

Rural Centered

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Colorado Center for Rural Education

November 2022

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SWCEC Executive Director Jessica Morrison presents the new environmental science van, which educators will take in the field to help students learn more about climate change.

How Collaborative High School Pathway Programs Help Rural Students Find Their Way

The [Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative](#) (SWCEC) is a regional collaboration of local school districts, higher education institutions, and businesses. It builds career and college pathways for students in the isolated communities of southwestern Colorado. When given equal access to educational opportunities more readily available to their urban counterparts, these students can build a foundation for an economically viable future.

SWCEC provides access to shared equipment, resources, and a project-based curriculum. [Silverton School](#), with a student population of 84, is a member of the SWCEC. Its leaders developed an innovative education model that supports each student's individualized learning path. Take Selene Rhoades, a senior at Silverton School. The administrators at Silverton School helped Selene match her talents and interests with the Teacher Education career path.



Selene Rhoades, seated, attends Silverton School and plans to become an educator.

To that end, Rhoades is enrolled this fall in a course offered by Fort Lewis College. Her cohort includes peers from Durango High School, which is located an hour away over two mountain passes. Rhoades attends the class twice a week, in person or online, and completes her practicum hours at Silverton School one day a week.

Elizabeth Barszcz, the principal at Silverton Public School, said that their partnership with SWCEC has pushed the school to develop even more post-secondary opportunities for their high school students. In addition to Rhoades working toward a career as an educator, two Silverton seniors are taking dual enrollment courses at Fort Lewis College, one is completing a welding certificate at Pueblo Community College, and another is in a building trades work-study program. "We offer personalized learning pathways for each student," said Barszcz. "We help students build character, master skills, and produce high-quality work, all in a respectful and safe environment."

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Education is one of SWCEC's five career and college pathways. The others include:

- Building Trades,
- Environmental,
- Hospitality/Tourism, and
- Health Sciences.



Students dig potatoes in the community garden at Silverton School.

The first members of the SWCEC were five school districts (Silverton, Bayfield, Durango, Pagosa Springs, and Ignacio), plus [Pueblo Community College](#) and [Fort Lewis College](#). By all accounts, the first two years of the organization's existence have been a success. It has brought more than \$8 million to the southwest region of Colorado for the purpose of building shared systems for rural school districts. Four additional districts (Montezuma-Cortez, Dolores, Dove Creek, and Mancos) plan to become members of SWCEC in the future.

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Jessica Morrison, SWCEC Executive Director, said, "We are excited to lead an innovative project that gives our students access to an equitable education, regardless of their zip code. So far, the cooperation and collaboration between school districts, higher education institutions, and industry has been astounding. I am constantly amazed by the energy and commitment that people from across our region bring to the table. Together, we are building a viable future workforce."

UPCOMING APPLICATION TIMELINES

[Colorado Substitute Stipend](#) applications accepted:
Ongoing

[Ongoro Rural \(Student\) Teaching Stipend](#) applications for fall 2023 accepted:
December 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023

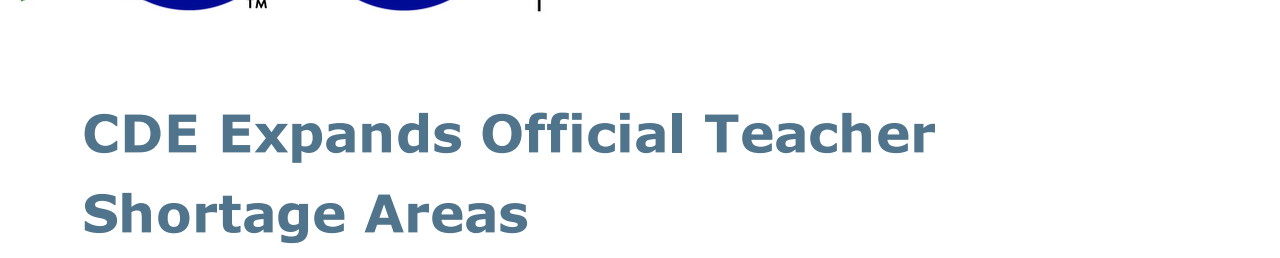
[National Board Certified Teacher Stipend](#) applications accepted:
January 1, 2023 through April 30, 2023

[Rural In-service Educator Stipend](#) applications for fall 2023 accepted:
May 1, 2023 through August 31, 2023

[Special Services Provider Stipend](#) applications for fall 2023 accepted:
May 1, 2023 through August 31, 2023

Visit TEACH Colorado's [Financial Aid and Scholarship Information](#) page for information about additional scholarships.

For financial aid available to in-service and aspiring educators, download the Colorado Department of Education's [Educator Recruitment and District Supports flyer](#).



CDE Expands Official Teacher Shortage Areas

You May Now Be Eligible for \$10K in Financial Assistance

In August 2022, the State Board of Education confirmed the 2022–23 Educator Shortage Areas. Based on district reports of unfilled or hard-to-fill positions last school year and updated guidance from the federal government regarding how to calculate shortage areas, the list of shortage areas has expanded. This change may increase the number of educator candidates and current educators who could qualify for financial incentives.

The [Educator Recruitment and Retention \(ERR\) Program](#) supports the recruitment, selection, training, and retention of highly qualified educators across the state. Qualified program applicants can apply for up to \$10,000 in one-time financial assistance toward their educator preparation program costs if they commit to teaching in a shortage area for three years. Applicants must already be enrolled in a state-approved preparation program to qualify.

For the 2022–23 school year thus far, the Colorado Department of Education has awarded \$3.2 million of ERR Program funds to more than 500 educators. The CDE has received a large number of requests and is spending down available funds quickly, so qualifying applicants should apply as soon as possible. Contact educator_recruitment@cde.state.co.us for more information.

Our Featured Partners

Western Colorado University

Western Colorado University's 100% [online teacher preparation program](#) allows adults to complete their degrees and obtain a teaching license. The program is entirely online and allows individuals to maintain their existing employment while attending classes.

TEACH Colorado

[TEACH Colorado](#) provides licensure coaching; resume, cover letter, and testing guides; additional financial reimbursements; and scholarships to non-licensed school staff, high-school students, career changers, and all others who are interested in teaching.

Colorado BOCES Association

The [Colorado Boards of Cooperative Educational Services \(BOCES\) Association](#) provides educational services to two or more school districts that alone cannot afford the service, or find it advantageous and cost-effective to cooperate with other districts.

Regis University

[Regis University](#) offers 100% online teacher licensure programs for those with a college degree and those seeking degree completion. Programs are available for elementary education, secondary education, and special education. Attend a virtual information session for more information. Contact the [Student Success Coach](#) for more information.

CU-Boulder

The University of Colorado at Boulder offers an online [Teacher Leadership Program](#). Students earn stackable graduate certificates in subjects such as "Social and Emotional Learning" and "Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students" that can lead to an MA in Teacher Leadership.

Colorado Department of Education

As the administrative arm of the State Board of Education, the [Colorado Department of Education](#) is responsible for implementing state and federal education laws, disbursing state and federal funds, holding schools and districts accountable for performance, licensing all educators, and providing public transparency of performance and financial data.

Contact Us

The [Colorado Center for Rural Education](#) supports educators by providing financial support to pre- and in-service teachers and special services providers. Visit our [website](#) for more information about our mission and available [stipends](#).

Robert Fulton, PhD
State Coordinator
Robert.Fulton@unco.edu
Connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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Colorado Center for Rural Education at the University of Northern Colorado
McKee Hall 103 | 501 20th Street | Campus Box 106 | Greeley, Colorado 80639

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