



# COLORADO

## Governor Jared Polis

Governor Polis is passionate about supporting our kids and schools because he knows that Colorado's children are the future of this state. Governor Polis began his public career in education, getting elected to the State Board of Education in 2000 on which he later served as Vice-Chair and Chair during his six year term. He also founded New America School, a school for immigrant and at-risk children and Academy of Urban Learning. Since taking office, Governor Polis has made it one of his administration's top priorities to improve our education system by investing in Colorado students and educators. These past two years have been challenging for Colorado students and schools across the country. **Governor Polis is proud of Colorado's track record of success in safely returning to in-person education in 2020 earlier than many states.** The Polis administration is doing everything possible to provide a safe, consistent learning experience so that our children can thrive.

**This year, Governor Polis is going bigger and bolder with the urgency of saving people money and making Colorado more affordable while making historical investments in our schools.**

### **FY 2022-23 Budget includes Historic Investments in Education:**

#### **K-12:**

- Our students and public schools are the foundation of Colorado's future and Governor Polis is proud that this budget increases funding for K-12 education by \$381.2 million in FY 2022-23. This includes a significant investment to reduce the Budget Stabilization Factor by \$150 million to 4.7%, an all-time low since its peak of 16.0% in FY 2012-13, and increases per pupil funding by \$526 to historic levels. It also proposes to pre-pay an additional \$300 million to the State Education Fund in order to maintain this new, higher level of investment in our K-12 schools.

#### **Pre-K:**

- The new Department of Early Childhood will prepare for the launch of Colorado's Universal Preschool program, which will provide at least 10 hours per week of free, high-quality preschool to all four-year-olds. It will also streamline the application process for early childhood programs to increase access to services for all families through an equitable and transparent approach. With an initial investment of \$13 million, of which \$5.1 million is General Fund, this request is the initial response to the Transition Report, and is a direct result of the H.B. 21-1304 Transition Working Group and the Transition Advisory Group's significant stakeholder work to set the Department of Early Childhood up for success this year and for years to come.
- **\$10M increase in state funding for CSI mill levy equalization** in efforts to ensure that those attending district schools and Charter School Institute schools have access to the same public resources within their geographic regions.

- **\$2M increase in state funding for new resources for school improvement** to expand access to existing and new evidence-based supports for schools identified as underperforming under the Colorado state accountability system.
- **\$0.5M increase in state funding for empowering parents with school information** to contribute to improvements in data quality, accessibility, and transparency in the State's school and district dashboard, SchoolView.

### **Investing Federal Education Funding**

- Colorado received \$1.166 billion in funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) for K-12 public school education. Of that amount, over \$1 billion will go out as direct aid to districts to support schools with a variety of needs, with at least 20% dedicated to combat unfinished learning.
- In 2020, the state received \$44 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding for school districts, schools, and institutions of higher education, and other education-related entities to address the impact of COVID-19. These dollars helped fund innovative collaboration between school districts, public schools, and public institutions of higher education serving high-needs students in order to help prevent and address unfinished learning and support excellence and equity.

### **2021 Legislative Accomplishments**

- **HB19-1262, State Funding For Full-day Kindergarten**: In 2019, Governor Polis made it a priority to pass the long-awaited legislation providing free, full-day kindergarten to every child in Colorado. Families across the state were having to choose between sending their child to kindergarten or saving for their college education, and some families simply couldn't afford it. Governor Polis worked with Republican and Democratic legislators to pass this historic legislation helping Colorado families.
- **SB21-185 "Supporting Educator Workforce in Colorado"**: In 2021, Governor Polis signed a critical piece of legislation to address Colorado's teacher shortage. Over 80 education leaders and organizations came together to work with the state to improve and expand the ways in which individuals can become educators. Not only does it give professionals more ways to enter the teaching profession, but it also invests funds in mental and behavioral health services for educators.
- **SB21-119 "Increasing Access to High-Quality Credentials"**: This legislation expanded the effective Career Development Success Program, taking a large stride towards the goal of ensuring that every Colorado student ultimately has the ability to graduate with a high-quality credential, advanced coursework, or college credit. The Governor has made postsecondary affordability and access a key priority of his administration.
- **HB21-1234 "Supplemental Education High-Impact Tutoring Programs"**: One of the many strategies taken by the state to address the impacts of the pandemic on student learning, this legislation invests \$5 million dollars into the creation of a high-impact tutoring grant program to address the learning gaps exacerbated by COVID-19.

### **How Governor Polis is Working to Make Classroom Safer During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

- **Governor Polis is proud of Colorado's track record of success in safely returning to in-person education in 2020 earlier than many states.** Governor Polis is working closely with school districts, education leaders, and public health experts to provide

layered protections so that students could get back into the classroom safely and quickly. Remote and hybrid learning had a significant impact on students, particularly our youngest children, educators, and families.

- Free Mask Delivery for Every Student and Educator in Colorado: The Polis administration will continue delivering free KN95 and surgical masks for students and educators across the state. Since launching in August of 2020, the State has delivered nearly 8 Million masks to a combination of 412 school districts, and public, private and charter schools, including more than 4 Million surgical masks and 3.8 Million KN95s.
- Free Testing in Colorado Schools: The State of Colorado is providing free, voluntary, and rapid COVID-19 testing on a weekly basis to all Colorado K-12 schools for the 2021-22 school year. This program is available to all public, private, charter, and tribal schools in the state who choose to enroll, and will include testing for both students and staff. Schools are able to select a full service option, where a state contractor will provide all services needed to implement rapid testing, including staffing, or they can choose a direct shipping option, where schools will be provided all of the testing supplies, training and technology, but have the option to implement the program in a way that works best for them. Schools can sign up at [covid19.colorado.gov/free-testing-schools](https://covid19.colorado.gov/free-testing-schools).