 14 highlights several strategies in place in our region's schools.

In addition to promoting the social-emotional and mental health of students, schools maintain efforts to maintain and enhance the physical health of students. In addition to traditional activities like recess and physical education (PE) classes, teachers incorporate movement breaks into their classroom practices. Table 6 shows key physical health activities in schools.

<b>Table 6: Percent of schools with physical health practices/policies (2019)</b>		
<i>Practice/Policy</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>State</i>
Offer an average of 30 minutes physical activity each day	90%	88%
Require physical education (PE) for all students	90%	85%
Maintain a school health team or wellness committee	68%	72%

Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

<b>Benchmark</b>	School Safety
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How do schools ensure student safety?



All districts and schools in the region practice safety drills and protocols, as well as offer the Safe2Tell program.

Schools maintain student safety at the highest priority. Using many of the programs mentioned above, educators aim to ensure schools feel safe for students. Furthermore, drills and protocols are practiced routinely to increase awareness and preparedness.



Another strategy in place across the region to promote student safety is the Safe2Tell program. In addition to offering resources for advocacy and education, the program offers “an anonymous method for students, parents, school staff and community members to report concerns regarding their safety or the safety of other.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Safe2Tell <https://safe2tell.org/?q=about-us>

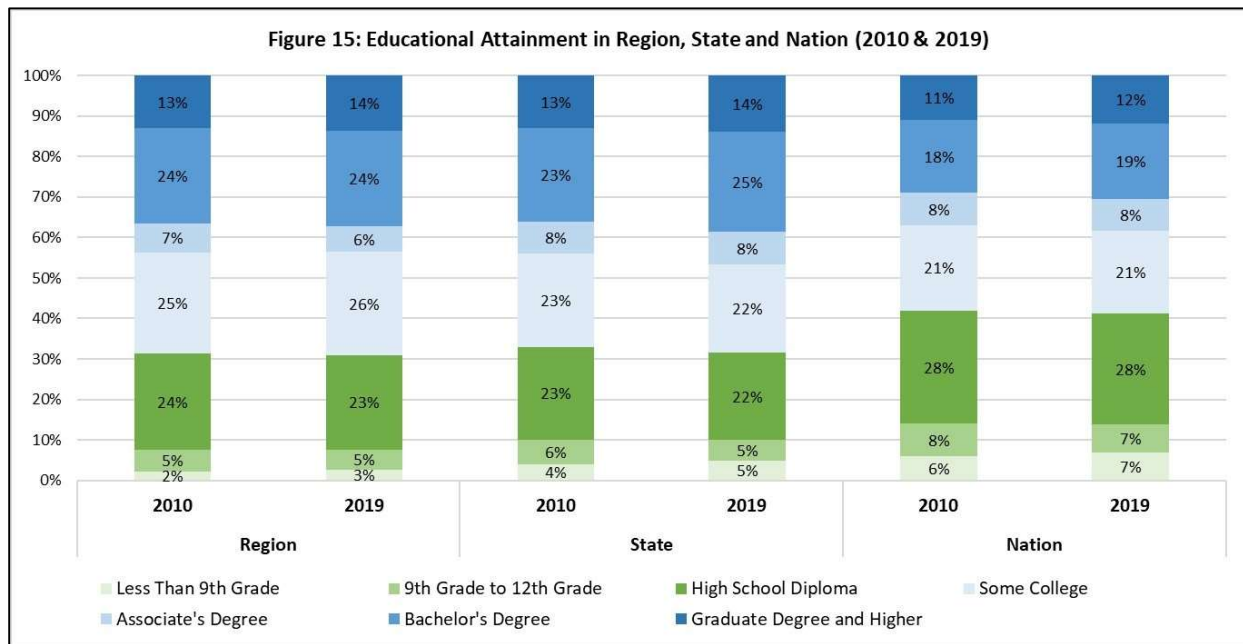
## C. HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education institutions, through the degrees and certifications offered to students, build advanced knowledge and skills in students, increasing the employability and robustness of the regional talent pipeline. As the final stage, these institutions continue from the education provided in K-12 schools, enhancing a student's preparedness to enter the workforce.

 <b>North Star</b>	Educational Attainment Levels
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-  What are the levels of educational attainment in our region? What percentage of residents have a college degree?
-  In 2019, 44% of region residents have a higher education degree, consistent from 2010 and slightly below the state (47%).

The levels of educational attainment in a region directly relate to its economic health. A workforce with the skills and credentials to contribute to local businesses and organizations promotes a viable, sustainable and diverse economy. As of 2019, 44% of the region residents have a higher education degree (Associate's, Bachelor's or Graduate Degree) (Figure 15). Though slightly lagging the state (47%), more students in the region graduate from high school and continue to college when compared to the nation (39%). While the state experienced some shifts from 2010 to 2019, the region's levels of educational attainment stayed consistent. Table 7 presents data by county, with Archuleta, La Plata, and San Juan Counties demonstrating higher rates of college degree attainment.



Source: American Community Survey

**Table 7: Educational Attainment Levels by County (2010 & 2019)**

	Archuleta		Dolores		La Plata		Montezuma		San Juan	
	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019	2010	2019
<b>Less Than 9th Grade</b>	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%
<b>9th to 12th Grade</b>	5%	7%	9%	8%	4%	3%	8%	7%	1%	1%
<b>High School Diploma</b>	27%	21%	36%	38%	19%	20%	30%	30%	25%	33%
<b>Some College</b>	24%	23%	26%	27%	25%	26%	26%	27%	32%	20%
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	6%	7%	9%	7%	7%	6%	7%	5%	9%	6%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	24%	26%	12%	10%	28%	26%	16%	18%	24%	29%
<b>Graduate Degree +</b>	13%	14%	6%	8%	15%	16%	10%	9%	6%	6%

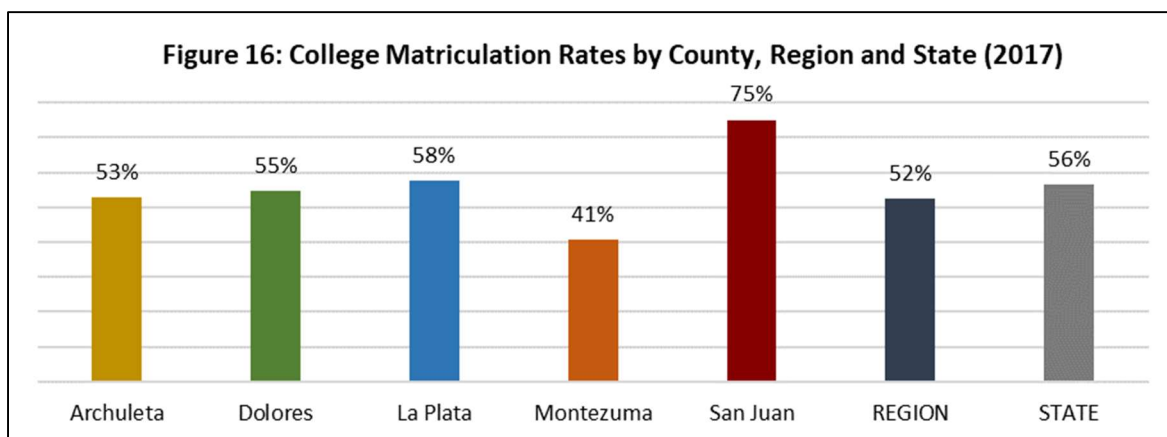
Source: American Community Survey

<b>Benchmark</b>	College Matriculation for Regional High School Graduates
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- What percentage of students from our regional high schools enroll in college?
- 52% of high school graduates matriculated in college in 2017, lower than the state (56%).

An indicator of our region's overall educational attainment is the rate of college matriculation of regional high school graduates. Many of these students stay local for college (see next section). Regardless of where they attend college, and whether they attend a two- or four-year program, students may return to the region after obtaining their degree or certification.

As of 2017, 52% of high school graduates matriculated in college, slightly lower than the state (56%) (Figure 16). This rates varies significantly by county.



Source: Colorado Department of Education (CDE)


<b>Benchmark</b>	Local Higher Education Institutions
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? What access to higher education do we have in the region? How many students attend and graduate from these institutions?

→ Enrollment at Fort Lewis College has decreased in recent years.

Our region has two primary higher education institutions, Fort Lewis College and Pueblo Community College. Additionally, residents can travel to northwest New Mexico to attend San Juan College. These institutions promote higher education attainment by 1) offering regional high school graduates a local option to pursue a higher education degree or certification and 2) infusing higher education graduates into regional economy. Table 8 provides key data on enrollment and degrees/certifications awarded at Fort Lewis College (Data not available for the Southwest campus of Pueblo Community College).

**Table 8: Fort Lewis College Enrollment and Degrees/Certifications Awarded**

	Student Enrollment			Degrees/Certifications Awarded		
	2010	2014	2017	2010	2015	2019
 FORT LEWIS COLLEGE	3,853	3,775	3,320	683	667	685

Source: Colorado Department of Higher Education

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this report, we have presented a wide range of metrics on the state of the education system in Southwest Colorado, encompassing early childhood care centers, K-12 schools, and higher education institutions. In addition to focusing on high school completion and regional educational attainment, schools maintain a multitude of priorities to promote the development and well-being of students and staff. By understanding the performance of students and schools across all these metrics, we become more familiar with our education system and how it impacts our broader economic health.

### *Acknowledgements:*

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