NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

2023 Annual Charter Schools Report
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2023 Annual Charter Schools Report
Executive Summary

Charter schools in North Carolina reflect a dynamic and evolving landscape within the broader state educational options and continues to see growth in all areas including enrollment, school locations, and types of programming. As of the 2023 North Carolina Annual Charter Schools Report, the state boasts a diverse array of charter schools, each with its unique mission, educational approach, and student demographics. The North Carolina State Board of Education, Charter Schools Review Board, and Office of Charter Schools welcome this opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges encountered in the charter sector over the past year.

The 2023 Annual Charter Schools Report summarizes the state of charter schools during the 2022-2023 school year and will explain charter school authorizing and monitoring within the state, provide data on charter school student demographics, and report on academics and funding. Finally, the report will highlight best practices and recognitions within the large range of diverse and unique North Carolina charter schools, as well as information regarding access to the state's charter schools.

As of the submission of this report, there are 210 operating charter schools in the state[1]. The number of charter schools within the state has more than doubled since the lifting of the charter school cap in 2011. While the sector continues to expand, so do the complexities of operating schools. Challenges seen over the last few years include the rising cost of transportation programs, staffing challenges, and difficulties finding and funding facilities for new schools, and for improving and expanding operating schools. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts among stakeholders, policymakers, educators, and community members.

For the 2022-23 school year, 145,075 students were enrolled in charter schools representing over 10% of the total state enrollment of 1,428,765.[2] One hundred and sixty-nine charter schools reported having a waitlist at the start of the 2023-24 school year, totaling 85,551 students (it should be noted that figures could include duplicate students as students are often waitlisted at multiple charter schools). Eighty-three charter schools report having a wait list of 200 or more students, and 37 of those with 700 or more. Charter schools in 26 zip codes[3] had a waitlist of more than 800 students.

The State Board of Education and the North Carolina General Assembly have each provided critical supports to ensure accountability, oversight, and autonomy in the state's 210 charter schools. The Office of Charter Schools and Charter Schools Review Board look forward to continued partnership to ensure North Carolinian families have access to high-quality schools of choice. The future of charter schools in North Carolina hinges on continued collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and a commitment to educational excellence and equity. As the educational landscape evolves, charter schools will play a vital role in promoting innovation, choice, and student success.

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[1] At the beginning of the 2023-24 school year, there were 211. One school, School of the Arts for Boys, was closed in fall of 2023.

[2] Data from NC Public Schools Statistical Profile. Accessed 3/22/24.

[3] 27278, 27284, 27358, 27410, 27502, 27511, 27516, 27522, 27540, 27560, 27587, 27603, 27605, 27704, 28036, 28037, 28054, 28078, 28110, 28115, 28120, 28214, 28227, 28262, 28269, 28273

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Legislation and Historical Background

In 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Charter School Act, thereby authorizing the establishment of "a system of charter schools to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently of existing schools, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

1. Improve student learning;
2. Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as at-risk of academic failure or academically gifted;
3. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
4. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning at the school site;
5. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system;
6. Hold the schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems."

Article 14A, Chapter 115 of North Carolina General Statute outlines how the system of charter schools must operate. The law includes the following sections:

- Purpose of charter schools; establishment of North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board and North Carolina Office of Charter Schools
- Eligible applicants; contents of applications; submission of applications for approval
- Opportunity to correct applications; opportunity to address Advisory Board
- Fast-track replication of high-quality charter schools
- Final approval of applications for charter schools
- Review and renewal of charters
- Material revisions of charters
- Nonmaterial revisions of charters
- Charter school exemptions
- Charter school operation
- Civil liability and insurance requirements
- Open meetings and public records
- Accountability; reporting requirements to State Board of Education
- Charter school facilities
- Public approval for private activity bonds
- Charter school transportation
- Admission requirements
- Charter school nonsectarian
- Nondiscrimination in charter schools
- Student discipline
- North Carolina School Report Cards
- Driving eligibility certificates
- General operating requirements
- Display of the United States and North Carolina flags and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance
- Course of study requirements
- Employment requirements
- Identification of low-performing and continually low-performing charter schools
- Causes for nonrenewal or termination; disputes

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- Dissolution of a charter school
- State and local funds for a charter school
- Notice of the charter school process; review of charter schools
- Operation of NC Pre-K programs

Finally, G.S. §115C-218.110 directs that the State Board "shall report annually no later than June 15 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following:

1) The current and projected impact of charter schools on the delivery of services by the public schools.
2) Student academic progress in charter schools as measures, where available, against the academic year immediately preceding the first academic year of the charter schools' operation.
3) Best practices resulting from charter school operations.
4) Other information the State Board considers appropriate."

This report fulfills this legislated reporting requirement.

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North Carolina Charter School Authority and Oversight

North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board

On August 16, 2023, the NC General Assembly passed Session Law 2023-110, commonly referred to as House Bill 618, an act converting the Charter Schools Advisory Board to the Charter Schools Review Board ("CSRB"). This new law shifted the authority for approval of charter applications, material revisions to the charter agreement, and charter renewal terms from the State Board of Education ("SBE") to the CSRB. The new law created a right of appeal to the SBE for any of the above-referenced CSRB decisions. Codified in NC General Statute as Article 14A of Chapter 115C (115C-218, et al,) the charter schools law established the Charter Schools Review Board and outlines the role of the State Board of Education.

With the establishment of the CSRB's new authority in 2023, charter law further defines the role of the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall have the following duties:

1) Rulemaking. -- To establish all rules for the operation and approval of charter schools. Any rule adopted by the State Board shall first be recommended by the Charter Schools Review Board.

2) Funding. -- To allocate funds to charter schools.

3) Appeals. -- To hear appeals from decisions of the Charter Schools Review Board under G.S. 115C-218.9.

4) Accountability. -- To ensure accountability from charter schools for school finances and student performance.

The CSRB is comprised of eleven voting members; four appointed by the North Carolina Senate, four appointed by the North Carolina House of Representatives, two appointed by the State Board of Education, and the Lieutenant Governor or the Lieutenant Governor's designee. The Superintendent of Public Instruction or the Superintendent's designee serves as the secretary of the board and a nonvoting member. Statute outlines the term requirements: "Appointed members shall serve four-year terms of office beginning on July 1. No appointed member shall serve more than eight consecutive years. Vacancy appointments shall be made by the appointing authority for the remainder of the term of office."

Table 1: Charter Schools Review Board Members

Appointed By	First Name	Last Name	Start Date of Current Term	End Date of Current Term
State Board of Education	Alex	Quigley	2023	June 30, 2027
State Board of Education	Eric	Sanchez	2021	June 30, 2025
Superintendent – (Non-Voting)	Alex	Granados	2023	June 30, 2025
Lt. Governor	Stephen	Gay	2023	December 31, 2025
House	Bruce	Friend	2021	June 30, 2025
House	Hilda	Parlér	2021	June 30, 2025
House	Dave	Machado	2022	June 30, 2025
House	Shelly	Shope	2021	June 30, 2025
Senate	Bartley	Danielsen	2022	June 30, 2025

Senate	Rita	Haire	2021	June 30, 2025
Senate	John	Eldridge	2021	June 30, 2025
Senate	Todd	Godbey	2021	June 30, 2025

North Carolina Office of Charter Schools

N.C. General Statute §115C-218(c) stipulates the establishment of the NC Office of Charter Schools, staffed by executive director and additional personnel to carry out necessary duties. Pursuant to state statute, the Office of Charter Schools has the following powers and duties:

I. Serve as staff to the Review Board and fulfill any tasks and duties assigned to it by the Review Board.
II. Provide technical assistance and guidance to charter schools operating within the State.
III. Provide technical assistance and guidance to nonprofit corporations seeking to operate charter schools within the State.
IV. Provide or arrange for training for charter schools that have received preliminary approval from the State Board.
V. Assist approved charter schools and charter schools seeking approval from the State Board in coordinating services within the Department of Public Instruction.
VI. Assist certain charter schools seeking to participate in the NC prekindergarten program in accordance with G.S. 115C-218.115.
VII. Other duties as assigned by the State Board.

The Office of Charter Schools is currently staffed by eight consultants and an executive director, with office responsibilities divided into three teams with multiple workflows, each managed by an individual consultant. In addition to leading workflows, consultants support several additional workflows.

Authorizing Team
The OCS Authorizing Team works to ensure a transparent charter authorizing and opening process which is aligned to state law and holds charter boards to high expectations resulting in quality charter schools.

- Applications - Facilitates the new school application process, provides training to applicants, hires and trains external evaluators, provides updates to CSRB members.
- Ready to Open - Provides training and support to newly approved schools prior to opening, reviews submitted documentation to ensure compliance with statute, policy, and the Charter Agreement, and provides CSRB with updates to ensure newly approved schools are making progress towards a successful opening several times per year.
- Amendments - Facilitates the process for material changes to a school's charter application including review of required documents and adherence to the approval process.
- Rules/Reports - Produces reports required through legislation and/or CSRB/SBE requests. Works with the DPI Rules Coordinator and Rules Commission to facilitate the process as it pertains to charter-related rules.
- SBE/CSRB - Organizes and manages CSRB meetings. Prepares SBE materials.

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Accountability Team
The OCS Accountability Team works to ensure North Carolina's charter schools are fiscally, operationally, and academically strong by providing support, oversight, and rigorous renewal standards.

- Performance Framework - Facilitates the yearly collection and audit of documents from schools to ensure compliance with statute, policy, and the Charter Agreement.
- Renewals - Facilitates the 2-year charter renewal process including renewal data collection (last 3-years), renewal site visits, renewal interviews, and trainings. Prepares renewal documentation and presentations for CSRB and SBE.
- Risk Assessment - Conducts site visits and monitors at-risk schools. Manages DPI compliance team meetings and analyzes/records DPI charter school compliance data. Manages closure process and revocation appeals.
- School Improvement – Analyzes academic data; monitors and supports low-performing charter schools. Conducts site visits and assists with review of School Improvement Plans through NC Star.

External Support Team
The OCS External Support Team works to support the diverse stakeholders of the NC charter school system including members of the public, media, researchers, parents, and staff. The External Support Team also leads and supports various external and internal working groups and committees.

- Stakeholder Support - Manages grievances and complaints from stakeholders. Produces OCS Guidance Documents and tools/resources.
- Partnerships/School Support – Coordinates training and collaboration events for Charter School leaders along with other DPI Divisions. Facilitates internal projects such as the Alternative Evaluation Instruments and Scholarship Reviews.
- Communications/Data - Manages all internal and external communication between the Office of Charter Schools and the general public. Responds to data requests. Provides Epicenter assistance.

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Legislative Updates

Throughout the 2022-2023 Session, the General Assembly passed several bills impacting the North Carolina charter school community, including, but not limited to the following:

SESSION LAW 2023-107 | HOUSE BILL 219 | Charter School Omnibus

- G.S. 115C-218.5(a) amended to state, "The Review Board shall not consider any alleged impact on the local school administrative unit or units in the area served by a charter school when deciding whether to grant, renew, amend, or terminate a charter."
- G.S. 115C-218.6(b)(2) amended to add for Charter School Renewal, "The charter school's student academic outcomes for the immediately preceding three years have not been comparable to the academic outcomes of students in the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located. For purposes of this section, if a school's charter results in it providing services to certain targeted subgroups, the school's academic performance shall be judged in comparison to the academic outcomes of students in the same subgroups in the local school administrative unit where the school is located."
- G.S. 115C-218.7 was amended to add "If a charter school has been identified as low-performing under G.S. 115C-218.94, then it shall be considered a material revision of the school's charter to increase its maximum authorized enrollment by more than twenty percent (20%) of the previous year's maximum authorized enrollment. For the purposes of this section, maximum authorized enrollment is as defined in G.S. 115C-218.8." This section also removed the requirement to obtain approval from the Review Board for enrollment increases for any school not designated as low-performing.
- G.S. 115C-218.45 was amended to allow Charter Schools to admit out-of-state students and foreign exchange students.
- G.S. 115C-218.45(f) was amended by adding two new subdivisions to add admissions preferences for graduates of certain Pre-K programs and for children of military families.
- G.S. 115C-47 was amended by adding a new subdivision to read: "(68) To Provide Equal Access to All Residents of the Local School Administrative Unit. – A local board of education shall not consider a student's current or prior enrollment in a charter school in any criteria used by the local board for determination of admissions or eligibility to any school or special program."
- G.S. 115C-218.105 was amended to authorize counties to provide capital funds to charter schools.
- Part 7 of the bill allows the Central Park School for Children in Durham County to conduct a weighted lottery pilot program. The pilot program shall preserve existing weighting factors but may add additional weighting factors that serve the goal of assisting educationally or economically disadvantaged students, including walk zones.

SESSION LAW 2023-110 | HOUSE BILL 618 | Charter Schools Review Board

- An act to concert the Charter Schools Advisory Board into the Charter Schools Review Board, to shift the authority to approve charters from the State Board to the Review Board, and to create a right to appeal to the State Board of Education from Review Board Decisions.

SESSION LAW 2023-106 | SENATE BILL 49 | Parent's Bill of Rights[4]

- Establishes a Parents' Bill of Rights enumerating certain rights of parents related to the education, health, privacy, and safety of their child.
- Requires public school units to provide parents with information related to parental involvement in schools, legal rights for their child's education, and guides for student achievement.

[4] Bill summary accessed 3/14/24 at https://dashboard.ncleg.gov/api/Services/BillSummary/2023/S49-SMTC-98(e3)-v-1.

- Requires public school units to provide notifications on student physical and mental health, requires age-appropriate instruction on certain topics in kindergarten – 4th grade, and creates remedies for parents to address concerns over implementation of these requirements.
- Require health care practitioners to obtain written consent from the parent of a minor child before providing treatment.

SESSION LAW 2023-134 | HOUSE BILL 259 | Remote Charter Academies

- The Appropriations Act of 2023 included additions to the Charter School Act allowing for Remote Charter Academies as part of an initial application or modification of an existing charter. Per this legislation, a nonprofit may apply to the Charter School Review Board for approval of a remote charter academy that meets certain requirements. A charter with an approved remote charter academy is authorized to provide remote instruction to all enrolled students, as a hybrid instruction model, or in separate programs for remote and in-person instruction. Remote charter academies provide instruction primary online to students in a remote location both synchronously and asynchronously. Remote academies could include any combination of grade levels and have the ability to choose from regional or statewide enrollment.

SESSION LAW 2023-134 | HOUSE BILL 259 | Appropriations Act

- SECTION 7.4.(a) DPI shall reclassify at least the following full-time equivalent positions within the Department: (2) One position to be a Read to Achieve Charter School Coordinator.
- DPI FUNDING IN ARREARS SECTION 7.20.(a) The Department of Public Instruction shall develop a model to fund public school units whose funding is based on average daily membership (ADM) to be based on the actual ADM from the prior school year instead of projections for the upcoming school year. The Department shall include in the model a method to account for newly formed charter schools to ensure the charter schools receive adequate funding to operate before prior year ADM data is available or representative of the student population.
- REMOTE CHARTER ACADEMIES SECTION 7.26.(a) Article 14A of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read: "Part 7. Remote Charter Academies. "§ 115C-218.120. Remote charter academies. See House Bill 618 for details regarding Remote Charter Academies.
- Section 8.35.(a) extends the pilot program for virtual charter schools through the 2025-2026 school year.
- SECTION 7.30. (a) Extraordinary Transportation Costs Grant. The Program shall use funds from the Special State Reserve Fund (SSRF) to cover extraordinary costs associated with the transportation of high-needs students with disabilities. (b) The Department of Public Instruction shall provide an application for local school administrative units and charter schools to apply for extraordinary transportation funds and may provide additional eligibility guidelines not inconsistent with this section.
- CTE Grade Expansion Grants - Career and Technical Education Grade Expansion grants shall be awarded under the Program for the purpose of expanding career and technical education (CTE) programs by prioritizing the inclusion of students in sixth and seventh grade through grant awards provided to selected local school administrative units and charter schools for up to seven years.
- G.S. 115C-218.85(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read: "(5) The charter school shall not use a three-cueing system, as defined in G.S. 115C-83.3(9a), or a curriculum with visual memory as the primary basis for teaching word recognition in any instruction or intervention provided to students in grades kindergarten through three."
- SECTION 7.83. Paid Parental Leave - “A board of directors may provide paid parental leave consistent with the requirements of G.S. 126-8.6. If the board provides paid parental leave, it shall be eligible to receive funds as provided in G.S. 115C-336.1(b). If the board does not provide paid parental leave, it shall provide written notice to individuals upon offering employment. The notice

shall state that employment with the charter school will not count toward any minimum period of service established pursuant to G.S. 126-8.6(c1)."

- G.S. 115C-218.105, as amended by S.L. 2023-110, limits the discretion to withhold or reduce charter school funding to the Charter School's Review Board and Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Section 7.7 - Requires the Department of Public Instruction to develop a model, based on the study conducted pursuant to Section 7.44 of S.L. 2021-180, for funding children with disabilities services on the basis of the reported cost of the services provided.

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Charter School Accountability

Regulatory Accountability

As schools of choice, charter schools are accountable to parents and guardians, who may withdraw their student(s) and re-enroll them elsewhere, should the school not meet expectations. Additionally, the North Carolina General Assembly and State Board of Education (SBE) have approved several additional, concrete measures through which charter schools are held accountable to stakeholders, as well as accountability requirements found in NC Administrative Code.

General Statute mandates charter schools meet accountability requirements pertaining to all Public School Units including Open Meetings laws, Public Records Act, criminal background checks, as well as health and safety requirements.

State Board of Education policies expand upon charter school accountability measures including areas such as charter school renewal, planning year, testing, insurance requirements, and audits.

A charter school is operated by a Board of Directors which receives a Charter Agreement to operate a charter school. Each Charter Agreement contains a multitude of areas in which charter schools are held accountable and reiterates the requirements of state and federal law. Charter Agreements are updated as necessary with changes to law; the most recent Charter Agreement can be found here.

Academic Monitoring

Schools identified as low-performing or continually low-performing receive various supports, and must meet specific requirements, from the Office of Charter Schools and other divisions within NCDPI. Those include but are not limited to:

- Low-performing schools are subject to similar requirements as traditional public schools: stakeholder notification of low-performing status, school improvement teams, and school improvement plan submission and review.
- Low-performing schools may be asked to appear before the Charter Schools Review Board for updates on progress/plans for improvement.
- Low-performing schools are subject to Risk Assessment processes including site visits and progress monitoring.
- Low-performing schools receive support including School Improvement Plan training conducted by the Office of District and Regional Support.
- Schools are offered professional development and support through OCS and other DPI divisions and grants, including NC ACCESS, Exceptional Children, Federal Programs, NC Instructional Leadership Academy (Office of District and Regional Support) and more.

Further, the Office of Charter School's newly created School Improvement Team conducts site visits, provides 1:1 support, and analyzes academic data to monitor the progress of low performing schools. During each school's two year renewal process, each renewal school undergoes an extensive review of

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academic data, must submit goals in its self-study for renewal, and present to the Charter Schools Review Board.

Charter Termination and Closure

Charter schools are held accountable in several ways including academic, financial, operational, and governance monitoring. If a charter school fails to meet standards set out in law, the Charter Agreement, the school's charter application, and/or policy, it risks closure.

General Statute specifies reasons for charter termination:

§115C-218.95. Causes for nonrenewal or termination; disputes.

(a) The Review Board may terminate, not renew, or seek applicants to assume the charter through a competitive bid process established by the State Board upon any of the following grounds:
(1) Failure to meet the requirements for student performance contained in the charter;
(2) Failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
(3) Violations of law;
(4) Material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter;
(5) Two-thirds of the faculty and instructional support personnel at the school request that the charter be terminated or not renewed; or
(6) Other good cause identified.

Charter closures occur under a number of circumstances and fall into four categories: relinquishment, assumption, non-renewal, or revocation.

- Relinquishment occurs when a charter board voluntarily surrenders the charter.
- Assumption occurs when a charter board's Charter Agreement is assumed by another charter board.
- Non-renewal occurs when a charter board fails to receive a renewal term and the current Charter Agreement expires.
- And finally, revocation occurs when a charter board's Charter Agreement is revoked pursuant to legal allowances for the termination of a charter.

At the conclusion of the 2022-2023 school year, two charter schools closed permanently due to non-renewal. Invest Collegiate Transform and Eastside STREAM Academy, both located in Charlotte Mecklenburg district, were nonrenewed by the State Board of Education.

Since 1998, there have been a total of 90[5] charter terminations. This includes schools that were in operation and those that may have been in the planning year program prior to opening the school to students.

Table 2: Types of Charter School Closures, 1998-2023

Revoked	Relinquished	Assumed	Non-Renewed	Total
22	53	1	14	90

[5] This includes the two nonrenewals from the 2022-2023 school year and a closure that took place at the end of 2023 and will be reported in next year's report.

2022-2023 Performance Framework

The State Board of Education (SBE) sets goals and measures for all public Charter Schools to annually monitor and track performance trends. Identification and analysis of charter school performance trends provides the opportunity for targeted programmatic support and professional development offerings by the Office of Charter Schools (OCS). The measures for charter schools operating in the 2022-2023 academic year include information from annual accountability data along with financial and operational requirements set forth in General Statute, SBE Policies, and the Charter Agreement.

APPROACH TO GUIDANCE AND MONITORING

Implementation of the Epicenter document management system in fiscal year 2019 continues to be a valuable resource for managing the heavy load of reviewing and providing meaningful guidance on thousands of documents annually by a small team of Education Consultants. The overall compliance statistics are then captured in the final School Performance Framework Report presented here.

2022-23 PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK TREND ANALYSIS

In 2014, OCS created the Performance Framework to serve as the standard mechanism for annual reporting on progress toward achievement of the State Board's goal to increase the number of charter schools meeting academic, operational, and financial goals. The Framework provides a consolidated view of each charter school's performance relative to operational, financial, and academic criteria. The operational and financial elements of the Framework are all requirements outlined in General Statute, State Board policy, or the Charter Agreement. The academic elements align with the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan of the SBE, along with academic performance measures found in General Statute applicable to all public-school units.

The Performance Framework reports on 46 operational, financial, and academic indicators. Some measurements were not applicable to all schools, such as required EMO/CMO reporting, posting of previous performance scores (not applicable to first year schools), renewal criteria, and other measurements that did not yield a data point for some schools, such as subgroup accountability data.

This section provides accountability numbers and percentages for charter schools based on three of the four main categories of the Performance Framework which include operational criteria, renewal criteria, and financial criteria. Academic outcomes are directly received from state accountability data and are reported within this report.

For each section, percent compliant is reported. The compliance percentage is calculated for each school by the number of criteria measures met divided by the total number of criteria the school was measured against for the given category.

Section: A. Operational Annual Monitoring Criteria

One hundred thirty-four (134) of 206 charter schools, or 65%, achieved at or above 80% but less than 100% success in the category of operational annual monitoring criteria. Seventy (70) charter schools, 34%, were compliant in every single applicable measure. Two schools fell below the 80% threshold, scoring 78% and 79% respectively. All charter schools were measured against a maximum of 21 operational/governance criteria, of which some were not applicable to a given school.

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Operational Annual Monitoring Results by Measure

Twelve (12) of 21 criteria yielded a charter school compliance percentage above 80% but below 100%. Of the 21 Operational criteria, thirteen criteria measured as having 100% of charter schools in compliance. The two lowest scoring criteria are below:

A7. Official funded ADM is within 10% of projected. Accurately predicting enrollment within 10% accuracy can be a difficult computation for charter schools, especially given a school's funding is capped at the number projected, leading many school leaders to err on the side of too many rather than too few. 129 of 206 schools, or 63%, met this target, up from 53% the previous year.

A17. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined in general statute, SBE policy, or the signed charter agreement. One hundred thirty six of 206 schools, 66%, met this target, down from 59.41% the previous year. The Charter School Nurse Consultants work closely with OCS to remind schools of the importance of having all thirteen of the required pieces in place and accurately reporting so on the annual self-report, which cannot be amended once it is submitted to DHHS by the school.

Table 3: Operational Compliance Results by Measure, 2022-2023

Measure	Percent Compliant
A1. The NC Report Card and Letter Grade are prominently displayed on the school's website and schools with D/F have sent letter to notify parents.	97.97%
A2. The school has an assigned administrator in the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS).	99.49%
A3. The school meets the required number of instructional hours or days in accordance with State law.	100%
A4. The school adheres to all testing and accountability policies for state assessments.	100%
A5. The school implements mandated programming as a result of state or federal requirements; Title I Status, Title II, EC Status, School Nutrition, English Learners.	100%
A6. The school follows student admissions and lottery requirements as stated in North Carolina General Statute, State Board of Education Policy, and the signed charter agreement.	99.51%
A7. The school's official funded ADM is within 10% of the projected ADM.	62.62%
A8. The non-profit board has a current grievance policy.	99.03%
A9. The non-profit board has a current conflict of interest policy that complies with G.S. 115C-218.15.	100%
A10. The non-profit board has a current nepotism policy.	100%

A11. A quorum of the non-profit board of directors meets no less than 8 times a year (including annual meeting).	100%
A12. The majority of the non-profit board members primary residence in NC.	100%
A13. There is evidence of current fire inspections and related records.	96.60%
A14. The school has a viable certificate of occupancy or other required building use authorization.	100%
A15. The non-profit board holds current, active civil and liability insurance with the minimum coverage as defined in the signed charter agreement.	99.03%
A16. The non-profit board has a criminal history check policy that mirrors the LEA in which the school is located.	99.03%
A17. The school is compliant with all student health and safety requirements as defined in general statute, SBE policy, or the signed charter agreement.	66.02%
A18. The school is compliant with teacher licensure percentage requirements by maintaining at least 50% of teachers licensed from December 31 through the end of the school calendar year in accordance with SBE policy.	99.01%
A19. The charter school is compliant with the annual EMO/CMO public records request.	100%
A20. The charter school is compliant with maintaining the required dissolutions funds as required by G.S. 115C- 218.100.	88.89%
A21. The school is compliant with the implementation of a School Improvement Plan submitted through NCStar.	98.46%

Section: B. Operational Renewal Monitoring Criteria

The Performance Framework Measures are evaluated against state requirements such as graduation requirement adherence, state laws on open meetings and the individual school's charter mission, vision statements and educational programming. The framework measures are part of the renewal monitoring criteria. At the time of this annual report only one school was not compliant in all areas and was not renewed at the end of the 2022-2023 year.

Section: C. Financial and operational goals as measured by the Office of Charter School's Performance Framework

Of the 206 operating charter schools, seven schools were reported as having cautionary or disciplinary financial status.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK CONCLUSION

Overall, the vast majority of charter schools show compliance in operational, financial, and renewal criteria each year. It should be noted that compliance ratings are reported based on evidence provided that a measure has been met within a certain timeframe. It should not be assumed and is not always the case that a charter school is violating a law or policy due to failure to provide timely evidence of compliance. The Charter

Schools Performance Framework is a vital accountability tool used by OCS to review compliance annually for the over 200 charter schools currently operating in the state with the goal of improvement and stability in operational, academic, and financial status.

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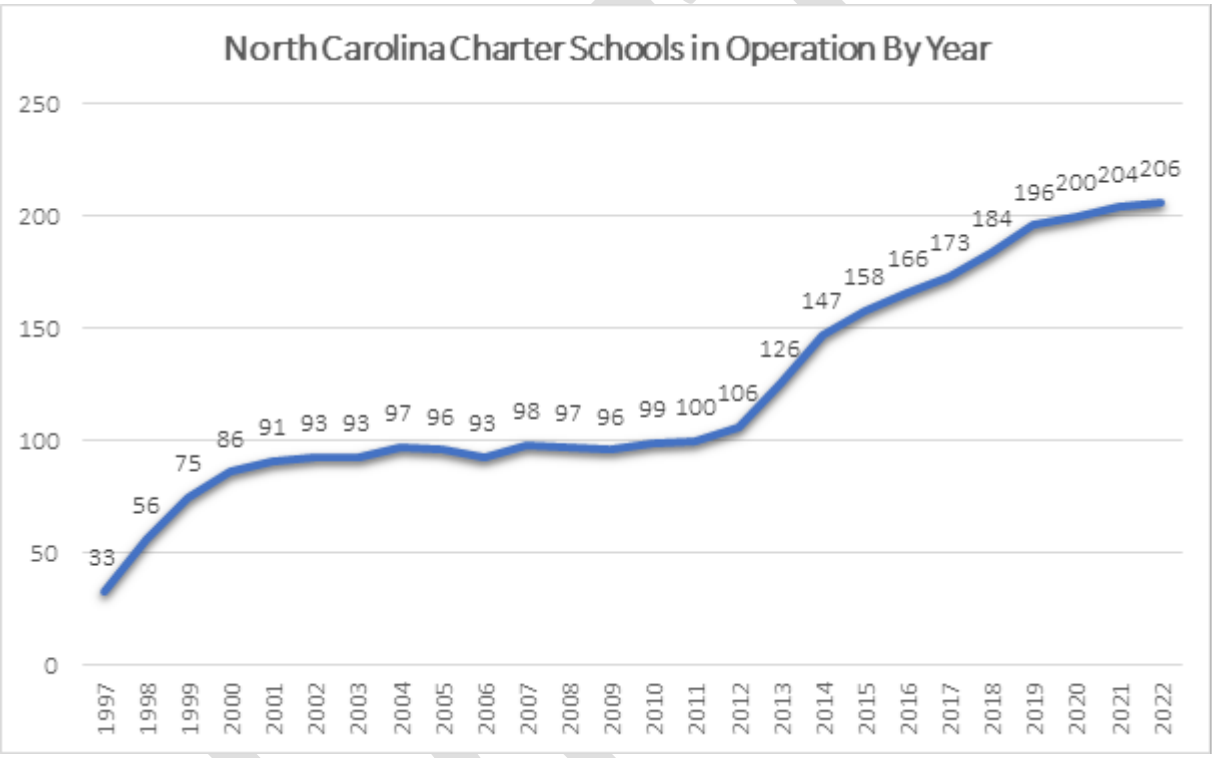
2022 Charter Sector Growth and Sustainability

The North Carolina charter school sector began in 1996 when the General Assembly passed the Charters School Act. The original Act placed a cap on charter school growth at 100 schools. That cap was eliminated in 2011 and since that time the number of charter schools has increased by 106% to 206 operating charter schools as of the 2022-2023 school year. As of April 1, 2024, there are 210 operating charter schools within North Carolina.

Charter School Growth by Year

Figure 1: North Carolina Charter Schools in Operation By Year, 1997-2022



Charter School Openings, 2023-2024

After successful completion of the Ready to Open process, seven new charter schools opened for the 2023-2024 school year.

Table 4: Charter Openings, 2023

School Name	County	1st Year Grade Levels	At Full Enrollment
Bonnie Cone Leadership Academy	Mecklenburg	K-10	K-12
Aspire Trade High School	Mecklenburg	9-10	9-12

School of the Arts for Boys Academy (SABA) - Closed Dec. 2023	Chatham	3-5	K-12
Movement School Northwest	Mecklenburg	K-1	K-5
Wayne STEM Preparatory	Wayne	K-3	K-9
Mountain City Public Montessori	Buncombe	K-6	K-8
Legacy Classical	Rockingham	K-4	K-8

Ready to Open Status, 2024

As of April 1, 2024, there are three charter schools scheduled to open in fall 2024, contingent upon the successful completion of the Ready to Open process and a final approval vote from the Charter Schools Review Board to receive Charter Agreements. Two applicant boards withdrew from the Ready to Open process and will need to reapply should they choose to open a charter school in the future.

Table 5: Ready to Open Status, 2024

School Name	County	1st Year Grade Levels	At Full Enrollment
Riverside Leadership Academy	Craven	K-7	K-12
Agape Achievement Academy	Cumberland	K-3	K-5
American Leadership Academy (ALA)- Monroe	Union	K-8	K-12

An additional sixteen charter applicant boards are being supported by the Office of Charter Schools as the cohort slated to open in 2025.

2023 CHARTER APPLICATION CYCLE

Fifteen non-profit boards submitted applications to open public charter schools by the April 29, 2023, application deadline. Of these, one applicant sought approval for Acceleration to open in the 2024-2025 school year with another fourteen applying under the regular timeline to open in 2025. Three applications withdrew before Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB) interviews took place.

Once an application is deemed complete, it is presented to evaluators including external evaluators with a variety of charter and educational experience, NC DPI staff evaluators, and CSRB members. Applicant boards then appear for an interview with the CSRB and are either forwarded to a second-round interview or recommended for denial or approval. If an applicant is forwarded to a second-round interview, the CSRB makes a final vote of recommendation for denial or approval. It should be noted that non-profit board applicants may choose to partner with a management organization according to guidelines set forth in NC Administrative Code. Those applicants partnering with a management organization receive additional interview time to allow the CSRB members to direct questions toward said management organization.

2023 ACCELERATED APPLICATIONS

One accelerated application was received; however it was not approved by the CSRB to enter Ready to Open (RTO) status.

2023 STANDARD TIMELINE APPLICATIONS

Fourteen standard timeline charter applications were received and reviewed by external evaluators, NCDPI staff, and CSRB between May 2023 and September 2023. Eight applications were recommended for approval by the CSRB.

During the CSRB interview period, six of the applicants were asked to return for a second-round interview. Of those second-round applicants, five applicants were ultimately approved by CSRB, while one second-round applicant was not recommended for approval.

Dispositions of the fifteen applications received by the application deadline:

- Three applicants withdrew
- Eight applicants recommended for approval
- Four applicants not recommended

At the conclusion of the 2023 Charter School Application Cycle, eight schools were approved by CSRB to open on a standard timeline:

Table 5: Charter Application Approvals, Cycle 2023

School Name	LEA Location	Grade Levels for 1st Year	Grades when fully enrolled
Carolina Achieve	Orange	K-5	K-8
Liberty Charter Academy	Guilford	K-9	K-12
Triad International Studies Academy	Guilford	K-2	K-6
Crossnore Community Charter	Forsyth	1-4	K-8
Movement School Gastonia	Gaston	K-1	K-5
Movement School Guilford	Guilford	K-1	K-5
Sledge Institute	Vance	K-2 and 6	K-12
HYPE Leadership Academy	Hoke	K-5	K-12

Charter School Authorizing Staff

The Office of Charter Schools serves as staff to the current North Carolina authorizer, the Charter Schools Review Board. The Office creates, implements, monitors, and supports the entire authorizing process from application creation to final ready to open status. When a charter applicant moves into an operating school, the Office then supports and monitors pursuant to the processes established for operating schools. Thus, the Office supports both non-operating charter board applicants and the over 200 operating charter schools.

The powers and duties of the office are explained in General Statute:

(3) Powers and duties. – The Office of Charter Schools shall have the following powers and duties:

a. Serve as staff to the Review Board and fulfill any task and duties assigned to it by the Review Board.
b. Provide technical assistance and guidance to charter schools operating within the State.
c. Provide technical assistance and guidance to nonprofit corporations seeking to operate charter schools within the State.
d. Provide or arrange for training for charter schools that have received preliminary approval from the Review Board.
e. Assist approved charter schools and charter schools seeking approval from the Review Board in coordinating services with the Department of Public Instruction.
e1. Assist certain charter schools seeking to participate in the NC prekindergarten program in accordance with G.S. 115C-218.115.
f. Other duties as assigned by the State Board.

According to a 2020 national survey of authorizing staff[6], most authorizers (80%), have a ratio of no more than ten schools per full-time employee. North Carolina's average of eight consultants staffing the Office of Charter Schools provides a ratio of 26.25 schools per consultant. When considering the addition of 19 schools in the planning process, the average increases to nearly 29 schools per consultant.

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWALS

The Renewal Process takes two years to complete, starting in July, two years before the school's charter expires. For the schools whose charter ends June 30, 2024, the process began in July 2022.

"Year 1" = July 2022 - June 2023
"Year 2" = July 2023 - June 2024

The Office of Charter Schools works with two Cohorts of renewal schools during any Renewal Cycle. As one Renewal Cohort receives new Charter Agreements in July, a new Cohort enters the process, and the remaining Cohort continues into the second-year tasks culminating in a charter renewal term vote by the Charter Schools Review Board. The chart below outlines the main aspects of the renewal process that take place throughout the two-year process. This is an approximate timeline as the process may take more or less time due to several factors.

Table 6: Charter Renewal Timeline

Month	Tasks
July (Year 1)	OCS sends a notification to Schools with Charters that will expire in 2 years.

[6] Published by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

	Schools request to enter the renewal process via a letter signed by the Board Chair.
September – October (Year 1)	Renewal Process Training for leaders. Compliance Team Meeting is held with other DPI Division discuss Renewal schools. (Collaboration of all agencies who report on renewal school compliance)
November (Year 1)	Renewal Schools Complete and submit a Self-Study.
December (Year 1)	Renewal fee of $500 is due to OCS. Site visits are scheduled.
January - May (Year 1)	OCS Conduct Site Visits and Provides Feedback Schools submit Renewal Items for the Performance Framework Second Compliance Team meeting (Collaboration of all agencies who report on renewal school compliance)
August-October (Year 2)	Third Compliance Team meeting (Collaboration of all agencies who report on renewal school compliance) OCS Prepares a comprehensive report regarding the data needed for a renewal placement according to the Renewal Guidelines.
November - December (Year 2)	OCS Presents Renewal School Data to the CSRB Schools not placed as a 10-year guideline placement, present school information to Charter Schools Review Board
January – February (Year 2)	Financial Business Services presents on Renewal Schools' Financial Status Charter Schools Review Board votes on Renewal Terms
March - June (Year 2)	OCS facilitates the finalization of new charter agreements, including drafting new agreements and gathering the signatures by Board Chairs and the State Superintendent.

Seventeen charter schools requested renewal of their charters that will expire June 30, 2024. Receipt of a ten-year renewal is based on statutory requirements. Schools that did not meet the ten-year requirements were interviewed over two CSRB meetings (November 2023, December 2023). On February 6, 2024, the CSRB held a final review of the renewing schools to determine final renewal terms for 14 of 17 schools. The review and vote on the remaining three renewal schools concluded at the April 8, 2024 CSRB meeting.

The Charter Schools Review Board granted a ten (10) year charter renewal for the following schools, which per § 115C-218.6 shall be granted a ten-year renewal term. The schools have provided financially sound audits the previous three years, have academic outcomes comparable to the local LEA for the preceding three years, and are in compliance with State law, federal law, the school's own bylaws, and the provisions set forth in its charter granted by the State Board of Education.

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Table 7: Renewal Terms, 2024

Code	School Name
51A	Neuse Charter School
60B	Sugar Creek Charter
60I	Community School of Davidson

A seven (7) year renewal was granted to:

Code	School Name
06B	Marjorie Williams Academy
13A	Carolina International School
36G	Community Public Charter
42B	Hobgood Charter School

A three (3) year charter renewal was granted to:

Code	School Name
26C	The Capitol Encore Academy
34D	Carter G. Woodson School
42A	KIPP Halifax College Preparatory
61Y	Steele Creek Preparatory Academy
62A	Tillery Charter Academy
62J	Southwest Charlotte STEM Academy
94A	Pocosin Innovative Charter

Non-Renewal was decided for:

Code	School Name
36F	Ridgeview Charter School

The Renewal Decisions for Children's Village Academy (54A) and Movement School Eastland (62K) have been moved to the April meeting of the Charter Schools Review Board to allow more time for the collection and processing of additional information. UPDATE AFTER MEETING

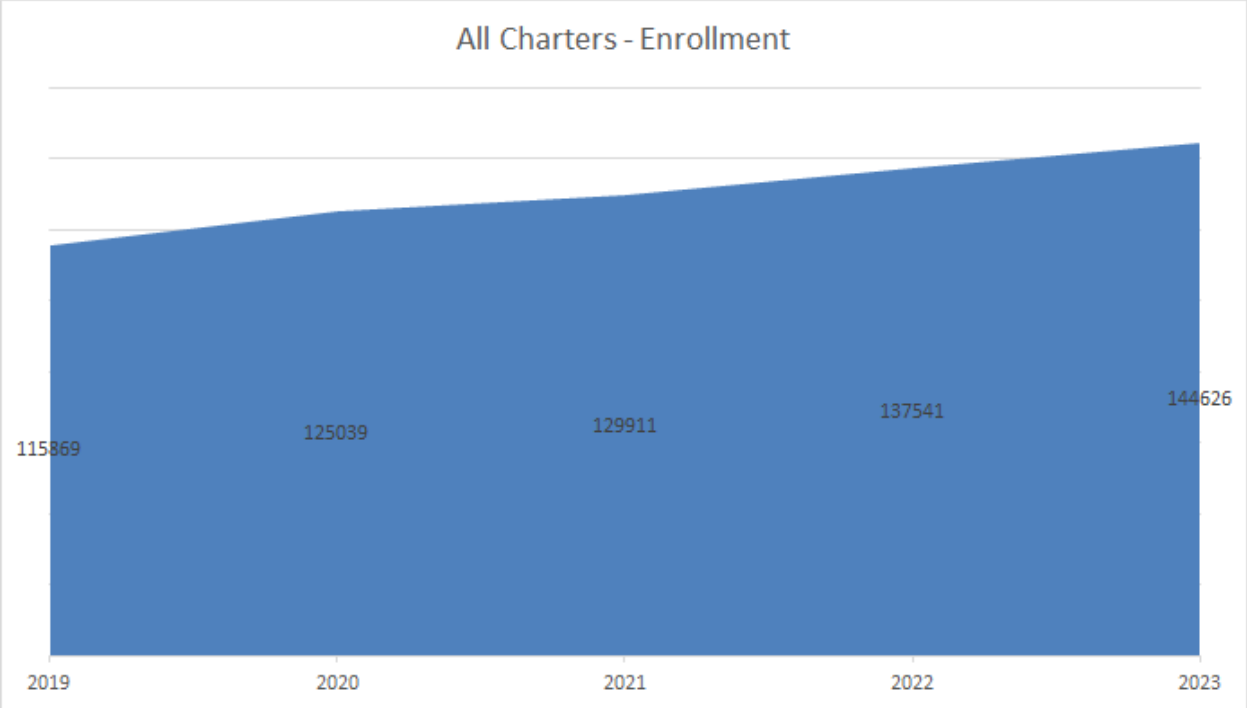
Final decisions and discussions can be found in CSRB minutes and livestream recordings.

Charter School Student Enrollment and Demographics

State statute originally capped at 100 the number of charter schools that could operate in the state in a given school year, but the General Assembly removed that ceiling in August 2011. Since then, the number of charter schools in the state has grown from 100 to 211 (as of the 2023-24 school year)[7]. 209 are brick-and-mortar charter schools operating in 63 counties, and two are virtual charter schools. Both virtual charter schools have brick-and-mortar headquarters in Durham County.

As of December 1, 2023, there are over 144,500 students being served by charter schools. This represents nearly 9.5% of the total public-school population as of the December 1 headcount. The figure below shows charter enrollment gains since the pandemic, growth of nearly 25%.

Figure 2: Charter School Enrollment, December 1st 2019 to December 1st 2023



Student enrollment and demographic data are retrieved from the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS), NC's PreK-13 State Longitudinal Data System. The system is composed of various DPI source data collection systems, a student and staff identification system, a centralized data repository, and associated reporting and analysis tools. As student data naturally fluctuates over time, point in time is noted throughout.

[7] One school closed effective 12/31/24, so the current number is 210 operating charter schools.

Table 8: Charter Schools by County, as of April 1, 2024

County Description	Official School Name ----------
Alamance	River Mill Academy
Alamance	Clover Garden
Alamance	The Hawbridge School
Alamance	Alamance Community School
Avery	Marjorie Williams Academy
Beaufort	Washington Montessori Public Charter School
Bladen	Paul R. Brown Leadership Academy
Bladen	Emereau: Bladen
Brunswick	Classical Charter Schools of Leland
Brunswick	Classical Charter Schools of Southport
Buncombe	Evergreen Community Charter
Buncombe	ArtSpace Charter School
Buncombe	IC Imagine
Buncombe	The Franklin School of Innovation
Buncombe	Asheville PEAK Academy
Buncombe	Francine Delany New School for Children
Buncombe	Mountain City Public Montessori
Burke	New Dimensions: A Public Charter School
Cabarrus	Carolina International School
Cabarrus	Valor Preparatory Academy
Cabarrus	A.C.E. Academy
Cabarrus	Concord Lake STEAM Academy
Caldwell	Oak Hill Charter School
Carteret	Tiller School
Chatham	Chatham Charter
Chatham	Woods Charter
Chatham	Willow Oak Montessori
Cleveland	Pinnacle Classical Academy
Columbus	Thomas Academy
Columbus	Classical Charter Schools of Whiteville
Cumberland	Alpha Academy
Cumberland	The Capitol Encore Academy
Currituck	Water's Edge Village School
Davidson	Davidson Charter Academy Inc.
Durham	North Carolina Cyber Academy
Durham	NC Virtual Academy
Durham	Maureen Joy Charter School
Durham	Durham Charter School
Durham	Community School of Digital and Visual Arts
Durham	Kestrel Heights School
Durham	Research Triangle Charter Academy
Durham	Central Park School for Children

Durham	Voyager Academy
Durham	Global Scholars Academy
Durham	Research Triangle High School
Durham	The Institute for the Development of Young Leaders
Durham	Reaching All Minds Academy
Durham	Excelsior Classical Academy CFA
Durham	KIPP Durham College Preparatory
Durham	Discovery Charter School
Edgecombe	North East Carolina Preparatory
Forsyth	Quality Education Academy
Forsyth	Carter G. Woodson School
Forsyth	Forsyth Academy
Forsyth	The Arts Based School
Forsyth	NC Leadership Charter Academy
Franklin	Crosscreek Charter School
Franklin	Youngsville Academy
Franklin	Wake Preparatory Academy
Gaston	Piedmont Community Charter School
Gaston	Mountain Island Charter School Inc
Gaston	Ridgeview Charter School
Gaston	Community Public Charter
Granville	Falls Lake Academy
Granville	Oxford Preparatory School
Guilford	Greensboro Academy
Guilford	Guilford Preparatory Academy
Guilford	Phoenix Academy Inc
Guilford	Triad Math and Science Academy
Guilford	Cornerstone Charter Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy
Guilford	The College Preparatory and Leadership Academy of High Point
Guilford	Summerfield Charter Academy
Guilford	Piedmont Classical High School
Guilford	Gate City Charter Academy
Guilford	Next Generation Academy
Guilford	The Experiential School of Greensboro
Guilford	Revolution Academy
Guilford	Summit Creek Academy
Halifax	KIPP Halifax College Preparatory
Halifax	Hobgood Charter School
Harnett	Anderson Creek Academy
Harnett	Achievement Charter Academy
Haywood	Shining Rock Classical Academy
Henderson	The Mountain Community Sch
Henderson	FernLeaf Community Charter School
Iredell	American Renaissance School
Iredell	Success Institute Charter School

Iredell	Pine Lake Preparatory, Inc.
Iredell	Langtree Charter Academy
Iredell	Iredell Charter Academy of Arts & Science
Jackson	Summit Charter School
Johnston	Neuse Charter School of Johnston County
Johnston	Johnston Charter Academy
Johnston	American Leadership Academy - Johnston
Lee	Ascend Leadership Academy: Lee County
Lee	MINA Charter School of Lee County
Lee	Central Carolina Academy
Lenoir	The Children's Village Academy
Lincoln	Lincoln Charter School
Lincoln	West Lake Preparatory Academy
Martin	Bear Grass Charter School
Mecklenburg	Sugar Creek Charter
Mecklenburg	Lake Norman Charter
Mecklenburg	Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy
Mecklenburg	Queen's Grant Community School
Mecklenburg	Community School of Davidson
Mecklenburg	Socrates Academy
Mecklenburg	Charlotte Secondary School
Mecklenburg	KIPP Charlotte
Mecklenburg	Corvian Community School
Mecklenburg	American Leadership Academy Charlotte
Mecklenburg	Bradford Preparatory School
Mecklenburg	Commonwealth High School
Mecklenburg	Pioneer Springs Community School
Mecklenburg	Lakeside Charter Academy
Mecklenburg	United Community School
Mecklenburg	Stewart Creek High School
Mecklenburg	Charlotte Lab School
Mecklenburg	The Math and Science Academy of Charlotte
Mecklenburg	VERITAS Community School: A Challenge Foundation Academy
Mecklenburg	Mallard Creek STEM Academy
Mecklenburg	Matthews Charter Academy
Mecklenburg	Unity Classical Charter School
Mecklenburg	Movement Charter School
Mecklenburg	Bonnie Cone Classical Academy
Mecklenburg	East Voyager Academy of Charlotte
Mecklenburg	Jackson Day School
Mecklenburg	Steele Creek Preparatory Academy
Mecklenburg	Southwest Charlotte STEM Academy
Mecklenburg	Movement School Eastland
Mecklenburg	Telra Institute
Mecklenburg	Bonnie Cone Leadership Academy

Mecklenburg	Aspire Trade High School
Mecklenburg	Movement School Southwest
Mecklenburg	Movement School Northwest
Montgomery	Tillery Charter Academy
Moore	The Academy of Moore County
Moore	Sandhills Theatre Arts Renaissance School
Moore	Moore Montessori Community School
Nash	Rocky Mount Preparatory School, Inc.
New Hanover	Cape Fear Center for Inquiry
New Hanover	Wilmington Preparatory Academy
New Hanover	Classical Charter Schools of Wilmington
New Hanover	Island Montessori Charter School
New Hanover	American Leadership Academy-Coastal
New Hanover	Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington
New Hanover	Wilmington School of the Arts
Northampton	KIPP Gaston College Preparatory
Onslow	Z.E.C.A. School of Arts and Technology
Orange	Eno River Academy
Orange	The Expedition School
Pamlico	Arapahoe Charter School
Pasquotank	Northeast Academy for Aerospace & Advanced Technologies
Person	Bethel Hill Charter
Person	Roxboro Community School, Inc.
Pitt	Winterville Charter Academy
Randolph	Uwharrie Charter Academy
Robeson	CIS Academy
Robeson	Southeastern Academy
Robeson	Old Main STREAM Academy
Rockingham	Bethany Community School
Rockingham	Legacy Classical Academy
Rowan	Faith Academy
Rutherford	Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy: A Challenge Foundation A
Rutherford	Lake Lure Classical Academy
Stanly	Gray Stone Day School
Surry	Millennium Charter Academy
Swain	Mountain Discovery Charter School
Transylvania	Brevard Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy
Union	Union Academy Charter School
Union	Union Day School
Union	Union Preparatory Academy at Indian Trail
Union	Monroe Charter Academy
Union	Apprentice Academy High School of North Carolina
Vance	Vance Charter School
Vance	Henderson Collegiate
Wake	The Exploris School

Wake	The Magellan Charter School
Wake	Sterling Montessori Academy
Wake	Franklin Academy
Wake	East Wake Academy
Wake	Raleigh Charter High School
Wake	PreEminent Charter School
Wake	Quest Academy
Wake	Southern Wake Academy
Wake	Casa Esperanza Montessori Charter School
Wake	Endeavor Charter School
Wake	Triangle Math and Science Academy
Wake	Longleaf School of the Arts
Wake	Wake Forest Charter Academy
Wake	Cardinal Charter Academy
Wake	Envision Science Academy
Wake	RISE Southeast Raleigh Charter School
Wake	Central Wake High School
Wake	Peak Charter Academy
Wake	Pine Springs Preparatory Academy
Wake	Rolesville Charter Academy
Wake	Carolina Charter Academy: CFA
Wake	Raleigh Oak Charter School
Wake	Cardinal Charter Academy at Wendell Falls
Wake	Doral Academy of North Carolina
Wake	The Math and Science Academy of Apex
Warren	Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School
Washington	Pocosin Innovative Charter
Watauga	Two Rivers Community School
Wayne	Dillard Academy Charter School
Wayne	Wayne Preparatory Academy
Wayne	Wayne STEM Academy
Wilson	Sallie B Howard School of Arts and Science
Wilson	Wilson Preparatory Academy

Gender Data

As of October 1, 2023, males slightly exceeded female enrollment at charter schools, which is aligned with state-wide public school enrollment figures showing slightly greater male enrollment.

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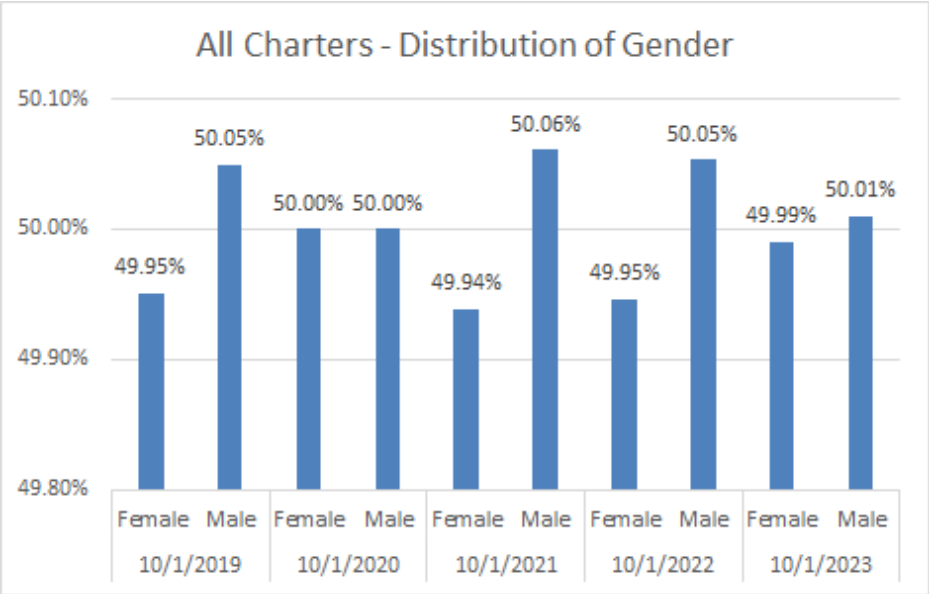
Figure 3: Gender Distribution in Charters, 2019-2023



ETHNICITY AND RACIAL DATA

N.C. General Statute 115C-218.45(e) states, "within one year after the charter school begins operation, the charter school shall make efforts for the population of the school to reasonably reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the general population residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located or the racial and ethnic composition of the special population that the school seeks to serve residing within the local school administrative unit in which the school is located." The school shall also be subject to any court-ordered desegregation plan in effective for the local LEA. Beginning January 2022, all charter schools were required to submit plans to the Office of Charter Schools as to how the school is making efforts to meet these requirements.

The figure below shows racial/ethnic composition within all charters and all traditional (non-charter) local education agencies (LEAs) as of October 1, 2023.

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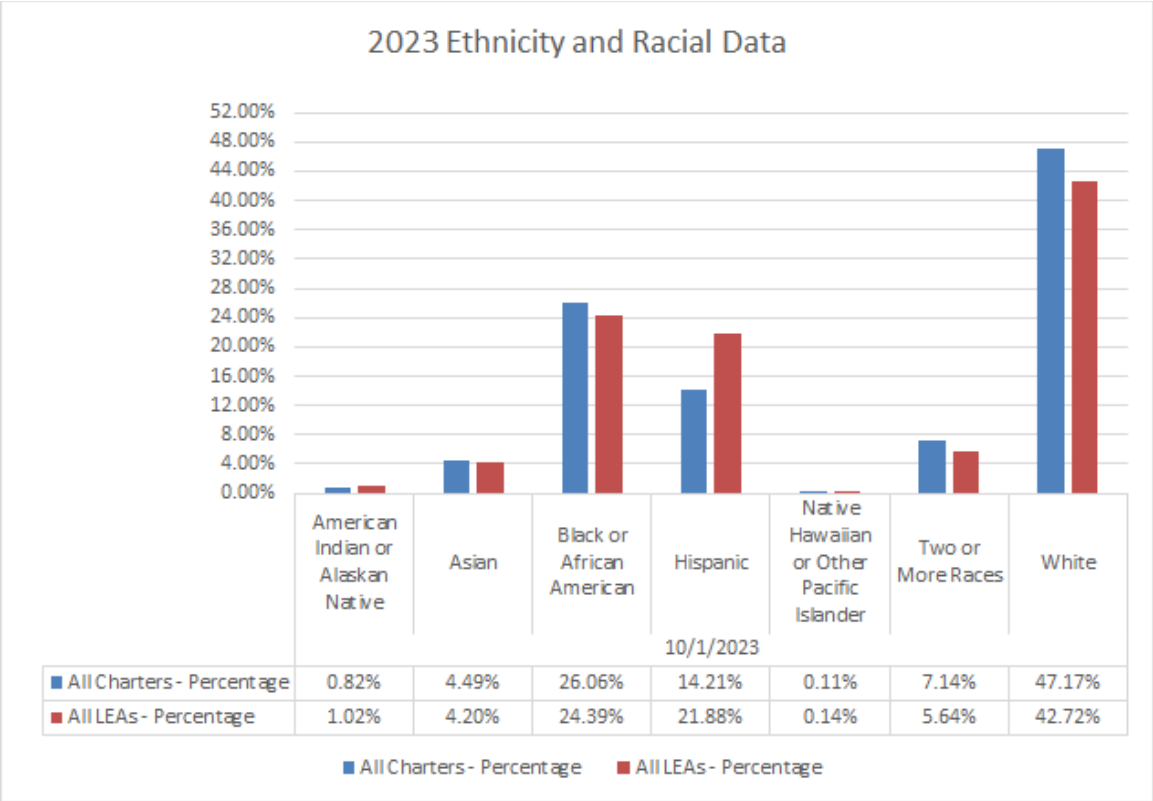
Figure 4: Demographic Data: Charters and Traditional LEAs, 2023

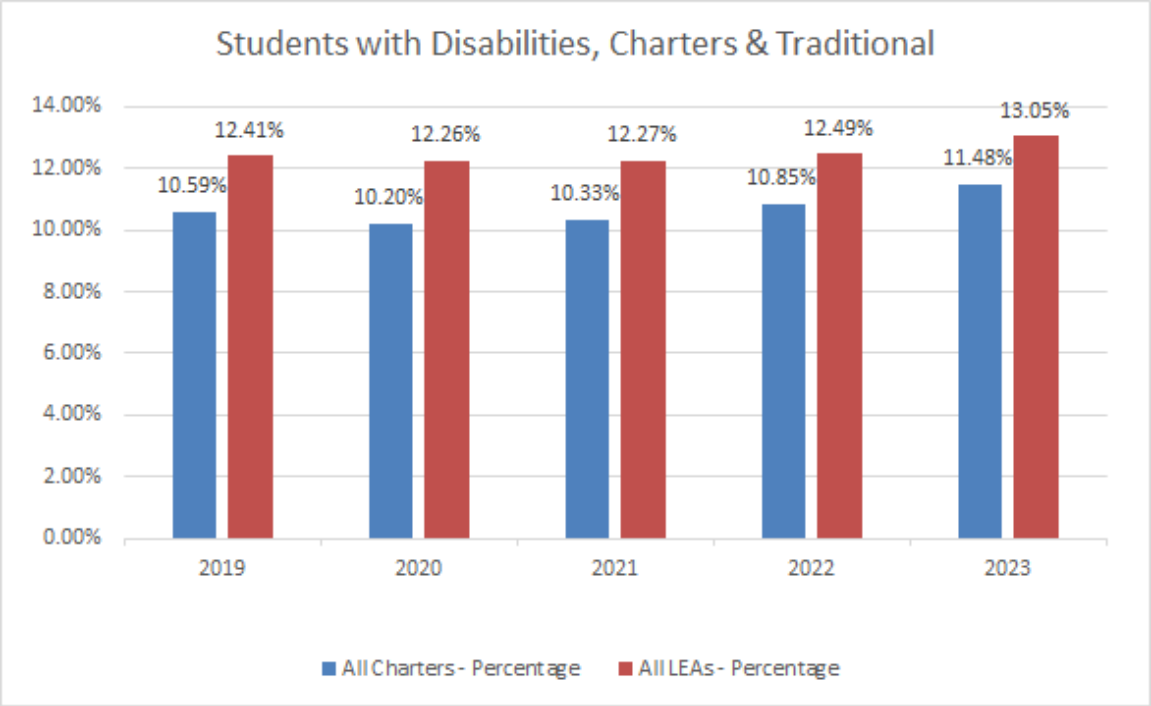


Special Population Student Enrollment

Students with Disabilities

As of the December 1, 2023, federal headcount of Students with Disabilities (SWD), the SWD headcount at charter schools was 11.48%, up from 10.85% the year prior.

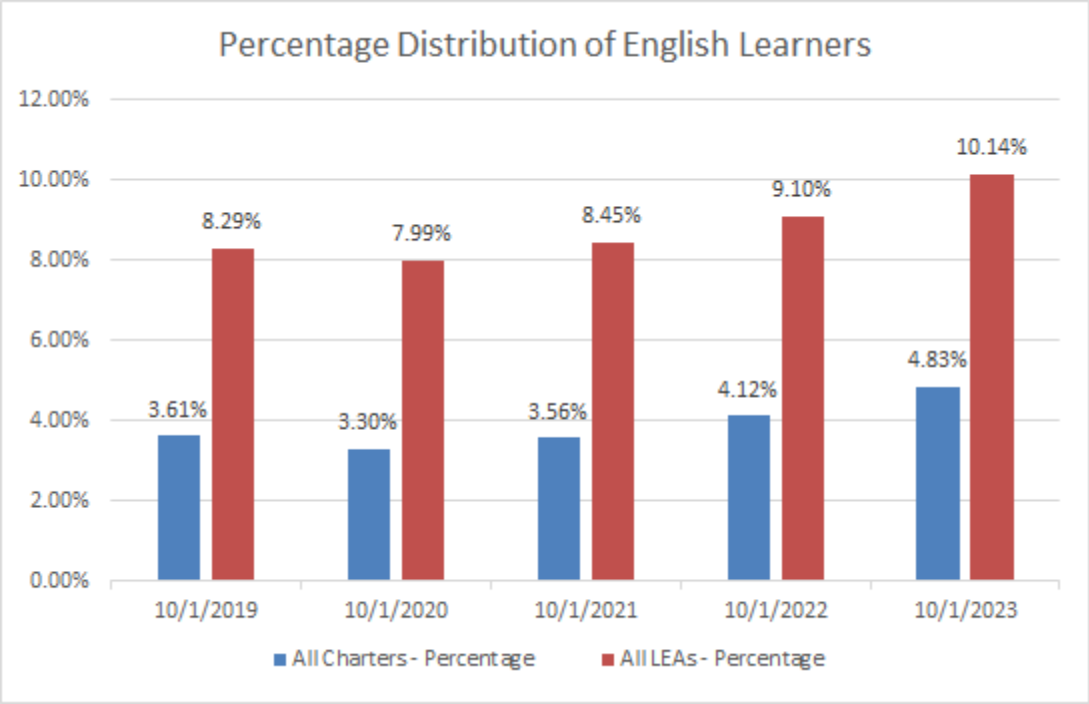
Figure 5: Students with Disabilities Charters and Traditional LEAs, 2019-2023



English Learners

As of the October 1, 2023, federal headcount, charter schools continue to show increased enrollment of English Learners, but much lower rates of enrollment when compared to traditional (non-charter) public schools.

Figure 6: English Learners, Charters and Traditional LEAs, 2019-2023

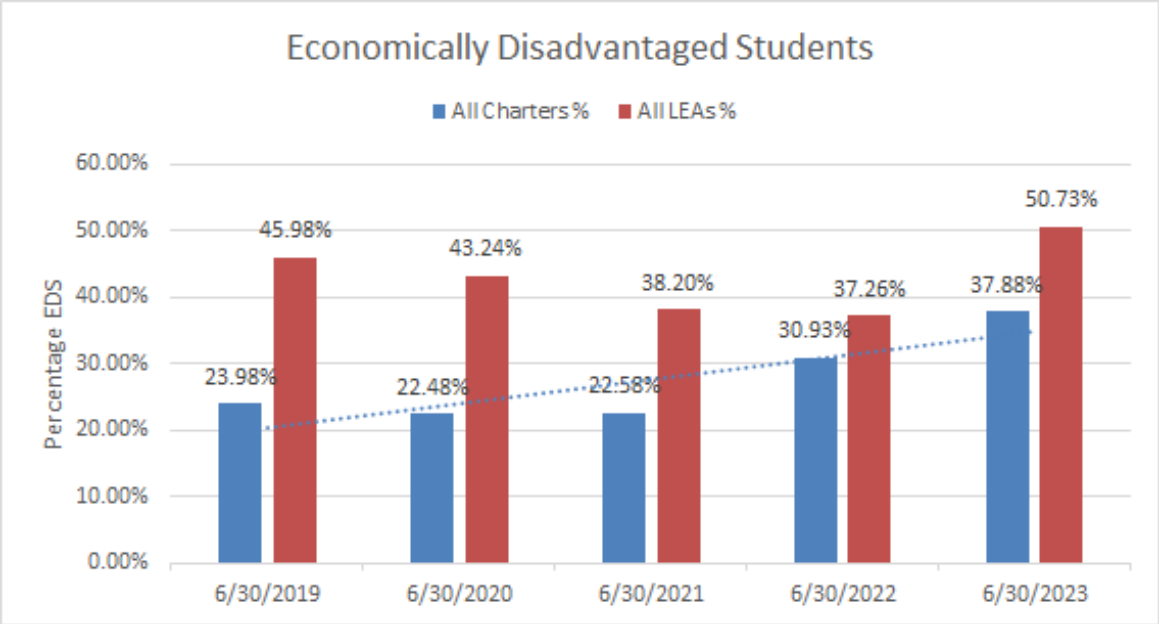


Economically Disadvantaged Students

As of June 30, 2023, charter schools enrolled 52,333 economically disadvantaged students, or 37.88% of charter students. This is a nearly 99% increase from the 2020 headcount number of 26,299 EDS students enrolled in charter schools within North

Beginning with the 2021–22 school year, the criteria for identifying Economically Disadvantaged Student (EDS) status was updated by the United States Department of Education. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is defining Economically Disadvantaged status as: Any student identified by a Public School Unit (PSU), meeting the criteria of Directly Certified, Categorically Eligible, or a method consistent with state or federal guidance for financial assistance regardless of participation or eligibility in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Direct certification involves matching student enrollment records with data from other government programs, such as SNAP or TANF, to automatically qualify eligible students for free meals without requiring a separate application. One recent significant change is that Categorically Eligible now includes children who are Medicaid recipients, thus impacting the increase of students within the economically disadvantaged subgroup statewide.

Figure 7: Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students, 2023



Eliminating Barriers to Access

Weighted Lotteries

The ability to conduct a weighted lottery is codified in G.S. §115C-218.45(g1). Charter schools may not discriminate in their admissions process based on race, creed, national origin, religion, or ancestry; however, they can use additional controls to enroll underserved populations, if supported by the school's mission.

A weighted lottery at a charter school refers to a specific method used to prioritize student admissions based on certain criteria, typically designed to promote diversity within the school's student body. In a weighted lottery system, certain applicants are given preference or additional chances of being selected based on specific factors such as socio-economic status. North Carolina follows the federal definition related to educationally disadvantaged students in determining which subgroups may be weighted in a weighted lottery: economically disadvantaged, English learners, Students with Disabilities, migrant students, and homeless/unaccompanied minors.

Here's how a weighted lottery typically works:

1. **Identifying Criteria:** The charter school establishes criteria that will be used to prioritize student admissions. These criteria must meet the federal guidance and definitions for educationally disadvantaged students.
2. **Assigning Weights:** Each criterion is assigned a "weight" or numerical value that reflects its importance in the admissions process. For example, being eligible for free or reduced-price meals might carry a higher weight than having a sibling at the school.
3. **Applying Weights in the Lottery:** When the school conducts its admissions lottery (a random selection process used when there are more applicants than available spots), applicants' names are entered into the lottery pool. However, applicants who meet specific criteria receive additional entries or chances in the lottery based on the weights assigned to those criteria. This means that students meeting certain criteria have a higher probability of being selected in the lottery.
4. **Ensuring Diversity and Equity:** The purpose of a weighted lottery is often to promote diversity and equity within the school's student population. By giving preference to students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, the school aims to create a more inclusive learning environment that reflects the broader community's diversity.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** It's essential for schools using a weighted lottery system to be transparent about the criteria, weights assigned, and the overall admissions process. This transparency helps build trust among parents, community members, and stakeholders, ensuring that the lottery process is fair and equitable. The Office of Charter Schools works with schools to develop lottery and admissions policies that meet these objectives.
6. **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Charter schools implementing a weighted lottery must ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies governing admissions practices. This includes adhering to anti-discrimination laws and guidelines regarding fair access to educational opportunities for all students.

Overall, a weighted lottery at a charter school is a strategic approach to admissions that goes beyond a purely random selection process. By considering specific criteria and assigning weights accordingly, charter schools can proactively address diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in their student enrollment practices.

Over 70 charter schools are approved to utilize a weighted lottery. As more charter schools begin to implement a weighted lottery, the hope is to see more educationally disadvantaged students enrolling in charter schools. As part of the approval process, schools must explain how the needs of educationally disadvantaged students will be met. Many schools report an increase in staff, improved nutrition and transportation programs, as well as increased community outreach and partnerships.

Part 7 of the Charter School Omnibus Bill of 2023 allows the Central Park School for Children in Durham County to conduct a weighted lottery pilot program. The pilot program shall preserve existing weighting factors but may add additional weighting factors that serve the goal of assisting educationally or economically disadvantaged students, including walk zones.

Transportation

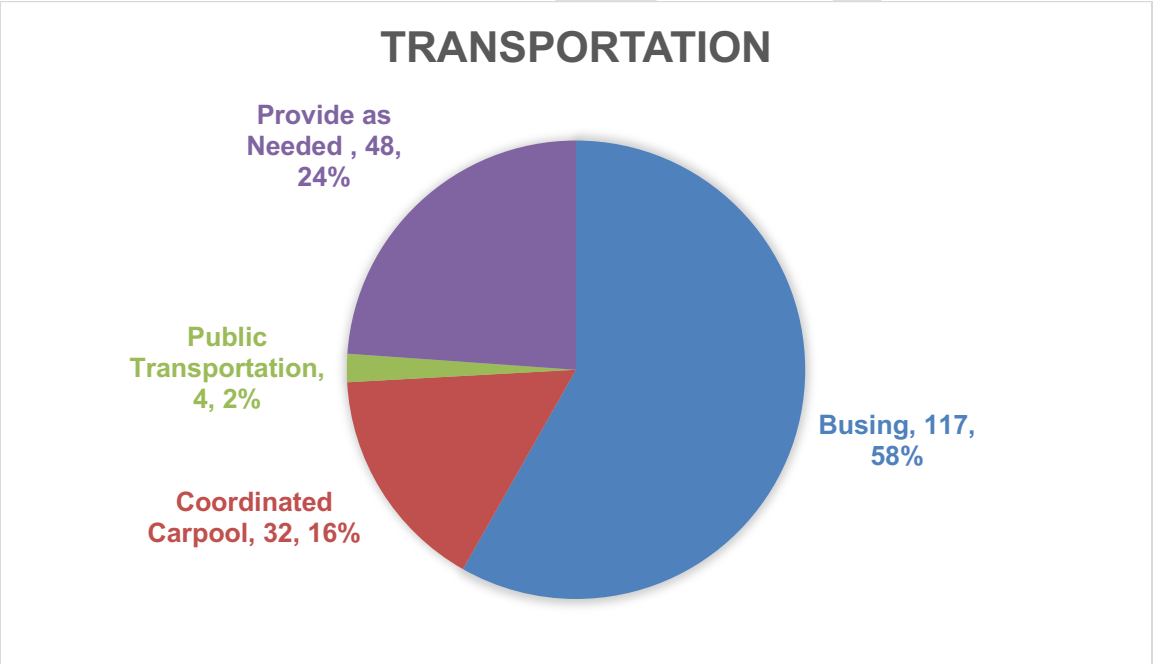
General Statute §115C-218.40 states that a charter school "may provide transportation to students enrolled at the school. The charter school shall develop a transportation plan so that transportation is not a barrier to any student who resides in the local school administrative unit in which the school is located."

During the 2021 legislative session, the Charter School Transportation Grant was made permanent. This grant appropriates $2.5 million to charter schools who meet the eligibility requirement of serving 50% or more economically disadvantaged students. In the most recent grant cycle, fall 2024, a total of 65 eligible charter schools submitted applications with eligible expenses totaling more than $8.5 million dollars, far

below the available funding. Feedback from grant recipients confirm that the transportation grant is allowing greater use and upkeep to traditional yellow busing which has become more costly over the years due to fuel and supply costs. Further, grant recipients report the ability to expand transportation services and move funds from transportation to other areas of need within the school.

Figure 8: Charter School Transportation, 2023

According to school survey, the transportation options offered at charter schools vary as seen below, with most schools offering busing. All public schools are required by law to provide transportation in situations where a student would otherwise be unable to attend school. Those charter schools not providing bus transportation report cost and staffing as main barriers.



Child Nutrition

Charter schools in North Carolina are not required to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), however, like the transportation provision, they are required to have a plan that ensures that every child who needs lunch provided will receive a meal. Child nutrition plans are evaluated during the initial charter school application phase and are a consistent component of interview questioning prior to CSRB approving applications.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 82 charter schools participated in NSLP and for the current 2023-2024 school year, 84 schools implement the NSLP.

NC ACCESS Programming

Overview

The North Carolina Office of Charter Schools is currently in its sixth and final year of implementing the North Carolina Advancing Charter Collaboration and Excellence for Student Success (NC ACCESS) Program through a $36.6 million Public Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The major purposes of the CSP grant programs are to expand opportunities for all students, particularly educationally and economically underserved students, to attend charter schools and meet challenging state academic standards; provide financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of public charter schools. The grant is scheduled to be completed by September 2024.

Subgrant Program Statistics

The subgrant program is the largest investment the NC ACCESS Program makes to remove barriers for educationally disadvantaged students. Over 90% of the total award goes directly to schools through a competitive subgrant application process. Through four cycles, the NC ACCESS Program has awarded 62 charter schools with subgrants totaling $33 million.

Charter School Transformative Executive Leadership Program

The NC ACCESS Program Office of Charter Schools is in the 2nd year of the Charter School Transformative Executive Leadership Program to provide high-quality, customized professional coaching for a cohort of charter school leaders with a focus on dramatically accelerating their leadership capacity and improving student outcomes at schools designated as low- or continually low-performing.

Transformational principal leadership is critical to turning around low-performing schools. This year-long cohort learning experience is designed to examine the implementation and evaluation of programmatic strategies, the effectiveness of the decision-making process, and the engagement of multiple stakeholders by a transformational leader engaged in an agenda of change in low-performing schools. Currently, 40 school leaders are taking part in the Executive Leadership Program. The Charter School Transformative Executive Leadership Program is facilitated by Alex Quigley, Executive Director of Healthy Start Academy.

The Assistant Principal Academy

In continuing the mission to ensure high-quality charter schools in North Carolina, the NC ACCESS Program launched the Assistant Principal Academy. The academy was designed to ensure potential qualified leaders are prepared and available to lead charter schools in the future. The NC ACCESS Program is supporting 40 charter school teachers and administrators to participate in the training which began in September 2023.

Charter School Academic Performance

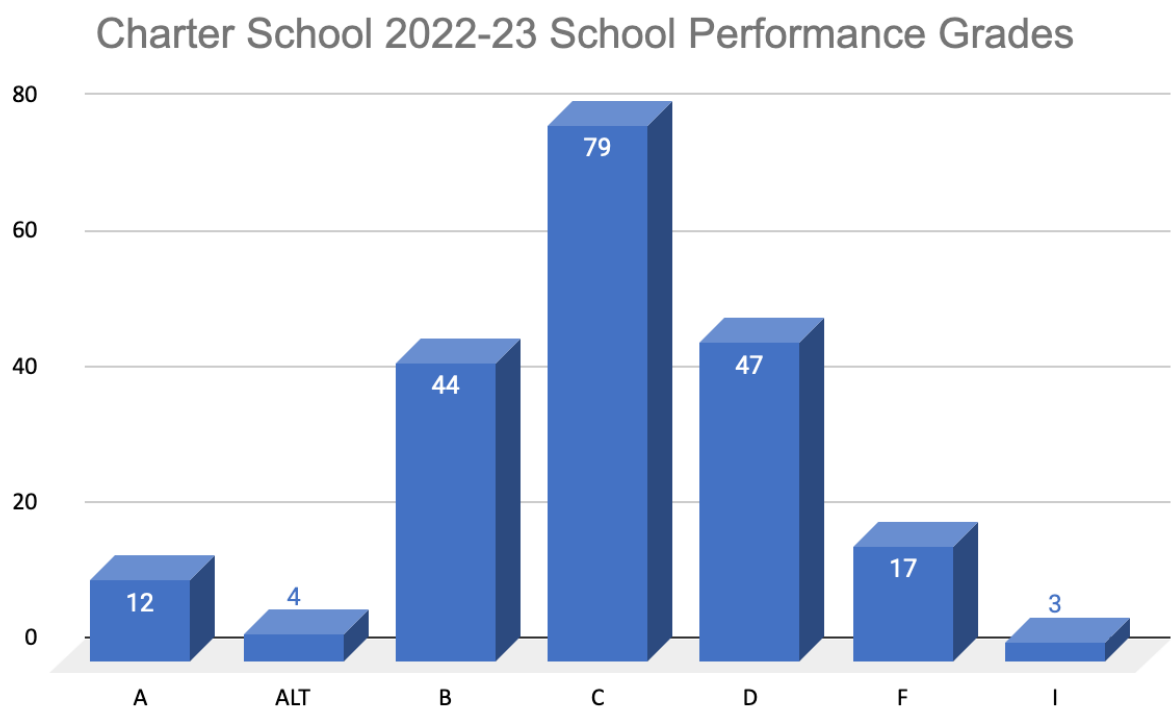
The sixth legislative purpose of charter schools outlined in statute is to "hold schools established under this Part accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems." The academic performance of charter schools in North Carolina varies widely. While some charter schools consistently demonstrate strong academic outcomes and exceed state standards, others face challenges related to student achievement, teacher retention, and resource allocation.

Academic Performance 2022-2023

Percentage of charter schools receiving a School Performance Grade of an A or B

Fifty-six of 199 (28.1%) of charter schools received a School Performance Grade (SPG) of an A or B. This calculation does not include three schools that did not have tested grades or in which in the test grades, the number of students tested was less than 30, and four schools participating in the Alternative Schools' Accountability Model.

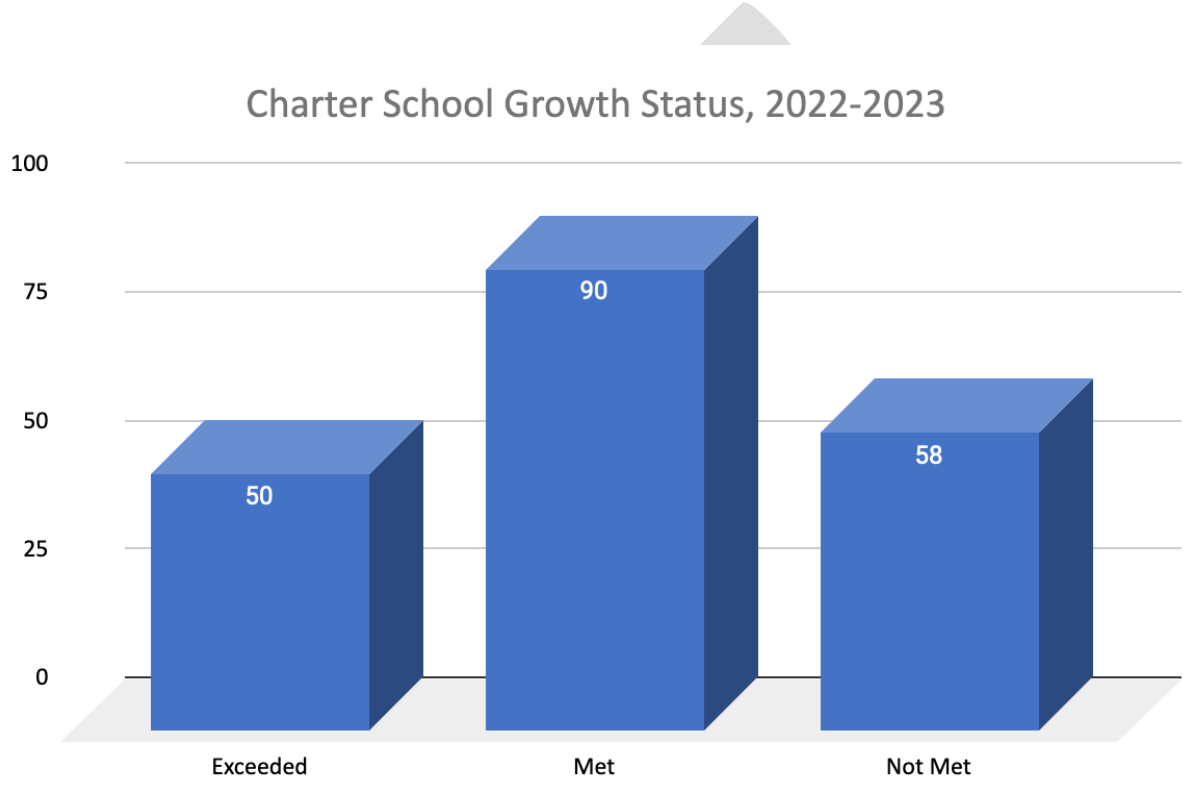
Figure 9: Charter School SPGs, 2022-2023



Percentage of charter schools meeting or exceeding expected annual academic growth

One hundred forty of 198 (70.7%) of charter schools met or exceeded expected growth for 2022-23. This calculation does not include eight schools that did not have growth measures reported for 2022-23.

Figure 10: Charter School Growth Status, 2022-2023



Charter schools meeting the statutory definition of Low Performing (School Performance Grade of D or F and a school growth score of "met expected growth" or "not met expected growth")

Charter schools meeting the statutory definition of Continually Low Performing (Identified as Low Performing two out of the last three reported school years)

Table 8: Low Performing Status, Charter Schools 2022-2023

Category	# of Schools	% of Open Charters
LP	56	27%
CLP	55	26%
LP + CLP	49	23%
Total LP or CLP	62	30%

State Low-Performing Schools and Districts

Each year low-performing school information is presented to the State Board of Education and submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) regarding districts and schools identified as low-performing, effective improvement planning, and recommendations for additional legislation to improve student performance and increase local flexibility. Data on low-performing and continually low-performing charter schools is included within that report[8]. In addition, the NCDPI Accountability Division publishes an Annual Testing Report[9] with detailed academic analysis on the state's public schools.

The North Carolina General Assembly has enacted requirements to identify low-performing schools, low-performing districts, and recurring low-performing schools based on Legislative requirements.

North Carolina identifies low-performing public school units annually. There are four designations for low-performing public school units:

- Low-Performing School (applies to charter schools)
- Low-Performing District (does not apply to charter schools)
- Recurring Low-Performing School (used for non-charter public school units)
- Continually Low-Performing Charter Schools (applies to charter schools)

Low-Performing Schools. A low-performing school has a School Performance Grade of 'D' or 'F', and a growth status of 'Met' or 'Not Met.'

Low-Performing District. Low-performing districts are defined as districts that have greater than 50% of schools identified as low-performing.

Recurring Low-Performing School. A recurring low-performing school is identified as low-performing in any two of the last three years.

Continually Low-Performing Charter Schools. A continually low-performing charter school is identified as low-performing in any two of the last three years.

[8] Report to the North Carolina General Assembly: Low-Performing Districts and Schools, Improvement Planning, and Statewide Support.
https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=372864&MID=14640

[9] https://www.dpi.nc.gov/2022-23-annual-testing-report-includes-performance-school-performance-grades-and-long-term-goals/download?attachment

Table 9: Comparison Data for 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 Low Performance, State Data

	Schools 2022	Schools 2023	Leavers LP Status	Stayers LP Status	Enters LP Status	Change
LP Traditional PSU	793	741	258	535	206	-52
LP Charter	67	60	19	48	12	-7
LP Lab Schools	4	3	1	3	0	-1
LP Districts	29	25	11	18	7	-4
Recurring Traditional LP Schools	464	658	57	407	251	194
Continually LP Charters	35	57	5	30	27	22

Academic Recognitions

National Elementary and Secondary Act Distinguished Schools

Sixty-five U.S. schools have been named 2023 National Elementary and Secondary Education Act Distinguished Schools for the extraordinary success of their students in several categories. One North Carolina charter school was recognized for the following category:

Category 3: Schools that show excellence in serving special populations of students

- ArtSpace Charter: Swannanoa, NC

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Charter School Impact on Local Districts

FUNDING AND MEMBERSHIP

For the 2022-2023 fiscal year, charter schools received $985,919,148 in state funding[10] out of the $11.9B Public School Budget.

State funds are allotted based on the number of students in ADM at an individual charter school. State funds may be used for any purpose with the exception of purchasing a building. Most federal funds are targeted to specific school populations such as Title I or IDEA Handicapped. Local funds are based on the local current expense appropriation in the county in which the student resides. Local funds may be used for any purpose.

Unlike local education agencies, charter schools are not bound to serve only the students residing within a particular county or district. Many charter schools serve students from multiple districts, which often poses challenges related to transportation and funding allocations. Given the large number of districts from which a charter school may enroll students, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific fiscal impact of a given charter school on its "home district."

Detailed financial data regarding student enrollment, school personnel, expenditures, and reports can be found at NCDPI Financial and Business Services.

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[10] https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/fbs/resources/2023-highlightspdf-0/download?attachment

Best Practices and Innovation

Charter schools were designed to provide families and students with greater choice in the types of educational opportunities available within the public school system. Through the charter process, charter boards and founders design schools that provide innovative and unique opportunities that attract a diverse range of students. The attraction to charter schools, for many families and students, lies in the specific programming and mission of the chosen charter school. The foundation of charter school success in NC lies in ***choice*** – families choosing the programming and environment that best meets the individual needs of their unique students.

2022-2023 Highlights of student opportunity and achievement include:

Alpha Academy Charter School

- Utilizes a radio broadcast program, WAIS, involving students as anchors to share news around the school quarterly.

Pinnacle Classical Academy

- High School: Ranks number 1 in Cleveland County, among the top 50 high schools in North Carolina, and among the top 6% of nearly 25,000 high schools in the nation, according to the U.S. News & World Report.
- Middle School: Ranks among the top 3% of middle schools in North Carolina.
- Elementary School: Ranks among the top 9% of elementary schools in North Carolina.

Reaching All Minds Academy

- Zion Anderson, a middle school student, was selected as a host of North Carolina STEM Explorers airing weekly on WRAL Channel 5.

The Exploris School

- The North Carolina Historic Society named Cori Greer Banks, teacher, as their 2023 Outstanding Teacher of North Carolina History.

Union Academy Charter School

- Reinvented summer school by adding an agriculture career pathway to their program. One student exclaimed, “We come for reading and math, and we GET to do Ag!”

Voyager Academy

- Awarded the Silver Distinction by College Board for the AP Honor Roll.

Triangle Math and Science Academy

- Star League program provides robust training for international Science Olympiads, inspiring students to compete with peers globally.

Quality Education Academy

- Sustain a legacy of serving underserved and disenfranchised communities helping them “Harambee” or pull together to determine their own values and goals, and then sustaining them over generations. QEA is a school model that actually works, based on a 31-year longitudinal study using participatory action research.
- Offer young men’s and young ladies’ mentoring programs along with such enrichment activities as chess, barbering, hydroponics, aeroponics, engineering, eSports, cosmetology, truck driving, sustainable farming, drone piloting, and aviation.

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- QEA scholars are getting their certification through FEMA in Disaster Response Drone Training, recreational drone pilot licenses, and commercial drone pilot licenses.
- Established partnership with High Point University to teach classes on QEA's campus for those seeking licensure/their master's degree in education.
- Partner with NC A&T SU in agriculture and sustainable farming. The QEA 4-H club is supported by the university's 4-H club.

Charter schools are among North Carolina's top public elementary and middle schools, according to U.S. News & World Report's new **2024 rankings**, which are based on academic performance.

NC Charter Schools Among Top 20 Elementary Schools:

- Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy (Mecklenburg County), #2
- Lake Norman Charter (Mecklenburg County), #7
- Pine Lake Preparatory (Iredell County), #12
- NC Leadership Charter Academy (Forsyth County), #15
- The Academy of Moore County (Moore County), #17

NC Charter Schools Among Top 20 Middle Schools:

- Endeavor Charter (Wake County), #3
- The Expedition School (Orange County), #7
- Greensboro Academy (Guilford County), #8
- Pine Lake Preparatory (Iredell County), #11
- Triangle Math & Science Academy (Wake County), #13
- Peak Charter Academy (Wake County), #15
- Lake Norman Charter (Mecklenburg County), #18
- Envision Science Academy (Wake County), #19

Portrait of a Graduate Exemplars: Promising Practices

Chatham Charter School

- Adaptability, Communication, and Personal Responsibility

Lake Norman Charter School

- Empathy

Lincoln Charter School

- Empathy, Communication, and Collaboration

The Expedition School

- Personal Responsibility

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Teaching and Leading Recognitions

The Wells Fargo Principal of the Year Award was introduced in 1984 to recognize the role of the principal in establishing an environment conducive to the pursuit and achievement of academic excellence in North Carolina's schools. The Wells Fargo Principal of the Year serves as the North Carolina ambassador for the state's approximately 2,500 principals.

2023 Principal of the Year for charter schools: T.J. Worrell- Northeast Academy for Aerospace and Advanced Technologies, Elizabeth City, NC

2024 Principal of the Year for charter schools: Dr. Serena Fuller- Art Space Charter School, Swannanoa, NC

The Burroughs Welcome Fund Charter School Teacher of the Year chooses a candidate who is dedicated and highly skilled, a candidate proven capable of inspiring students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn.

2023 Teacher of the Year: Ryan Henderson, Sugar Creek Academy, Charlotte, NC

2024 Teacher of the Year: Lee Haywood, Uwharrie Charter School, Asheboro, NC

Resources

Please see the links below for additional data and information related to North Carolina's charter schools.

Recognitions

Accountability Data

Data and Reports

NC School Finances

School Report Cards

MyFutureNC Attainment Profiles

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