



Southwest  
Colorado  
Education  
Collaborative  
Annual Report

2021 - 2022



# Director's Report



Our first official year of the Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative (SWCEC) marks many exciting milestones, and I am proud to work alongside our school districts, industry leaders, and higher education partners while we work to create opportunities for students in our region together.

A few highlights on the accomplishments that our collaboration have achieved this past year:

- Built out three mobile learning labs for Building Trades and Environmental pathways
- Two new concurrent enrollment classes offered through the Environmental pathway
- Third annual ECI Summer Camp
- First annual Building Trades: Behind the Drywall Summer Camp
- First Building Trades Careers Symposium
- Board of Directors' second annual retreat
- Shared educator learning opportunities across all 5 districts
- Eight work based learning and field studies events

With our first successful year behind us, we now look ahead to the inspiring prospect of expanding to all school districts in the southwest region and adding three additional career and college pathways - Educator, Health Sciences, and Hospitality and Tourism.

Serving as the Executive Director of SWCEC has been a true honor. A special thank you to our Board of Directors and Steering Committee who provide unwavering support to this community, and to our students who continue to lead the way for us all.

In partnership,

Southwest Colorado  
Education Collaborative



**Jessica Morrison**

*Executive Director*

Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative

# Report Sections

01

*Page 1*

Letter from the Director

02

*Page 2*

Our Origins

03

*Page 3*

Our Mission, Vision,  
and Values

04

*Page 4*

Looking Back

05

*Page 5*

Long term  
sustainability

06

*Page 6*

2020-2023  
Strategic Priorities

07

*Page 7*

The Collaborative

08

*Pages 8-11*

Pathways

09

*Page 12*

Looking Forward

10

*Pages 13-15*  
SWCEC by the  
Numbers

11

*Page 16*  
Thank You to Our  
Partners

12

*Page 17*  
SWCEC by the Numbers

# Our Origins

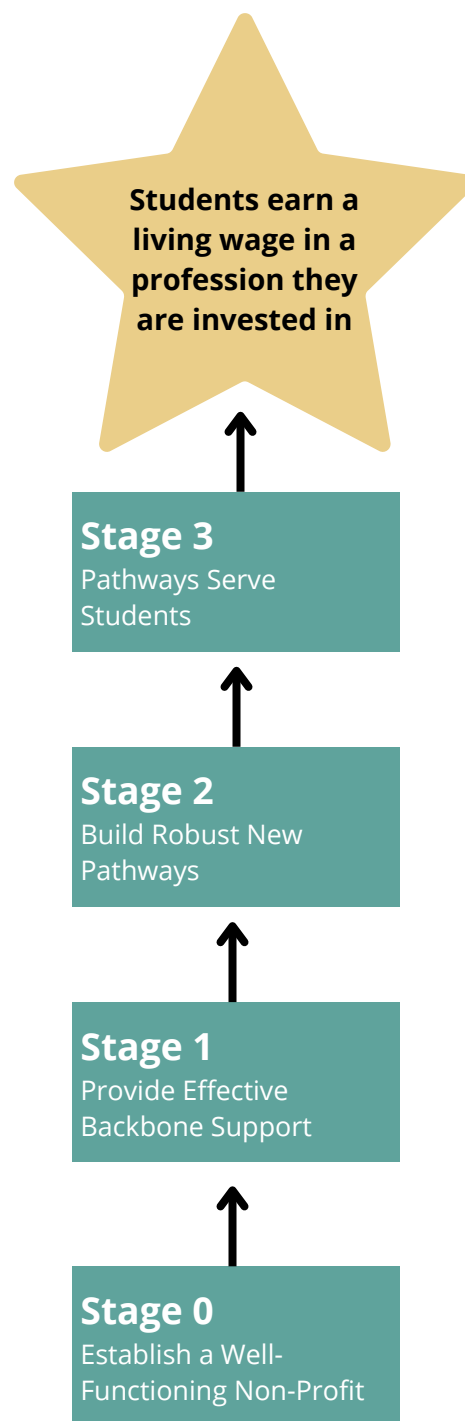
## BACKGROUND

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative (SWCEC) is a first-of-its-kind model aimed towards improving educational opportunities for rural students in Southwest Colorado. Formed in 2021, SWCEC was launched as a collaborative partnership between five school districts (Bayfield, Ignacio, Durango, Silverton, Archuleta) and two higher education institutions (Pueblo Community College and Fort Lewis College). A nonprofit organization sits at the center with an Executive Director, four staff members, and a Board of Directors composed of district, higher education, industry, community, and tribe representatives. The nonprofit coordinates region-wide college and career pathways, teacher collaboration and development, and work-based learning. Our first initial pathways were Building Trades and Environmental, and the next three pathways will be Health Sciences, Educator, and Hospitality & Tourism.

## WHO WE SERVE

The ~ 9,000 K-12 students and 2,785 high school students of our region are diverse and under-resourced (46% of all students experience a higher-than-average rate of poverty). The Southwest is home to nearly 10% of the state's Native American population, making up 11% of the region's student population as a whole. The Collaborative shares borders with several Sovereign Tribal Nations, including the Navajo Nation, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

## SWCEC THEORY OF ACTION



# Mission, Vision and Values

## Mission

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative strengthens diverse communities by providing pathways in career readiness and higher education for students to build 21st-century skills and economically viable futures.

## Vision

Bringing students' futures to life!

## Core Values

### **STUDENT FOCUSED**

Empowering students furthest from opportunities to be leaders of their futures

### **ABUNDANT PARTNERSHIPS**

Cultivating a vision for shared education resources

### **ADAPTABLE SOLUTIONS**

Approaching challenges through curiosity and creativity for productive resolutions

### **COMMUNITY DRIVEN**

Connecting school districts and industries for regional economic growth

### **COLLECTIVE INTEGRITY**

Fostering trust through open communication to serve our region

# Looking Back

In early 2019, a group of educators and leaders from five local school districts and two institutions of higher education in Southwest Colorado embarked on a journey to explore the landscape of their region's current rural educational resources. Along the way, they heard the rallying cries from industries hungry for a skilled future workforce and identified that this region was ripe for innovation and creativity. They discovered how rural areas could effectively prepare the future workforce with limited access to educational resources.



Building trades students with equipment in Igancio.

## 2019-2022 Timeline

01

**2019**

SWCEC districts began conversations, visited the Rural School Innovation Zone in Texas and worked with Lyra

02

**SUMMER 2020**

State of CO announced RISE Grant

03

**FALL 2020**

SWCEC submitted RISE application and won largest RISE grant in the state

04

**WINTER 2021**

The Collaborative shifted focus from design to implementation. The Board of Directors formed.

05

**SPRING 2021**

Celebration at Fort Lewis College and Executive Director nomination

06

**SUMMER 2021**

SWCEC hired staff; pathways prepared for summer and fall programming

07

**SPRING 2022**

Development of summer pathway opportunities; submitted applications for Rural CoAction and School Counselor Corp grants

08

**SUMMER 2022**

Won Rural CoAction and School Counselor grants; Building Trades Summer Camp; ECI Kick off at Fort Lewis College

# Long Term Sustainability

The Collaborative was founded on the core belief that we can offer more opportunities for students when we work and build together. Sustaining the work beyond the life of any single grant or tenure of a leader is important for those opportunities to expand and grow. The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative is therefore a nonprofit entity that works in partnership in the region to streamline regional student pathways, overseen by a Board of Directors and guided by an MOU agreement between the five school districts and two higher education institutions.

SWCEC's activities were originally funded by the Governor's 2020 RISE Grant. Since then SWCEC has received additional grant funding through the Colorado Department of Education's Rural CoAction (a grant created in response to the success of rural collaboration modeled by SWCEC) and the School Counselor Corps grant - combined totaling over \$5 million.

Finally, the Collaborative partners are also financially contributing to the centralizing nonprofit, which shows true commitment to the region and supports the mindset that the region's students are all of our students.

**\$3.6M**

2020 RISE Grant

**\$3.7M**

2022 Two Rural CoAction Grants

**\$1.3M**

2022 School Counselor Corps Grant



Students in the Building Trades pathway at the Career Symposium in May, 2022

# SWCEC 2021-2023 Priorities

## 1

### STUDENT IMPACT

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative will work with the community and school districts to support students furthest from opportunities with access to resources and mentorship to create positive, measurable student impact and provide opportunities for future pathways.

## 2

### FINANCIAL STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative will provide a multi-facilitated sustainability plan to school districts and regional support for new student opportunities.

## 3

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative will focus on stakeholder engagement by: cultivating relationships with industry leaders, providing opportunities to school personnel to grow a culture of advising within their communities and keep community members engaged through various marketing and media strategies.

## 4

### EXPANSION

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative will focus on an informed, well-planned expansion model by researching and implementing additional pathways, supporting access to additional work-based learning opportunities, and building a foundation of career exploration for younger students.

## 5

### SUPPORTIVE WORK CULTURE

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative will engage in building a supportive work culture for SWCEC staff to engage in meaningful work.



Students on an excursion during the Environmental Climate and Science Institute in Summer 2021



# The Collaborative

Guided by a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

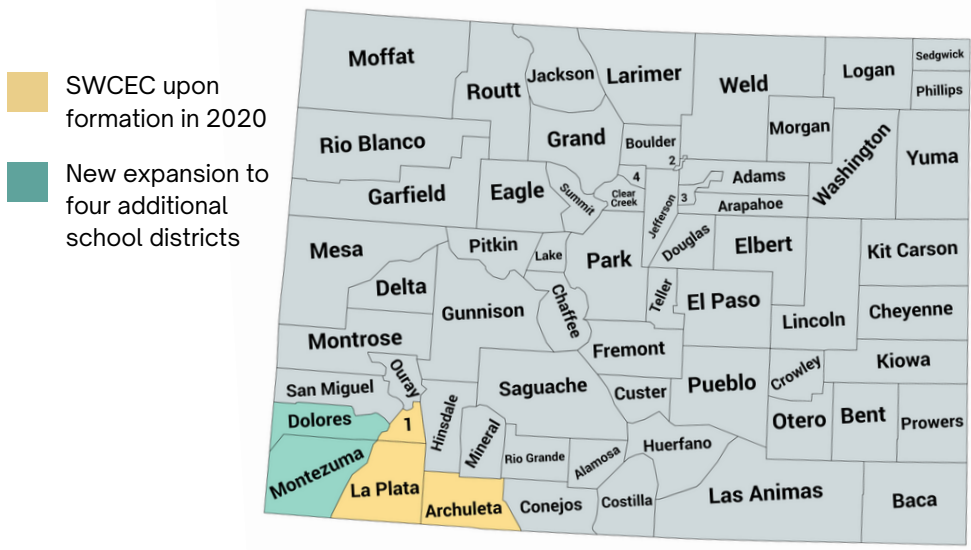
**5 DISTRICTS / SCHOOLS**  
Archuleta  
Bayfield  
Durango 9R  
Ignacio  
Silverton  
*\*expanding soon!*

**2 HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS**  
Fort Lewis College  
Pueblo Community College

**1 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**  
SWCEC nonprofit with 5 full-time staff



## CO Counties Served by the SWCEC



Map provided by the SWCEC

# Pathways: Overview

In the first year of SWCEC, efforts focused on two pathways: Building Trades and Environmental. Both pathways utilize a proven teaching concept and sharing of equipment through mobile learning labs (MLLs). MLLs are outfitted with equipment normally found in brick-and-mortar labs that rotate among the districts to allow school districts to share resources across a wide geographic area.



## **BUILDING TRADES**

The Building Trades pathway ensures that graduates are able to immediately enter the local workforce and earn a living wage. It also meets the dire need our community has for skilled construction workers to sustain the regional economy. Through the development of standardized Building Trade competencies and strengthening course offerings, students in the Building Trades pathway across all 5 districts will gain exposure to new opportunities, targeted job training and career advising, and the opportunity to earn college credit and certifications.



## **ENVIRONMENTAL**

As part of an initiative at Fort Lewis College (FLC), the Environmental Pathway uses the unique landscape of southwest Colorado to inspire students interested in science and environmental sustainability to develop passions leading to collegiate and career success. The program features hands-on outdoor learning, success coaching, peer mentorship, career exploration, and college level classes to provide a coordinated, multidisciplinary experience.

# Pathway: Building Trades

## PATHWAY COMPONENTS

- Educators provide certifications within their Buildings Trades classrooms
- Professional development on project-based learning for all Building Trades educators
- Co-created Building Trades competencies streamline student learning across the region
- Implementation resources for authentic competency curriculum available to all Building Trades educators
- A Pathways Coordinator assigned to the development of workbased learning opportunities for the Pathway and cross-district collaboration
- The Pathway is working to provide future HVAC, plumbing, and electrical offerings with certifications

**328 students** baseline enrollment in courses in 2019-2020

**15 Industry Partners** around the region that provided work based learning opportunities

**123 students** participated in at least one **work based learning** event

**2 Mobile Learning Labs** of equipment valued at **\$285,000**

**160+ hours** of cross-district collaboration for CTE teachers



Students participate in activities at a Buildings Trades Career Symposium at the Sky Ute Casino in Ignacio, CO

# Pathway: Environmental

## PATHWAY COMPONENTS

- A community of practice and access to professional development available to all Environmental Pathway educators
- Dedicated science classroom space at Fort Lewis College
- Students equipped with Project-Based Learning opportunities and access to the FLC Environmental Science Climate Institute
- A Pathways Coordinator assigned to the development of workbased learning opportunities for the Pathway and cross-district collaboration



Students work in teams to build shelters during the Environmental Science Climate Institute at Fort Lewis College in Summer 2021

**13** students baseline enrollment in Aug 2020 ECI Kick Off; **26** students in Aug 2021

**2 mobile learning labs** valued at **~\$125,000**

Engaged **5 Industry Partners** who provided WBL opportunities

**\$100,000** of equipment shared across districts

**2 Concurrent Enrollment courses** at Fort Lewis College

**60 students** participated in at least one **workbased learning event**

**3 Regional Field Excursions:** fen restoration, agriculture and the environment, snowpack and snow water equivalent lab

**60+ hours** of cross-district collaboration for Environmental Advisors



Students on a field study during the Environmental Science Climate Institute

# Pathways: Student and Educator Voices



Scan to watch students interviewed at the Environmental Science and Climate Institute in 2021

"The [Environmental Science Climate Institute] helped me think more scientifically. It helped me see what different kinds of fires can do for the forest. It can help me a lot in the future, I think I'd like to become a Wildlife Officer."

***Student Participating in the ECI at Fort Lewis College***

"It's been such a great experience to have a structured space to collaborate with the other building trades instructors in the area, align our curriculums, improve the quality of the curriculum. We couldn't have done it without the support of Trendlines and the SWCEC.

Our students love the new technology and will be in tears when it has to leave our shops. We have students learning on their own and utilizing equipment to create items, sell them, and run their own business!"

***Molly Turner, CTE Teacher at Ignacio HS/MS***

***Student Responses: "In what ways were the professionals you observed on today's job shadow role models for you?" :***

- They showed me that it is possible to find a job that fits your personality and what you love.
- They were kind and respectful. They explained thoroughly in an ear-catching way. They also interacted with us as if we were training for this field, not just students watching.
- They were very positive, even if you said something wrong, they were positive and made you feel confident.
- Encouraging people to do what they like, accepting if you like or dislike this kind of work.
- They helped me collaborate and talk to others. I'm not that good with that.

***High School Students, Bayfield High School***



Students presenting an activity during the Environmental Science Climate Institute at Fort Lewis College



Machinery provided with the help of the SWCEC at the Building Trades workshop at Ignacio High School/Middle School



Students in the Building Trades Pathway constructed dog houses which sold for \$250 each, pictured here with a satisfied customer

# Looking Forward

## DISTRICT EXPANSION

Through Colorado Department of Education's Rural CoAction grant, four additional southwestern school districts (Dolores, Dove Creek, Mancos, and Montezuma-Cortez) along with the San Juan BOCES (SJ BOCES) and in partnership with SWCEC are excited to explore, expand and deepen collaborative conversations to enhance career pathways and career-connected learning (CCL) opportunities for students in the region. Through the Rural Coaction Cohort 2 grant we will build, expand and strengthen existing collaboration, shared resources and partnerships with higher education, tribal entities and industry in our communities. Our first pathway focus will be developing a regional Hospitality and Tourism pathway.



EVERY STUDENT.  
EVERY DAY.



*Dolores*  
School District RE-4A



## PATHWAY EXPANSION AND DESIGN SESSIONS

Along with the Hospitality and Tourism pathway, the SWCEC Board of Directors voted this year to approve the addition of two more regional pathways - educator and health sciences. SWCEC will lead monthly design sessions that will incorporate development work for all five regional pathways.



HEALTH SCIENCES



EDUCATION



HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

## SCHOOL COUNSELOR CORP

SWCEC will support school districts with the development and implementation of middle school career exploration programs. Each district will provide a foundation for students and families to be educated and ready to engage in CTE pathways, and understand their higher education options when they enter high school. Using the SWCEC's regional approach, districts will collaborate to design, implement, and refine middle school preparation across Southwest Colorado, instead of siloed action within individual schools.

# Leadership

## 2022-2023 SWCEC Staff

The Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative nonprofit has five full-time staff dedicated to the success of regional collaboration to design and build student college and career pathways in partnership with community and industry.



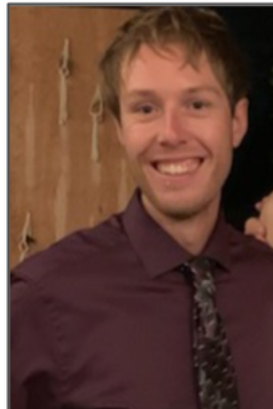
**Jessica Morrison**  
Executive Director



**Executive  
Administrator**



**Dave Dillman**  
Pathways Director



**Mark Schenberger**  
Pathway Coordinator



**Sonnin Dahl**  
Pathway Coordinator

# Leadership

## 2022-2023 Board of Directors

The SWCEC is a 501c3 nonprofit governed by a Board of Directors. The role of the Board is to:

- Set policy and make high-level decisions
- Hire, evaluate, and renew SWCEC Executive Director
- Monitor progress
- Approve the budget and oversee finances
- Engage in advocacy on behalf of the Collaborative



**Karen Chaser**

Board Chair,  
Durango



**Kim White**

Board Treasurer,  
Silverton



**Leon Harnhardt**

Bayfield



**Kevin Aten**

Pueblo Community  
College



**Jenni Trujillo**

Fort Lewis College



**LaTitia Taylor**

Southern Ute  
Education Director



**Gisele Pansze**

College Compass  
Counseling



**Troy Dyer**

Veritas Fine Homes



**Nick Olson**

Southwest  
Conservation Corp



# Leadership

## 2022-2023 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee's role is to:

- Advise and inform the development and implementation of strategy, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors
- Collaborate with other districts, higher education institutions, and partners
- Provide feedback on program effectiveness
- Spread the word and share successes
- Communicate relevant information back to institution

### Reece Blincoe

Superintendent, Dolores

### Ty Gray

Superintendent, Dove  
Creek

### Cheryl Nixon

Provost and Vice  
President for Academic  
Affairs, Fort Lewis  
College

### Amy Miglinas

Principal, Bayfield

### Todd Cordrey

Superintendent, Mancos

### Perry Pepper

Director of Academic  
Services, Pueblo  
Community College

### Chris DeKay

Superintendent, Ignacio

### Chad Wheelus

HTI Coordinator, Cortez

### Josh Sanchez

CTE Director, Pagosa  
Springs

### Kim White

Superintendent,  
Silverton

### Alana Romans

Director of Strategic  
Initiatives, Fort Lewis  
College

### Karen Chesser

Superintendent,  
Durango

### Dylan Connell

Curriculum and PD  
Director, Durango

### Norma Conley

CTE Instructor, Ignacio

### Sean O'Donnel

Principal, Pagosa Springs

# Thank You to Our Partners!

This work would not be possible without the dedication and support of our partners.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS



## INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Adept Roofing	Boss Mechanical	CalCom Energy	Durango Electric
Durango Fire	FCI Constructors	Fire & Ice Heating and AC	Gleason Bison
Growing Spaces	Ignacio Community Library Idea Lab	Inspire HVAC	M&R Plumbing
Morris Electric	Nunn Construction	Rocky Mountain Ecology	Shaw Solar
Studs Lumber	The Smiley Building	Timberage	TL Roofs
Veritas Fine Homes			

# SWCEC: By the Numbers

**5 school districts** joined in 2020

**4 additional school districts** partnering in 2022-2024

**2 Higher Education Institutions:** Fort Lewis College and Pueblo Community College

**5 Full-time Staff at the SWCEC** - and an Executive Administrator joining the team soon

**183 students** participated in Building Trades work-based learning

**39 students** participated in Fort Lewis College ECI Kick Off 2020-2021

**\$8.6 Million** in grant funds from the RISE, Rural CoAction, and School Counselor Corp Grants

**2 Initial Pathways** (Building Trades and Environmental)

**2 Building Trades Mobile Learning Labs** valued at **\$285,000** and over **\$100,000** worth of equipment shared across districts

**3 Additional Pathways in development** (Health Sciences, Educator, Hospitality & Tourism)

**30** Industry and Community Partners

Southwest Colorado  
Education Collaborative



**EMPOWER**  
  
schools

**September 2022**

Developed by Empower Schools  
[empowerschools.org](http://empowerschools.org)