



## Alternative Education Campus Demographics and Enrollment Trends

In Colorado, there is a foundation of legislation and strong state leadership to support at-risk students in a multitude of ways. The state manages grant programs and a process for designating schools as alternative education campuses (AECs). There have been between 87 and 94 AECs in Colorado that serve between 29,000 and 30,000 students in each year.

State law created in 2025 (HB25-1167) requires CDE to complete an annual report on AEC year-round enrollment trends, including student demographics and groups. This report includes changes beyond the official October count date and transfers into and out of AECs. Data included in this fact sheet analysis are from the 2021-22 (90 AECs), 2022-23 (87 AECs), and 2023-24 (94 AECs) Student October collection and the Student End-of-Year collection.

### Student Demographics

Over the past three years Colorado AECs have primarily served 14- to 19-year-olds (about 91.3 percent of students served) who are majority male and Hispanic (Charts 1 - 3) which is a higher percentage than the state. The state student population is about half male and about one-third Hispanic. There were also a higher percentage of multilingual learners (an average of 14.2 percent from 2021-22 to 2023-24) and students with individualized education plans (IEPs; an average of 16.1 percent from 2021-22 to 2023-24) served in AECs than are found in the state (an average of 12.6 percent over the last three years for both categories).

#### Students AECs Serve

Through legislation, Colorado has defined alternative education campuses (AECs) as those who have a specialized mission, who have nontraditional methods of instruction delivery, who serve students with severe limitations, and whose student population is comprised of at least 90% "high-risk" students. According to C.R.S 22-6-604.5, high-risk students are those who meet one or more of fifteen conditions:

1. Juvenile delinquent
2. Dropped out of school or habitually truant
3. Expelled from school
4. History of personal drug or alcohol use
5. History of personal street gang involvement
6. History of child abuse or neglect or in foster care
7. Has a parent or guardian in prison
8. Has an IEP
9. Family history of domestic violence
10. Repeated school suspensions
11. Pregnant or parenting
12. Migrant child
13. Homeless child
14. History of mental health disorder, behavioral issue, or experienced significant trauma
15. Over-age/under-credited

Chart 1: Three-year Average Percentage and Number of AEC Students by Age

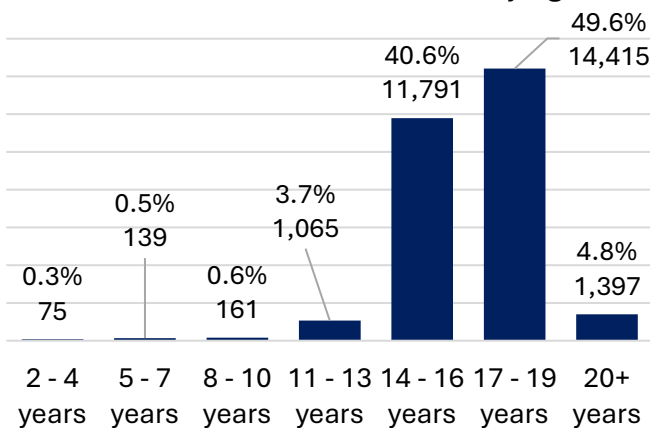
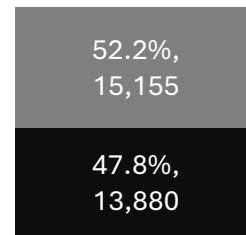


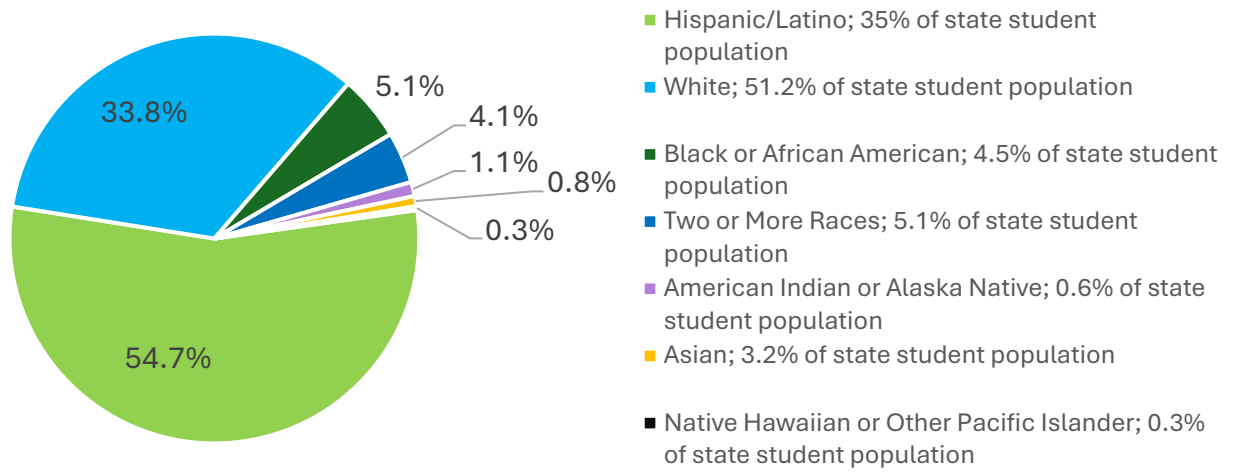
Chart 2: Three-year Average Percentage and Number of AEC Students by Gender



- Male; 51.5% of state student population
- Female; 48.9% of state student population

*Note: Data drawn from the Colorado Department of Education October and Student End of Year collections. Demographic information includes students who attended an AEC at any point in the school year beginning with October Count through the end of the school year.*

Chart 3: Three-year Average Percentage of AEC Student Population by Race / Ethnicity

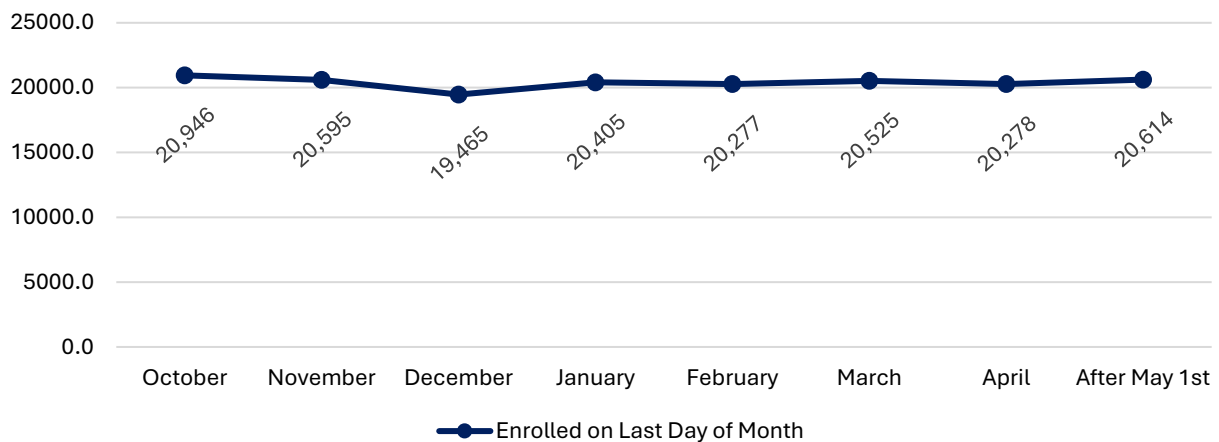


Note: Data drawn from the Colorado Department of Education October and Student End of Year collections. Demographic information includes students who attended an AEC at any point in the school year beginning with October Count through the end of the school year.

### Year-round Enrollment

An examination of enrollment on the last day of every month from October through the end of the school year reveals that the number of students in AECs stays fairly constant throughout the year (**Chart 4**).

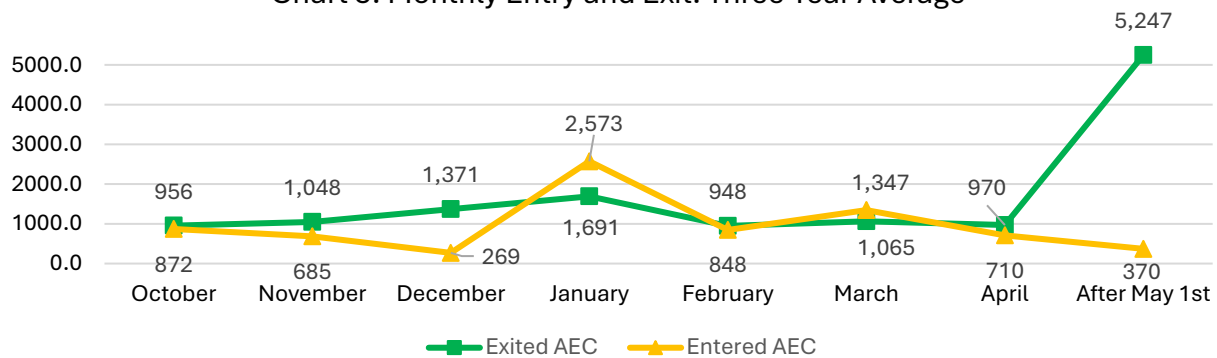
Chart 4: Monthly Enrollment for AECS: Three Year Average



Note: Data drawn from the Colorado Department of Education Student End of Year collection. May and June are grouped together when determining final counts because of the variance in district and school calendars across the state. The total number of students reflected in the "After May 1<sup>st</sup>" count includes students who completed and continued their educations.

An examination of movement in and out of AECs reveals that, on average, AECs experience more students exiting than entering each month with notable exceptions in January and March (**Chart 5**).

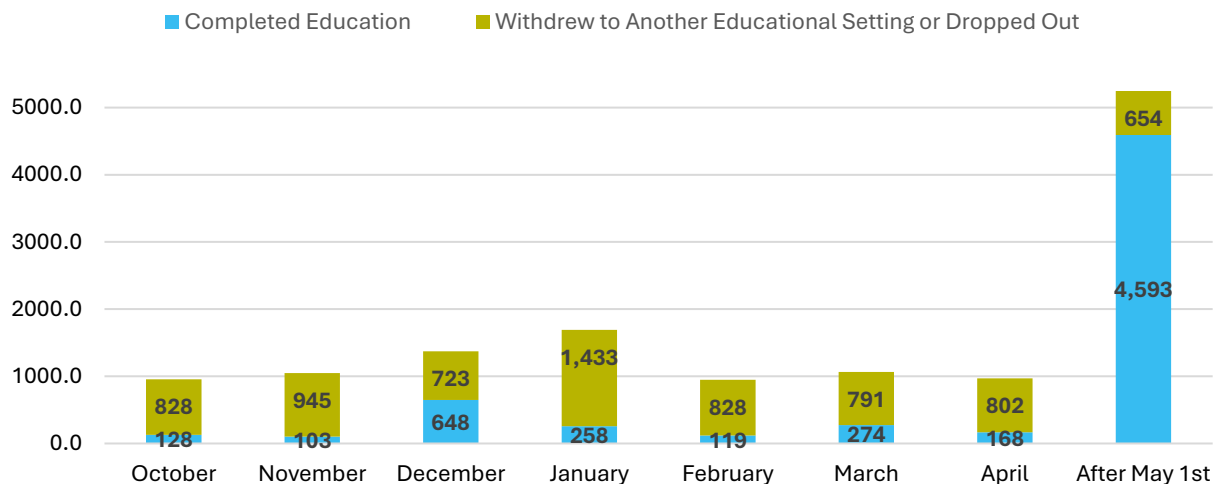
**Chart 5: Monthly Entry and Exit: Three Year Average**



*Note: Data drawn from the Colorado Department of Education Student End of Year collection. Per state board rule, the mobility calculation timeframe focuses on entries and exits that occur from the October Count date to the end of the school year. This timeframe was utilized to prepare the monthly enrollment trends to align with data collection and reporting methodology for student data. May and June are grouped together when determining final counts because of the variance in district and school calendars across the state.*

Students who left an AEC may have transferred to another educational setting or dropped out of school, and a group of students completed their education each month (**Chart 6**). The large jump after May 1st in Charts 5 and 6 includes students who met completion (high school equivalency) and graduation requirements so would be expected to no longer be enrolled. Somewhat dissimilar to other high schools, AECs have students complete and graduate more often throughout the year as they meet requirements.

**Chart 6: Reasons Students Left AECs: Three Year Average**



*Note: Data drawn from the Colorado Department of Education Student End of Year collection. See Chart 5 for additional notes.*