



## Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026  
Denver Marriott Tech Center



PRESENTED BY



# Ecosystem Building for Small Innovative Charters

**Sarah Johnson, K-12 Lead**

**Donnell-Kay Foundation & CultivatED Advisory Board Member**

**Kelly Tenkely, Co-Founder**

**CultivatED Colorado**

**Shaina Belton, Co-Founder**

**CultivatED Colorado**

**Kyle Gamba, La Luz Education**

**Co-Founder CultivatED Colorado**

**Blue Bell**

**February 27, 2026 | 8:30-9:30 a.m**

**New Schools and Development**



“  
The  
conference  
at your  
fingertips.



DOWNLOAD THE APP



# THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS



PRESENTED BY



**D | A | DAVIDSON**  
FIXED INCOME CAPITAL MARKETS

**JHL**  
CONSTRUCTORS  
BUILDING COLORADO'S FUTURE



DIAMOND

**gs**  
Gillem Staffing  
Special Education Staffing



**Staples**

PLATINUM



**GroundFloor Media**

**SW**  
SPARKSWILLSON, P.C.



# Thank you.

**Zone Sponsor**



GroundFloor Media



Colorado League of  
Charter Schools



We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



**Be a part of the action.**



Please sit based on your region:

Western Slope &  
Mountains



Southern  
Colorado

Front Range

CultivatED Colorado

Eastern Plains

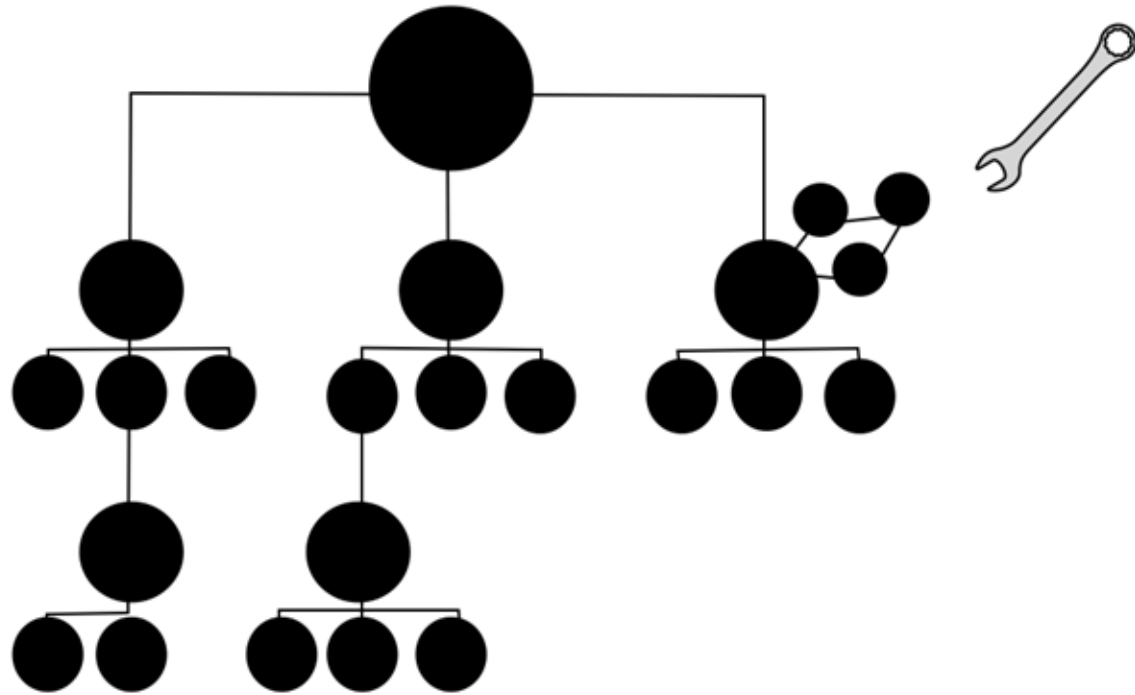
CultivatED Colorado  
Website:



CultivatED Education  
Partners Website:



# Simple System

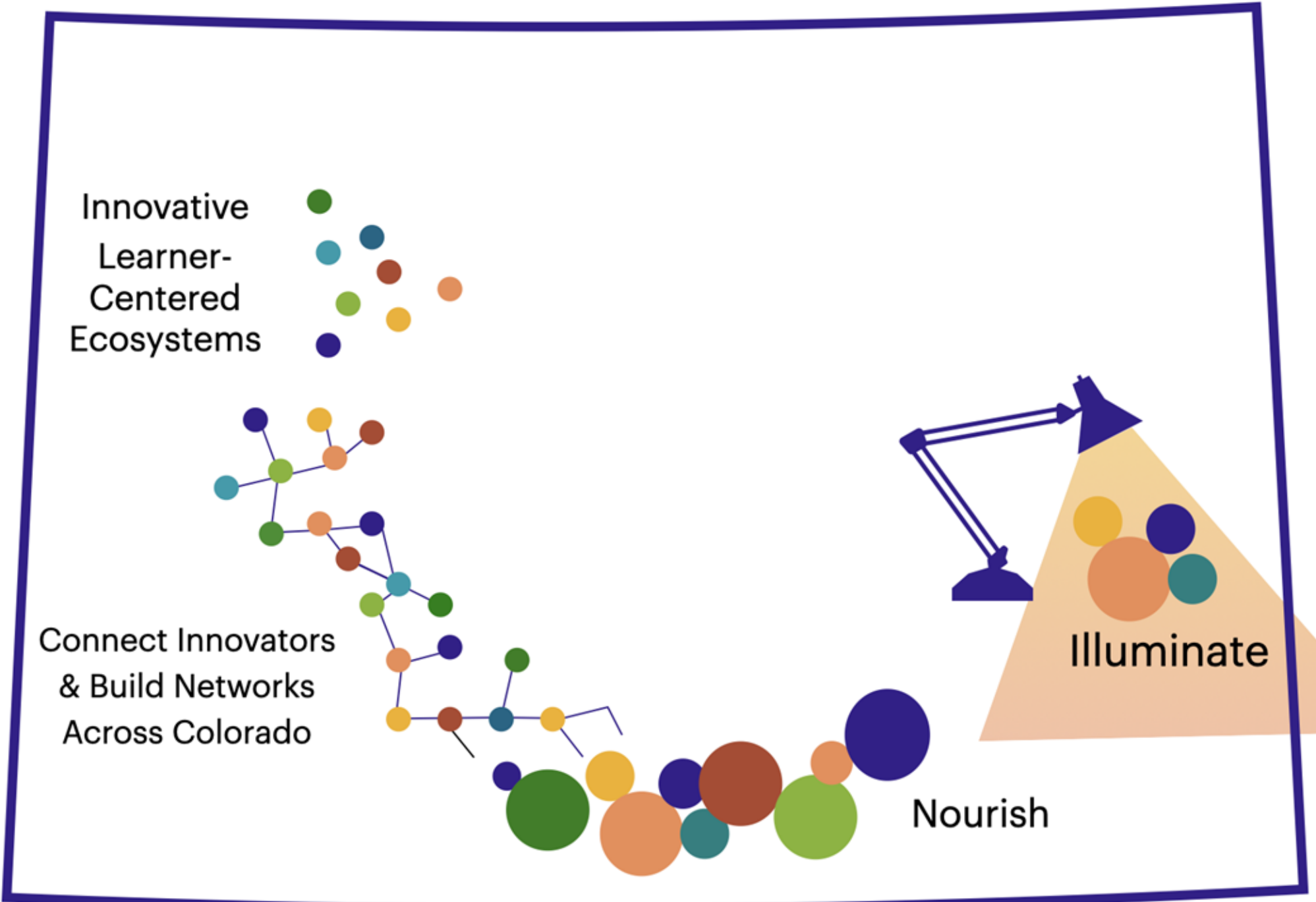


Legacy Models

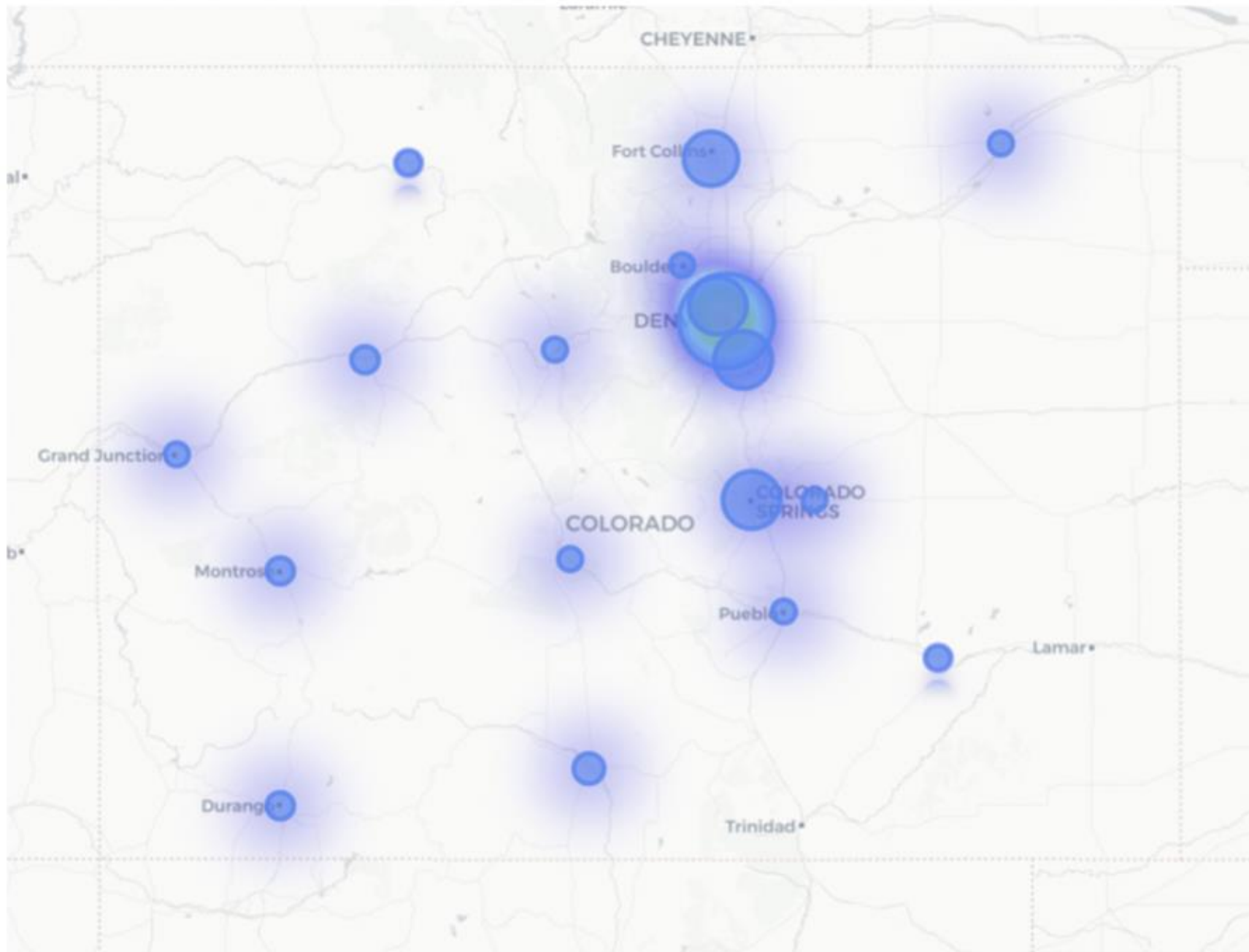
# Complex Adaptive Living System



Learner-Centered Ecosystems



**“Innovation doesn’t scale through replication alone—it scales through relationships.”**





**It Takes a Village: La Luz's Community-Centered Approach**

At La Luz, we firmly believe in the power of community collaboration. Over the past three years, we've had the privilege of working with remarkable individuals and organizations throughout our state. These partnerships have not only strengthened our mission but have also reinforced our conviction that the community must play an integral role in crafting solutions.

### Community Partners





# HIGH ROCKIES COMMUNITY SCHOOL

**Where young minds thrive through play, collaboration,  
and exploration in and out of the classroom.**





# Community Asset Mapping Guide

A Resource for School Leaders & Teachers

<https://coloradolearningstories.com/guide>



## Why Community Asset Mapping Matters

If we believe that learning is not confined to a classroom, then we have to design like that's true. Community asset mapping is the practice of intentionally identifying the people, places, organizations, businesses, stories, and expertise that already exist around you and asking: *How might this become part of learning?*

When we treat the community as curriculum, learning stops being abstract. It becomes rooted in real problems, real people, and real contributions.

When learners regularly engage with local nonprofits, small businesses, city leaders, artists, engineers, farmers, and entrepreneurs, they begin to see themselves as part of something larger.



## Schools Embedded in Community

Our vision is a statewide network where any school in Colorado can discover what's available in their community to build richer, more equitable learning ecosystems.

Community asset mapping is about reframing schools as embedded in the community rather than siloed learning spaces. When schools map their community intentionally:

- Learning becomes Contextual and applied
- Students develop Civic identity
- Organizations gain Fresh thinking
- Schools gain Visibility and strength
- Interconnected learner-centered ecosystems form



# What Is a Community Asset?

Any organization, space, or resource in your area that can support student learning.



## Nonprofits

Youth mentoring, food banks, after-school clubs



## Businesses

Internships, job shadows, guest speakers



## Parks

Nature centers, trails, outdoor learning



## Libraries

Maker spaces, tutoring, digital resources



## Museums

Art, science, history education programs



## Public Spaces

Community gardens, plazas, rec centers



## Community Centers

Cultural centers, faith-based, senior centers



## Other

Government, higher ed, healthcare providers



## More Ways to Map

Categories are just one lens. Try these perspectives to uncover assets you might overlook:

### Map by Human Story

Every nonprofit has an origin story. Every business owner has a journey. The "why" behind the work is rich learning.

### Map Through Families

Parents who are engineers, artists, therapists. Grandparents who garden. Alumni who've launched startups. Activate what's already present.

### Map by Industry

Aerospace, outdoor recreation, agriculture, renewable energy, tech. What if every major industry saw local learners as future contributors?

### Map by Contribution

How might learners contribute meaningfully — solving real problems, creating for real audiences, serving real needs?

# Stories & Assets Sharing

- Name + school
- Location
- One thing their school is proud of
- One growth edge or challenge
- Ways in which your school interacts with the surrounding community

15 minutes total- share time equally

# Debrief & Closure

- Add your school & story to: <https://coloradolearningstories.com/>

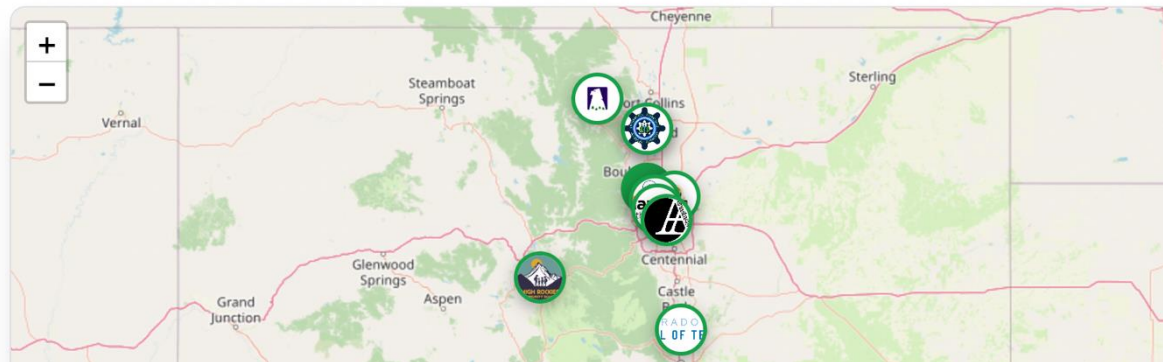
**Explore Learning Stories Across Colorado**

This map tells the story behind the data. Explore learner-centered schools across Colorado through real stories of learning, told by schools and learners themselves, revealing the relationships, experiences, and environments where learning comes alive.

Search schools by name or city...

All Regions

+ Add Your School



- Explore the periodic table of learner-centered ecosystem elements
- Complete an asset map for your school

**“  
Your  
feedback  
helps us all  
move forward  
together**



**Colorado League of  
Charter Schools**



**Each time you take the survey you can enter to win prizes**